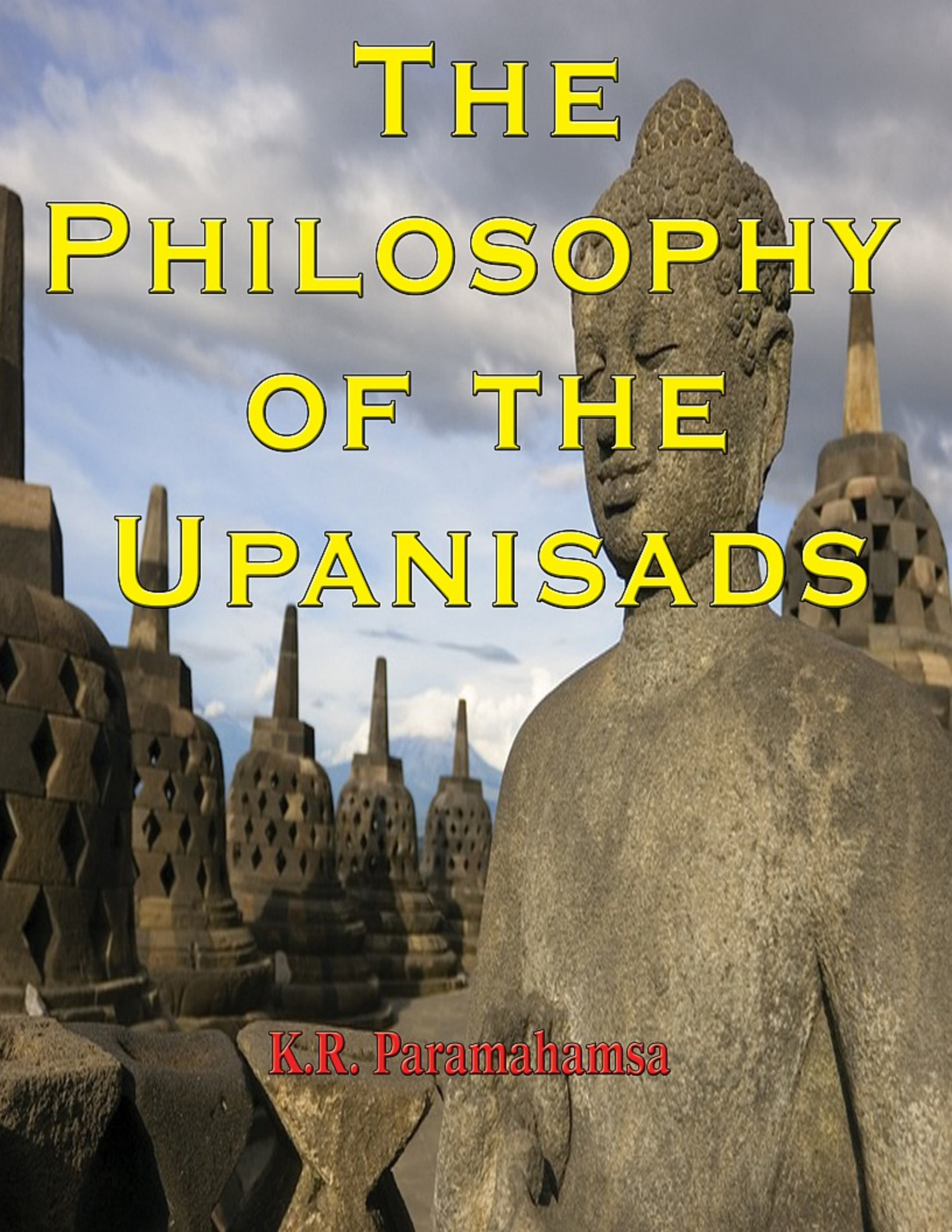
The Philosophy of the Upanisads
K.R. Paramahamsa

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1103 Middlecreek
Friendswood, Texas 77546
281-992-3131281-482-5390 Fax

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Worldwide Book and eBook publication and distribution by: TotalRecall Publications, Inc.

Printed in United States of America United Kingdom

Paper Back

ISBN 978-1-59095-882-7

UPC 6-43977-58829-6

eBook: Adobe Acrobat

ISBN 978-1-59095-883-4

UPC 6-43977-58837-1

The sponsoring editor is Bruce Moran and the production supervisor is Corby R. Tate.

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About the Author

K.R. Paramahamsa was a retired civil servant in India borne on the Indian Administrative Service. He has created the website Sri Sathya Sai Veda Pratishtan at www.vedamu.org , a repository of all the Vedic literature available in India in Devanagari and Grantha scripts. Besides, the website hosts 415 hours of Vedic chanting of ten Veda sakhas in different modes in a representative way. He is Adjunct Faculty of the Hindu University of America in Florida. He is now a resident of the Ashram of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai at Prasanthi Nilayam-515134, India in pursuit of spiritual upliftment.

About the Book

The Upanisads are Vedanta, a book of knowledge in a higher degree even than the Veda, but knowledge in the profounder Indian sense of the word, *Jnana*. And because it is only by an integral knowing of the Self that this kind of direct knowledge can be made complete, it was the Self the Vedantic sages sought to know, to live in and to be one with IT by identity. And through this endeavor, they came easily to see that the self in us is one with the Universal Self of all things and that this self again is the same as God and the Brahman, a transcendent Being or Existence; and they beheld, felt, lived in the inmost truth of man´s inner and outer existence by the light of this one and unifying vision. The Upanisads are epic hymns of 'self-knowledge', world-knowledge and God-knowledge' in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

The ontological enquiry of the 'Beingness' is the core of the Vedantic system of thought. The Vedantic system consists of the Upanisads, the Brahma-sutras (*Vedanta* aphorisms) and the Bhagavad-Gita. The *Vedanta* Aphorisms are again based on the essential content of the Upanisads. The Bhagavad-Gita also contains the essence of the philosophical teachings of the Upanisads. Thus the Upanisads constitute the basic structure on which the ontological enquiry of the Being and the Reality is based. All the Vedantins maintain that there is an essential unity threading the Upanisads together.

The Upanisads mainly aim at explaining the nature of the *Atman*. That is why the Upanisadic philosophy is said to be '*Atman'* centered. Their teaching is in line with the much later teaching of Socrates, 'Know thyself'.

The philosophical survey of the thirteen earliest Upanisads in this book borrows considerably from the work 'A Constructive Survey of the Upanisadic Philosophy' by Prof. R.D.Ranade, a very well researched and creative presentation.

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01
The Background of Upanisadic Speculation

The Significance of the Study of the Upanisads

The Upanisads contain not one system of philosophy, but systems of philosophy rising one over another like a mountain range, and culminating in a view of the Absolute Reality. Philological considerations weigh as much as philosophical considerations in the appreciation of the Philosophy of the Upanisads.

The Upanisads occupy a unique place in the development of Indian thought. In the Upanisads, we have the doctrines of Absolute Monism, of Personalistic Idealism, of Pluralism, of Solipsism, of Self-Realization , of the relation of Intellect to intuition and so forth. In the Upanisads we also have the conflict of view about the relation between the Absolute and the Individual, the nature of Immortality, the problem of Appearance, the Norm of human conduct, etc. The very acute analysis of the epistemology of Self-consciousness, as noticed in the Upanisads, can hold its own against any similar doctrine of any advanced thinker of today.

It has been customary with some western philosophers to presume that it is all pessimism that runs the contours of Upanisads. This presumption only exposes their ignorance of the content of the Upanisads. The Upanisads carry the crest-wave of that great huge ocean of blissful existence. They portray the life of beatific vision enjoyed at all times by the Mystic. The bliss they portray is positive and universal. The Upanisads form the basis of enlightened faith of India, and their purpose is spiritual; they are truly religious. They deserve to constitute a very important chapter in the World's Philosophy of Religion.

The philosophy of the Upanisads is metaphysical. The veracity and the virility of any such theory is to be gauged by its power of making life more divine and, therefore, worth living. The Upanisads provide the philosophic foundation upon which the Bhagavad-Gita later on erects its theory of spiritual activism. In either case, the mystical motive has been the most predominant in the Upanisads. It is Rational Mysticism, and it is a truism.

Plato and Shankaracharya among philosophers, Ashoka and Akbar among princes are illustrations of the way in which this universal vision has been sought.

Plato is known for nothing so much as for his synoptic vision of the universal among the particulars. Shankaracharya spent a lifetime in seeking to know that by knowing which everything else comes to be known. Ashoka, in one of his rock-edicts, forbade the decrying of other people's faiths – for in that way he said one was doing disservice to one's own faith – and he taught the virtue of Concourse (samavaaya). Akbar sought after the universal vision by summoning a Council of Religion, for perchance, in that way, he thought that 'that lock whose key had been lost might be opened'. There is a far cry from the days of Plato and Shankaracharya, or of Akbar and Ashoka, to the present day. Knowledge has taken immense strides with the growth of time. Scientific inventions have enormously enriched the patrimony of man. The old order has changed, and a new one has taken its place. Nevertheless, the goal of human life as well as the means for its attainment has remained the same. Unquestionably, the search after God remains the highest problem even today, and a philosophical justification of our spiritual life is as necessary today as it was hundreds of years ago.'

In the history of Indian Thought, every revival of the study of the Upanisads has synchronized with a great religious movement. When the author of the Bhagavad-Gita sought to synthesize the truths of the Upanisads in the immortal Song-Celestial, it was to give a new impulse to religious thought, and thereby to lay the foundations for a truly mystical religion.

More than a millennium later, during the time when the Systems of Reality based on Vedanta were sought to be constructed, there was again witnessed a phenomenon of a new religious revival, more in the nature of an intellectual rather than a purely mystical religion. Again, more than a millennium later, there has arisen the need to reconcile mysticism with intellectualism in such a way that any philosophic thought construction based on the eternal truths of spiritual experience might harmoniously synthesize the claims of science, philosophy and religion.

The Upanisads are indeed capable of giving us a view of reality, which would satisfy the scientific, the philosophic as well as the religious aspirations of man.

This is for the reason that they give us a view, which appears to be supported by a direct, firsthand, intuitive mystical experience, which science cannot impeach and which all philosophy may consider as the ultimate goal of its endeavour. At the same time, it can be seen at once to be immanent truth in the various forms of religion, which is the object of its investigation.

The Upanisads and the Rigveda

The Rigveda, which preceded the Upanisads more than thousand years, is a great hymnology to the personified forces of nature. It represents the earliest phase in the evolution of religious consciousness, that is, the objective phase of religion. The Upanisads, on the other hand, mark the subjective phase of religion. There are no hymns to gods and goddesses of Nature therein. On the other hand, they contain a scientific search for the Substratum underlying the phenomenal forces of nature. There are no offerings of prayers to gods in the Upanisads, nor is there any discernable fear of the wrath of those natural forces personified as gods. This is suggestive of the transference of interest from god to Self from the Vedic period to the period of Upanisads.

