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Narada - Parivrajaka Upanishad

This is the teaching of Narada to the Sounaka Sages. It discusses the methods to attain salvation, the rules to be followed by a Sanyasi, and the time when a person should enter Sanyasa. It also talks about Karma Sanyasa.

This Upanishad has nine chapters. Once Narada, the celestial sage came to the sacred Naimisha forest where sages always perform yajna. There Sounaka and the other sages greeted him and welcomed him after paying due respects. Although, they were well-instructed in spirituality, still they requested Narada to teach them the means of liberation from worldly bondage.

Narada replied, "The one born in a good family, when completes twelve years of life as Brahmachari and knowledge, then spending the 25 years as a householder and performing the duties of a Grihastha, spending another 25 years as a forest-dweller, performing his duties as a Vanaprasthi and after becoming free from all desires of thought, word and deed and latent desires becomes Sanyasi such a person becomes peaceful, self-controlled, liberated." This is the first Upadesha (teaching) of this Upanishad.

Then the venerable sages requested Narada to tell them about the mode of renunciation. For this, the celestial sage Narada said that it was better to know this truth from Brahma, his grandfather. After completing the yajna which they were performing, the sages along with Narada went to Satyaloka that is also known as Brahmaloaka. There Narada requested Lord Brahma to impart that knowledge.

Brahma, after hearing the request from Narada remained steady in deep meditation for a short time. He then told Narada that he would give that knowledge that was imparted to him by the Supreme Being or Virata Purusha in the form of Purusha Sukta hymn and the secret doctrine of the Upanishads. Brahma, after repeating what Narada had told the sages about the means of liberation said that when one becomes free from all desires, he becomes mature enough to embrace renunciation. This is the content of the Upadesha of the second chapter of this Upanishad.

Then, Narada asked Brahma as to who was entitled to renounce worldly life and what the mode of their life was. Brahma replied, "There are some who do not deserve to embrace Sanyasa. These include the eunuch, deformed and blind persons, one who is guilty of crime, and the one who has fallen from right conduct. A wise man renounces the world after completing the required procedure as per the Scriptures. Only when there is desirelessness, one should embrace Sanyasa.

Even in the stage of Brahmacharya, one can take Sanyasa, provided he has all his sense organs under his control. Such a person must live on alms, remove his tuft of hair along with the sacred thread, and possess an even mind in which the knowledge 'I am Brahman' is engraved. Such a person becomes an embodiment of peace, quiescence, purity, truth, contentment, straightforwardness. Such a person loves all in thought, word and deed. After discharging his duties with the ten virtues or right conduct namely, contentment, forgiveness, self-control, non-stealing, purity, control of senses, humility, scriptural learning, truth and temper and after studying Upanishads in the prescribed manner, one may renounce worldly life.

For such a person, the body experiences no pleasure or pain even when he is alive. He becomes the Paramahansa. He wears only a pair of loincloth, the patched garment. After giving up everything, he wanders alone. He abandons all faults like passion, anger, pride, greed, and delusion. He attains liberation when he is freed from pride, egotism, wickedness, cruelty, and when he possesses knowledge of the Self. In solitude, he meditates upon; he attains liberation when he is freed from pride, egotism, wickedness, cruelty, and when he possesses knowledge of the Self. In solitude, he meditates upon Brahman in thought, word and deed. He neither welcomes death nor rejoices.

This Upanishad then tells about the marks of such a Sanyasi who gets liberated. Again Narada asked Brahma as to how the being without a sacred thread could be a Brahmin and Brahma replied, "For a Sanyasi, the thread of indestructible, transcendental Brahman, the wisdom only has meaning, and not the external thread that he wears. He will maintain silence and the conduct of such a person will be incomprehensible to ordinary men." Then Brahma spoke about different kinds of ascetics and their nature, about meditating on the Superior Brahman and the ultimate liberation and cleared all the doubts lurking in the mind of Narada.

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