

SUMMARY OF PRASNA UPANISAD

- N. Avinashilingam

SHANTI MANTRA: Shanti mantra is chanted by the students as a prayer seeking a healthy body and a co-operative mind to pursue the study of Brahman.

INTRODUCTION: Prasna Upanisad appears in brahmana portion of Atharva Veda. It is an explanation of Mundaka Upanisad that appears in mantra portion of Atharva Veda. Six students who had done upasana on saguna Brahman approached the Teacher Pippalada with samit in their hands. The Teacher asked them to stay in his Gurukulam for one year by observing brahmacharya and tapas and with sraddha. He told the students that he would answer their questions after one year, if he knew the answer.

PRASNA 1: After one year, Kabandhi, great grandson of Katya asked the Teacher Pippalada, who is the cause of the srusti? The Teacher answered that Prajapathi is the cause of the srusti. Prajapathi made mithuna srusti of rayi (food) and prana (eater). Then he made loka srusti, kala srusti, anna srusti and praja srusti. Those who follow dharma and live a life of tapas would be blessed with comfortable life here and hereafter.

PRASNA 2: After that, Bhargava Vaidarbhi asked the Teacher Pippalada which Devatas sustain the body. Who among them talk of their glory? Which Devata is the greatest? The Teacher answered that 24 Devatas sustain the body. They are 5 karma indriyas, 5 jnana indriyas, 5 pranas, 4 antahkaranas and 5 elements (panca bhutas). All the Devatas talk of their glory. But Prana is the greatest Devata. Prana pretended to leave the body. All the Devatas understood that they cannot survive without Prana. They praised Prana. They prayed to Prana to protect them like a Mother protecting her child.

PRASNA 3: Then Kausalya, son of Asvala asked the Teacher Pippalada what is the cause of Prana. How vyasti prana enter the body? How prana depart from the body? How prana divides itself and dwell in the body? The Teacher replied that para Atma is the cause of Prana. Due to sankalpa and karma phala, Prana enters the body. Like a King employing Officials in charge of certain villages, Prana made other pranas like apana, samana, vyana and udana incharge of certain functions while retaining some functions for itself. Prana in association with udana on the basis of the last thought of a departing person lead him to next birth. The benefit of doing prana upasana is krama mukthi. His progeny will continue.

PRASNA 4: After that, Gargyah, grandson of Surya asked the Teacher Pippalada, which indriyas do not function during dream? Which indriyas function during dream? Who experience the dream? Who experience happiness during deep sleep? What is the adistanam for everything?

The Teacher replied that during dream, 5 karma indriyas and 5 jnana indriyas do not function. During dream 5 pranas and mind function. Mind experience the dream on the basis of earlier perception. Prajna experience the happiness as a result of karma phala. Para atma is the adistanam. Everything resolves in para atma. The one, who gets this para atma jnana, identifies himself with Para atma.

PRASNA 5: Then Satyakama son of Sibi asked the Teacher Pippalada what phala is there for meditating on the first letter of Om. The Teacher replied that he will have next birth as a human being endowed with tapas and sraddha and enjoy manusya ananda. The student asked what phala is there for meditating on the second letter of Om. The Teacher replied that he will go to deva loka and enjoy deva ananda for some time and will be reborn in this world. The student asked what phala is there for meditating on Om. The Teacher replied that he will go to brahma loka and get krama mukthi.

PRASNA 6: After that Sukesa son of Bharadvaja asked the Teacher Pippalada where is sodasa kala purusha. The Teacher replied that he is everywhere and he is also in the body. He said nirguna Brahman is sodasa kala purusha. All rivers get absorbed in the sea and lose their name and form. Similarly jiva on getting brahma jnana resolves everything in Brahman.

CONCLUSION: Upasana is a means to neutralise habitual wrong thinking about tat pada and tvam pada. This Upanisad uses adhyaropa apavada method to teach. Finally the Teacher said that he had taught all about Brahman and beyond that there is nothing else to be known. The students thanked the Teacher for helping them cross the ocean of ignorance. They did namaskar to the Teacher.