When the individual self has become the Universal Self, that is, when the Atman has been realized, whom and what may anybody fear? For whom and what may offerings be made? For who and what may anybody pray to divinity? In other words, from the Veda to the Upanisads, there is transference from prayer to philosophy, from hymnology to reflection, and from henotheistic polytheism to monotheistic mysticism.

Secondly, it is to be noticed that the concepts of cosmogony were found even in certain hymns of the Rigveda itself. For instance, in Rigveda hymn X-88, the seer enquires what the 'hyle' was, out of which the heavens and the earth were built eternally firm, and what it was upon which the Creator stood when he upheld the worlds. In hymns X-5 and 27, the concepts of Being and Not-being in a cosmological sense are broached. In hymn X-29, the primal existent is declared superior to both Being and Not-being, and the cognizant activity of the Creator is called in question. These references establish that even in the period of the Rigveda, a beginning was made towards the real, philosophical impulse, which, however, gathered momentum at the beginning of the period of the Upanisads.

Thirdly, from the psychological point of view, it may be noted that while the

Rigveda may be regarded as a great work of emotion and imagination, the Upanisads may be regarded as a work of thought and reason. The Upanisads exhibit a systematic search after the Ultimate Reality. This is best illustrated in many Rigveda hymns expressing the meek submission of the devotee seeking gracious forgiveness from a divinity which is the creation of his own imagination, the Upanisads declare confidently thus: 'Seek not favour from any such divinity; reality is not the divinity which you are worshipping – *nedam yad idam upaasate;* the guardian of order is not outside; natural and moral order does not come from without; it springs from the Atman, who is the synthesis of both outside and inside, who is veritably the ballast of nature, who is the unshakable bund that prevents the stream of existence from flowing recklessly as it lasts.'

The Upanisads and the Atharvaveda

From the age of the Rigveda to the age of the Atharvaveda, there is passage from hymns to incantations. Goblins, ghosts, sorcerers, witches, diseases and death take the place of the god of thunder, the god of rain, the god of celestial and terrestrial fire, the god and goddess of light, etc. The Atharvaveda is essentially a storehouse of the black art of the ancients. It is true that some auspicious charms take the place of destructive charms in the mantra-sastra of the Atharvaveda. But the general impression, which these Veda sakhas leave upon our mind, is that they sap all devotion or reason and leave us in the midst of witcheries and incantations. It is a far cry from the Atharvaveda to the Upanisads. These two are poles apart.

It is no doubt true that there is some kind of philosophical reflections in the Atharvaveda as in the hymns to Kaala (xix – 53-54). It is equally true that the Upanisads also contain the influence of the Atharvaveda in so far as incantations and charms are concerned.

For example, there are references in the Bruhadaaranyaka and the Kaushiitaki Upanisads that are of a degraded order of customs even in the reign of philosophy. They refer to such practices as securing the love of a woman, the destruction of the lover of a wife, the fulfillment of the desire for procreation, magical obtainment of rich treasure, securing the love of any man or woman, charms which may prevent death of children during one's lifetime, the teaching by means of which the enemies die round about us as the effect of the charms exercised against them, etc.

These are only the specimens of blemishes on an age otherwise wholly devoted to philosophical and mystical reflection. In a way, they look like spots on the face of the moon, only heightening the beauty of the philosophical reflections. But the clear distinction is that when we pass from the Atharvaveda to the Upanisads, we pass from the domain of incantations to the domain of philosophy.

The Upanisads and the Brahmanas

The age of the Brahmanas is that of ceremonialism and ritualism as the chief topic of the Brahmanas is sacrifice. It appears that the original purity of the hymnology of the Rigveda was sullied in the age of the Brahmanas. The Brahmanas foist a superstructure of meaningless ceremonialism upon the hymnology of the Veda. They press into their service passages and the texts from the Veda, which they utilize in such a way as to support the not-very-glorious life of the sacrificer.

The Brahmana passages mingle together legends, dogmas, philological and philosophical speculations, etc with a view to exhibiting the efficacy of the mantras for the practical life of the sacrificer. It looks odd that lot of intellect should have been wasted on the formulation of the details of the various sacrificial rites.

On the other hand, the spirit of the Upanisads, with a few exceptions, is entirely opposed to the sacrificial doctrine of the Brahmanas. The Upanisads promote philosophical thought as against the barren and empty formalism of the Brahmana literature.

The Mundaka Upanisad, in one passage, states that the only way towards securing the goal of human life consists in blindly following the routine of sacrificial and ritualistic works enjoined upon us by our ancestors (I.2.1).

But, in the following passages, the Upanisad declares thus: 'Sacrifices are like those unsteady boats on the ocean of life, which may take one at any time to the bottom of the sea. Those who regard sacrifices as the highest good of human life, go again and again from old age to death. Living in the midst of darkness, these *soi disant* wise men move about to and fro like blind men led by the blind. They regard themselves as having reached the goal of their life even while living in the midst of ignorance. Full of desire, they fall down from their places in the heavens

as soon as their merit is exhausted. Thinking that sacrifice is the highest end of human life, they cannot imagine that there is any other end. Having enjoyed in the heavens the reward of their good works, they descend down to this world or to a lower world still. It is only those who practise penance and faith in a forest, who tranquil their passions, lead the life of knowledge and live on alms, - it is only these that go to the immortal Atman by the door-way of the sun' (I.2.7-11).

Such passages as in the Mundaka Upanisad in relation to ritualism are rather rare. The Upanisads stand only for knowledge as against the Brahmanical philosophy of works. Their general concern is to try to find out the philosophical end of human life.

Even the early Upanisad Chhaandogya emphasizes the efficacy of the 'inner sacrifice'. It declares thus. 'Our real sacrifice consists in making oblations to the Prana within us. One, who does not know this inner sacrifice, even if he were to go in for a formal sacrifice, throws oblations merely on ashes. On the other hand, he who knows this inner sacrifice is relieved of his sins as surely as wool is burnt in a flame of fire. Knowing this inner sacrifice, even if a man were to do acts of charity for a chandala, he may verily be regarded as having sacrificed to the Universal Soul' (V.19-24).

The Kaushiitaki Upanisad makes a reference in a similar vein, probably referring to the custom at the time of the Aaranyakas to perform acts of mental sacrifice. In a passage, it declares thus: 'The ancient sages did not go in for a formal sacrifice knowing that an endless sacrifice was going on all the while within themselves' (II.5).

The above references only establish that the Brahmanical idea of sacrifice is so modulated in the days of Upanisads as to transform the very concept of sacrifice from a physical to a mental act, helpful to the process of acquisition of spiritual knowledge. On the whole, it may be said with no fear of contradiction that the futility of works was definitely recognized at the time of the Upanisads, which have promoted a philosophy of knowledge for the Brahminical philosophy of works.

Meaning of Revelation

The Veda sakhas, the Brahmanas and the Upanisads have all been recognized from times immemorial as *Sruti* or Revelation. Revelation may not be any

external message delivered to man from without, but a divine afflatus springing from within, inspired by the Divine. The Vedic texts are not human, as the work of men, but divine, as coming from God in that sense. We may say that the Vedic seers composed their hymns and the Upanisadic philosophers set forth intellectual arguments in this way.

It is not worthy of discussion, as the Naiyaayikas and Miimaamsakas later did, as to whether the Veda sakhas and the Upanisads are 'paurusheya' or 'apaurusheya'. The Naiyaayikas maintained that these works are 'paurusheya' in the sense that they were composed by God. The Miimaamsakas maintained, on the other hand, that they are 'apaurusheya' in the sense that they were composed neither by man nor by God, but that they have existed in eternity, in the form of sounds in which they have come down to us. In contrast to both these schools, the Vedantins maintain that the Veda sakhas and the Upanisads are 'apaurusheya' in the sense that they were inspired by God. Like basal literature of all religions, the Veda sakhas and the Upanisads appear to have been composed by seers in a state of divine intoxication.

On Revelation, the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states thus. 'The Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharvaangirasa have all of them been breathed forth by that great Primeval Being; likewise also have all history, all mythology, all sciences, all Upanisads, all poems, all aphorisms and all the commentaries thereon been breathed forth by that Great Divinity' (II.4.10).

The clubbing of the Veda and the Upanisads on one hand with the Histories and the Mythologies on the other as being the result of the breathing forth of God can only mean that all these great works may be regarded as having been due to the inspirational activity of God in the minds of those who composed them. It is not the writers of these works that are the authors of them, but it is the Divinity within them that is responsible for their production. From this angle, the philosophers to whom the Upanisads were attributed were merely instruments of the Divine for display of their activity. This is a kind of a new Upanisadic Occasionalism, where the seer or the sage serves merely as an occasion for the creative activity of God.

Thus, when the sage Svetaasvatara says that the Upanisad, named after him, was revealed to him because of the power of penance and the grace of God (VI.21) and when the sage Trisanku utters his *Vedaanuvachana,* in the Taittiriya

Upanisad, meaning either 'post-illuminational discourse' or 'in consonance with his mystical illumination' (I.10), they are only referring to the manner of *revelation* explained above.

There is also another view, which implies a kind of human participation in the transmission, if not in the composition, of these revealed texts. In the Isa (10) and the Kena (I.3) Upanisads, there is emphasis on a 'continuity of philosophical tradition which had come down to the days of the Upanisads'.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, it is likewise said that the sages of the yore were careful to learn spiritual wisdom from their *gurus*, for fear that when these *gurus* had departed, there would be nobody living who would tell them 'what could not be otherwise heard, what could not be otherwise thought, what could not be otherwise known' (VI.4.5).

In the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, there is a strange view of the genesis of Revelation. It states that the Rigveda, the Yajurveda and the Saamaveda were, all of them, produced by the God of Death, who having coupled himself with a wife of his own creation, namely Speech, produced the above mentioned Veda sakhas along with all men and cattle, from his union (I.2.4-5). This view appears to be quixotic for philosophical purposes. But it seems to have an anthropologic value, and as being the remnant of an old mythological way of thought. Such references are in plenty in Brahminical as well as in some Upanisadic literature.

On the whole, it may be said that the Upanisads are regarded by the Upanisads themselves as being the work of the inspirational activity of God in the human mind.

