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## UNIT 4b KENOPANISHAD

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### 4b.0 OBJECTIVES

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The Upanishad opens with multiple questions. The Interesting part of the Upanishad is that it contains the psychological analysis which is very suggestive. By the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- understand and practice the knowledge that will help you to one attain transcendent illumination;
- to attain knowledge of the Absolute which delivers immediate liberation to you. This is possible if you are able to withdraw the mind from worldly object and mediate on the ultimate 'Truth' of the Universe, which is Brahman himself.

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### 4b.1 INTRODUCTION

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Kenopanishad is the second Upanishad of Sama Veda. It derives its name by the first word used in the opening verse, 'Kena'. It is also called Talvaropnisad as it is the ninth chapter of Talvakara or Jaimini Brahmana. It is a short Upanishad with four chapters containing 34 Mantras (13 verses and 21 prose sentences.) Adi Sankara has written two commentaries for this one for pada – bhasya and another for Vakya – bhasya.

The Upanishad is divided into four chapters – the first two are in the form of dialogue, a dialogue between the Guru and a Disciple. It explains how one can realize Atman through the analysis of perception. Third and fourth chapters have an allegory to understand and recognize Brahman. The Upanishad concludes with the Guru's advice to his Disciple, the golden rule that he had to follow to understand Brahman.

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### 4b.2 PREVIEW

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Invocation – Let my limbs strengthen. My speech, eyes, ear have vigorous strength and all my senses. All stay in Brahman of the Upanishads. May I never discard Brahman nor Brahman discard me. Let there be no discarding of me. Let the Truth of the Upanishad live in me dedicated to the self.

Peace, peace, peace.

The Disciple suspects that there must be an unknown and unseen force that guides each one's physical and psychological behaviour. He wants to clarify his doubts, so he seeks guidance from his Guru and asks him, "By whom .....?" questions. Knowledge is gained by observing, questioning and seeking guidance and understanding what has been taught.

The Guru, who lights up the ambition in the Disciple to know more, confirms that there is a force behind each and every action of the mortal. So, next inquisition is what or who this force is. It is an unknown and unseen force. It is difficult to comprehend as it is not a physical or external object. It is within one self. Only a wise and a steadfast seeker, who meditates deeply is able to recognize it. The ancient seers have understood the force to be the Atman, Brahman who resides within us.

Brahman is not an intellectual matter and nor is it incapacitating but at the same time it is not beyond unknowable for a seeker. Understanding that Brahman is not beyond unknowable is the strong belief of the ancient seers, the present seers and stay true even for the future seers.

Who or what is Brahman? The relationship of Him is within one's own inner self which cannot manifest as an external object. It is difficult to comprehend an unknown and unseen Brahman. He is not a 'figure head' but a life itself. If one realizes this truth then one is released from all bondages, moves away from sin. "Of all forms and manner of knowledge the soul must strip and void itself so that there may be left in it no kind of impression of knowledge, nor trace of aught so ever, but rather the soul must remain barren and bare, as if these forms had never passed through it, and in total oblivion and suspension." (Ibid, Bk. 3, Ch. 2)

Next clarification is, will this awareness lead to 'know' Brahman? The Guru had to lead his Disciple further in understanding, 'Knowing' or 'not knowing' Him. "pratibodha – viditam matam amrtatvam hi vidate

Atmana vindate viryam vidyaya vidate mrtam" (2.4)

Brahman is cognized by "pratibodha – viditam" by intuition. The knowledge of self by self, by pure spiritual awareness is attained by internally connecting one self with God. The moment this realization comes the Atman and Brahman will become one and the same; the one who attains this stage, experiences "vidyaya vidate mrtam," an imperishable knowledge, which in turn becomes an immortal learning. The one who is enlightened by the knowledge of Brahman sees Brahman in all creatures. "Who has already gained 'jnana', this distinction between objective knowledge and subjective experience of Brahman vanishes. For he who realizes Brahman as the all and both subjective and objective are for him the polarities of the unitary Being. .... Only a perfect knower of Brahman is vouchsafed this experience of all objects – man, animals, Nature, God etc – as Brahman." Swami Sarvananda, Kenopanishad, page 17. He becomes the part of this immortal Nature.

The next step is to acknowledge His part in all physical and psychological actions. The Guru who understands the psychology of a learning Disciple; uses an allegory to guide him to understand the importance of accepting Brahman in one's action.

Guru uses Indra, Agni and Vayu as chief characters in his fable. A war was fought between the gods, 'the Good' and the demons, 'the Bad'. The 'Good' was victorious against the 'Bad'. And the war was won by the divine's grace. But the gods were happy and were intoxicated about the victory. Brahman thought that they being the 'Good' must realize their error, and should not forget Him. And He was successful in making them realize the Supreme power behind their victory. This knowledge was made known to them by Uma, 'Sakthi'. Once they realized the 'Truth', they were elated.

