

उपनिषत् रत्नाकरः

GEM FILLED OCEAN OF UPANISHADS

SELECTIONS
FROM
BRHADAARANYAKA UPANISHAT

[YAJNAVALKYA AND MAITREYI]

Translation and Explanation

by

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YAAJNAVALKYA INSTRUCTS HIS WIFE ABOUT THE IMMORTAL STATE

अथ ह याज्जवल्क्यस्य द्वे भार्ये बभूवतुः
 मैत्रेयी च कात्यायनी च
 तयोर्ह मैत्रेयी ब्रह्मवादिनी बभूव स्त्रीप्रज्ञैव तर्हि कात्यायिनी
 अथ ह याज्जवल्क्योऽन्यद्वृत्तमुपाकरिष्यन् ॥ १ ॥

Yaajnavalkya had two wives - Maitreyee and Kaatyaayanee.

Of those two, Maitreyee had expertise in debating about Brahman.

Kaatyaayanee on the other hand was only adept in her duties that belonged to her as a woman (as a wife).

Yaajnavalkya wanted to embrace another type of life.

Yaajnavalkya had two wives- Maitreyee and Kaatyaayanee.

Yaajnavalkya had a hermitage which taught thousands of students.

He acquired the wealth needed by winning many debates on Knowledge that were conducted by King Janaka.

No one was there who could surpass him in his Knowledge.

He did not just have intellectual proficiency of the scriptures, but was a great Jnaani who lived as established in the Self.

His wife Kaatyaayanee took care of the young students and loved them like a mother.

Cows, children, their food and comfort, service to her husband was her life.

Without her, the hermitage could not survive at all.

Maitreyee on the other hand was of an intellectual type. She studied scriptures along with the students and assisted her husband in running the classes.

She was also an inevitable part of the hermitage, helping her husband as a teaching assistant.

After a fulfilled life of raising so many students to a higher level of knowledge,

Yaajnavalkya decided to renounce his householder life and resort to the solitude of a forest live, where he could be absorbed in Samaadhi and discard his body-attire.

He decided to leave the hermitage in the care of his wives and announced this decision to Maitreyi first, so that she will be able to explain this to Kaatyaayanee, who may break down by hearing about her husband's separation.

मैत्रेयीति होवाच याज्ज्वल्क्यः प्रव्रजिष्यन्वा
 अरेऽहमस्मात्स्थानादस्मि
 हन्त तेऽनया कात्ययन्यान्तं करवाणीति ॥ २ ॥

Yaajnavalkya said - "Maitreyi, my dear!

*I want to renounce this state of life and take over to monastic life.
 Therefore, I have to do my duties equally with you and Kaatyaayanee."*

Yaajnavalkya explained to Maitreyee, his intention to renounce and divide the lands and cows equally between her and Kaatyaayanee.

Maitreyee was least interested in the possession of any property.
 She wanted to get instructions from her husband about attaining the same state of Self, he was established in.

If he was renouncing all the lands and cows and seeking solitude, he must surely have some other precious wealth as his.

Maitreyee wanted that wealth alone to be hers; so she asked him-

सा होवाच मैत्रेयी
 यन्न म इयं भगोः सर्वा पृथिवी वित्तेन पूर्णा स्यात्
 स्यां न्वहं तेतामृताहो तेतामृताहो तेतामृताहो नेति
 नेति होवाच याज्ज्वल्क्यः
 यथैवोपकरणवतां जीवितं तथैव ते जीवितं स्यात्
 अमृतत्वस्य तु नाशास्ति वित्तेनेति ॥ ३ ॥

Maitreyee said- "Lord!

If the entire earth is filled with wealth, will I become immortal because of that?"

Yaajnavalkya replied - "No!

