

= Jabala Upanishad =

The Jabala Upanishad (Sanskrit : जाला उपनिषद् , IAST : Jabala Upaniṣad) , also called Jabalopanishad , is a minor Upanishad of Hinduism . The Sanskrit text is one of the 20 Sannyasa Upanishads , and is attached to the Shukla Yajurveda .

The Jabala Upanishad is an ancient text , composed before 300 CE . It is among the oldest Upanishads that discuss the subject of renouncing the worldly life for the exclusive pursuit of spiritual knowledge . The text discusses the city of Banaras in spiritual terms , as Avimuktam . It describes how that city became holy , then adds that the holiest place to revere is one within the Atman (soul , self) .

The Upanishad asserts that anyone can renounce this choice is entirely up to the individual , regardless of which Ashrama (stage of life) he is in . The Jabala Upanishad seems to justify suicide as an individual choice in certain circumstances , a view opposed by earlier Vedic texts and Principal Upanishads . Those too sick may renounce the worldly life in their mind . The Jabala Upanishad presents the Vedanta philosophy view that one who truly renounces lives an ethical life , which includes not injuring anyone in thought , word or deed . Such a sannyasi (renunciate) abandons all rituals , is without attachments to anything or anyone , and is one who is devoted to the oneness of Atman and Brahman .

= = History = =

The Jabala Upanishad is an ancient text , composed before 300 CE and likely around the 3rd century BCE , and among the oldest that discuss the subject of renouncing the worldly life for the exclusive pursuit of spiritual knowledge . The text is also referred to as Jabalopanishad (Sanskrit : जाला उपनिषद्) or Gabala Upanishad .

The themes of this Upanishad are meditation and renunciation . Sage Yajnavalkya " as the expounder of the precepts of this Upanishad " elaborates on the aspects of renunciation of the worldly life , in the interests of achieving spiritual enlightenment as the " transcendence of attachment to every desire , including the desire for renunciation itself " . According to Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan , a professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics , this Upanishad seems to justify suicide in certain circumstances , a view opposed by earlier Vedic texts and principal Upanishads . The text discusses the city of Banaras as " one Shiva never leaves " , and as a holy place to revere . It also is among the earliest texts which states that the four stages of life are not necessarily sequential in that anyone can renounce their worldly life at any time . The Jabala Upanishad presents the Vedanta philosophy view that the proper life of a sannyasi is not about any rituals , nor wearing any sacrificial thread , but about the knowledge of one 's soul (Atman , self) .

In the Vedic @-@ era literature , only three ashramas (life stages) were mentioned , with Brahmacharya (student) as the first stage and the Grihastha (householder) as the second stage . The third stage of life , in the Vedic texts , combined Vanaprastha (retired or forest dweller) and Sannyasa (renunciation) as one ashrama . According to Soti Shivendra Chandra , a scholar at the Rohilkhand University , the separation of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa as two different stages of life is first mentioned in the Jabala Upanishad . However , Patrick Olivelle , a professor at the University of Texas at Austin , states that the Sannyasa ashrama as a separate stage is mentioned in Aruni Upanishad , which likely is a more ancient Upanishad .

= = Chronology and anthology = =

It is unclear when the Jabala Upanishad was composed , as is true with most ancient Indian texts . Textual references and literary style suggest that this Hindu text is ancient , composed before the Asrama Upanishad which is dated to 300 CE . Hajime Nakamura , a Japanese scholar of Vedic literature , dates Jabala Upanishad along with Paramahansa Upanishad to around the start of the common era . The German scholar of Upanishads , Joachim Sprockhoff , assigns it to be from the last few centuries prior to the beginning of the common era , while the German Indologist Georg

Feuerstein dates it to around 300 BCE . The text is one of the oldest renunciation @-@ related Upanishads .

In the anthology of 108 Upanishads of the Mukhtika canon , narrated by Rama to Hanuman , it is listed at number 13 . In the Colebrooke anthology of 52 Upanishads , which is popular in North India , the Jabala Upanishad is listed at number 51 . In Narayana 's anthology of 52 Upanishads , which is popular in South India , the Jabala Upanishad is listed at number 39 or 40 depending on the manuscript . In later compilations brought out in South India , it is part of the 108 Upanishads . In the 30 minor Upanishads published by the 19th @-@ century Sanskrit scholar Ramamaya Tarkaratna in the Bibliothica Indica , the Jabala Upanishad is given the name Gabala Upanishad and listed at number 28 .

