



Ishavasyopanishad: An Analytical Study in a Modern Context

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ABSTRACT: In this research paper I will discuss the first verse (shloka) of Ishavasyopanishad in the modern context. It is considered the first Upanishad. Ishavasyopanishad is the fortieth chapter of Shuklayajurvedakanvasakhiya Samhita. It has special significance as it is part of the mantra- part. Karma kand has been described in the first thirty-nine chapters of Shuklayajurveda. This is the last chapter of that Kand and in it the Gyan Kand in the form of God has been described. Due to 'Ishavasyam' appearing in its first mantra, its name has been considered as 'Ishavasya'. This mantra teaches us that whatever is the inanimate- animate world in this entire universe is pervaded by God. That is why we should always remember God and enjoy wealth with renunciation. One should not be attached to it because this wealth and material goods do not belong to anyone. It is imperishable. In today's society, every human being has become so busy in his quest to accumulate money and gain material comforts that he is neither aware of the impermanence of this world nor does he have time for his spiritual growth. I think that in such a time, the importance and propagation of this mantra of Ishavasyopanishad will be useful.

KEYWORDS: Ish, Upanishad, Jagat, Wealth, Greed, Renunciation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The main subject of Upanishads is to know about Brahman (Athato Brahman Jigyasa). The sages had many discussions on Brahman Gyan (knowledge of the Brahman), but could not logically establish it in their thoughts. They portrayed Brahman in a negative sense, neti, neti (not this, not this).

They realized that the real form of Brahman is pure consciousness. Despite being the substratum of all behavior, all knowledge, all experience, He is beyond them. The empirical and negative description of the Brahman is neti, neti (not this, not this). The neti, neti negates all descriptions about the Brahman, but not the Brahman itself. In fact, the Brahman is the Existence of all existences, the Truth of all truths, the Reality of all realities. There is no plurality here.

Everything is an expression of Brahman. Ishavasyopanishad says,

*īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat ।
tena tyaktena bhūñjīthā mā grdhaḥ
kasyasviddhanam ॥ Ishavasyopanishad, 1.*

'īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyāṃ jagat', means whatever living or non-living pervades in this universe that is nothing but Ish or Brahman. Since this Upanishad starts with the word Ish, it is called Ishopanishad. The message that God is omnipresent has been given for the first time in this Upanishad. Whatever is the inanimate- animate and dynamic creation in this world is pervaded by God, this is the main statement of Vedanta. The word Jagat means dynamic, 'gachati iti jagat'. That which is moving every moment and changing every moment is the world (Jagat). Change or movement is the nature of the world. And this changing world is pervaded by God, there is no part of it where God is not present. Just as sugar is full of sweetness, salt is full of saltiness, water is full of ras, and fire is full of light, similarly this entire universe is full of God. Upanishad says that whatever we see moving and dynamic is the world itself. The visible matter of this changeable and dynamic world is equipped with name and form. So, the question arises that how does name and form originate in this dynamic substance or matter. Answering this question, the sage of Upanishad says that a dynamic substance that is always in motion first develops its form and then it is given a name. for example, the shape of whirlpools formed in the flow of a river is actually water. But once the shape or form is formed, its name becomes whirlpool. And its existence seems different from water. Similarly, waves are formed in the sea. Wave and whirlpool are different names but basically, they are water. And water is always dynamic and due to its mobility shapes and forms are created. Similarly, due to the dynamics or mobility of the world, scenes of different names and forms arise in the world (jagatyāṃ jagat).

Here, the Veda teaches us a very important thing that nothing is permanent in the world,



everything is dynamic and changeable. Everything is moving at a very fast pace. Energies are flooding always. Today's modern science also accepts that every particle has motion. They have also calculated the speed of light, sound etc. The earth, the universe and our names and forms have been created due to this movement of energy. Everything is the result of the movement of that energy. For example, there is a point, there is movement in the point, this movement creates a line and the line creates a shape and this shape is given a name. shape is called form and whatever pronunciation is given to it becomes the name. Thus, world is only name and form, and it is made up of dynamic matter (jagatyām jagat). The Veda says that this dynamic matter is pervaded by God (isāvāsyamidam sarvam). It means that whatever is visible is pervaded by God and there is nothing in this world except God. But if God is everywhere in the world, then why is He not visible to us? Why do we remain sad if God is called Sacchidananda. The Veda says that, this is the mystery that even though everything is pervaded by God, we are unable to see Him because our eyes are always on the form, we are not able to see the substance (God or Ish). When our vision comes to the substance (tattva dristi), there will be no place for sorrow in our life. Because all the bubbles rise in the water and merge in the water itself. And we will understand that there is no such thing which has been born and there is no such thing which has been destroyed. (*na jayate mriyate va kadacin nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah ajo nityah sasvato 'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire*, Bhagavad Gita 2.20). This is what this mantra is trying to make us understand that if we understand the substance (tattva) then worldly desires anger, greed, jealousy, envy will not dominate our lives. Because all these desires and defects arise from duality. Our sorrow begins when we leave the cause and get stuck in effect, when we do not see the cause of unity and accept diversity as truth. Because as a causal substance (karan tattva) it is indestructible (Avinashi) and eternal (nitya) and this is the nature of God.