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02
Chronology of the Upanisads Their Basic Content

Meaning of the Word Upanisad

The word Upanisad means knowledge received by the student 'sitting close to' the teacher. Explaining the derivation of the term, in the introduction to his commentary on the Katha-Upanisad, Shankara says:

'By what etymological process does the term Upanisad denote knowledge? This is now explained. Those who seek liberation, being endowed with the spirit of dispassion towards all sense objects, seen or heard of, and, approaching this knowledge indicated by the term Upanisad, presently to be explained, devote themselves to it with one-pointed determination – of such people, this knowledge removes, shatters, or destroys the *avidya* (ignorance or spiritual blindness), which is the seed of all relative existence or worldliness. By these etymological connexions, Upanisad is said to mean knowledge.'

And anticipating a possible objection, Shankara continues:

'It may be urged that students use the term Upanisad even to denote a book, as when they say 'we shall study the Upanisad', 'we shall teach the Upanisad'. This is no fault; since the destruction, etc of the seed of worldliness, which is the meaning of the root *sad* (in upa-ni-sad), cannot be had from a mere book, but can be had from knowledge, even the book may also be denoted by that term, because it serves the same purpose (indirectly), as when we say that 'clarified butter is verily life'. Therefore, the term 'Upanisad' primarily refers to knowledge, and only secondarily to a book.'

Education involving the students 'sitting close to' the teacher means the most intimate student-teacher communion. The higher is the knowledge sought, the greater is this communion, and still greater is the silence accompanying the knowledge-communication. These values reach their maximum when the knowledge that is sought and imparted is of the highest kind, namely, *Atmajnana* or *Brahmajnana*, knowledge of the Atman or the Brahman, which as Shankara points out in his commentary on the Brahma-Sutra (I.1.2) – '*Anubhavavasanatvat bhutavastuvisayatvat cha Brahmajnanasya* – finds its consummation in experience (or realization), since the knowledge of the Brahman relates to a reality which is

already existing'.

Early and Later Upanisads

The Upanisads may be classified into the old and the new, or the early and the later, Upanisads. The old Upanisads account for thirteen and the new Upanisads are that have followed the old ones. The old Upanisads, arranged in the order of the Muktika canon are Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Maandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhaandogya, Brhadaaranyaka, Svetaasvatara, Kaushiitaki and Maitri. This order does not take their chronological sequence into account.

After considerable research, the Upanisadic age is placed between 1200 BC and 600 BC. From the point of view of chronology, and after taking various factors into account, the thirteen old Upanisads may be classified into five groups:

Isa and Kena

Aitareya, Taittiriya and Kaushiitaki

Katha Brhadaaranyaka and Chhaandogya

, Mundaka and Svetaasvatara

Prasna, Maitri and Maandukya

The new Upanisads seem to have been the product of the next period of Indian Thought subsequent to and later than 600 BC. They seem to have come into being when Buddhism was germinating in the Indian sub-continent, when the Saamkhya and the Yoga were being systematized and when the Bhagavad-Gita was being composed to finally hush the voice of the materialist and the atheist, by way of synthesizing the points of theistic significance in the Saamkhya and the Yoga. On the other hand, the thirteen old Upanisads constitute the philosophical bedrock of the Indian Thought in continuation of the Brahminical literature.

Main contents of the Upanisads

We review briefly the contents of the various Upanisads arranged chronologically, as recorded above. This is to set forth, in brief, the main philosophical points of interest in those Upanisads. This is primarily to enable

the readers to understand and appreciate the problem-by-problem treatment by the Upanisads from the philosophical points of view.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad

This Upanisad contains six chapters of which the second, the third and the fourth alone are of philosophical consequence. The other chapters, though they contain philosophical matters, are interspersed with miscellaneous reflections.

In the first chapter, we have a description of the Cosmic Person considered as a sacrificial horse. Then we pass on to the theory of Death as the 'arche' of all things. Then we have a parable in proof of the supremacy of *Praana* followed by some creationist myths put together at random.

In the second chapter, we have the famous conversation between Gaargya, the proud Brahmin, and Ajaatasatru, the quiescent Kshatriya king. The great sage Yajnavalkya is introduced in this chapter for the first time in the Upanisadic literature. In this chapter, there is a discourse by him to his wife Maitreyi.

In the third chapter, he discourses to several philosophers in the court of King Janaka. In the fourth chapter, he discourses to the King himself.

As for the personality of the sage Yajnavalkya, he is an irascible philosopher by nature, as may be seen from the fate to which he subjects Saakalya who was disputing with him in the court of the King. Nevertheless, he seems to possess the kindness of human feelings, especially in his relations with his wife Maitreyi. Though given to bigamy, he maintains a strict spiritual relation with Maitreyi, while he considers his other wife Kaatyayani as a woman of the world and treats her accordingly.

Adumbrating as he does his doctrine of immanence to Gaargi when she torments him with question after question, he handles her rather unceremoniously, checking her philosophic impudence. But he handles the sage Jaaratkaarava in a shrewd way. When the sage Jaaratkaarava presses him to some deepest questions of philosophy, he takes him by the hand out of the assembly of philosophers and scholars, and discourses with him on the subject of *karma.* He is quite prudent in giving *ad-hoc* answers to his controversialists.

He is a eudaemonist by nature and sees no harm in acceptance of presents while imparting philosophical knowledge. Thereby he is one with the Sophistic

view of wisdom rather than the Socratic view that a great spiritual teacher must never contaminate himself with the acceptance of presents.

Yajnavalkya is, undoubtedly, the greatest philosopher of the Upanisadic times. By his consistent philosophical Idealism and by his thoroughgoing practical Atmanism, he may give lessons to any great thinker of the day like King Janaka. Though the King offers him his kingdom and possessions, he scarcely avails of them.

The King Janaka figures largely in the third and the fourth chapters of the Upanisad. In the third chapter he is only a spectator of the great controversy in his court. In the fourth, he takes the liberty to learn personally from the sage Yajnavalkya himself. In the fifth chapter, too, the King is introduced, wherein there are miscellaneous reflections on ethical, cosmological and eschatological matters.

The sixth chapter of the Upanisad contains the celebrated parable of the senses, and the philosopher Pravaahana Jaivali is introduced. This last chapter ends with certain superstitious Brahminical practices. Among other things, it carries a statement of the genealogical tradition of the Upanisad, which is to be taken note of for what it is worth.

The Upanisad contains detailed information about different kinds of meditation and several philosophical doctrines. Only when one sacrifices the cosmos, gives it up, does one realize the *Atman*. It mentions that the horse sacrificed in the *Asvametha-Yajna* (sacrifice) is symbolic of the cosmos.

In the beginning, there was the *Atman* that asserted, 'I AM' and became the 'I'. Then it felt lonely and was afraid, as fear would arise from loneliness. It wondered why IT was afraid and wanted an 'other'. Then IT became the two - man and woman. Men were born of them. The state of love is the Unmanifest (*avyakta*). The Unmanifest becomes the manifest world. The *Atman* is the same as the *Brahman*. He who realizes 'I am the *Brahman*' becomes the *Brahman*.

The world consists of the three – name given by speech, form seen by the eye and action originating in the *atman*, and is full of the *Brahman*. All the three constitute the Being. It teaches the doctrine that the *atman* is found in deep sleep. Nobody wants an object of pleasure for the sake of the object, but for the sake of the *atman*. We are, therefore, to know what the *atman* is. By knowing it,

everything becomes known. Everything is the *Atman* (*idam sarvam yadayam atma*). When it is realized that everything is the *Atman*, one realizes that there is no difference between the knower and the known. This *Atman* is the *Brahman* (*ayam atma brahma).*

This Upanisad records the debate between Yajnavalkya and other enquirers after Truth. Yajnavalkya says that, after death, the senses and mind of man become one with their respective deities who are their sources. But his actions - *karma* (merit and demerit) accompany him to another life. The *atman* lives through the life principle and works through all the life functions. None can see the seer; none can hear the hearer and none can know the knower. It is not an object of any form of consciousness. The *atman* is present inwardly in everything (*antaryamin*) and knows everything, but nothing knows it. It is the ultimate seer, hearer, thinker and knower. The *atman* is neither subtle nor gross, neither the senses nor the life principle, neither inwards nor outwards. It is imperishable. It commands the sun and the moon, the elements and time to perform their functions. Everything is founded in it. It is the same as the *Brahman*. The *Brahman* is Knowledge and Bliss (*vijnanam anandam brahma*).

Yajnavalkya also teaches that the *atman* is the guiding light of man. What light guides man? By the light of the sun is the answer. What is the man's light when the sun sets? The answer is the light of the moon. What is the light when the moon sets? The answer is that it can then be the light of fire. What can be the light when the fire goes out? The answer is that another man's voice may then guide. What can be the light when there is no such voice? The answer is the light that guides in a dream. What is the light that guides in a dream? The answer is it is the light of the *atman*. It is through the light of the dream that one can transcend the forms of death or other perishable forms. That light is itself imperishable.

This Upanisad teaches that when the 'I' is embraced by the *atman* as *prajna* in deep sleep, it becomes filled with bliss and knows nothing else.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/SuklaYajurvedam/Madyandina%20Samhita/Upanisa ds/Brihadaranyaka%20upanisad/brihadaranyaka.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/brihadaranyaka.htm

The Chhaandogya Upanisad

The Chhaandogya Upanisad, though considered to belong to the period of the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, is not of such high literary or philosophic eminence as the latter. It is, however, quoted quite often by the author of the Vedantasutras. Chapters six, seven and eight alone are of philosophical importance.

The first and the second chapters portray only Brahminical liturgy and doctrine. Although there is a little cosmological argument and a little philosophical disquisition here and there, on the whole, they contain only such subjects as the significance of *Aum,* the meaning, the kind and the names of *Saaman,* and the genesis and function of *Aum*.

At the end of the first chapter, there is a parable loaded with satire, pouring ridicule upon the mantra-chanters who go about their business with the desire of obtaining some material ends. It is in the nature of an invective against the Brahminical belief in externalism, with a view to asserting the supremacy of the spiritual end to any material end whatsoever.

The third chapter contains the famous description of the sun as a great beehive hanging in space. It also contains with a description of the Gayathri Brahmana-wise, the *bon mots* of Saandilya, a description of the world as a huge chest, the all-too disconnected instruction of Angeerasa to Krishna, the son of Devaki, and finally a piece of heliolatry, with the myth of the emergence of the sun out of a huge egg.

In the fourth chapter is presented the philosophy of Raikva, the story of Satyakaama Jaabaala and his mother, and the story of Upakosala who is the disciple of Satyakaama Jaabaala.

In the fifth chapter is contained the eschatological teaching of Jaivali which is identical in content with the account in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad. In addition, the chapter contains the famous synthesis of thought effected by Asvapati Kaikeya out of the six cosmological doctrines advanced by the six philosophers who had gone to learn 'wisdom' from him.

