

= Bhikshuka Upanishad =

The Bhikshuka Upanishad (Sanskrit : भिक्षुका उपनिषद् , IAST : Bhikṣuka Upaniṣad) , also known as Bhikshukopanishad , is one of the minor Upanishads of Hinduism and is written in Sanskrit .

The Upanishad describes four kinds of sannyasins (Hindu monks) , their eating habits and lifestyle . Yoga is the path of spiritual liberation for all four . Of these , the Paramahansa monks are discussed in this text at greater length , and described as loners who are patient with everyone , free from dualism in their thoughts , and who meditate on their soul and the Brahman .

= = Etymology = =

Bhikshuka means " mendicant " or " monk " , and is derived from the root word Bhikṣu meaning " one who subsists entirely on alms " .

= = History = =

The author of the Bhikshuka Upanishad is unknown , as is its date of composition . It was probably composed in the late medieval to modern era , most likely in the 14th or 15th century . The text has ancient roots , as its contents are identical in key details to chapter 4 of the Ashrama Upanishad , which is dated to about the 3rd century CE . Both texts mention four types of mendicants with nearly identical life styles . The two texts have a few minor differences . The much older Ashrama Upanishad , for example , mentions that each type aspires to know their self (Atman) for liberation , while the Bhikshuka specifies that they seek this liberation through a yogic path .

The Bhikshuka Upanishad is a minor Upanishad attached to the Shukla Yajurveda . It is classified as one of the Sannyasa (renunciation) Upanishads of Hinduism . The text is listed at number 60 in the serial order in the Muktika enumerated by Rama to Hanuman , in the modern era anthology of 108 Upanishads . Some surviving manuscripts of the text are titled Bhikshukopanishad (भिक्षुक उपनिषद्) .

= = Contents = =

Bhikshuka Upanishad consists of a single chapter of five verses . The first verse states that four types of mendicants seek liberation , and these are Kutichaka , Bahudaka , Hamsa and Paramahansa . The text describes the frugal lifestyle of all four , and asserts that they all pursue their goal of attaining moksha only through yoga practice . The first three mendicant types are mentioned briefly , while the majority of the text describes the fourth type : Paramahansa mendicants .

= = = Kutichaka , Bahudaka and Hamsa monks = = =

The Upanishad states that Kutichaka monks eat eight mouthfuls of food a day . Prominent ancient Rishis (sages) who illustrate the Kutichaka group are Gotama , Bharadwaja , Yajnavalkya , and Vasishta .

The Bahudaka mendicants carry a water pot and a triple staff walking stick . They wear a topknot hair style and ochre @-@ coloured garments , and wear a sacrificial thread . The Bahudaka do not eat meat or honey , and beg for their eight mouthfuls of food a day .

The Hamsa mendicants are constantly on the move , staying in villages for just one night , in towns no more than five nights , and in sacred places for no more than seven nights . The ascetic practice of Hamsa monks includes daily consumption of the urine and dung of a cow . The Hamsa monks practice the Chandrayana cycle in their food eating habit , wherein they vary the amount of food they eat with the lunar cycle . They eat a single mouthful of food on the day after the dark new moon night , increase their food intake by an extra mouthful each day as the size of the moon increases ,

and reach the maximum fifteen mouthfuls of food for the day after full moon night . Thereafter , they decrease their food intake by a mouthful each day until they reach the new moon night and begin the cycle again with one mouthful the following day .

= = = Paramahansa monks = = =

The Bhikshuka Upanishad illustrates the Paramahansa (literally , " highest wandering birds ") mendicants with a list of names . The list includes Samvartaka , Aruni , Svetaketu , Jadabharata , Dattatreya , Shuka , Vamadeva , and Haritaka . They eat only eight mouthfuls of food a day and prefer a life away from others . They live clothed , naked or in rags .

The Upanishad dedicates the rest of the verses to describing the beliefs of the Paramhansa monks . For example ,

The Paramhansa monks , who are loners , are to be found in deserted houses , in temples , straw huts , on ant hills , sitting under a tree , on sand beds near rivers , in mountain caves , near waterfalls , in hollows inside trees , or in wide open fields . The Upanishad states that these loners have advanced far in their path of reaching Brahman ? they are pure in mind , they are the Paramahansas .

= = Influence = =

The classification of mendicants in the Bhikshuka Upanishad , their moderate eating habits and their simple lifestyles , is found in many Indian texts such as the Mahabharata sections 1 @. @ 7 @. @ 86 ? 87 and 13 @. @ 129 .

Gananath Obeyesekere , an Emeritus Professor of Anthropology at the Princeton University , states that the beliefs championed and attributed in Bhikshuka Upanishad are traceable to Vedic literature such as Jaiminiya Brahmana . These views are also found in other Upanishads such as the Narada @-@ parivrajakopanishad and Brhat @-@ Sannyasa Upanishad . In all these texts , the renouncer is accepted to be one who , in pursuit of spirituality , was " no longer part of the social world and is indifferent to its mores " .

A test or marker of this state of existence is where " right and wrong " , socially popular " truths or untruths " , everyday morality , and whatever is happening in the world makes no difference to the monk , where after abandoning the " truths and untruths , one abandons that by which one abandons " . The individual is entirely driven by his soul , which he sees to be the Brahman .