



Enlightened Knowledge: Attainment of Happiness through a Reading of the Upanishads

Dr. Laxmi Saha

Assistant Professor, Philosophy
Vijaygarh Jyotish Ray College

Abstract

In the present age, true peace and happiness are lacking among people. People are busy searching for happiness in the material world and the abundance of this material world makes people more impatient. Thinking that material things and happiness are the same, people chase after this ever-changing material world and are destroying peace of mind. On the other hand, ignoring all the ultimate and eternal truths, people end up in a maze of lies. The knowledge that the source of true happiness and peace lies within the heart remains intact in Indian philosophy but has been forgotten by people. The reason for this surprise is not being able to distinguish between good (Shreya) and bad (Preya). The explanation of Shreya and Preya in the Upanishads states that Preya is governed by a narrow view whereas Shreya is motivated by a wide view. Focusing on all these problems of the human world, my attempt in this article is to give a complete explanation and discussion of how the problems of the people of the present age can be solved through the accumulated wisdom of Sanatana-Jnana and Upanishads.

Keywords: Upanishads, morality, peace, ethics, human lives, material world and happiness

Introduction

The true meaning and purpose of life can be found through the words spoken in the Upanishads. Solutions to various problems closely related to life in the present society can also be found through the words spoken in the Upanishads. Through the knowledge described in the Upanishads, the path on which people can choose the best way of life leads to happiness.

Indian civilization emerged from the Tapavans and the only way out of the downward trend of modern civilization in the developed world is through Indian religion, civilization, and culture. It is within this that peace can be found.

Upanishads are a storehouse of knowledge from which the corrupt image of present life can be softened. Rammohan Roy felt that the reading of Upanishads was necessary not only for the monks but also for the householders because the knowledge of the Upanishads established national and social unity in the minds of people. The Upanishads never command renunciation or asceticism. In the Upanishads, it is said to maintain

harmony between renunciation and enjoyment i.e., to control the senses without completely abandoning the attachment to the object of the senses so that man can determine the difference between 'Shreya' and 'Preya' and to take good (Shreya) as the goal of life. Only through this path can people experience immense happiness in the present age. If man can control his senses, then only all the problems can be removed and life becomes beautiful if there is harmony between enjoyment and sacrifice in life. Living according to the instructions of the Upanishads leads to satisfaction in human life, which is the source of all happiness.

Another significant aspect of the Upanishads is that the Upanishads resolve the conflict between interest and altruism with the help of the development of the inner self. The Upanishads say that when the same infinite Being exists in everything in the world, then all in the world are related to all. Such a sense of integrity can spread love in the hearts of all. If this sense of integrity can be awakened in people's lives in the present era, then it is possible to establish happiness instead of interests in society. (Sen, 2018)

Vivekananda said that the first sign of Dharma Sadhana is the elimination of fear. In the Bhagavad Gita, we find that Sri Bhagavan instructs Arjuna to avoid the climb and become empty, citing the immortality of the soul. This same advice applies to every human being in the life of the world and it is also applicable to every human being in the present modern life. If fear is not removed, there is inferiority in human life which destroys happiness and peace.

Upanishads and the source of peace and happiness

In the Katha Upanishad, it is realized that if one realizes the true reality of truth, the best path, then absolute peace emerges in one's life. In the story of Katha Upanishad, a young boy, Nachiketa wanted to learn the knowledge of the true self instead of having all the pleasures of material world. Thus Nachiketa, even as a boy, chooses Shreya, the right and enlightened path and when this is attained, even an ordinary man becomes a true man and he becomes Shreya.

In the story told in the Katha Upanishad, when a 10-year-old boy named Nachiketa received three boons from Yamaraja and on the third boon Nachiketa tried to achieve self-knowledge in the form of moksha sadhana, Yamaraja told Nachiketa that this self-knowledge is a very subtle and difficult thing. Therefore, it would be better for Nachiketa if he wants some other things which are easy to understand and can give pleasure too. When Nachiketa did not agree, Yamaraj tried to tempt him in various ways. It is said in verse 23 of the first chapter of Kathopanishad-

śatāyusaḥ putrapautrānvr̥ṇīṣvā bahūnpaśūnhastihiraṇyamaśvān |

bhūmermahadāyatanaṃ vr̥ṇīṣva svayaṃ ca jīva śarado yāvadicchasi || (Kathapanishad,1.1.23)

That is, here Yamaraja wanted to give Nachiketa a hundred years, sons, cows, cattle, elephants, horses, etc. vehicles, gold, and a vast kingdom, i.e. all the means of enjoyment of worldly happiness, and to enjoy this forever, Yamaraja wanted to give long life to Nachiketa.

