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Laghu Guru Upanishad, Spiritual Teachings of Sri Sivabala Yogi: Gurprasad

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During the Vedic period in ancient India, gurus imparted divine knowledge about higher consciousness and nature of the supreme God. The “Upanishads” thus originated as a collection of such knowledge. Etymologically, the word Upanishad means sitting near an enlightened teacher and listening to the divine knowledge. Upanishadic knowledge is the highest form of any knowledge and it alone leads to self-realization. In the ancient times, due to the lack of printing facilities, the Upanishadic knowledge was passed down by word of mouth from a sage to the disciples. After many generations, it was penned down in Sanskrit. This knowledge is abstract and concise, making it difficult to imbibe by most people. In due course of time, these have been translated subjectively by various scholars; thus, the original gist or instruction may be missing or altered according to the spiritual maturity of that author. Various speculations and philosophies have thus been developed.

The book *Laghu Guru Upanishad* aims to revive the quintessence of Upanishadic knowledge suited to this age. It is written in an easy to understand English language. “Laghu” literally means short version of the original book Guru Upanishad. *Laghu Guru Upanishad* has been recorded in Bhava Samadhi, by the author Gurprasad. Bhava samadhi is the most intimate form of guru-disciple relationship. It is a state of highly purified and introverted mind, concentrated on itself or on the pure form of the object of one’s worship. It is achieved through self-surrender and done out of love and devotion. Teachings revealed in bhava samadhi fall in Upanishadic category of instructions. Many of the world’s greatest scriptures have been written in bhava samadhi. *Laghu Guru Upanishad* has been written in question and answer format.

Chapter one “Introduction” unfolds the central theme of the teachings, i.e., control of mind. It also contains answers to the basic questions like who is a competent guru, why the need for this work when a large number of scriptures already exist. It does not hurt the sentiments of any religion or scripture and pays respect to all saints and scriptures from all countries in equal measure.

Chapter two “Instruction in General” talks about various positive (love, devotion, discrimination, compassion, etc.) and negative (attachment, desire, doubt, fear, pride, greed, etc.)

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attributes that each individual mind has and how an individual can cultivate the positive ones to aid in control of mind. The overall state of an individual mind is determined by the level and type of attributes that it has. It specifies that aim of any spiritual practice is to control the mind and not to find God, which in essence is found on its own when the mind is destroyed.

Chapter three "Reality" explains the metaphysical nature of the Reality, which is also called by many names like Brahman, God, and Truth. It describes the concept of how absolute reality (nirgun or formless) by the use of invisible power called maya (principle of illusion or ignorance) appears as phenomenal world (sagun or with form). It conceptualizes the theory of karma (action done by the individual in the past or present), atman (the higher self, which is covered by the five sheaths), and moksha (liberation by control of mind and ultimately destruction of the 'I' sense).

Chapter four "Control of Mind" elucidates how to achieve the control of mind through various paths and disciplines. Gist of various paths like the path of service, the path of worship, the path of yoga, the path of love and devotion, the path of knowledge, and the path of silence is given. How to carry practice on each path as well as pitfalls are explained. Throughout the chapter, it is emphasized that mind is a disease as well as its cure, highlighting the role of discriminative intelligence and will power. The stages in the control of mind are self-discipline, self-purification, self-abidance, self-subsidence (manolaya), and destruction (manonash). Importance on any of the above spiritual paths is described as persistence through practice of the teachings and not merely reading the book.

Chapter five "The Satguru" paints a biographical sketch of Sri Sivabala Yogi, who at a tender age of 14 years had attained self-realization following initiation by Sri Shankar Bhagwan or God himself. He sat in tapas which is the highest form of any spiritual discipline, carried out only by divine incarnations after self-realization. He was in continuous samadhi (transcendental and super-sensuous state) for 23 hours a day for the first 8 years and then 12 hours a day for next 4 years. This chapter elucidates the intolerable levels of hardship that Sri Sivabala Yogi faced during those 12 years and thereafter. He thus gained tapas power, which he imparts upon initiation to his devotees to help control their minds.

Rather than outward act of doership, *Laghu Guru Upanishad* calls for an inward search for the supreme Brahman and mystical union with Him, in a rational way. It contains divine knowledge of the highest quality, which is of special value for those seekers who want to pursue a spiritual quest seriously. The teachings put forth must be put into action to gain spiritually. Only then one can appreciate the positive effect on one's own mind.

The severe austerity in human form that Sri Sivabala Yogi took is awe-inspiring and commendable. No ordinary human being can undergo such a severe penance in a human form, indicating that Sri Sivabala Yogi is a divine incarnation.

Laghu Guru Upanishad undoubtedly sets a platform which crosses all social, cultural, and religious barriers and demystifies spirituality in this age. It can be used as a guide to complement one's existing spiritual quest and encourages raw beginners to take up spirituality.

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