The Jabala Upanishad is one of the 20 Sannyasa Upanishads . The Sultan Mohammed Dara Shikoh , in 1656 helped organize and publish a collection of 50 Upanishads translated into the Persian language , with the title of Oupanekhat ; in this collection the Jabala Upanishad is listed at number 29 and " Jabala " is spelled " Djabal " . This Persian translation was itself translated into Latin by Anquetil du Perron in 1801 ? 02 , wherein Anquetil remarked that the Indians are reading this collection of Upanishads all the time " knowing it to be the best book on religion " . The Anquetil translation brought the Upanishads to the attention of Arthur Schopenhauer and other western philosophers .

= = Structure = =

The Sanskrit text of this Upanishad has six chapters . Sage Yajnavalkya answers questions in the first five , wherein the questions are posed by Brihaspati , Atri , students of Brahman @-@ Atman , King Janaka and by Atri again . The last chapter lists the names of famous sages who were model sannyasis (renunciates) .

The extant texts are found in two versions . One consists of six chapters structured into 14 verses , while the other version has six chapters with the same content but does not number the 14 verses .

The first three chapters are devoted to defining the place where the seat of all beings and ultimate reality (Brahman) resides , and how to reach it through meditation , the Hindu god Shiva and the city of Varanasi . The next three chapters relate to renunciation . They describe the characteristics of a Paramahansa as one who has reached the highest status of spirituality , who abandons all external signs of asceticism and discards all relationships or worldly comforts to know " Brahman , the nature of the Self " .

= = Contents = =

= = = Holy city of Varanasi = = =

The first chapter of the Upanishad opens as a conversation between Brihaspati and Yajnavalkya , where Brihaspati asks Yajnavalkya for information about the place where the seat of all beings , the Brahman , lives . Yajnavalkya states that true Brahman @-@ seat of all beings , or Kurukshetra , is Avimuktam ? a place that Shiva never left . This Avimuktam is a part of Varanasi (Banaras) . All renouncers , after having wandered places , should stay at this Avimuktam . This is the place , asserts the Upanishad , where Rudra imparts the moksha knowledge just when the last vital breaths of the dying are departing , leading one to videhamukti (salvation after death) . This place is holy , a place to revere and not leave .

In the second chapter , sage Atri asks Yajnavalkya " how can I know this infinite , non @-@ manifested Atman ? " The Atman , states Yajnavalkya , can be found in Avimuktam . Atri then asks how to find Avimuktam . The Jabala Upanishad uses wordplay to express a literal and hidden allegorical meaning . Yajnavalkya answers that Avimuktam is to be found between Varana and Nasi , or Varayati and Nasayati .

Geographically , the city of Varanasi is situated on the Ganges river , where two small , mostly dry

rivers named Varana and Asi join the Ganges . Metaphorically , the text adds , Varana is named as it wards off errors of organs (Varayati) , and Nasi is named as it destroys the sins committed by one 's organs (Nasayati) . Atri , after listening to this metaphorical answer , repeats his question , with " but where is this place of Avimuktam ? " Yajnavalkya replies that Avimuktam is already within Atri , " where his nose and eye brows meet , for there is the place of the world of heaven and highest world of Brahman . " This Avimuktam is the " abode of Brahman " .

A person who is aware of Brahman reveres it as the Atman in the Avimuktam within him . Ramanathan interprets this verse to mean that one who knows the true nature of Avimuktam understands that " the individual Self (soul) is no other than the attributeless Brahman " .

In the third chapter , the shortest in the Upanishad , the students of Brahman ask Yajnavalkya to recommend a hymn that guides someone to immortality . Yajnavalkya recommends the Satarudriya , the hymn with the hundred names of the god Rudra . This hymn is found in sections 16 @. @ 1 to 16 @. @ 66 of the Vajasaneyi Samhita in Yajurveda , and is conceived as many epithets of Atman .

= = = How to renounce = = =

In the fourth chapter of the Upanishad , King Janaka of Videha asks Yajnavalkya , " Lord , explain Sannyasa [renunciation] . "

Yajnavalkya answers that one may complete Brahmacharya (the student stage of life) , then Grihastha (householder) , followed by Vanaprastha (retirement) and finally Sannyasa (pilgrimage as Parivrajaka Bhikshu , renunciation) . Or , continues Yajnavalkya , one may renounce immediately after completing the student stage of life , or after the householder stage , regardless of whether or not one has completed the sacred fire ritual or any other rituals . Olivelle interprets the sacred fire ritual reference as an indirect reference to marriage , and thus the text asserts that those who have married or never married can both renounce . The Jabala Upanishad herein recommends that a person may renounce on the day he feels detached from the world , regardless of which stage of life he is in , and whether he has completed that stage .

