

Kathopanishad

Shibir 5 Summary

Pravachan 2 (25.8.22)

Please Note: This is an English summary of the pravachan by a seeker, Rimaben Dhanky and has been uploaded here for the benefit of the English reader.

In the second shlok, we learned that Rishi says, “O God, may the Nachiketa fire sacrifice that represents all auspicious rituals act as a bridge that connects to the soul.” However, these rituals may or may not bring about liberation, they can also be the cause of transmigration; hence this prayer. The auspicious karma should become a reason for the connection with the pure self and not of transmigration. Right now, you have the capacity to only do good activities, and not remain in a pure state and perform pure acts. But may your good karma lead you to pure karma.

The Enlightened One divides auspicious in three ways. 1. Activity - kriya 2. Devotion - bhakti 3. Contemplation - vichar. Kriya includes good activities like seva, charity, etc. Bhakti includes devotion towards God and Guru. Vichar - contemplation, includes subtle thoughts of discrimination between self and non-self.

This shubh upayog - auspicious alertness/knowledge is divided into two parts. 1. Satsishay - will certainly attain the self. 2. Niratishay - will not attain the self till it becomes satsishay. The one who has auspicious satsishay attains a pure nature of the soul, attains samyag darshan, and attains moksha. Till you do not have satsishay upyog, you cannot succeed to attain liberation, you can attain heaven. Your meritorious karma are such in satsang that you will get a chance to go to the satsang and nowhere else. The one who has niratishay shubh upyog can attain samyag darshan in the future once it becomes satsishay. You should aim for satsishay only. You should not get stuck in good activities.

The soul has shubh upyog. He has an attachment towards the Dispassionate (prashasta raag). His passions are very weak now. But shubh or auspicious means attachment. Upayog means knowledge or alertness. If you go towards satsishay, you can attain self-realisation. You need to overcome your attachment and make your knowledge more powerful to go towards satsishay.

The Enlightened One is not always abiding in the pure mode, but even when He is doing some good or auspicious work, His consciousness remains in the thoughtless state. The soul cannot even tolerate the noise of 'I am a soul'. The Enlightened One's shubh bhaav- auspicious mode is satishay, so even while doing auspicious activities, He slips into His inner silence or goes beyond thought. Do not forget the soul while doing any good work.

There is no need to do sammurchchhim kriya - When you are doing any rituals out of your family tradition without an aim. You can make your sammurchchhim kriya amrut kriya - This is to get rid of impure feelings right now and abide in the self. You need a strong emotion or a strong thought process. Practice connecting with the pure soul. The person with satishay upyog can attain the pure nature of the soul. O God, please bless us that our activities become a bridge.

You should leave the blind attachment for your means too. On 10th August 1958, the USA sent a rocket to the moon at the expense of millions of dollars. But within 77 seconds, it was uncontrollable. They decided to destroy it. It had involved years of effort and millions of dollars. But when they realised that the means that they have made is not going towards their aim, they decided to destroy it within a moment. If your Guru asks you not to fast and still, you continue fasting, you are having blind attachment to your means. You must understand that your welfare is in following His command.

Now there is a sudden turn. The path of spiritual practice is to go from the lower self to the higher self. Now there is no more philosophy in the next few shloks. It is better to pay the price of discipline than to remain a self-willed person. You must live the life of beneficial Shreyas. Shlok 3 and shlok 4 are explained through a metaphor of a chariot, where the whole journey is beautifully explained from the lower self to the higher self. This metaphor is found in many scriptures including Bhagavad Gita. 10 shloks of Kathopanishad are repeated in Bhagavad Gita too.

You can find the metaphor of the chariot in Buddhism and Greek literature also. Why is the example of the chariot given? In those days, cars were not invented, people were used to seeing chariots, and chariots were widely used by everyone. The Rishi is very practical, so he is trying to explain the unknown thing through a known example. A picture is worth a thousand words.

Shlok 3:

Know the Atman as the lord of the chariot, who sits within it and the body as the chariot. Know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as, verily, the reins.

Shlok 4:

The senses (and the instincts) they say, are the horses, and their roads are the sense objects. The wise call Him the enjoyer (when He is) united with the body, the sense, and the mind.

Here chariot is the physical or gross body. Rathinam is the owner, possessor, or passenger of the chariot. He is jivatma - contaminated soul. Five horses are five sense organs. Our five sense organs are touch, taste, smell, see, and hear. Our five motor organs are hands, feet, speech, excretory and reproductive organs. Today we will only think about sense organs. The rein represents the mind. The charioteer is your intellect. Roads on which the chariot is running represents the world of sense objects.