It has been called isāvāsyam because the one who is contained in it is also its controller. But that power is not a material (jad padarth). This is complete consciousness. That is why it is called Ish. He rules, governs, creates and dissolute the world. This is divine play. All name and form are projection of that divine power. He is controller, master and ruler of all name and form. Due to this He is called Ish. Ish means ruler. This is pure consciousness and cause of the universe. It is present in each and every particle of the universe and every particle is full of divine consciousness. But it is dynamic (jagatyām jagat).

Shwetashwatar Upanishad interpreted it as: - *eko hamso bhuvanasyāsya madhye sa evāgniḥ salile samniviṣṭaḥ // 6.15 //* In this universe the Swan, the Supreme Self alone exists. It is He who, as fire, abides in the water. Here, the Supreme Self, Brahman, is referred to as the swan which means the destroyer of ignorance. Brahman is fire because the Supreme Self-consumes ignorance as fire burns wood. If one knows his own Self, he knows Brahman and he knows everything. In today's modern times, when science has progressed so much, we can scientifically explain this mantra. The mantra says that fire abides in water and science proves that fire abides in every drop of water. Because water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen elements which are flammable.

Other Upanishads also confirm this idea of Brahman. In Chandogya Upanishad it is said, "All this is Brahman. Everything comes from Brahman, everything goes back to Brahman, and everything is sustained by Brahman. One should therefore quietly meditate on Brahman tajj. (*sarvam khalvidam brahman tajjalaniti santa upasita*. Chandogya Upanishad, 3.14.1). In Taittiriya Upanishad, '*Ekam evadvitiam*' [That (Brahman) is one without a second].

Even in the famous epic Ram Charit Manas, Tulasi Das ji, has written while describing the all-pervading nature of Brahman i.e. Ram, "Siya Ram maya sab jag jani, karahu pranam jori jug pani". The meaning of this couplet is that the entire world is prevailing with Lord Rama, and we should humbly bow down to Him. It considers that God resides in everything.

The second part of the mantra has more relevance in contemporary time.

***tena tyaktena bhujñithā mā grdhaḥ
kasyasiddhanam ।***

In Indian tradition, three ways of utilization of wealth have been suggested. 1. Dan (charity), 2. Bhog (pleasure) and 3. Nash (annihilation). This means that if you do not enjoy your wealth then it should be donated to charity otherwise it will be destroyed or lost. It is said in the Upanishad that whatever God has given you, enjoy it but do not get obsessed to it. Use it with renunciation because it is not yours.

The enjoyment without obsession is great idea given by Ishopanishad. This is the idea that is developed in the Gita as Anasakta Karma Yoga. We find a famous story regarding this in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

*maitreyīti hovāca yājñavalkyaḥ, udyāsyanvā
are'hamasmāsthānādasmī, hanta te'nayā
kātyāyanyāntam karavāñīti ||* (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 2.4.1).



When sage yagyavalkya was going to take renunciation, he decided that he would divide his wealth between his two wives Maitreyi and Katyayani. Maitreyi, knowing her husband's wish, asked, "O Lord, if the entire earth is filled with her wealth, will it give me immortality? In reply, Yajnavalkya, said, no dear, no one can ever do this. With money you can only live a happy life. But it is difficult to attain immortality through wealth. Then Maitreyi said,

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

Maitreyi said that the things which will not give her immortality are of no use to her, rather she prayed to Yajnavalkya for the means to attain immortality. The message is quite clear that money is not something that should be made the goal of life. Ishopanishad says, '*tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā*', this means that the omnipresent God, being omnipresent (sarvavyapi) and omniscient (sarvagya), is aware of our actual situation. That is why He has given us that which is useful and beneficial for us. Therefore, we should remember God and use the things given by Him as offering to God. Our interest lies only in the use of the material given by Him. If we wish for more than this, it will be painful for us, not pleasant. That is why the Veda warns humans: "*mā grdhaḥ*", do not be greedy or obsessed with wealth or money. "*Kasyasviddhanam*" consider whose money it is? Means this wealth or money does not belong to anyone and we should enjoy what God has given us. God has given us according to our needs.