The sixth chapter is evidently is the best of all the chapters. In this chapter is contained the highly-strung 'identitat' philosophy of Aaruni who establishes an absolute equation between individual and Universal Spirit. For him there is no difference between the two at all. Aaruni is the outstanding personality of the Chhaandogya Upanisad as Yaajnavalkya is of the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad. The Satapatha Brahmana records that Aaruni was a very renowned sage of antiquity, and that Yaajnavalkya was a pupil of Aaruni. The philosophy, which Aaruni advances in this chapter, truly entitles him to that position. But later writers such as the author of the Kaushitaki Upanisad utilized his name for very unimportant purposes.

The seventh chapter contains the famous discourse between Narada and Sanatkumara. The eighth chapter contains some very excellent hints for the practical realization of the Atman, as well as the famous myth of Indra and Virochana.

The Upanisad states that after salvation, man's spirit resides along with the gods and the *Brahman* in the highest world. This conception is theistic. It also states that everything is verily the *Brahman*. It is the innermost to man. It is the smallest and yet the largest. It is reached after death. In the beginning, all was Non-being out of which Being came and then the cosmic egg. The egg burst creating the cosmos. The Upanisad propounds that Being cannot come out of Non-Being, and so originally there was Being.

The person seeing through the eye is the *Atman* and is the *Brahman*. The eye is considered the most important of the senses.

Aruni teaches his son Svetaketu that in sleep, speech enters mind, mind the life principle (*prana*), the life principle the psychic force (*tejas)*, the psychic force the Supreme Deity. All these belong to the *Atman*. 'That art thou' (*tattvamasi*)! Everything enters the *Atman* and loses its identity. The Upanisad mentions *mahavakyas* such as 'I am all this' (*ahameva idam sarvam)* and 'The *Atman* is all this' (*atma eva idam sarvam*).

This Upanisad anticipates the doctrine of the Mandukya Upanisad pointing out the various stages by which the search for the *Atman* has to be carried out. It also delineates the field in which the enquiry has to be conducted.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/SamaVedam/Upanisads/Chandogya%20upanisad/chandogya.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/chhandogya.htm

The Isa Upanisad

The Isa Upanisad is named after the initial word of the treatise. It is quite a small Upanisad, and yet it contains an extraordinarily piercing insight. In a short compass of eighteen verses, it gives a valuable mystical description of the Atman, a description of the ideal sage who stands unruffled in the midst of temptations and sorrows, an adumbration of the doctrine of *Karma-yoga* as later formulated, and finally a reconciliation of the claims of knowledge and works. The most valuable idea that lies at the root of the Upanisad is that of a logical synthesis, which it attempts between the two opposites of knowledge and works. According to it, both are required to be annulled in a higher synthesis. It is this idea of the logical synthesis of opposites, which is an unconscious contribution, which the Sage of the Upanisad makes to the development of Indian Thought.

The Upanisad teaches the doctrine of the Infinite to which addition and subtraction make no difference. As to the *Brahman*, IT is the One; IT does not move and yet is faster than mind; IT is far and yet near; IT is outwards and yet inwards to us. IT teaches that the Lord pervades everything in the world.

The Isa Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/SuklaYajurvedam/Kanva%20Samhita/Upanisad/Isa%20upanisad/isaupanisad.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/isaintrod.htm

The Kena Upanisad

As is the Isa Upanisad, the Kena Upanisad, too, is named after the initial word of the Upanisad. It consists of four sections, two balancing against two, and the first two composed in verse, while the last two in prose. It exhibits the division of the subjective and the objective approaches to the proof of Atman,

namely, the psychological and the cosmological.

The verse part of the Upanisad presents a psychological argument for the existence of the Atman as the inspirer of the various sense functions. Literally and metaphorically, the verse part does away the idol worship and favours the worship of the Ultimate Reality conceived as the Atman. Finally, in a paradoxical passion, it hammers the spiritual truth that 'those who know really do not know, and those who do not know may alone be said to know the Ultimate Reality'.

The prose part of the Upanisad records the famous myth of Indra and the Damsel, and advances the cosmological argument for the proof of the Immeasurable Power, which is behind the forces of Nature. It teaches that no man who is not humble can ever hope to come into the presence of this Power, and thus stresses on the need for humility. It lays the moral foundation for the esoteric doctrine that austerity, restraint and action are its attributes, the Veda sakhas its limbs, and Truth its shelter. The Upanisad advises us to find the same reality in objective as well as subjective existence in the flash of the lightning as in the motion of the mind.

The Upanisad raises the question what is it that impels the senses and the mind to perceive and understand. What is it that sustains all, but which nothing sustains? He who says that he knows it does not really know it, and he who says that he does not know it verily knows it. That is the *Atman*, the *Brahman*. Without IT, the senses, the mind and even the gods can do nothing.

The Kena Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/SamaVedam/Upanisads/Kena%20upanisad/kena.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/kena.htm

The Aitareya Upanisad

The Aitareya Upanisad, properly so-called, is only a part of the larger Aitareya Aaranyaka beginning with the fourth section of the second chapter through to the end of the chapter. The Upanisad itself contains three chapters all of which are important.

The first chapter is given to a description of the creation of the world by the primeval Atman through the intermediary Virat. The second chapter contains the famous philosophy of 'Three Births' probably belonging to the sage Vaamadeva, a Vedic sage mentioned in Rigveda (IV.27.1). His opinions are cited with approval and his example is held up before a seeker desirous of gaining immortality. In this chapter is introduced the idea of life after death. The third and the last chapter is a very bold statement of the fundamental doctrine of idealistic philosophy that all psychical and the cosmical existences must be regarded as the expression of a common principle, namely, intellect.

The Upanisad gives a semi–mythological account of creation. According to it, the *Atman* correlates the microcosm and the macrocosm. The gods become the psychophysical principles. The mental functions are only the rays of our rational consciousness (*prajnanam*). Our rational consciousness is the constant integrated awareness (*prajnanam-brahma*).

The Aitareya Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/Rigvedam/Upanishads/volume1.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/aitareya.htm

The Taittiriya Upanisad

The Taittiriya Upanisad is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter occurs the famous physiological description of the nipple-like gland that hangs downwards in the brain, and which is regarded as the seat of the Immortal Being. Two famous ethical descriptions as well as the mystical utterances of Trisanku also occur in this chapter.

The second chapter is a collection of miscellaneous points containing, among other things, the first mention of the so-called 'Doctrine of Sheaths' as well as a description of the Beatific Calculus. The third chapter takes up the question of the Sheaths from the second chapter and exhibits these as a ladder of metaphysical existences. The chapter ends with that famous mystical monologue in which subject and object, and the subject-object relation are all described as being ultimately one.

The Upanisad mentions five forms of union - the union of physical elements,

the union of shining beings, the union of knowledge, the union of creative beings and the union of physiological parts, incorporating the idea of union as the act of creation. It establishes that by the time of this Upanisad, five forms of causal explanation of creation came to be accepted. They are the physical explanation of the creation of the universe, creation as due to the actions of the divine beings, as due to the potency of esoteric knowledge, as due to some cosmic sexes and as due to the *atman* or man as the centre.

The *Brahman* is the Truth, Consciousness and the Infinite. From the *Atman* is born ether, air, fire, water, earth, plants, food and man as 'I', one from the other sequentially. Man is called *atman* because he eats, swallows and absorbs (*adyate*) the different elements constituting the objective world. Inward to the *atman* made of food is the *atman* made of the vital principle (*prana*). Inward to the vital principle lies the mind, inward to mind, reason (*vijnana*) and inward to reason, bliss (*ananda*). Each latter is the *atman* of the former and each former is the body of the latter. But every one of them is a form of *Purusa* (*Atman*) Himself.

This Upanisad teaches that Reality in the beginning was absolutely indeterminate – Unmanifest. It points out that the Bliss of the *Atman* is infinitely greater than all the pleasures of men and gods put together. Even though several distinctions among the levels of spirit and body are made, every level is considered part and parcel of the *Brahman*.

This Upanisad defines *atman* as one that eats, swallows and absorbs the different elements constituting the objective world. The Sanskrit word for absorption is *adyate.* This is symbolic of the *atman*, as everything is to dissolve into it ultimately, ontologically. This is not the only etymological meaning of the word '*atman*'. From the point of view of Indo-Germanic philology, the most reasonable seems to be from a word meaning 'to breathe'. The Sanskrit root is '*an'*, meaning to breathe.

The Taittiriya Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/KrishnaYajurvedam/Upanishads/Taittiriya%20upanisad/volume1.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/taittariya.htm

The Kaushitaki Upanisad

The Kaushitaki Upanisad is divided into four chapters. The first is an enlarged variant on the description of the path of the Gods and the path of the Fathers as occurring in the Brhadaaranyaka and the Chhaandogya Upanisads.

The second and the third chapters may be said to belong to the Kaushitaki Upanisad proper. The second chapter is a collection of quite disconnected units, and contents the doctrines of the four philosophers, namely, Kaushitaki, Paingya, Pratardana and Sushkabhringaara. The sage Kaushitaki is described as 'Sarvajit' meaning an all-conquering sage. Further, the chapter contains a description of a number of social customs of the times, which are superstitious and are, therefore, to be considered as irreligious. In the third chapter, the sage Pratardana is described as imbibing the principles of philosophy from Indra. As Indra is only a mythological name of Vedic repute, it may be that the points of philosophy contained in this chapter belong to the sage Pratardana himself rather than to Indra. Nevertheless, we must consider the story as it is, and take into account the references to Indra's exploits freely made here, as they are similar to those made in the Rigveda Samhita.

To be specific, Indra tells Pratardana that the only good for mankind here on earth is to know Him; that He it was who had killed the three-headed son of Tvashtri; that He it was who had delivered over the Arunmukhas to the jackals; that having broken many a treaty, He it was who killed the sons of Prahlada in heaven, the Paulomas in the inter-mundane regions, and the Kaalakanjas on earth; and that even though He had done these deeds, not a hair of His body was injured; and that finally any one who understands Indra to be of this nature, and to have performed these exploits, never suffers, even though he may kill his mother or father, or go in for a theft, or destroy an embryo; nor does the bloom ever depart from his face. It is in this conversation between Indra and Pratardana that *Prana* comes to be understood first as the principle of life, then as the principle of consciousness, and then is equated with Ultimate Reality, namely the Atman. And we are told that it is this Atman who is the cause of all good and evil actions in this world, and that all human beings are merely instruments in His hands.