The chariot is your gross body. The example of the chariot is an apt example for the human being, who has five senses. It is an apt example of a spiritual journey. The horses are always running here and there when they are not tied. Your sense organs are also opening outside, they are extroverted, and they keep wandering outside. The name of these horses is touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. All these senses have a choice. Some horses- people only want to see the dance to see beautiful girls or good costumes. Some horses- people only want good music. This way all the five horses have their own choices and they run in that direction. They want to indulge in their sense object. It is difficult for a charioteer- intellect to control these horses. You need these horses - five senses to know the world, if you do not have them, you will have no knowledge of the world. These senses give you knowledge of the world.

Rein is a unique thing, in which one end is connected to the horses and the other one is connected to the charioteer. There is only one rein for five horses. Actually, the mind functions in ten organs. The mind is only getting indulged in something or the other. You do not know whom to control- the horses- five senses or intellect.

The charioteer is your intellect. The mind is a faculty of many volitions and irresolutions, thoughts, emotions, and perceptions. The intellect is the faculty for analysing, evaluating, and decision making.

You are seeing a boy for your daughter. The boy may be very nice, very rich, educated, etc. but he always remains confused. In this case, your daughter should not get married to this confused person, as he will never be able to make decisions on his own. If your intellect is weak, nothing can be done, you will have to stay with the Guru. You must have clear priorities. The intellect will help you in controlling the senses.

If the intellect is confused, you will become miserable. Your intellect needs to be very strong. You cannot move ahead without an intellect. The mind keeps having various volitions and irresolutions and thoughts. But the intellect decides on one thought. This way, there might be clashes between the mind and the intellect and if your intellect is not sharp, you will have problems at every junction.

Strengthen your intellect by satsang. The mind is always impulsive, the intellect needs to be clear. It must have clarity and confidence. If you have to get out of your comfort zone, you need intellect. Your intellect should be clear, then if your mind is doing a drama, you will be able to manage it.

You must understand the functions of the mind and intellect. The intellect always wants one decision after analysis. Your horses of the chariot - your senses get extroverted and enjoy sense objects. The charioteer for the new horses - the beginner on a spiritual path does not flow with the flow. It disciplines the horses- senses, it also disciplines the mind. You must have restraint and discipline. When your senses are extroverted, they enjoy the sense objects, at that time, as a charioteer- intellect has to use its rein and go in the right direction, the senses should go within to have an inward focus. These are the only options, you have to decide which direction you want to go. The driver or a charioteer or intellect cannot be deaf or blind.

If a driver is drunk, your chariot or car will fall into a pit, it will never reach its destination. Do you want to keep your senses extroverted or do you want an inward focus? The intellect should have discernment and knowledge. If you do not have this clarity and confidence, your chariot is in danger. You need the growth of your intellect.

Your mind will not cooperate in the beginning. The intellect should discipline the mind. If you have discernment, you will be able to go on the beneficial path- Shreya marg. If you do not have discernment, you will not be able to walk on the path of spirituality and you will go on the path of pleasure- Preya marg. If your son is on the path of pleasure and not on the path of spirituality, do not mention his name in front of your Guru even if he is very 'smart', 'intelligent', and is 'earning well'. In the supreme path, his value is zero. The person who decides to annihilate his transmigration will get marks from the Guru. As parents, you should play your role and keep quiet. Do not remain unaware, at the same time, do not dominate over him. Your role should have started when your child was 1 year old. By the time, your child is 7 years old, 70% of his dhancha- model is ready, and you send him to good schools or universities only for 30% of the work.

Whipping the horses is not the right way. With whipping the horse might get controlled temporarily, but it will get up again at double speed like a spring. Do you want to be discerning and go towards the true nature of the soul or do you want to become non-restrained and go on the path of sense objects? If your intellect is confused, your mind will not get proper instructions, the horses- senses will become wild, and you will fall in a pit. Such a contaminated soul- jivatma is an enjoyer.

Jivatma or contaminated soul means pure soul plus oneness in the special characteristics – upadhi, then it becomes a limited soul- simit atma. He feels that he is confined to the body and mind. He thinks that he is the body. He has the feeling of me and mine in all the external substances. He thinks that the senses belong to him and he is the doer and enjoyer of all the sensual pleasures. This is the reason why jivatma is labelled as 'bhokta' or enjoyer. He is the doer of the bondage of his karma too.