Verse 24 of the Upanishad says-

etattulyaṃ yadi manyase varaṃ vr̥ṇīṣva vittaṃ ciraḥvikaṃ ca /

mahābhūmau naciketastvamedhi kāmānāṃ tvā kāmabhājaṃ karomi || (Kathapanishad, 1.1.24)

Yamaraja wanted to give Nachiketa great wealth, hereditary means of livelihood, royal rights over vast territories, and all heavenly and earthly blessings. But in reply to all this Nachiketa who appeared said-

śvobhāvā martyasya yadantakaitatsarveṃdriyāṇāṃ jarayaṃti tejaḥ |

api sarvaṃ jīvitamalpameva tavaiva vāhāstava nṛtyagīte || (kathapanishad, 1.1.26)

Nachiketa told Yamaraja that all the consumables he wanted to give to Nachiketa were temporary. They destroy the sense of power of man and the long life that is said to be attained is also very short compared to eternity according to Nachiketa so he does not want to be entitled to any kind of sense of happiness and material gain.

Therefore, what is realized through the conversation between Nachiketa and Yamaraja, compared to self-knowledge, all the means of happiness and sense gratifications derived from it are transitory and they may not exist in future. Self-knowledge is more necessary to get self-realization.

In present society also if people search for the supreme good, the highest good, or the Shreya instead of the trivial material things people will get the peace from within. The main thing is to choose the right thing or the right path so that true happiness can be felt even with less. The true meaning and purpose of life can be found through the words spoken in the Upanishads. Solutions to various problems closely related to life in the present society can also be found through the words spoken in the Upanishads. Through the knowledge described in the Upanishads, people can choose the best lives for themselves. (press,2019)

In this way, if ordinary people ignore trivial worldly things and follow the ultimate truth as the path of life, then only real happiness and peace can be found. But in today's age, people give more importance to the best and the dearest, so they do not find real peace. Mental and spiritual happiness is the source of peace rather than the happiness of the material world.

Through the knowledge of Upanishads, not only information is obtained, but through it, man finds the real purpose of life. Also, people realize that the source of real happiness and peace is not extraterrestrial. Such knowledge can bring eternal peace in human life and depressed and disoriented people can find the real meaning of life.

On the other hand, in the dialogue between Maitreyi and Yajnavalkya in the second chapter of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, we find the teachings of Atmatattva and Amritattva, which are obtained by ignoring the happiness of the material world. The knowledge gained through these conversations can bring the message of true peace to the lives of ordinary people.

maitreyīti hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ, udyāsyānvā are'hamasmātssthānādasmi, hanta te'nayā kātyāyanyāntaṃ karavāṇīti || (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 2.4.1)

Yajnavalkya once renounced his domestic life and aspired to the life of an ashram, telling his wife Maitri that he would divide all his property between his two wives, Maitri and Katyayana.

Maitreyi asks Yajnavalkya that if the world is filled with wealth, can immortality be attained through that wealth? In reply, Yajnavalkya said that it is not possible to obtain Amrit Tattva through money, then Maitri said-

sa hovāca maitreyī, yenāhaṃ nāmṛtā syāṃ kimahaṃ tena kuryām? yadeva bhagavānveda tadeva me brūhīti || (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 2.4.3)

Maitri said that the things by which she will not attain immortality were of no use for her, rather she prayed to Yajnavalkya for the means of attaining immortality.

Yajnavalkya told Maitreyi in reply to this - all the things that are in the world are not loved because of love for those things, those things are loved only for self-love. Husband, wife son, wealth, Brahmin Kshatriya everything seems dear to self-love. Therefore, it is better to see the Atman itself and the duty is to listen to it, meditate on it, and do nididhyasana if one desires to attain true peace.

Through this dialogue of Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi, one can gain knowledge about the real purpose of life. Its relevance is still present in the present era. The desire for worldly pleasures is at the root of the discontent and despair among people in the present age. The things in which people seek satisfaction and peace are incapable of providing them. Because all the instruments of sense happiness seek to subjugate the senses and limit them to a small extent. If man ignores this small area of desire like Maitreyi did and rushed towards self-realization, then the establishment of real peace in the human mind becomes possible. This idea of Brihadaranyak helps one to transcend one's smallness to shine the light of Brahman, where one attains peace in one's unsatisfied life. (Press, 2019)

The words of Isha Upanishad help to realize the impermanence and truth of life, through which only true peace can be found. The true nature of life is realized in the very first verse of the Ish Upanishad.

īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyām jagat |

tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasya sviddhanam || (Isha Upanishad, 1.1)

Through the verse it is expressed that this ever moving and moving universe is only an expression of an immovable entity called God. So, man must see God in all things, and realize that nothing exists independent of God's being. If this kind of feeling occurs only then no attachment or infatuation will arise for any object in

the world. And naturally, non-attachment will arise in the human mind. A man's heart will be filled with dispassion and thus he will be free, because if instead of renunciation, there is infatuation and attachment in life, only then sorrow, misery, and turmoil will come into man's life. A person without addiction is free and free from disillusionment. He who enjoys the world in this way attains supreme bliss in a short time. The meaning of 'tyakten bhunjeetha' mentioned in the sloka means one should enjoy everything in this world by renunciation. And one should not gain a lot of wealth, whether it is one's own or another's. Even in the present society, people can realize bliss only if they can live a life of scarcity through renunciation by renouncing greed for property, money, and wealth. (press, 2019)