The Kaushitaki Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://www.vedamu.org/vedas/Other%20Upanisads/Kaushhiitakiupanisad.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://www.celextel.org/ebooks/upanishads/kaushitaki_brahmana_upanishad.htm

The Katha Upanisad

The Katha, the Mundaka and the Svetaasvatara Upanisads, constituting the fourth group, are related to each other as no three of the other Upanisads are. They all aim envisaging the highest philosophical truths in a poetic manner, and thus become the chief sources of the Bhagavad-Gita and other philosophical Gitas of the later period. The main difference among the three Upanisads is that the Katha Upanisad is a metaphysical work, the Mundaka an emotional work and the Svetaasvatara a commixture of philosophy and mysticism. All the three Upanisads seem to have been written at a time when the Saamkhya and the Vedaanta had not yet parted ways.

The Katha Upanisad has its natural termination at the end of the first Adhyaya. This is evident from the repetition of words at the end of the Adhyaya as well as the 'phalasruti', which is also given at same place. The second Adhyaya thus seems to be tacked on to the original redaction of the Upanisad, even though the second Adhyaya seems to furnish a sequel to the Nachiketa's Death story as may be seen in the last verse of the first Adhyaya.

In the second Adhyaya (5, 6), Yama seems just to be furnishing an answer to the query of Nachiketas in Adhyaya one (29). This suggests that the entire intervening portion is a later addition.

Two of the most prominent features of the Katha Upanisad are the description of the 'Chariot of the Body', and the death and the dream approaches to the problem of reality. The whole of the Katha Upanisad is surcharged with lofty ideas about the Immortality of the Soul, as well as suggestions for the practical attainment of the Atman. In one passage, this Upanisad brings out a distinction regarding the realization of the Atman in the various worlds.

While we are dwelling in this body on earth, we can visualize the Atman only

as in a mirror. This is contrariwise, left being to the right and right being to the left. In the world of the Fathers, we visualize the Atman as in a dream, the image leaving a psychical impression indeed, but being unreal. In the world of the Gandharvas, we are told, we see Him as one sees a pebble under water, the image being true but refracted. It is only in the world of the Brahman, we are informed, that we can distinguish the Atman from the non-Atman, as light from shade. This means that we can see the Atman as in broad daylight. This is a valuable contribution of Katha Upanisad to Upanisadic thought.

The Upanisad teaches that the knowledge of what happens to man after death is more valuable than anything in the world, than even sovereignty of the whole world. Such knowledge is the knowledge of the *Atman*. *Atman* is smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest. The objects are higher than the senses, mind higher than the objects, the individual's reason (*Buddhi*) higher than mind, the Cosmic Reason (*Mahan Atman, Logos)* higher than the individual's reason, the Unmanifest (*Avyakta*) higher than the Cosmic Reason and the *Purusa* (*Atman*) higher than the Unmanifest; there is nothing higher than the *Purusa*. The *Atman* cannot be understood by reason; it has to be grasped only as 'Is'. It can be realized by withdrawing speech (*senses*) into mind, mind into reason (*jnana atman*), reason into the Cosmic Reason and that into the *Atman* of Peace (*Santa Atman).* Everything else is a branch of the *Atman* and the *Atman* is the root. The whole is like the *Asvattha* tree whose roots are above and branches below. It is symbolic that the *Atman* is above everything and yet is the main root of everything.

The Katha Upanisad text in Sanskrit at:

http://www.vedamu.org/vedas/108Upanisads/108Upanisads.asp
(Enter Page No.4)

The Katha Upanisad translated version in English is at:

http://www.celextel.org/ebooks/upanishads/katha_upanishad.htm

The Mundaka Upanisad

As the name implies, the Mundaka Upanisad is an Upanisad addressed to *shavelings*, and may be classified, according to its subject matter, along with the later Samnyaasa Upanisads. Its eclecticism is apparent on the face. The position it

takes in regard to ritualism is halting. Its cosmology is suffused both by Saamkhya and Vedanta ideals. Its metaphysics is totally based on Vedic thought and has a ritualistic tinge. It can incite to mystic thought. As a work, it has no parallel in the whole literature of the Upanisads.

The Upanisad differentiates the higher and the lower forms of knowledge. The higher is the knowledge of the *Brahman* and the lower is the knowledge of the empirical sciences, and arts including the Veda and their subsidiaries. As the spider throws out its web and withdraws it into itself again, the *Atman* throws out the world out of IT and withdraws the world again into IT. The life of action and sacrifices is as unstable as an unsteady boat and is, therefore, not the highest, and belongs to the world of ignorance.

In man dwell two spirits - the higher and the lower. The higher remains a pure witness of the lower and its experiences. The lower performs actions in this world and enjoys their fruit. Because of the rewards and punishments that follow the merit and demerit of actions, the lower is bound by them and feels not happy. But it overcomes its bondage when it realizes the higher spirit, merging with it. Study or intellect, penance or renunciation cannot attain the *Atman*. Nor do the weak or the deluded. Only those chosen for it can realize it.

The Mundaka Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/AtharvanaVedam/Upanisad/Mundaka%20upanisad/mundaka.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://sanatan.intnet.mu/upanishads/mundaka.htm

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad seems to have been written in the interests of Saivism. It seems to have had its natural termination at the end of the first chapter, as may be seen from the repetition of the words at that stage. The other chapters seem to have been added at a later stage.

In the first chapter we have suggestions for a good criticism of contemporary doctrines, including even Atmanism, in favour of a Saivite Trinitarian Monism. The second chapter contains a classical description of *yoga.* The third, the fourth and the fifth chapters are devoted to a discussion of Saivite and Saamkhya

philosophies. There is a discussion as to the meaning of the word 'Kapila' mentioned in chapter five.

The last chapter is the only un-sectarian one devoted to the theistic view of the Godhead. In this chapter is introduced the idea of *bhakti* (devotion) to *guru* as to God.

This Upanisad was written at a time when the Saamkhya and the Vedanta were yet intermixed. 'The Saamkhya had not yet lost its God who is described as ruling the Pradhana (VI.10), while the Vedanta had not yet definitely had its Maya, a mere metamorphosis of the Saamkhya Prakriti. The three Gunas as in IV.5 were yet the common property of both the Saamkhya and the Vedanta, having had their origin so far back as the Chhaandogya VI.4. Nor had the Saamkhya yet laid an emphasis on the subjectivity of sense perception, which was primarily responsible for the parting of the ways between the Saamkhya and the Vedanta. The doctrine of creation in the sense of evolution was mooted in V.5, but its full implications had not been yet thought out. The psychology and the metaphysics of the Saamkhya were yet in the making, and had not yet been sundered from those of the Vedanta as with a hatchet. It is for all these reasons that we may say that the Svetaasvatara, in which lie embedded side by side the Saamkhya and the Vedanta doctrines of cosmology, psychology and metaphysics, is a very valuable Upanishad for the genetic study of the parting of the ways between the two great systems.'

The Upanisad is considered to be a theistic Upanisad as it speaks of the *Brahman* as a personal being. It enumerates some contemporary doctrines of the origin of the world, then in vogue. According to it, the origin was time, nature, necessity, chance, elements, cosmic womb, *Purusa*, the finite self (*atman*). There are two *atman*s - the perishable and the imperishable. Man is a combination of the two. The perishable is the manifest, meant to act and enjoy the fruit of actions. The imperishable is the *Atman* as the cosmos, the Lord. The perishable is the *pradhana* (*Prakrti*). It is *Maya*. The *pradhana* is the primary state of the whole world of becoming. *Prakrti* is the original state of the world of becoming. *Maya* is the appearance of something as being, although it is only becoming. It is neither being nor non-being and so becoming. As becoming appears as being, it is called *Maya*. Everything that belongs to *Maya* is perishable. Man overcomes *M*aya by knowing the imperishable.

The *atman* is present in the body like oil in the oil-seed or butter in milk The *Brahman* is the *Purusa* Himself. This Upanisad mentions the names of the Saiva religious sects. But it treats Siva as the *Brahman* Itself. It repeats the Mundaka passage about the two *atman*s as the two birds, the lower one merging with the higher.

It compares the Lord to the magician and calls His power magic–*Maya.* The *Atman* is neither male nor female. The Lord presides over our ethical conduct, but is accessible to men who have risen above action. This Upanisad carries the ideas of grace and devotion. It mentions the name of Svetaasvatara who obtained divine knowledge through penance and the grace of God. One who is absolutely devoted to God and likewise to his teachers can only know the divine truths. Theism is clearly emphasized in this Upanisad.

The Katha Upanisad text in Sanskrit at:

http://www.vedamu.org/vedas/108Upanisads/108Upanisads.asp

(Enter Page No.121)

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad translated version in English is at:

http://www.celextel.org/ebooks/upanishads/svetasvatara_upanishad.htm

The Prasna Upanisad

The Prasna Upanisad evidently belongs to a very late date in the history of Upanisadic literature. It is a preconceived systematic unity, as almost no other Upanisad is. Six sages go to Pippalada to learn wisdom. They ask, each of them, a question of Pippalada in such a way that the person last mentioned asks his question first. The order of their questions is such that they educe an evolving philosophy from Pippalada. The nature, the style and the manner of presentation of the arguments in the Upanisad are comparatively modern.

The first question relates to the creation of creatures. The answer is that the creator God created couples of polar opposites, which in turn created the world of beings. The couples were *Rayi* (*materia*l) and *Prana* (*the life principle*). The life principle is the Cosmic Person and is one's *atman*.

The second question enquires as to who the gods are and who among them is the greatest. The answer is that the gods are Ether (*akasa*), Air, Fire, Water, Earth, Speech, Mind, Eye and Ear. Greater than all of them is *Prana*. Here the *Prana*

means not mere physical air or physiological bios, but the Cosmic Principle integrating the part of the universe and the psychophysical constituent of human beings. When the life principle exits the body, nothing remains and none of the other gods can perform their functions. This establishes that by the time this Upanisad was written, the gods of polytheism who were originally treated as natural forces were turned into cosmic entities and into man's senses and organs.

The third question relates to the origin of *prana* itself and how does it divide itself into senses, etc of man. The answer is that *prana* is born out of the *atman* like reflection and employs its divisions for performing different functions in the body.

The fourth question relates to what happens to the gods in sleep and who is it that sleeps. The answer is that in sleep all the senses become one with the god of mind. Only *prana* and its involuntary activities do not sleep and continue to work. In dream, the agent experiences whatever is experienced in the waking state again, and even what is not then experienced. In dreamless sleep, he is overpowered by a psychic force (*tejas)* or its intense light and does not see dreams. Like birds resting on a tree, everything rests in the *atman*.

The fifth question is about the word *Aum*. The answer is that the word is the same as the *Brahman*, both the manifest and the unmanifest together.

