

The Urban Well

The Mercy Seminar 2023, Term 1

Reading 1.4

The Katha Upanishad

*May the Lord of Love protect us.
May the Lord of Love nourish us.
May the Lord of Love strengthen us.
May we realize the Lord of Love.
May we live with love for all;
May we live in peace with all.
OM shanti shanti shanti*

PART II

[1]

1 The self-existent Lord pierced the senses
To turn outward. Thus we look to the world
Without and see not the Self within us.
A sage withdrew his senses from the world
Of change and, seeking immortality,
Looked within and beheld the deathless Self.

2 The immature run after sense pleasures
And fall into the widespread net of death.
But the wise, knowing the Self as deathless,
Seek not the changeless in the world of change.

3 That through which one enjoys form, taste, smell,
sound,
Touch, and sexual union is the Self.
Can there be anything not known to That
Who is the One in all? Know One, know all.

4 That through which one enjoys the waking
And sleeping states is the Self. To know
That as consciousness is to go beyond sorrow.

5 Those who know the Self as enjoyer

Of the honey from the flowers of the senses,
Ever present within, ruler of time,
Go beyond fear. For this Self is supreme!

6 The god of creation, Brahma,
Born of the Godhead through meditation
Before the waters of life were created,
Who stands in the heart of every creature,
Is the Self indeed. For this Self is supreme!

7 The goddess of energy, Aditi,
Born of the Godhead through vitality,
Mother of all the cosmic forces,
Who stands in the heart of every creature,
Is the Self indeed. For this Self is supreme!

8 The god of fire, Agni, hidden between
Two firesticks like a child well protected
In the mother's womb, whom we adore
Every day in the depths of meditation,
Is the Self indeed. For this Self is supreme!

9 That which is the source of the sun
And of every power in the cosmos, beyond which
There is neither going nor coming,
Is the Self indeed. For this Self is supreme!

10 What is here is also there; what is there,
Also here. Who sees multiplicity
But not the one indivisible Self
Must wander on and on from death to death.

11 Only the one-pointed mind attains
This state of unity. There is no one
But the Self. Who sees multiplicity
But not the one indivisible Self
Must wander on and on from death to death.

12 That thumb-sized being enshrined in the heart,
Ruler of time, past and future,
To see whom is to go beyond all fear,
Is the Self indeed. For this Self is supreme!

13 That thumb-sized being, a flame without smoke,
Ruler of time, past and future,
The same on this day as on tomorrow,

Is the Self indeed. For this Self is supreme!

14 As the rain on a mountain peak runs off
The slopes on all sides, so those who see
Only the seeming multiplicity of life
Run after things on every side.

15 As pure water poured into pure water
Becomes the very same, so does the Self
Of the illumined man or woman, Nachiketa,
Verily become one with the Godhead.

[2]

1 There is a city with eleven gates
Of which the ruler is the unborn Self,
Whose light forever shines. They go beyond
Sorrow who meditate on the Self and
Are freed from the cycle of birth and death.
For this Self is supreme!

2 The Self is the sun shining in the sky,
The wind blowing in space; he is the fire
At the altar and in the home the guest;
He dwells in human beings, in gods, in truth,
And in the vast firmament; he is the fish
Born in water, the plant growing in the earth,
The river flowing down from the mountain.
For this Self is supreme!

3 The adorable one who is seated
In the heart rules the breath of life.
Unto him all the senses pay their homage.

4 When the dweller in the body breaks out
In freedom from the bonds of flesh,
What remains? For this Self is supreme!

5 We live not by the breath that flows in
And flows out, but by him who causes the breath
To flow in and flow out.

6 Now, O Nachiketa, I will tell you
Of this unseen, eternal Brahman, and
What befalls the Self after death.

7 Of those

Unaware of the Self, some are born as
Embodied creatures while others remain
In a lower stage of evolution,
As determined by their own need for growth.

8 That which is awake even in our sleep,
Giving form in dreams to the objects of
Sense craving, that indeed is pure light,
Brahman the immortal, who contains all
The cosmos, and beyond whom none can go.
For this Self is supreme!