*Your life will just be similar to those who have many possessions.
 Wealth indeed destroys the path to immortality."*

सा होवाच मैत्रेयी
येनाहं अमृता स्यां किमहं तेन कुर्याम्
यदेव भगवान्वेद तदेव मे ब्रूहीति ॥ ४ ॥

Maitreyee said-

*“What will I do with that by which I will not become immortal?
Whatever the Lordship knows, instruct to me that alone.”*

स होवाच याज्जन्वल्क्यः,
प्रिया वै खलु नो भवती सती प्रियमवृधत्
हन्त तर्हि भवत्येतद्व्याख्यास्यामि ते,
व्याचक्षणाय तु मे निधिध्यासस्वेति ॥ ५ ॥

Yaajnavalkya said -

*“You have been always been my beloved and now you have increased that
love. If that alone is what you want, then I will explain that to you.
As I explain, contemplate on that meaning.”*

Maitreyee, my dear!

What is the most loved thing of all?

Oneself!

Everything that you love is a thing of love because you love the Self.

This love for the Self alone appears as the love for the husband, wife, children god etc.

Since the wrong understanding is there about the Self, people mistake the body to be the Self; but actually the innermost essence of all, the Brahman- that alone is spread out as all the perceptions. Anything you love is the Self alone that is perceived as other things.

Then why love other things?

Love the inner essence only and be silent; you would get the fulfillment of loving all the things of the world!

स होवाच

न वा अरे पत्युः कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय पतिः प्रियो भवति ।

न वा अरे जायायै कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय जाया प्रिया भवति ।

न वा अरे पुत्राणां कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय पुत्राः प्रिया भवन्ति ।

न वा अरे वित्तस्य कामाय वित्तं प्रियं भवति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय वित्तं प्रियं भवति ।

न वा अरे पशूनां कामाय पशवः प्रिया भवन्ति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय पशवः प्रिया भवन्ति ।

न वा अरे ब्रह्मणः कामाय ब्रह्म प्रियं भवति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय ब्रह्म प्रियं भवति ।

न वा अरे क्षत्रस्य कामाय क्षत्रं प्रियं भवति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय क्षत्रं प्रियं भवति ।

न वा अरे लोकानां कामाय लोकाः प्रिया भवन्ति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय लोकाः प्रिया भवन्ति ।

न वा अरे देवानां कामाय देवाः प्रिया भवन्ति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय देवाः प्रिया भवन्ति ।

न वा अरे वेदानां कामाय वेदाः प्रिया भवन्ति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय वेदाः प्रिया भवन्ति ।

न वा अरे भूतानां कामाय भूतानि प्रियाणि भवन्ति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय भूतानि प्रियाणि भवन्ति ।

न वा अरे सर्वस्य कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति

आत्मनस्तु कामाय सर्वं प्रियं भवति ।

आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यो मैत्रेयि

आत्मनि खल्वरे दृष्टे श्रुते मते विज्जाते इदं सर्वं विदितम् ॥ ६ ॥

He said-

“My dear! Not for a husband’s sake that a husband becomes a loved object; but a husband becomes a loved object because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for a wife’s sake that a wife becomes a loved object; but a wife becomes a loved object because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for the sake of the sons do sons become loved objects; but sons become loved objects because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for wealth’s sake that wealth becomes a loved object; but wealth becomes a loved object because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for the sake of animals that animals become loved objects; but animals become loved objects because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for a Brahmin’s sake that a Brahmin becomes a loved object; but a husband becomes a loved object because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for a Kshatriya’s sake that a Kshatriya becomes a loved object; but a Kshatriya becomes a loved object because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for the sake of worlds that worlds become loved objects; but worlds become loved objects because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for the sake of Devas that worlds become loved objects; but Devas become loved objects because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for the sake of Vedas that worlds become loved objects; but Vedas become loved objects because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for the sake of the beings that beings become loved objects; but beings become loved objects because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Not for the sake of all things, that all things become loved objects; but all things become loved objects because of the love for the Self alone.

My dear! Aatmaa alone is to be seen, heard, thought about, contemplated upon Maitreyi.

If Aatman, my dear, is seen, heard, thought about, and understood, all this get understood.