This is an interesting thought provoking parable. The intention is to illustrate the superiority of Brahman at all manifestation including the divine ones. We make much of our intellectual and physical powers and remain satisfied by the successes we achieve. We glorify our actions boast our accomplishments. We ignore to recognize His hand that led us to success in our 'Positive' actions.

Brahman is present in everything. For example "*vidyto uyadyutada iti mantamisu sada ityadhidaivam*," (4.4), in lightning, one of the striking phenomena of external Nature and in the winking of an eye which is the most minute and insignificant function of a mortal. The power of Brahman is in cosmic form or in human's physical action, whether it is great or small. Use of lightning and winking of the eye can be interpreted in different levels –

- 1) Brahman is behind the each action. Without His power nothing happens.
- 2) The illustration indicates the instantaneous enlightenment produced by the union of the individual soul with the transcendental principal of universal mind, light enlightens the intellect which brings joy and happiness.
- 3) If one understands the inner power of the Brahman, then each task, from a difficult to a easy, one can achieve success with a lightning speed and as easily as winking of an eye.

Understanding His presence in each action gives confidence to seek the 'Right Path'. The mental process by which one remembers, think and will presupposes Brahman. One who understands this is elated and his wisdom shows itself in his actions. He, "*bahusobhamanam*", shines forth with wondrous beauty. To attain this stage one has to work in the right direction, one needs determination and be wise. One must be determined not to waver from his quest to know the 'Truth'. One has to meditate on Brahman as '*Tad – vanam*', dearest of all. He has to follow Austerity, self – control and steadfast work. Once he realizes, the 'Truth', his intellect enlightens. The path of enlightenment gives him imperishable learning.

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### 4b.3 DISCUSSION

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*"Kenasitam patati presitam manh, Kena pranah prathamah prati yuktah.*

*Kenasitam vacam imam vadanti. Caksuh srotram ka u devo yunakti."* (1.1)

"By whom willed and directed does the mind light on its objects? By whom commanded does the life move first? At whose instance do (people) utter this speech? And what god is it that prompts the eye and the ear?"

The Upanishad opens with questions – "By whom.....?" rising doubt if one's physical activity is independent of its actions or has relation with an unknown

force. The whole Upanishad is a search to find an answer to this uncertainty. The very process of one's growth to higher knowledge starts when one starts questioning what happens around one's life. To understand the cause and effect, one has to travel beyond the thoughts to experience the pure enlightenment.

Enlightenment comes when one understands that there is a vital force within us which is responsible for all our physical actions. Probing mind has a difficulty in recognizing this vital power, as Brahman does not have an external physical form. Knowledge of a thing arises through sense or mind, but Brahman cannot be reached by either of these. That is why the ancient seers have said that the knowledge of the Brahman is known and at the same time unknown. There is a duality of understanding the inner supreme power. Brahman is an absolute who resides deep in the self Atman; one has to consciously take an inward journey to understand the inner power one live in.

For a seeker (Disciple) it is challenging to be definite if he 'knows' or 'do not know' Brahman. No positive reply can be given to the question whether one knows Brahman, when asked from an objective point of view. One cannot describe him. But at the same time if one says that he does not know Brahman in this manner, so have the knowledge of Him.

“Iha ced avedid atha asti n ached ahavedin mahati vinastih

Bhutesu bhutesu vici ntya dhirah pretyasmal lokad amrta bhavanti” (2.5)

“If here (a person) knows it, then there is truth, and if here he knows it not., there is great loss. Hence, seeing or (seeking) (the Real) in all being, wise men become immortal on departing from this world.”

The teacher uses the word '**dhira**' twice in the second chapter. According to the Dictionary meaning, 'dhira' means – wise, intelligent or a scholar and also steadfast, determined and holding fast. It is not enough if one is a scholar but must be determined in seeking Him.

The allegory, illustrates, how even the gods failed to recognize Brahman. But understands when Uma, daughter of Himavath reveals His identity. Once they recognize they are elated in their status. This is a powerful metaphor to highlight - life (Indra), Agni (eyes), Vayu (breath) were able to understand the supreme power that lay within deep self. The teacher further says that Brahman is behind the lightning and the wing of the eye, once more it symbolizes that each and every action from winning a war to the winking of an eye, His power is vested. And it can also be interpreted as one can see Him like a flashing of a lightning or a winking of an eye so quick and fast. It is in the presence of mind to behold it and to understand Him.

When the seeker (Disciple) wants the secret of recognizing Brahman, the Guru says the golden rule of life to seek Him - Austerities, self – control and dedication in work as the means to the end.