The sixth question relates to the *Purusa* (*Atman*) and His sixteen phases. The answer is that the phases are *prana*, faith (*conviction of existence or being*), the five elements - ether, air, fire, water and earth, all the senses taken together - vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste, mind, food, semen (*the generative principle*), penance, sacred word, ethical action, the worlds and name. All of them are fixed in the *Atman* like spokes in the axle. This means that the *Atman* is the centre as well as the circumference of the universe. IT is the source of functions and processes in IT. IT is the consciousness of everything – not empty consciousness.

The Prasna Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

vedamu.org/vedas/AtharvanaVedam/Upanisad/Prasnaupanisad/prasna.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/prasna1.htm

The Maitri Upanisad

The Maitri Upanisad is a very important Upanisad as its vocabulary and its many references are peculiar to itself. It can be divided into two strata, the first four chapters constituting the first and the last three constituting the second stratum. The first stratum may be considered a comparatively early redaction, and is, therefore, relevant for philosophical consideration. The second stratum contains references to such astrological names as Sani, Rahu and Ketu (VIII.6), Brihaspati, the author of a heretical philosophy (VII.9), and six-fold Yoga (VI.18). This Yoga appears to be the precursor of the later eight-fold Yoga.

Under the spell of the Saamkhya and the Buddhist doctrines, King Brihadratha is introduced in the first stratum of the Upanisad, as giving vent to a pessimistic mood, which is quite unusual in Upanisadic literature. The King goes to Saakayaana and begs of him to teach the secret of philosophy. Saakayaana tells him what he has himself learnt from the sage Maitri. The sage Maitri is thus regarded as the promulgator of the doctrines of this Upanisad.

In the philosophy of Maitri, the first issue is a description of the pure noumenal Self who 'arising from the body shines in His own greatness'. The second issue is a description of the phenomenal Self-called the Bhutaatman who is subject to the influence of good and bad actions, and who, therefore, undergoes transmigration. The third issue is the description of the *raajasa* and the *taamasa* qualities. Among the *taamasa* qualities are mentioned infatuation, fear, dejection, sleep, sloth, hurt, age, grief, hunger, thirst, niggardliness, anger, atheism, ignorance, jealousy, pitilessness, folly, shamelessness, roguery, haughtiness and changeability. Among *raajasa* quality are mentioned desire, affection, passion, covetousness, injury, love, longing-ness, activity, rivalry, restlessness, fickleness, instability, greed, partiality to friends, the support of those who are around and about, aversion for the undesirable and attachment to the desirable (III.5).

The noumenal Self is regarded as the Mover of the Body under whose direction the Body goes round like a wheel driven by a potter, the sensory organs being the rein, the motor organs the horses, the body the chariot, the mind the charioteer, and the temperament the whip (II.9). The phenomenal Self is considered like a beast chained by the fetters of good and evil, bound like one in a prison, subject to terror as one in the hands of death, deluded by pleasure like

one intoxicated by liquor, rushing headlong like one possessed by an evil spirit, bitten by adversity as by a great serpent, blinded by a passion as by night, filled by *Maya* as by sleight-of-hand, false like a dream, unsubstantial like the pith of a banana tree, changing dress like an actor, and falsely delighting the mind like painted wall (IV.2).

In the second stratum there are helio-theism bordering on pantheism; a number of astronomical speculations (VI.14-16); the doctrine of the Word and the non-Word – non-Word being even superior to Word; an exhortation to avoid the company of those who always live in the state of hilarity; those who beg; those who live on handicraft; those who perform sacrifices for the unworthy; the *sudras* who learn scriptures; the rogues who wear knotted hair; dancers; mercenaries; prize-fighters; mendicants; actors; those dismissed from the service of the king; those who pretend to allay the evil influence of sprites and goblins; those who wear red-dress, ear-rings and skulls; and those who, by their sophism, shake the faith of the people in the Veda (VII.8).

There is also an adumbration of the later Hatha-yoga practices such as pressing the tongue against the palate, conveying the breath through the *sushumna* (VI.18-21), and a description of the seven mystical sounds heard in the process of contemplation, namely, those of a river, a bell, a brazen vessel, a wheel, the croaking of frogs, the pattering of rain, and a voice which comes from a place of seclusion (VI.22).

The Maitri Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://www.vedamu.org/vedas/Other%20Upanisads/Maitrayanyupanisad/Maitrayanyupanisad.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://www.celextel.org/ebooks/upanishads/maitrayani_upanishad.htm

The Maandukya Upanisad

The Maandukya Upanisad is the last of the early great Upanisads, laying the foundations of the later Vedanta philosophy. It partitions the symbol Aum into three different parts, and adds a fourth. They correspond to different states of consciousness, corresponding to which are, again, different kinds of soul. The great originality of the Maandukya Upanisad consists in positing the four states

of consciousness, namely, waking, dream, deep sleep, and the fourth one – the inexplicable state of consciousness.

The Upanisad teaches that there is an aspect of the Godhead corresponding to these states of consciousness, the last one alone being real. The Absolute of philosophy surpasses a theological conception as that of God.

The Upanisad contains a summary of all the other Upanisads. It teaches that the *atman* has four states - the waking state, the dream state, the state of dreamless sleep and its original pure state. In the waking state, the consciousness of the *atman* is directed towards external gross objects. It has then seven parts and nineteen gateways. The seven parts are the forehead, eye, the life principle, bodily centre, abdomen, feet and face. The nineteen gateways are the five senses - eye, ear, taste, touch and smell, the five organs of action - hands, feet, the generative organ, excretory organ and the organ of speech, the five vital principles - *prana, apana, udana, vyana* and *samana*, the four inner instruments - mind, ego, reason and apperception. (The five vital principles are said to control the involuntary functions of the body making life possible. It is difficult to identify them).

In this state the *atman* is considered the worldly person - *Vaisvanara*, meaning the gross aspect of the Logos or the Cosmic Person. In dream, it has the same seven parts and nineteen gates, but its consciousness is turned inwards, towards the dream objects. In this state, it is called the psyche, as it constitutes psychic force enjoying dream objects of subtle elements. In dreamless sleep, the *atman* desires nothing. Its consciousness is its only gate and all plurality becomes one in it. It is then called *Prajna* as its being is pure, undifferentiated, solid, unified consciousness and into which everything enters. It pervades the other two states and always stays as their background. It is full of bliss. But it knows nothing, not even itself. The fourth state is the *Atman* in Its purity and is beyond thought and speech. IT knows itself and is not overwhelmed by the Unconscious.

The word *Aum* consists of three parts-a, u and m. The letter 'a' is the *atman* in the waking state, 'u' the *atman* in the dream state and 'm' the *atman* in the deep sleep. The *Atman* in Its original pure state is without distinction. It is AUM - the ALL.

This Upanisad gives a new idea as to the study of the 'I' consciousness. It has

to be studied in its own field, not in the field of objects. The four states of the *Atman* constitute the specific field of the 'I' consciousness at the level of the macro as well as the microcosmic personalities. The *Atman* is the *Brahman*. The names of the four states of the macro Cosmic Person are *Virat, Hiranyagarbha (Sutratman), Iswara* and the *Brahman.* The macro Cosmic Person includes all the microcosmic persons and inter-relates them. The Cosmic Person works through the finite persons.

The Maandukya Upanisad text in Sanskrit is at:

http://vedamu.org/vedas/AtharvanaVedam/Upanisad/Mandukya%20upanisad/Mandukya.asp

Translated version in English is at:

http://www.hinduwebsite.com/mandukya.htm

The Problems of the Upanisadic Philosophy

'Wonder' is the root of the Upanisadic philosophy in India, as in Greece. The philosophers of the Upanisads did not consider the forces of nature as heavenly deities before whom they had to bow down their heads in awe. From the Rigveda to the Upanisads, we find the same transition as we find in the History of Greek Philosophy from Homer and Hesiod to Thales and Anaximander.

In the Upanisads, natural forces cease to be personified, and speculative thinking is the bottom line of all enquiries. The Mundaka Upanisad asks, 'What is that, which being known, everything else becomes known?' (I.1.3). In short, the enquiry is to know the 'arche' of knowledge. First they tried to find this in the cosmological sphere. Having failed to find it therein, they began to search after it in the psychological domain.

The Katha Upanisad makes the enquiry, 'what is it, which persists when the body is dead? What is it, again, which lives and persistently creates, even though the body may go into a state of sleep?' (II.5.4-8).

Yaajnavalkya stands victorious in the court of the King Janaka when he addresses the transmundane problem of persistence of the Self after death. Yaajnavalkya asks, 'What is the real root from which the tree of life springs again and again, even though knocked and cut down by Death?' (III.9.28).

Eschatological knowledge is regarded as the most precious of all. But, even then, the desire of man to know the Ultimate could not be finally quenched. He must know the answer to the most central problem – 'What is the Real; what is the Atman; and what intellectual construction could one make about the Atman?'

Any attempt to solve these problems would lead the Philosophers of the Upanisads into the very heart of metaphysics. If an intellectual solution could be arrived at, the next problem would be how to attain to that knowledge in practice and what should be the norms of conduct. The culmination of the practical endeavour could only be in the mystical attitude beyond the moral plane. Therefore, mysticism could be the culmination of the Upanisadic philosophy, as it is, in fact, the culmination of all philosophies. But in the absence of an understanding of the cosmology, the psychology, the metaphysics and the ethics of the Upanisads, one cannot understand the spirit of the Upanisadic philosophy.

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03
The Methods of the Upanisadic Philosophy

The Upanisadic philosophers have adopted various methods at different times, according to the necessities of discussion, while expounding their philosophical doctrines.

The Enigmatic Method

The enigmatic method occurs in the Upanisads from time to time. Saandilya adopts a cryptic way to explain how God could be regarded as the origin, the end, and the life of all things. Similarly, explaining *vidya* and *avidya*, and *sambhuti* and *asambhuti*, the philosopher of the Isa Uapnisad points to a synthesis of opposites underlying the apparent contradictions involve in the formulation of the two riddles.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad provides the best illustration of this method. It explains that the reality is like a great circumscribing felly, whose tyres are the three *gunas*, whose ends are the sixteen *Kalaas*, whose spokes are the fifty *Bhavas* or conditions of Saamkhya philosophy, whose counter-spokes are the ten Senses and their ten Objects, whose six sets of eights are the eights such as the *Dhaatus*, the Gods, the eight-fold *Prakrti* and so on, whose single rope is the Cosmic Person, whose three paths are the Good, the Bad, and the Indifferent, or yet again, the Moral, the Immoral, and the A-moral, and finally which causes the single infatuation of the Ignorance of Self on account of the two causes, namely, Good and Bad works (I.4).

