

श्रीशङ्कराचार्यविरचितकौपीनपञ्चकम्

FIVE VERSES ON KAUPEENA

of

SHREE SHANKARAACHAARYA

Translation and Explanation

by

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INTRODUCTION

This work is a collection of five verses on 'Koupeena - the loin cloth' by Shree Shankara.

'कौ' means privy part; that which covers it is called कौपीन.

कौपीनं शतखण्डजर्जरतरं कन्था - It is a piece of a cloth which has been torn hundred times; it is a tattered cloth.

Shankara in these five verses extols the 'Wearers of Koupeenas'.

Koupeena is a symbol of renunciation, dispassion.

It is the state of JeevanMukti.

Yet all the 'Wearers of Koupeena' do not become JeevanMuktas.

Shankara describes the qualities of a JeevanMukta in these verses.

A man liberated while living; a man who has realized his true nature of the Self yet has a vague idea of body and the world around him is a 'Koupeenavanta - 'Wearer of a loin-cloth'! He can throw it away too; may be a slight sense of decency makes him wear that tattered cloth to cover his private parts.

What does he own?

Nothing except that loin cloth; that too, to make you feel comfortable.

He owns no property or house. He lives everywhere; be it a barren rock or the base of a tree.

He carries no vessels to cook; or a plate to eat. His two hands are enough to serve that purpose and that much food alone is enough for him.

He has no desires and so has no anxieties. He has no attachments; so he is happy.

He sees the world (body included) around as just a collection of meaningless pictures flowing around him; so he does not bother about it.

He has found out his true identity and is happy as he is.

But should every JeevanMukta wear a Koupeena and live?

Need not!

Janaka, Rama, Krishna, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda and many others were also 'Koupeena-Wearers' though they were covered with outfits suited to their way of life. Ramana wore just a Koupeena! Mahadevi who never ever saw a physical body as connected to her did not even bother about it! She lived as a 'body-less' saint!

The mind has to wear the Koupeena; that is all!

Since there is no body at all for a JeevanMukta, what does a Koupeena mean to him!

Koupeena is the symbol of a realized man who has renounced all the ideas of possession and remains in his natural state of the Self.

He no more identifies with the physical body or the patterns connected to it.

He has no need to worship any god with form as he is the formless Brahman from whom even gods rise up as waves!

Who can be happier than him who has renounced everything to be the essence of everything?

Who can be happier than him who has realized that very source of bliss which the senses experience as if from outside?

Who is happier than a man who owns nothing yet is everything!

Blessed are the Koupeenavantas!

कौपीनपञ्चकम्

वेदान्तवाक्येषु सदा रमन्तो भिक्षान्नमात्रेण च तुष्टिमन्तः
विशोकमन्तःकरणे रमन्तः कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥

*They enjoy only the abstract truths contained in the Upanishads.
They are contented with the food obtained by begging.
They are never distressed and their minds are ever blissful
(in the state of the Self).*

*Those are indeed blessed who just wear a loin cloth
(as their only possession)!*

मूलं तरोः केवलं आश्रयन्तः पाणिद्वये भोक्तुममत्रयन्तः
कन्थामिव श्रीमपि कुत्सयन्तः कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥

*They reside (anywhere, even) under the base of the tree!
They eat whatever food the two cupped hands can hold!
They disregard wealth equating it to just some worthless ragged cloth!*

*Those are indeed blessed who just wear a loin cloth
(as their only possession)!*

देहादिभावं परिवर्तयन्तः आत्मानमात्मन्यवलोकयन्तः
नान्तं न मध्यं न बहिः स्मरन्तः कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥

*They look at the body and the world surrounding it
as continuously changing.
They only see everything as the Self and remain as the Self!
They do not have any thoughts of differentiations as
inside, middle, or outside!*

*Those are indeed blessed who just wear a loin cloth
(as their only possession)!*

स्वानन्दभावे परितुष्टिमन्तः संशान्तसर्वेन्द्रियतुष्टिमन्तः
अहर्निशं ब्रह्मणि ये रमन्तः कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥

*They are completely merged in the blissful state of the Self.
All the pleasures enjoyed by the senses have become
completely nullified for them!
Day and night they remain only in the state of Brahman.*

*Those are indeed blessed who just wear a loin cloth
(as their only possession)!*

पञ्चाक्षरं पावनमुच्चरन्तः पतिं पशूनां हृदि भावयन्तः
भिक्षाशिनो दिक्षु परिभ्रमन्तः कौपीनवन्तः खलु भाग्यवन्तः ॥

*They recite the sacred chant of five syllables (अ हं ब्र ह्मा स्मि) always.
They contemplate on the Lord of all beings (Brahman/Self).
They just live on alms and are happy
in whichever direction they happen to go.*

*Those are indeed blessed who just wear a loin cloth
(as their only possession)!*

कौपीनपञ्चकं समाप्तम्