*Tasyaitapo – dama – karmeti pratistha, vedah sarvangani, satyam dyatanam.*

*Yo va etam evam vedapahatya papmanam ante svarge loke jyete pratitisthati, pratitisthati (4. 8, 9,)*

“Austerities, self – control and work are its support; the Vedas are all its units; truth is its abode. Whoever knows this, indeed, overcoming sin in the end, is firmly established in the Supreme world of heaven; yes, he is firmly established.”

The whole Upanishad revolves around understanding of the quoted text. They contain the essence of the Upanishad.

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## 4b.4 PHILOSOPHICAL RESPONSE

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Understanding of life and values revolve around, “By whom ..... ?” questions. Understanding the difference between the illusion and reality is like understanding the two sides of the issue. Is it an illusion to glorify the physical activity as the actor and forget that there might be reality that controls and guides all physical actions? Is it an illusion to consider that we are not responsible for our actions as all our actions are guided by an unknown power? Does our realization of Supreme Being make us passive in our actions? Does the realization of the Supreme Being make us more realistic and conscious in our actions? The question “By whom ..... ?” opens up a possibility to understand the ‘Truth’ of life; only inquiring mind can thrive for an answer.

It is a difficult and a challenging journey to understand the meaning of life and force behind it. The one who is interested in this pursuit must be not only wise but also a steadfast seeker. He must journey inward to see deep inside the self to understand the unseen. Once the self sees the God within, then it is like as Eckhart has said “When the soul beholds God purely, it takes all its being and its life and whatever it is from the depth of God; yet it knows no knowing, no loving or anything else whatever. It rest utterly and completely within the being of God, and knows nothing but only to be with God. So, soon as it becomes conscious that it sees and loves and knows God that is in itself a departure.” (Rudolf Otto: East and west)

Once one understands the powerful force behind one’s actions, each simple action carry more meaning and significance. The awareness that one’s action is guided by inner force does not make one passive instead it makes one to be successful and positive person. One can surge forward with complete consciousness that one’s actions achieve glory and victory with the guidance of the Supreme Being. One moves away from the wrong doing and become humble and become part of the nature.

The man with wisdom sees Brahman in every creature. It is the ultimate Truth. The insight is the most beautiful thing. Once one attains inner purity it is shown as an out world beauty. The presence of Uma in the Upanishad is the personification of enlightened inner self. The significance of mentioning ‘lightning’ in the Upanishad illustrates the instant understanding of the individual soul with that of the universal wisdom. This brings sudden brief moment of silence within and things around. “In this flash when thou art as if struck by lightning, when thou hearest inwardly the affirmation ‘Truth’ there remains if thou canst.” Eckhart, Rudolf Otto: Mysticism; East and west.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) How the disciple's questions, 'kena', are relevant to the present time?

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2) Our awareness that there is a power with in us, which guide us in our action, will it make us active or passive?

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**4b.5 LET US SUM UP**

The Upanishad attracts one's mind by its sublime simplicity and rich suggestiveness. It reveals profound flashes of thoughts and insight which is relevant to all time and situation. The essence of the Upanishad is not restricted to one thought, time or space; it is true at all times. Dr. S Radhakrishna's remark on Upanishad holds good, "When we pass from the Vedic hymns to the Upanishads, we find that the interest shifts from the objective to the subjective, from the brooding on the wonder of the outside world to the meditation on the significance of self. The human self contains the clue to the interpretation of nature. The Real at the heart of the universe is reflected in the infinite depths of the soul," (S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishad*, Introduction, page 49.).....

**4b.6 KEY WORDS**

- Guru** : A guru is a person who is regarded as having great knowledge, wisdom and authority in a certain area, and who uses these abilities to guide others. It also means "teacher" or "guide" in the religious sense, and is commonly used in Sikhism, Buddhism and Hinduism as well as in some new religious movements.
- Allegory** : Allegory (from Greek: *allos*, "other") is a figurative mode of representation conveying a meaning other than the literal. Fictions with several possible interpretations are not allegories in the true sense. Not every fiction with general application is an allegory. Allegory communicates its message by means of symbolic figures.

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## 4b.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 4b.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1 The Upanishad opens with questions –“By whom.....?” rising doubt if one’s physical activity is independent of its actions or has relation with an unknown force. The whole Upanishad is a search to find an answer to this uncertainty. The very process of one’s growth to higher knowledge starts when one starts questioning what happens around one’s life. To understand the cause and effect, one has to travel beyond the thoughts to experience the pure enlightenment.
- 2) Once one understands the powerful force behind one’s actions, each simple action carry more meaning and significance. The awareness that one’s action is guided by inner force does not make one passive instead it makes one to be successful and positive person. One can surge forward with complete consciousness that one’s actions achieve glory and victory with the guidance of the Supreme Being. One moves away from the wrong doing and become humble and become part of the nature.