The philosopher of the Svetaasvatara Upanisad again tells us that he contemplates Nature like a vast expanse of water contributed by the five different streams of the Senses; whose springs are the five Elements that make it fierce and crooked; whose waves are the five *Praanas*; whose fount is the *Antahkaranapanchaka*; whose whirl-pools are the five Objects of sense which entangle a man into them; whose five rapids are the five kinds of grief caused by Generation, Existence, Transformation, Declination, and Decay; which diverts itself into fifty channels of the *Bhaavas* of Saamkhya philosophy; and finally which has the five tides of periodic overflow, namely, at Birth, in Childhood, in Manhood, in Old age and at Death (I.5).

Philosophy may be rather arid and dry if it does not occasionally contain such enigmatic riddles. Even Plato makes use of this method to drive home his philosophical points of view.

The Aphoristic Method

The aphoristic method is employed in the Maandukya Upanisad. This has been the pattern of the later Sutra literature of the various Systems of philosophy. In this method, all the material of thought is compressed in short sentences pregnant with deep meaning. It is for the interpreter of the thought to elaborate in his own way. It may be that it is for this reason that the Vedanta-sutras came to be interpreted in such different fashions by the various commentators.

The passage from the Maandukya Upanisad, which has been verily the basis upon which all the later systems of Vedanta philosophy have come to be built, runs thus:

'The syllable Aum is verily all that exists. Under it is included all the past, the present and the future, as well as that which transcends time. Verily all this is Brahman. The Atman is Brahman. This Atman is four-footed. The first foot is the Vaisvaanara, who enjoys gross things …… in the state of wakefulness. The second foot is the Taijasa, who enjoys exquisite things ….. in the state of dream. The third is the Prajnaana, who enjoys bliss …. in the state of deep-sleep ….. The fourth is the Atman, …. who is alone, without a second, calm, holy and tranquil.'

The Etymological Method

The etymological method is adopted at several places in the Upanisads under the spell of Brahmanism, which had not ceased to influence the formulation of thought.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, there are such references as *svapiti* meaning one with himself, *asisishati* meaning water leading off all that is eaten, *pipaasati* meaning heat drying up what is drunk, etc (VI.8.1-3).

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad records that *purusa* is really *purisaya* meaning the one inhabiting the citadel of heart (II.5.18).

The Maandukya Upanisad records that the first letter A of the syllable Aum means *Aapti* (attainment) as it possesses the property of beginning-ness; the letter U means *Utkarsha* (exaltation), as it signifies intermediateness; and the letter M

means *Miti*, as it signifies measurement or destruction (9-11).

It may, however, be noted that such word-puzzles are rather here and there, and not common occurrences in the Upanisadic literature.

The Mythical Method

The mythical method is often resorted to in the Upanisads. This method is adopted generally for the purpose of conveying a moral lesson as in the Kena Upanisad wherein the parable of Indra and the Damsel is introduced to convey the lesson of humility. This is to stress that nobody can attain the Brahman unless he is humble at heart. Secondly, the myth introduced may have an aetiological purpose. The myth of the sun as coming out of the huge World-egg, the myth being serviceable here to mark the course of the generation of the world system from the Primeval Egg, which itself originally came from Being, and Being from Not-Being are examples. Thirdly, the myth may be transcendental. For example, in the Aitareya Upanisad, it is said that the Atman entered the human skull and became individualized as a human soul. From the soul, he looked back at the origin and convinced himself that he was the Atman. Fourthly, the myth may be in the nature of parody as, for example, the Canine Chant.

The Analogical Method

The analogical method is found employed in many places in the Upanisads. For example, the sage Yajnavalkya introduces the analogy of the drum, the conch or the lute to explain the process of the apprehension of the Self. Similarly, the sage Aaruni introduces the analogies of the juices which, in constituting honey, cease to be different from it; of the rivers that flow into the ocean and get merged into it; or of salt which becomes one with water when it is poured into it. All these examples are sought to show the non-difference of the individual soul from the Universal Soul. The analogical method envisages, by images, to drive home the truths that cannot be explained by the rigour of logic.

The Dialectic Method

The dialectic method is the bottom-line of the Upanisadic argument. It is employed at every stage of the development of the Upanisadic philosophy. The word 'dialectic' is to be understood as the method of the dialogue, and not otherwise. The dialogue occasionally takes the form of severe disputation as at

the Symposium in the court of the King Janaka. This incident underscores the need for the superiority of the leading philosopher to be implicitly acknowledged; otherwise it may, very often, take the form of wrangling and may even end tragically.

The Synthetic Method

The synthetic method is in contrast to the dialectic method. In this method, there is an attempt to fulfill, not to destroy, as is evidenced by the synthesis of thought effected by *Asvapati Kaikeya* out of the doctrines of the six cosmological philosophers in the Chhaandogya Upanisad, or by Pippalada out of the six psycho-metaphysical questions propounded to him by the six seers in the Prasna Upanisad, or by Yajnavalkya out of the six metaphysical points of view suggested to him by King Janaka in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad. In this method, there is only a sympathetic inclusion of the points of view suggested by others, in a higher synthesis.

The Mono-logic Method

The mono-logic method is a method of soliloquy, as opposed to the dialectic and the synthetic methods. The philosophers of the Upanisads are generally chary of imparting spiritualism. When they give the right answer, occasionally, it is because that they over-reach themselves in their exposition and lose themselves in a soliloquy in the midst of many.

For instance, in the discussion in the court of the King Janaka, after he had answered the question propounded to him by Uddaalaka, Yajnavalkya lost himself in a reverie and began to think aloud on the universal immanence of God, in the famous passage known as the *Antaryaami-Braahmana*, in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad. Similarly, Yajnavalkya poured himself out in his conversation with Janaka on the immutable nature of the Atman. In the Katha Upanisad, even though Yama was unwilling to impart wisdom to Nachiketas on the third question asked by him, nevertheless, when once he began to speak, he spoke in a philosophical monologue overreaching the bounds of the original question. The truth is that, in the case of the Upanisadic philosophers, it does not generally rain; but when it rains, it rather pours.

The *Ad-hoc* Method

The *ad-hoc* method is also known as a temporizing method. Very often, the philosophers of the Upanisads are generally pertinent to illuminate on any issue except the one, which is immediately before them. More important for them is the capacity of the learner to imbibe the teaching.

In the celebrated Indra-Virochana myth, their *guru* Prajaapati tells them the secret of philosophy, not all at once, but when either of them is ready to receive the wisdom so imparted. It so happens that Virochana is satisfied with the first answer of Prajaapati. But Indra is not, and presses his *guru* time and again for the solution of his problems. This results in Prajaapati ultimately disclosing the secret of his philosophy to Indra. Prajaapathi establishes in succession that the Atman is not merely a bodily double, or as identical with the Self in the states of dream or deep-sleep, but with the Self as-identical-with-itself. Prajaapathi explains only what his pupils need. This episode is an excellent example of the *ad-hoc* method employed in the literature of the Upanisads.

The Regressive Method

The regressive method takes the form of many successive questions, every new question carrying us behind the answer to the previous question. For example, in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, King Janaka asks Yajnavalkya, 'What is the light of man?' Yajnavalkya answers that it is the sun. King Janaka goes behind answer after answer, carrying Yajnavalkya from the sun to the moon, to the Fire and so on, and ultimately to the Atman which exists behind them all as in the Light-in-itself.

Similarly, in the same Upanisad, Gaargi takes Yajnavalkya from question to question. She asks him as to what is the support of water; he answers that it is air. She asks him as to what is air; he answers her that it is the intermundane. She takes him from behind the intermundane to the world of the sun, the world of the moon, the world of the stars, the world of the gods, and finally to the region of the Brahman. But when Gaargi asks him as to what lays behind the region of the Brahman, he checks her questioning in the only appropriate way, 'Thy head shall fall off if thou inquirest again', as such questioning necessarily leads to a regress *ad-infinitum* (III.6.1).

The Poetry of the Upanisads

The poetic method is applicable to philosophy where an emotion is to be created about the nature of reality, or when this reality becomes a fact of mystical apprehension.

The poetry in the Upanisads is mystical, moral or philosophical rather than heroic, lyrical or given to the description of nature or love. Its morality is subservient to its metaphysical implications. It does not rise to an expression of the innermost feelings of the human heart, to a confession of sin, or to a prayer for atonement to divinity.

In particular, the poetry of the Isa Upanisad is commixture of moral, mystical and metaphysical elements; that of the Kena Upanisad is psycho-metaphysical; that of the Katha Upanisad has, as its chief topic, the teaching about the Immortality of the Soul and the practical way to the realization of the Atman; that of the Svetaasvatara Upanisad rises to a theistic description of God; that of the Mundaka Upanisad is the highest emotion of which the Upanisads are capable. It may be that the emotion portrayed here may not be of the highest order; nevertheless it is the stage of emotionalism that has not been reached elsewhere.

In the Upanisads, there are several passages in prose, but highly poetic in sentiment. They are what one calls 'conflagrations of prose-poetry'. The passage in the Chhaandogya Upanisad that, 'the heaven must be regarded as the supporting beam from which the intermundane region hangs like a beehive. The sun is the honey of the gods as preserved in this beehive. The rays, which the sun spreads in different quarters, namely, the eastern, the southern, the western, the northern, and the upward directions are the different honey-cells looking in the various directions. The hymns of the four Vedas are the bees, which work on the beehive from the various sides. The different colours of the sun are the different kinds of the nature on which the various gods live' is an example of sustained imaginative composition in prose (III.1-11).

As an example of allegory in the Upanisads, the passage from the Kaushitaki Upanisad, 'The river of agelessness, the hall of omnipresence, the couch of grandeur, the damsel of mind, the handmaid of vision, the flowers of the world which these are intent on weaving, the passage of the Soul through the river

merely by the motion of the mind, the heaven of safety which it reaches by the assertion of its identification with the highest Brahman – a fit concatenation of circumstances that be fall the Soul which is described as the Child of the Seasons' stands out.

The Upanisads do not contain either nature-poetry or love-poetry. Nevertheless, they deal with the sublime in the region of mind, or in the realm of transcendence. As an example of the sublime in nature, the passage in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, 'By the command of the imperishable Brahman, the sun and the moon stand in their places; by the command of that Brahman, the heaven and the earth stand apart; by the command of that Brahman, the moments and the hours, the days and the nights, the half-months (fortnights) and the months, the seasons and the years, all stand apart; by the command of that Brahman, some rivers flow out to the east from the White Mountains, and others to the west are some other quarter' stands out (III.8.9).