Yajnavalkya states that some people perform the Prajapati ritual [1] when they renounce , but this should not be done . A person should instead make an offering to Agni (fire) that is one 's own vital breath . He should make the " three @-@ element offering " , namely , to " Sattva [goodness] , Rajas [energy] and Tamas [darkness] " within . He should revere Prana (internal life force) because it is the yoni (womb , birthplace) of all fires . If he cannot obtain this fire , he should offer the oblation " Om ! I offer to all godheads , svaha " with water as he begins the renunciation stage of life . As he offers this oblation , he should learn that the liberating mantra of Om is the three Vedas and the Brahman to be revered .

= = = Life is sacred , ending it a choice = = =

In the fifth chapter , Atri asks Yajnavalkya whether someone pursuing Brahman can be without the sacred thread . According to the translation by Paul Deussen , a professor and German Indologist , Yajnavalkya answers that " this very thing is sacred thread , namely the Atman " . A renouncer or Parivrajaka (another term for renouncer) performs a sacrifice to the Atman whenever he feeds himself or rinses his mouth with water . Feeding and dressing his Prana (life force) is the only duty of the renouncer .

Yajnavalkya states that the renouncer can choose a hero 's death by dying in a " just war " , or abstain from eating any food , or go into water or fire , or start off on the " great journey " . This section has led some scholars to believe that this Upanishad may be giving the choice of ending life to the individual and justifying suicide in certain circumstances . This view is different from Vedic texts and Principal Upanishads which consider suicide to be wrong .

According to this Upanishad , the renouncer pilgrim undertakes the journey to the knowledge of Brahman with purity of thought , without belongings , with his head shaved , wearing discoloured garments , free from enmity towards all , and he lives on alms . This method is not essential for anyone too sick or in mortal danger ? such a person may renounce verbally or mentally .

= = = Paramahansa : the ideal renouncer = = =

In the sixth and final chapter , Yajnavalkya lists exemplars of Paramahansas , the highest renouncers : the sages Samvartaka , Aruni , Svetaketu , Durvasa , Ribhu , Nidagha , Jadabharata , Dattatreya and Raivataka . The Paramahansas do not carry articles or show signs that suggest they have renounced , their conduct is concealed , they may only seem insane . They do not carry staves , nor bowl , nor hair tuft , nor sacred thread , but they are the ones who seek after the Atman (self , soul) .

Naked as he was born , beyond the pair of opposites (joy versus sorrow etc .) , without belongings , wholly devoted to the way to truth , the Brahman , with a pure heart , going out , begging alms at a proper time only to sustain his life , with the belly as his utensil , even @-@ tempered whether he gets anything or not , staying homeless , whether in a deserted house , in a temple , on a heap of grass , on an ant @-@ hill , at the roots of tree , in a potter 's workshop , on a river bank , in a mountain cave , in a ravine , in a hollow tree , at a waterfall , or just bare ground , not striving , free from feeling of " mine " , given to pure contemplation , firmly rooted in the supreme Self , eradicating all evil deeds , [...] he is called a Paramahansa .

The Paramahansa is the renouncer who seeks his own self , abandons impure acts and evil within , who devotes himself to meditating on the Atman and the Brahman .

= = Influence = =

Five important Upanishad texts , according to Olivelle ? the Jabala plus the Aruni , Laghu @-@ Samnyasa , Kathashruti and Paramahansa Upanishads ? provide different answers to the question of when someone may renounce the worldly life to lead a monastic one . The Laghu @-@ Samnyasa Upanishad , Kathashruti Upanishad and Paramahansa Upanishad suggest that a man may renounce after sequentially completing the student , householder and retirement stages of life , and then getting the consent of his elders and direct family members . In contrast , the Jabala Upanishad and Aruni Upanishad assert that the choice is entirely up to the individual , without needing to have completed any stage of life nor requiring the consent of anyone else .

If an individual feels Vairagya (detachment from the world) , the Jabala Upanishad maintains that no preconditions apply , and the individual has the spiritual right to renounce immediately . This principle in the Jabala Upanishad was cited by medieval @-@ era scholars such as Adi Shankara , Vijñānaśekha , Sureśvara , and Nilakantha as the Vedic basis that makes renunciation an individual choice and right . This choice has been referred to as a Vikalpa by the later scholars , which the society and state must respect . The Jabala Upanishad concurred with some Dharmasastras on the right to renounce and lead a monastic life , but its views contradicted others such as those in Manusmriti verses 6 @.@ 35 ? 37 . The text fed a debate on the right of the individual , and medieval Hindu scholars relied on and sided with the Jabala Upanishad .

The Jabala Upanishad influenced other scholarly works as well . The Jivanmukti @-@ viveka , written by the 14th @-@ century Advaita Vedanta scholar and Vijayanagara Empire mentor Vidyaranya , refers to the Jabala Upanishad while describing those who achieve living liberation .