



## **Glory of Bharath** » **Atharva Vedic Upanishads -VIII**

### **Paramahansa Parivrajaka Upanishad**

This Upanishad is taught by Lord Narayana to Lord Brahma. It deals mainly with the procedure of taking sanyasa.

Once Lord Brahma approached his father Adi Narayana, the Supreme Being and paying obeisance asked him: Lord, from your mouth all things pertaining to the nature of castes and orders have been heard, known and grasped. Now I wish to know the characteristics of the Paramahansa mendicant monk. Who is entitled to renunciation? What are the characteristics of a mendicant monk? Who is a Paramahansa monk? How is his mendicancy? Pray expound to me all this. The Lord Adi Narayana then replied:

The person entitled to renunciation is the wise one who has undergone the difficult course of learning the sacred lore from a good preceptor; has understood all the exertion necessary for happiness in this world and the next; has understood the need to discard, as vomit, the three (primary) desires, the three primary inclinations (regard for the body, etc.), 'mine-ness' and egoism; has completed studentship in celibacy which is the means to reach the path of liberation and has become a householder. From the stage of a householder he shall become a forest-dweller (Vanaprastha) and then renounce worldly life.

Or alternately he may renounce from the stage of a celibate student or from the stage of a house-holder or a forest-dweller. Or, whether or not he is an observer of vows, has completed his course of study, has discontinued his fire-ritual or does not maintain the sacred fire, he shall renounce that very day on which he has become disillusioned with the world. Thus discontented with all worldly affairs, whether as a celibate student, house-holder or forest-dweller, he shall get the approval of his father, mother, wife, close kinsmen and in the absence of these, of a disciple or fellow-lodger and then renounce the world.

Some law-givers prescribe the sacrifice called Prajapatya (of which the god Brahma is the presiding deity, prior to a twice-born embracing renunciation). But (though thus prescribed) he may not do so. He shall only perform the sacrifice Agneyi (whose presiding deity is Agni, the god of fire). For Agni is the vital breath (Prana). Thereby he does strengthen the vital breath. Then he shall perform the Traidhataviya sacrifice (whose presiding deity is the god Indra). By this (sacrifice) the three vital fluids, namely the Sattva (semen), Rajas (blood) and Tamas (the dark one) become strong like fire.

Having procured the holy fire from the house of a well-versed Vedic scholar he shall smell the holy fire in the manner described previously. If he is afflicted by illness or does not get the holy fire, he shall offer the oblation in the waters. For, water is presided over by all the gods. Reciting, 'I offer the oblation to all gods, Svaha', he shall tender the oblation and picking up (a small portion of) the offered oblation which is mixed with ghee, he shall eat this, as it is beneficial.

A healthy person if desiring to renounce the world in the due order of the stages in life shall perform the shradha ceremony unto himself and the fire-ritual for ridding himself of passions (Viraja-homa). He shall infuse the ritual fire to be symbolically present in his person. His proficiency in the affairs of the world and Vedic learning as well as the fourteen means of action under his control (karanas) shall be transferred to his son (symbolically). In the absence of a son it shall be done to a disciple; in his absence it shall be transferred into his Atman.

He shall then meditate on Brahman as identical with his Self, pronouncing the words 'Brahman Thou (Art)', 'the sacrifice thou (Art)'. He shall then ceremoniously sip water keeping his attention on that (Pranava); pull out the tuft muttering the Pranava; snap the sacred thread; discard the garment too on the ground or in the waters; become unclad reciting the mantra 'Om Bhuh Svaha, Om Bhuvah Svaha and Om Svah Svaha'; meditate on his own form; again recite mentally or in speech the Pranava and the vyahritis separately and utter three times three the farewell words, 'I have renounced, I have renounced, I have renounced' in gentle, middling and sharp tones; deeply engage in meditation on the Pranava and raise his hand saying 'Freedom from fear to all from me, Svaha'. He shall then start for the north thinking over the meaning of great scriptural texts such as 'The Brahman I Am', 'That Thou Art' and proceed in the unclad state. This is renunciation.

If one is not entitled to this way of renunciation, he shall recite first the prayer of the house-holder and then the texts 'Freedom from fear to all beings, everything emanates from me, you are my friend and you guard me. You are the source of strength. You are the Vajra (weapon) of Indra which killed (the demon) Vritra. Be a blessing to me. Prevent that which is a sin'. Reciting this mantra preceded by the Pranava he shall take up the emblematic bamboo staff and water pot and wear the waist band, loin-cloth and a discolored (i.e. ochre coloured) garment; then approach a good Guru, bow to him and receive from the mouth of the Guru the great scriptural text 'That Thou Art', preceded by the Pranava. Then he shall wear a tattered garment or a bark-garment or a deer-skin; avoid a landing place at a river side (for bathing, to prevent mixing with crowds), moving up (a staircase), and getting alms from a single house.

He shall bathe during the three prescribed periods, listen to an exposition of the Vedanta and practice the Pranava; be well established in the path of realizing Brahman; merge his favourite desire in the Atman; become free of 'mine-ness' and get established in the Self; give up passion, anger, greed, delusion, intoxication, rivalry, false pride, pride, egotism, intolerance, arrogance, desires, hatred, gloating, impetuosity, 'mine-ness', etc.; possessed of wisdom and dispassion he shall turn away from wealth and women and possessing a pure mind he shall ponder over the truths of all the Upanishads; guard bestowing particular care his celibacy, non-possession, universe-injuring attitude and truthfulness; conquer his senses and be free from affection externally and internally; secure alms for sustaining the body, like a harmless

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cow, from members of the four castes excepting those who are accursed and fallen; such a person is considered worthy of realizing Brahman. He shall view with equanimity at gain or loss (of alms) at all times; eat food (secured as alms from many places) like a bee, using the hand as a vessel; not increase fat (but) become lean; feel that he is Brahman; approach a village for (serving the preceptor). He shall, steady in conduct, go about alone for eight months and shall not journey as two (i.e. with a companion).