If you do not know and love the real Self, then all the perceptions reject you.

You will not get any true happiness from any perceived object, be it a wife or a husband, children or wealth.

Happiness runs away from a person who is ignorant of his true nature (Aatman).

If you love the inner essence alone, then all the perceived objects shine forth as the Self and merge in you as bliss alone.

He, who sees a second object as something to be loved, is indeed a sinner and is rejected by the Self, which is all.

He suffers forever in various existences.

ब्रह्म तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो ब्रह्म वेद

क्षत्रं तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनः क्षत्रं वेद

लोकास्तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो लोकान्वेद

देवास्तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो वेदान्वेद

वेदास्तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो देवान्वेद

भूतानि तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनो भूतानि वेद

सर्वं तं परादाद्योऽन्यत्रात्मनः सर्वं वेद

इदं ब्रह्म इदं क्षत्रं इमे लोकाः इमे देवाः इमे वेदाः इमानि भूतानि

इदं सर्वं यदयमात्मा ॥ ७ ॥

“Braahmana (a person who practices Brahma-knowledge) rejects him who knows Braahmana as different from the Aatman.

Kshatriya rejects him who knows Kshatriya as different from the Aatman.

Worlds reject him who knows the worlds as different from the Aatman.

Devas reject him who knows Devas as different from the Aatman.

Beings reject him who knows the beings as different from the Aatman.

All reject him who knows all as different from the Aatman.

This Braahmana, this Kshatriya; these worlds, these Devas, these Vedas, these beings, all this is that which is the Aatman.

स यथा दुन्दुभेर्हन्यमानस्य न बाह्याच्छब्दाच्छक्नुयाद्ग्रहणाय
दुन्दुभेस्तु ग्रहणेन दुन्दुभ्याघातस्य वा शब्दो गृहीतः ॥ ८ ॥

“Aatman is like -

when the drum gets beaten, one cannot distinguish its various notes; but by grasping the sound of the drum alone or the beatings of the drum alone; sound is understood.

Maitreyee! Have you heard the drum sound?

The drummer will be producing various types of sounds with his beatings.

Though all are different notes, you will always understand that the drumming sound is the essence of all notes.

Similarly this world which shines forth as various shapes and names is in essence Aatman alone.

स यथा शङ्खस्य ध्मायमानस्य न बाह्याच्छब्दाच्छक्नुयाद्ग्रहणाय
शङ्खस्य तु ग्रहणेन शङ्खध्मस्य वा शब्दो गृहीतः ॥ ९ ॥

“Aatman is like -

when the conch gets blown, one cannot distinguish its various notes; but by grasping the sound of the conch alone or the blowing of the conch alone; sound is understood.

Maitreyee! Have you heard the sound of the blowing conch?

The blower of the conch will be producing various types of sounds from the conch.

Though all are different notes, you will always understand that the blowing sound rising from the conch is the essence of all notes.

Similarly this world which shines forth as various shapes and names is in essence Aatman alone.

स यथा वीणायै वाद्यमानायै न बाह्याच्छब्दाङ्गुयाद्ग्रहणाय
वीणायै तु ग्रहणेन वीणावादस्य वा शब्दो गृहीतः ॥ १० ॥

“Aatman is like -

when the Veenaa gets played, one cannot distinguish its various notes; but by grasping the sound of the Veenaa alone or the playing of Veenaa alone; sound is understood.

Maitreyee! Have you heard the music played on Veenaa?

The Veenaa-player will be producing various types of musical sounds from the Veenaa-strings.

Though all are different notes, you will always understand that the music produced from the Veenaa strings is the essence of all notes.

Similarly this world which shines forth as various shapes and names is in essence Aatman alone.