But the pure entity is a non-doer and non-enjoyer. You are not the doer or enjoyer of your constant nature. You are the pure consciousness. The crystal is a non-doer, but when a red flower is kept along with the crystal, you feel that it is red.

The Enlightened One believes that He is detached, non-doer, and non-enjoyer. He does not think that He is the master, He thinks that He is the passenger of the taxi, where He gets down after playing His role perfectly. He is asansari – non-worldly, adehi – beyond the body, He does not have attachment with the body, and avyavahari

– not engrossed into worldly matters, He does not get controlled by His mind or instincts.

The support of your shreya- beneficial and preya- pleasurable is your intellect. The roads do not need to be smooth. The Enlightened One walks on the same road and His intellect is in the right direction. Your intellect as an ignorant person is not in the right direction. The roads, horses, rein, or chariot are not responsible for your fall, the charioteer is responsible for it.

Shlok 5:

One who is always of unrestrained mind and devoid of right understanding, his sense organs become uncontrollable like the vicious horses of a charioteer.

This shlok is for a person who is non-discerning. The next shlok is for the discerning person. Here two words need to be understood - avijnanvan and ayuktena. Avjnanvan is not wise and not knowledgeable. Ayuktena is not united with his intellect and is unrestrained.

If the charioteer is not good, the horses will be uncontrollable. The Enlightened One teaches the philosophy and implementation of that philosophy. Upanishad is known for its shortness and completeness (laghavta). Param Krupalu Dev has said, “Je pame te panth”- The way it is attained is the path. This is so short but still, so complete.

When you have avijnanta, you are not wise and alert. You do not have spiritual knowledge, you are not able to discriminate between shreya and preya. If you do not become wise and knowledgeable, you cannot make decisions. Someone asked J. Krishnamurthy, “Should I get married?” He said, “No”. When asked why, he added, “If you do not get married to the world’s most beautiful lady, your mind will wander.” The person asked, “What will happen if I get married to the most beautiful lady?” Krishnamurthy said, “Her mind will wander.”

Your intellect has to be sharp. The verse of Shri Atmasiddhi Shastra says,

Swachhand, mat agra taji, varte Sadgurulaksh
Samkit tene bhakhiyu, karan gani pratyaksh. [17]

The person who follows the preachings of the Enlightened Mentor and gives up swachhand etc., in supporting his wrong views, He is said to have right belief as this is known to be the direct cause for right belief (samyag darshan).

If you are not wise, you will fall into a pit.

Ayuktena: The one whose mind is illogical or unconnected (ayukta) is known as ayuktena. There is a non-cooperation between the mind and intellect. The intellect should give a command and the mind should obey it, this is an ideal situation and beautiful work can be done. Your intellect has to be proper and you should follow your intellect. When you are ayuktena, you are not united with the intellect.

The mind does not obey the instructions of the intellect, so it goes to the worst places and invites the destruction of the self. Sometimes the chariot might break into pieces and the owner might get hurt. At that time, you blame the horses. If you had caught the reins of the intellect, you would not have fallen. It is like the ignorant driver on the steering wheel. You will fall into a pit and harm yourself. You will harm your body and soul both. The non-discerning person has health issues too and he is never focused on the soul.

The intellect - charioteer has to be knowledgeable and the mind has to cooperate, then your senses will remain under control.

A person bought a unique horse and the seller said, "If you want to go somewhere, you should tell the horse that I am saved and to stop it, you should tell it that please save me." One day, he went on a high hill with the horse and realised his mistake. Out of fear, he shouted, "God, please save me," and the horse stopped. He was so happy that he exclaimed, "Thank God, I am saved," and the horse started running. Both of them fell from the hill.

The charioteer needs to be smart. The mind wants happiness but it is ignorant. It has experienced happiness from the world, so it keeps running toward the world. When you are eating, you should not only emphasise on non-violence, but you should also work on your attachment towards any particular type of food.

The mind is always going to favour the senses because it is inclined towards the senses. The senses are designed for extroverted behaviour or for sense objects. The mind cannot see the other options, as the intellect has not said anything so far to the mind. Now become a charioteer - the intellect, take the reins in your hands, and use your discernment that sensual joy is full of defects, it is destructive, and it causes distraction. You will have an attraction for the sense objects and then you will have repulsion for the same. The intellect says that if you run after happiness, which is followed by unhappiness; that is not true happiness. Because of the intellect, the mind becomes discerning.