9 As the same fire assumes different shapes
When it consumes objects differing in shape,
So does the one Self take the shape
Of every creature in whom he is present.

10 As the same air assumes different shapes
When it enters objects differing in shape,
So does the one Self take the shape
Of every creature in whom he is present.

11 As the sun, who is the eye of the world,
Cannot be tainted by the defects in our eyes
Or by the objects it looks on,
So the one Self, dwelling in all, cannot
Be tainted by the evils of the world.
For this Self transcends all!

12 The ruler supreme, inner Self of all,
Multiplies his oneness into many.
Eternal joy is theirs who see the Self
In their own hearts. To none else does it come!

13 Changeless amidst the things that pass away,
Pure consciousness in all who are conscious,
The One answers the prayers of many.
Eternal peace is theirs who see the Self
In their own hearts. To none else does it come!

NACHIKETA

14 How can I know that blissful Self, supreme,
Inexpressible, realized by the wise?
Is he the light, or does he reflect light?

YAMA

15 There shines not the sun, neither moon nor star,
 Nor flash of lightning, nor fire lit on earth.
 The Self is the light reflected by all.
 He shining, everything shines after him.

[3]

1 The Tree of Eternity has its roots above
 And its branches on earth below.
 Its pure root is Brahman the immortal,
 From whom all the worlds draw their life, and whom
 None can transcend. For this Self is supreme!

2 The cosmos comes forth from Brahman and moves
 In him. With his power it reverberates,
 Like thunder crashing in the sky. Those who
 Realize him pass beyond the sway of death.

3 In fear of him fire burns; in fear of him
 The sun shines, the clouds rain, and the winds blow.
 In fear of him death stalks about to kill.

4 If one fails to realize Brahman in this life
 Before the physical sheath is shed,
 He must again put on a body
 In the world of embodied creatures.

5 Brahman can be seen, as in a mirror,
 In a pure heart; in the world of the ancestors
 As in a dream; in the *gandharva* world
 As the reflections in trembling waters;
 And clear as light in the realm of Brahma.

6 Knowing the senses to be separate
 From the Self, and the sense experience
 To be fleeting, the wise grieve no more.

7 Above the senses is the mind, above
 The mind is the intellect, above that
 Is the ego, and above the ego
 Is the unmanifested Cause.

8 And beyond is Brahman, omnipresent,
 Attributeless. Realizing him one is released
 From the cycle of birth and death.

9 He is formless, and can never be seen
 With these two eyes. But he reveals himself
 In the heart made pure through meditation
 And sense-restraint. Realizing him, one is
 Released from the cycle of birth and death.

10 When the five senses are stilled, when the mind
 Is stilled, when the intellect is stilled,
 That is called the highest state by the wise.

11 They say yoga is this complete stillness
 In which one enters the unitive state,
 Never to become separate again.
 If one is not established in this state,
 The sense of unity will come and go.

12 The unitive state cannot be attained
 Through words or thoughts or through the eye.
 How can it be attained except through one
 Who is established in this state oneself?

13 There are two selves, the separate ego
 And the indivisible *Atman*. When
 One rises above I and me and mine,
 The *Atman* is revealed as one's real Self.

14 When all desires that surge in the heart
 Are renounced, the mortal becomes immortal.

15 When all the knots that strangle the heart
 Are loosened, the mortal becomes immortal.
 This sums up the teaching of the scriptures.

16 From the heart there radiate a hundred
 And one vital tracks. One of them rises
 To the crown of the head. This way leads
 To immortality, the others to death.

17 The Lord of Love, not larger than the thumb,
 Is ever enshrined in the hearts of all.
 Draw him clear out of the physical sheath,
 As one draws the stalk from the *munja* grass.
 Know thyself to be pure and immortal!
 Know thyself to be pure and immortal!

THE NARRATOR

Nachiketa learned from the king of death
The whole discipline of meditation.
Freeing himself from all separateness,
He won immortality in Brahman.
So blessed is everyone who knows the Self!

OM shanti shanti shanti