स यथाद्र्ध्वाग्नेरभ्याहितस्य पृथग्धूमा विनिश्चरन्ति
एवं वा अरेऽस्य महतो भूतस्य निःश्वसितमेतद्यद्ग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः
सामवेदोऽथर्वाङ्गीरस इतिहासः पुराणं विद्या उपनिषदः श्लोकाः
सूत्राण्यनुव्याख्यानानि व्याख्यानानीष्टं हुतमाशितं पायितम्
अयं च लोकः परश्च लोकः सर्वाणि च भूतानि
अस्यैवेतानि सर्वाणि निःश्वसितानि ॥ ११ ॥

“Aatman is like -

when the fire is kindled with wet faggot, various types of smoke rise up, in that manner alone my dear, the breath of this Supreme being alone are - Yajurveda, SaamaVeda, Atharvaangirasa, Itihaasa, Puraana, various learnings, Upanishads, hymns, aphorisms, elucidations, explanations, sacrifices, oblations in the fire, that which is eaten, drunk, this world, next world, all the beings; all these are his breath only.

Maitreyee!

When the smoke rises from the fire in the altar, it will rise up as various lines, curling in various ways, though it is the smoke only in essence.

All that you understand as the Vedas, various scriptures, all the affairs of the world, other world, and all the beings in all the worlds - are like the breath rising from the Supreme Brahman. Brahman alone is the essence of all.

स यथा सर्वासामपां समुद्र एकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां स्पर्शानां त्वगेकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां गन्धानां नासिके एकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां रसानां जिह्वैकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां रूपाणां चक्षुरेकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां शब्दानां श्रोत्रमेकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां संकल्पानां मन एकायनम्
 एवं सर्वासां विद्यानां हृदयमेकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां कर्मणां हस्तावेकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषामानन्दानामुपस्थ एकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां विसर्गाणां पायुरेकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषामध्वनां पादावेकायनम्
 एवं सर्वेषां वेदानां वागेकायनम् ॥ १२ ॥

*(Brahman is the only abode for all perceived and known things. This is how)
 "He is like*

*for all the waters, ocean is the only abode;
 for all the touches, skin is the only abode;
 for all the smells, nose is the only abode;
 for all the tastes, tongue is the only abode;
 for all the images, eye is the only abode;
 for all the sounds, ear is the only abode;
 for all the imaginations, mind is the only abode;
 for all the Vidyaas (Knowledge),
 Hridaya (understanding essence) is the only abode;
 for all the actions, hand is the only abode;
 for all the joys, organ of generation is the only abode;
 for all the ejections, anus is the only abode;
 for all the movements, feet are the only abode;
 for all the waters, ocean is the only abode;
 for all the touches, skin is the only abode;
 for all Vedas, organ of speech is the only abode.*

Maitreyee! A lump of salt is salty; is it not?
 In which part of the lump is the saltiness less, or more?
 The saltiness fills completely, inside and outside equally all over.
 So does the Aatman fill everything that is there!
 This Aatman is not a person or entity; but the very nature of knowing.
 This only knows the world as divided.
 You through ignorance understand, husband, wife, children, mother, father, Vedas, gods, etc because 'Aatman the Knowledge essence' appears through you as the husband, wife etc. Aatman understands elements also and sees the world as filled with objects made of elements.
 It identifies with the closest perception called the body and imagines an ego.
 It falsely understands itself to be a perishing body; and so it believes that it perishes along with the body. It holds on to wealth and people for fear of death alone.
 Since in ignorance it knows only the imagined ego and its world, it loses its world based on this ego at the death of the body.
 If one moves away from the body and does not identify with it (by making the body non-existent or dead as an unreal conception), there is no imagination of the world anymore.
 He alone does not die along with the body, whose body is already dead through knowledge.

स यथा सैन्धवघनोऽनन्तरोऽबाहयः कृत्स्नो रसघन एव
 एवं वा अरेऽयमात्मानन्तरोऽबाहयः कृत्स्नः प्रज्ञानघन एव
 एतेभ्यो भूतेभ्यः समुत्थाय तान्येवानुविनश्यति
 न प्रेत्य संज्ञास्तीत्यरे ब्रवीमीति होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यः ॥ १३ ॥

*“A lump of salt is entirely dense with saltiness inside and outside; so also, my dearest, this Aatman (inner essence) is entirely dense with ‘knowledge awareness’ inside and outside.
 From these elements it rises (as separateness) (through ignorance) and (this separateness) is destroyed along with them (through knowledge).
 After departing from there, it has no awareness of that other one, my dear (as a limited consciousness).”*

Thus spoke Yaajnavalkya.