A verse mentioned in the second volume of the Kena Upanishad tells how the nectar of life can be obtained.

pratibodhaviditaṃ matamamṛtatvaṃ hi vindate /

ātmanā vindate vīryaṃ vidyayā vindate'mṛtam //(Kena Upanishad, 2.12)

Here it is said that the real knowledge comes through the knowledge of Brahman i.e. knowing Brahman one gets Samyak drishti (right vision) and one who has Samyak jnana (right knowledge) can attain immortality. The wise man perceives the soul as the manifestation of his every sense. There is the existence of the soul as an integral indestructible which is the revealer of all the knowledge of the individual. Thus, the realization of the soul with its true nature is true knowledge. Through this, one learns to experience Brahman with every worldly object, thus life becomes Brahman, and man can rise above the suffering, ignorance, and delusional worldly life and attain immortal life.

In the same way, if every common man realizes the soul as the more manifest of all this worldly knowledge or sense or nature, i.e., if he wanders in the world knowing the soul as the seer behind every object, then his right vision arises, that is, true knowledge is born. This true knowledge will help man to realize that his soul is the Supreme Soul and through this realization, man will feel oneness with all the worlds and all living beings and he will rise above happiness and sorrow, strife, and death, and attain immortal, blissful, free divine life. This is called getting nectar. As the source of all the senses of the living being, knowledge of Brahman is the real nectar of life. (press, 2019)

Mundaka Upanishad verse 9 states that after getting the real knowledge of Brahman a saint becomes an egoless being, his self-conceit is removed, all doubts in the mind are removed and all karmas due to lustful disorders are reduced.

bhidyate hr̥dayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ /

kṣīyante cāsyā karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare | (Mundaka Upanishad, 2.2.8)

That is, if Brahma can be known in the form of a soul, then the delusion that ‘I am the master of everything’ is removed. Knowing himself to be the doer of all actions, a person sinks into self-conceit and his heart is filled with pride. By knowing Brahma as the doer of all actions, that pride is removed. The doubt that exists in everyone's mind about the realization of self is also removed when Brahman is realized. Apart from this, when one gets the direct knowledge of Brahman, one's lustful actions are reduced.

With this knowledge of Mundaka Upanishad, ordinary people like saints can transcend the small limits and pass into the infinite. If the common man can realize Brahman within himself, then the individual's self-conceit is first removed. After knowing Brahman, one realizes that he is not the master of all actions, his inner self is full of the lights of Brahman, i.e., the existence of one entity above all with which he is identical therefore the Brahman occupies the place of arrogance, the light of Brahman and the individual get connected with the infinite. At the same time, the doubt about the knowledge of Atmatattva, which is especially in the minds of the common man, i.e. the doubt whether it is possible to attain Atmatattva is also removed and the individual is united with the Supreme Being and as a result the desires which the common man is engrossed in, all his actions are usually driven by those desires can get extinguished. (Press, 2019)

Verse 28 of the first chapter of the third section of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads describes the act of chanting, by which the saint and the common man can reach the nectar of life.

asato mā sadgamaya, tamaso mā jyotirgamaya, mṛtyormāmṛtaṁ gamayeti.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 1.3.28)

Lead me from the unreal to the real

Lead me from darkness to light

Lead me from death to immortality

The first line contains a prayer to take us from untruth to truth, i.e. death is said to be unwholesome so that the supplicant may pass from there to righteous nectar. The second line contains the prayer to be taken from darkness to light as darkness is dead and Jyoti is the light of Amrita. Therefore, the supplicant may pass from the world of darkness to the world of light, and the third line contains the prayer to be taken from death to light, i.e. the supplicant wishes to reach the light of absolute. (Press, 2019)

Now if such a prayer is regularly practiced by the common man of the present society, then his inner soul also becomes enlightened because the lust and desire for worldly wealth is darkness, and leading life with material things only is a life of darkness too. If man can realize that he transcends the life of physical pleasures and rises to the ultimate reality, then he too will be able to find true peace within himself.

Conclusion

Therefore, the words of the Upanishads are eternal truth. The Upanishads give the knowledge to form a perfect enlightened life. The Upanishads instruct us to connect with the Brahman through knowledge, action, and devotion, which has been observed in the lives of Rabindranath Tagore, Rammohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo.

Rabindranath's social thoughts, educational thoughts, religious thoughts, and personal being are influenced by the light of knowledge of the Upanishads. His poetry 'Naivedya' 'Gitanjali' etc. and prose works like 'Manusher Dharma', 'Dharma', 'Santiniketan' etc. are characterized by religious consciousness containing the light of the knowledge of Upanishad. we get in Vivekanandada's writing "So I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads and of the Upanishads. The quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta and all lies in that one word..." (Complete works of swami Vivekananda, vol-8, p.267). So, the knowledge of Upanishads helps people to get rid of their sufferings and gives a source of happy lives with morality and ethics. People can be enlightened from within with the words of the Upanishads and get a stable life with minimum requirements. In present days also people need the knowledge of absolute reality to feel their reality so that they can get connected with the lights of the supreme being which is the only source of peaceful life.

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