Thus, the first mantra of Ishavasyopanishad teaches us mainly five things. 1. The name and form that is visible in this world is the expressed form of the dynamic element (jagatyām jagat) 2. There is a great controller pervades in this dynamic substance and the names and forms created from it, who controls all these things under one rule and He who is master of Himself and of all these things (īśāvāsyamidam sarvaṃ). 3. When you understand both these things, then you should enjoy whatever you have got, considering that everything has been given to you by Him (tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā). 4. Don't be greedy (*mā grdhaḥ*) and 5. Always remember whose money it is (*kasyasviddhanam*) and what is its purpose?

If we analyse these ideas given in Ishopanishad in the present perspective, we find that wealth or money has become not a necessity but the goal of our lives. In today's materialistic world, money is everything. We have forgotten that money is not the goal of our life, it is just a means to make

life better. We are running in this blind race of life without thinking. There is no end to this race. We are lost in the mad race of life and have forgotten what the goal of our life is? In our desire to accumulate wealth, we have forgotten to enjoy it. Saint Tulasidas has said,

Dasat hi gayi beeti Nisa sab, kabahu na nath!
neend bhari soyo. Vinaya Patrika, 245.

The simple meaning of this couplet is that we spent the whole night making the bed but we did not get time to sleep on this bed. This means that we have been busy accumulating wealth all our lives, we have not got time to consume it. For those who always run after wealth, we can refer to this verse mentioned in Mundak Upanishad 1.2.8.

avidyāyāmantare vartamānāḥ svayaṃ dhīrāḥ paṇḍitaḥ manyamānāḥ | jañghanyamānāḥ pariyaṅti mūḍhā andhenaiva nīyamānā yathāndhāḥ ||

Being in the midst of ignorance and thinking in their own minds that they are intelligent and learned, the ignorant wander, afflicted with troubles, like the blind led by the blind.

'*mā grdhaḥ*' is also a great doctrine given to mankind by this Upanishad. This means do not be greedy. Whereas this money does not belong to anyone. What is the reason for collecting it? The reason is only greed. When we understand that money is necessary for us only as much as we can consume, then our desire to accumulate money goes away.

If we understand the essence of this great idea, our obsession to wealth and materialism will end. And this world will be a peaceful place to live. Because the cause of sadness is not lack of means of happiness but greed. Bhartrihari has said in his Vairagyashatakam,

sa tu bhavatu daridro yasya tṛṣṇā viśālā manasi ca parituṣṭe ko'rthavān ko daridraḥ || - Vairagyashatakam – 53

He who has great desires is poor indeed. If there is satisfaction in the mind then who is rich and who is poor. The needs of even a poor person are fulfilled and the wishes of even kings are not fulfilled. Acharya Shankar asks in his Prasnottar Ratna Malika, *kim shochyam? Kaarpanyam. Prasnottar Ratna Malika, verse 26.*

What should we grieve about? Stinginess (parsimony). (*Kaarpanyam* is the quality of a *kripāna* who neither enjoys his wealth nor uses it for the benefit of the needy, whose wealth is of no use either in this world or in the hereafter).



II. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, we can say that the seer sages have understood the mystery of this creation very well. They have researched it, tested it and seen it. Only the truth experienced by themselves have been preached to the human being and it has been explained that even if someone takes possession of the entire wealth of the world, only a very little part is useful for his needs. Then what is the benefit of collecting money from morning till evening? If human beings understand this reality of life, then he can become free from greed and attachment and by adopting the true teachings of the Vedas in his life, he can liberate himself and become grateful. Otherwise, no one's hunger has ever been satiated by enjoyment, opulence or wealth. Neither it is satiated nor it will be satiated. In the words of Bhartrihari-
*bhogā na bhuktā vayameva bhuktāḥ, tapo na taptam
vayameva taptāḥ |
kālo na yāto vayameva yātāḥ, tṛṣṇā na jīrṇā
vayameva jīrṇāḥ* || Vairagya Shatakam,7.

we did not enjoy the pleasures; the pleasures took us enjoy. We did not do penance; we did penance ourselves. Time has not gone anywhere, we ourselves have gone. The thirst has not become obsolete, we became obsolete. Therefore, by realize the reality of this world and life we always have to remember this message of the Ishopanishad that has a great idea for modern contemporary life. i.e. All things including man and woman are expressions of Ish (God). Whatever moral means God provides them, they can live contentedly and prosperously. Whenever he realizes that wealth does not belong to anyone, he is only its protector and has the right only to its proper enjoyment. His greed for money goes away and his world becomes a worth living place.

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