When he has attained sufficient good sense (i.e. dispassion) he may become a Kutichaka or a Bahudaka or a Hamsa or a Paramahansa ascetic. Reciting the respective mantras he shall discard in the waters his waist-band, loin-cloth, staff and water vessel and move about unclad. He shall stay one night in a village, three nights in a holy place, five nights in a town and seven nights in a place of pilgrimage (Kshetra). He shall be without a (fixed) abode, be steady in mind, not resort to a fire-place (for warmth), be free from emotions, discard both rituals and non-rituals, receive alms for sustaining life alone with equanimity at its gain or loss in the manner of a cow, has his water vessel (only) in (the form of) a watering place and his residence in a solitary place free from trouble.

He shall not think of gain or loss but be interested in rooting out both good and bad actions; sleep always on the floor; discard shaving, give up the restriction of observing chaturmasya, interest himself deeply in pure meditation, be averse to wealth, women and city (life), behave like an insane person although perfectly sane, possess no distinguishing emblems or distinctive conduct, have no dreams as day and night are the same to him and be attentive to the path of deep meditation on Brahman in the form of Pranava in investigating on the nature of the Self. He who thus gives up his body by resorting to renunciation is the Paramahansa mendicant monk.

The god Brahma asked Narayana: Lord, what is Brahma-Pranava? Lord Narayana replied: The Brahma-Pranava consists of sixteen parts and it is cognized in quadruples in the four states (waking, etc.,). In the waking state there are the four states, waking within waking, etc., (jagrat-jagrat); in the dreaming state the four states are waking within dreaming, etc., (svapna-jagrat); in deep sleep there are the four states waking within deep sleep, etc., (susupti-jagrat); in the fourth state (turiya) there are the four states waking within the Turiya, etc., (turiya-jagrat). In the waking state of distributive pervasion (vyashti) there is quadruplicity of vishva, namely, vishva-vishva, vishva-taijasa, vishva-prajna and vishva-turiya. In the dreaming state of distributive pervasion there is quadruplicity of taijasa, namely taijasa-vishva, taijasa-taijasa, taijasa-prajna and taijasa-turiya. In the state of deep sleep of Prajna there is quadruplicity, namely prajna-vishva, prajna-taijasa, prajna-prajna and prajna-turiya. In the fourth state (turiya) there is the quadruplicity of the turiya, namely turiya-vishva, turiya-taijasa, turiya-prajna (and turiya-turiya).

These states in due order make up the sixteen parts. In the letter 'a' (of the Om - Aum) there is jagrat-vishva, in the letter 'u' jagrat-taijasa, in the letter 'm' jagrat-prajna, in the ardha-matra (of Om) jagrat-turiya, in the bindu svapna-vishva, in the nada svapna-taijasa, in the kala svapna-prajna, in the kalatita svapna-turiya, in the shanti susupta-vishva, in the shantyatita susupta-taijasa, in pashyanti turiya-prajna, in para turiya-turiya. The four parts of jagrat pertain to the letter 'a', the four parts of Svapna pertain to the letter 'u', the four parts of Susupti pertain to the letter 'm', the four parts of turiya pertain to the ardha-matra. This is the Brahma-Pranava. This is to be worshipped by the Paramahansa, Turiyatita and Avadhuta ascetics. By this Brahman is illumined. This is liberation in the disembodied state (Videha-mukti).

Lord, how is one without the sacred thread and tuft a person who has discarded all worldly activities? How he is solely devoted to absorption in Brahman? How is he a Brahmana? Thus the god Brahma asked Narayana. Lord Vishnu then replied: Oh child, he who has knowledge of the non-dual Atman has the real sacred thread (i.e. that knowledge itself is the sacred thread). His deep absorption in meditation is itself the tuft. This activity is (itself) the possession of the sanctifying ring of holy grass (pavitra). He does all actions, he is the Brahmana, he is deeply absorbed in Brahman, he is the illumined being (deva), he is the sage, he practices penance, he is the noblest, he is superior to all; know that he is I. In this world very rare is the mendicant monk who is a Paramahansa.

If there is one he is ever pure, he alone is the Purusha glorified in the Veda. He who is a great man (mahapurusha) has his mind resting in me. I too remain in him alone. He is the ever-satisfied. He is free from the effects of cold and heat, happiness and misery, honour and dishonour. He puts up with insult and anger. He is devoid of the six human infirmities (hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death), and is free from the six properties (of the body, birth, existence, change, growth, decay and death). He is without the intervention of (i.e. he is not circumscribed by) the state of elderliness or otherwise.

Excepting the Self he sees nothing else. Unclad, bowing to none, not uttering Svaha (as he worships no gods), not uttering Svadha (to propitiate the manes), without the need to send back (gods as they have not been invoked), free from blame and praise, not resorting to mantras and rituals, not meditating on other gods (than the supreme God), refraining from aims and their absence, with all activities ceased, firmly established in Consciousness consisting of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss, being conscious of the one supreme bliss, he ever meditates on the Brahma-Pranava (to the effect) that he is Brahman alone and thus fulfils himself; such a one is the Paramahansa mendicant monk. Thus ends the Upanishad.