सा होवाच मैत्रेयी अत्रैव मा भगवान्मोहान्तमापीपिपत्
 न वा अहमिमं विजानामीति
 स होवाच न वा अरेऽहं मोहं ब्रवीमि
 अविनाशी वा अरेऽयमात्मानुच्छित्तिधर्मा ॥ १४ ॥

That Maitreyee said- "At this point my Lord, you have led me to the midst of confusion. I do not comprehend this at all."

He said-

"Hey Maitreyi my dear, I am not saying any confusing words at all. This Aatman is imperishable and by its very nature cannot be destroyed."

It is very simple Maitreyi! Reject all that which perish off, and remain identified with that which does not perish. That alone is the state of immortality!

यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति
 तदितर इतरं पश्यति
 तदितर इतरं जिघ्रति
 तदितर इतरं रसयते
 तदितर इतरमभिवदति
 तदितर इतरं शृणोति
 तदितर इतरं मनुते
 तदितर इतरं स्पृशति
 तदितर इतरं विजानाति

*"When there is duality as it were,
 then one sees the other;
 one smells the other;
 one tastes the other;
 one talks to the other;
 one hears the other;
 one thinks of the other;
 one touches the other;
 one recognizes the other.*

यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत्
 तत्केन कं पश्येत्
 तत्केन कं जिघ्रेत्
 तत्केन कं रसयेत्
 तत्केन कमभिवदेत्
 तत्केन कं शृणुयात्
 तत्केन कं मन्वीत्
 तत्केन कं स्पृशेत्
 तत्केन कं विजानीयात्
 येनेदं सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयात् ।

*“When to this one (the Knower of Aatman), everything is Aatman only,
 then with what will he see what,
 with what will he smell what,
 with what will he taste what,
 with what will he talk with whom,
 with what will he smell what,
 with what will he think what,
 with what will he touch what,
 with what will he recognize what?
 With what will he understand that (Brahman), by which alone one
 understands all this?*

स एष नेति नेत्यात्मा
 अगृह्यो न गृह्यते
 अशीर्यो न शीर्यते
 असङ्गो न सज्जते
 असितो न व्यथते न रिष्यति
 विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयात् ।

*“This Aatman has been described as ‘not this’ not this’.
 It is ungraspable and cannot be grasped.
 It is un-decaying and cannot decay.
 It is unattached and can never be attached to.
 It is unfettered; it never feels pain; it never gets injured.
 Hey dear one, who can know that by which one knows everything?*

इत्युक्तानुशासनासि मैत्रेयि
 एतावदरे खल्वमृतत्वमिति
 होक्त्वा याज्ञवल्क्यो विजहार ॥ १५ ॥

*Thus you have been given the instruction, Maitreyi.
 This alone my dear is the state of immortality.”*

Having spoken this much, Yaajnavalkya left.

Maitreyee also took to the life of contemplation and renounced all the wealth that was offered to her by her husband.
 What great wealth can be there other than the wealth of immortality?
 Great is the husband who can give immortality to a beloved wife. Great is the wife who has dispassion, and makes herself qualified for, such a precious gift.

इति पञ्चमं ब्राह्मणम् ॥

॥Fifth Braahmana section ॥

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Narayanalakshmi, also known as Tejaswini in her ascetic life spent most of her life in the Himalayan terrain, engaged in the penance of knowledge. She is well-versed in all philosophies and is a scholar in Sanskrit language. Her mission life is to retrieve the lost knowledge of the ancient Rishis and offer it unblemished to all the seekers of the Truth.