As an example of sublimity in the subjective sphere, the passage in the Chhaandogya Upanisad, 'The city within is exactly like the city without, that the heart is the citadel of the Atman as the universe itself is, that just as in the outer world there is that un ending space which contains within it the heaven and the earth, the fire and the wind, the sun and the moon, the lightning and the stars, similarly, even here, within this little citadel, are they to be equally found' stands out (VIII.1.1, 3).

As an example of sublimity in the transcendental sphere, the passage in the Chhaandogya Upanisad, 'Infinity alone is bliss…. When one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the Infinite…. The Infinite is above, below, behind, before, to the right and to the left…. I am above, I am below, I am behind, I am before, I am to the right and to the left…. The Self is above, the Self is below, the Self is behind, the Self is before, and the Self is to the right and to the left. He who knows this truly attains Swaraajya' stands out (VII.23-25).

04
The Philosophers of the Upanisads and theirTemporal Environment

The Upanisads often mix up mythological pesons and deities with historical persons. The names of the upholders of the different views, rather the Philosophers, are found mainly in the dialogues and narratives. The Upanisadic Philosophers may broadly be classified as the Mystical, the Cosmological, the Psychological and the Metaphysical Philosophers.

The Mystical Philosophers

Of the mystical philosophers, Trisaanku seems to have been a sage of great insight as is evidenced in the Taittiriya Upanisad. Maitri, the promulgator of the Maitri Upanisad, is a great God-realizer, as evidenced from his description of 'the Atman as realized' in that Upanisad. Each of the sages Raatitara, Paurusishti and Naaka Maudgalya has left to us the virtue, which he regarded as of supreme importance, namely, Truth, Penance, and the Study of the Veda respectively.

Mahidaasa Aitareya in the Chhaandogya Upanisad seems to have been a philosopher interested in eugenics. His problem is prolongation of human life, even though he tries to realize it through rituals (III.16). Aaruni must have witnessed, if not practised, the fasting philosophy of ancient times (VI.7.1). The sage Kaushitaki is the inventor of the doctrine of *Praana* as the Brahman. He seems to have been an ancient 'satyaagrahin', and to have practised the virtue of non-begging. He is the author of the doctrine of the Three Meditations, namely, on the Sun, the Full- moon and the New moon for the fulfillment of some specific desires.

The sage Paingya seems to have been the henchman of Kaushitaki in his doctrine that *Praana* is the Lord of the Senses as well as the Mind. Praatardana is a freethinker of antiquity, disbelieving in the efficacy of external ritualism. He advocates the doctrine of the inner sacrifice, which is always going on within us. He has contributed the doctrine of Prajnaatman – a bio-psycho-metaphysical conception to the Upanisadic thought.

The sage Sushkabhrangaara seems to have taught that if a man regarded the Rigveda as supreme, all beings would worship him (*archante*); if he regarded the Yajurveda as supreme, all would join (*yujyante*) to prove his supremacy; and that if he regarded the Saamaveda as supreme, all would bow down to him (*samnamante*). This is a philologico-philosophical contribution made by him under the influence of Braahmanism.

The sage Jaivali seems to have held that the universe exhibits at every stage the principle of sacrifice. 'When we cast our glance at the sky, we see that the heaven is a great altar in which the sun is burning as fuel, his rays being the smoke, the day being the light of the sacrificial fire, the quarters the coals, and the intermediate quarters the sparks of the fire; from the oblation that is offered in this sacrifice, namely *Sraddhaa*, rises the Moon. If we look at the sky again, we see that *Parjanya* is the great altar in which the year is burning as fuel, the clouds being the smoke, the lightning being the light of the sacrificial fire, the thunderbolt the coals, and the rumblings of the clouds the sparks of the sacrificial fire; from the oblation offered in this sacrifice, namely the Moon, rises Rain. Then again, the whole world is a great altar in which the earth burns as fuel, fire being the smoke, night being the light, the moon being the coals, and the stars the sparks of the fire; from the oblation offered in this sacrifice, namely Rain, rises Food. Fourthly, man himself a great altar in which the opened mouth is the fuel, the breath the smoke, the tongue the light, the eyes the coals, the ears the sparks; from the oblation offered in this sacrifice, namely Food, rises Seed. Finally, woman herself is a great altar in which Seed being offered as an oblation, rises Man.'

In this peculiar way, Jaivali's philosophy connects the Sraddhaa libation with Moon, the Moon with Rain, the Rain with Food, the Food with Seed, and finally the Seed with Man. This is his celebrated doctrine of Five Fires. 'Finally, when a Man is cremated, from out of the fire of cremation which serves as altar, a lustrous person arises, who goes either to the World of the Gods, or to the World of the Fathers, as his qualifications enable him to proceed.'

Thus, for him, everything is sacrificed into something else until all is sacrificed into the Atman. The whole universe is a sacrifice within sacrifice. Its creiativity is sacrifice, which is not a mere ritual. One is to recall the *Purusasukta* (Hymn to Person), in which the world is created by the self-sacrifice of the

Supreme Person. We come across the idea of sacrifice raised to high philosophical and cosmic level, a theory reiterated in the Bhagavad-Gita.

This is qualitatively a new interpretation of the term sacrifice.

The Cosmological Philosophers

A passage in the Chhaandogya Upanisad (V.II) narrates an account of the cosmological philosophers. According to it, the sage Uddaalaka holds that the earth is the substratum of things; Praacheenasaala holds that it is the heaven which is so; Budila, Saarkaraakshya and Indradyumna hold that water, space and air are respectively the substrata of things; and Satyajnaa holds that the substratum is the sun – the celestial fire. In this passage, we have the names of the sages who held that the elements are the ultimate substrata of things. The sage Raikva is elsewhere described as having held with Indradyumna that air is the ultimate substratum of all things, the universe. For him, air is the same as *Prana*, the vital or life principle, in the macrocosm, holding the parts of the cosmos together and sustaining the whole.

Asvapati Kaikeya, who adopts the synthetic method, is described in the Chhaandogya Upanisad as having incorporated these views into his doctrine of the Universal Atman – the Atman Vaisvaanara, the heaven constituting the head of the Atman, the sun his eye, the air his breath, space his body, water his bladder and the earth his feet (V.18). According to him, the Cosmic Person is the Fire, Vaisvanara; he resides in all parts of the cosmos, not merely in any one of them. He is only about an inch, *praadesamaatram*, in size; and he is the same as the sacrificial fire.

The transition is made from cosmology to physiology when Satyakaama Jaabaala teaches Upakosala that Reality is to be found not in the sun, or the moon, or the lightning, but in the person in the eye (Chhaandogya IV). In other words, the person seen in the eye is the Atman, the Brahman. This has a spiritual meaning, that is, he who sees through the eye is the Brahman, and also that, in the waking state, the Atman resides in the eye.

Again a transition is made from cosmology and physiology to psychology when Gaargya thinks that the physical categories such as the sun, the moon and

the wind, and physiological categories such as the eye are the ultimate reality, and when Ajaatasatru, his *guru,* tells him that reality is to be found in the deep-sleep consciousness (Brhadaaranyaka II).

The Psychological Philosophers

The fact that the Upanisadic philosophers have taken greater interest in matters of psychology than of cosmology is evident from the way in which they always ask questions about matters of psychology. Of the interlocutors of Pippalaada in the Prasna Upanisad, the first sage Kabandhi Kaatyaayana alone seems to be interested in cosmology when he asks, 'From what primal Being are all these things created?' All the others seem to be interested in some kind of psychological question or other.

For instance, Bhaargava Vaidarbhi is interested in physiological psychology, and asks, 'What sense is the lord of all the others?' Kausalya Aasvalaayana is interested in the metaphysics of psychology, and asks, 'From what being Puraana, the lord of the senses, was born?' Sauryaayani Gaargya is an abnormal psychologist taking interest in the problem of dreams. Saibya Satyakaama is interested in mysticism, and asks about the efficacy of meditation on Aum. Sukesi Bhaaradvaaja is interested in the metaphysics of psychology, and asks about the nature of the Person with Sixteen Parts.

The philosophy of Pippalaada emerges in the answers that he gives to these seers. Pippalaada is a great psycho-metaphysician of antiquity. He advocates the doctrine of Rayi and *Praana,* which is equivalent to the doctrines of the supremacy of the vital breath about the senses, and the primary emergence of the vital breath from the Atman. It compares to the Aristotelian doctrine of Matter and Form.

Pippalaada regards the state of dream as one in which the mind of man has free play, embodying the forms of things experienced as well as inexperienced. He regards the state of free as one in which the light of the man is over-powered by the light of the Self.

He also teaches that by meditation on Aum till the time of death, one goes to the celestial regions where one learns from Hiranyagarbha to see the all-

pervading Person. While enunciating the doctrine of the Person with Sixteen Parts, he prepares the way for the later Saamkhya and Vedanta doctrine of the *Linga-sarira*. He teaches several psycho-spiritual or meta-psychological doctrines.

The sages Bhujyu and Uddaalaka, mentioned in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, are interested in physical research.

The sage Vaamadeva, who appears for the first time in Rigveda (IV.26 & 27), is introduced in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad (I.4 & 10), where he declares himself as having been Manu and the Sun in previous births. In the Aitareya Upanisad (II.4), the philosophy of 'Three Births' is declared to have been in consonance with his teaching. This sage declares that, 'While yet in embryo, he tried to know all the births of the gods. A hundred iron citadels tried to hold him; but a hawk that he was, with swiftness he came down to the earth. In embryo, indeed, did Vaamadeva speak in this manner.'

Vaamadeva seems to have held the view that there are three births of man. The first birth occurs when the spermatozoon combines with the ovum. The second birth occurs when the child is born. The third birth occurs when the person himself is reborn after his death.

Bhrigu, mentioned in the Taittiriya Upanisad, is a great psychologist. He holds that food, life-breath, intellect and bliss, in that order of gradation, constitute the expressions of the Atman. Bhrigu learns from his father, Varuna that the light of the *Purusa* (Atman) and that of the sun are the same. He also learns the doctrine of the identity of the finite self with the Brahman.

In the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, there are doctrines of certain psycho-metaphysicians such as Jitvan Sailani, Udanka Saulbaayana, etc. Jitvan Sailani holds that speech is the highest Reality. Udanka Saulbaayana holds that breath is the highest Reality. Varku Vaarshana, Gardabhivipita Bhaaradvaaja, Satyakaama Jaabaala and Vidagdha Saakalya hold respectively that the eye, the ear, the mind and the heart constitute the Ultimate Reality. Yajnavalkya, following the synthetic method, finds a place for each of these doctrines in his final synthesis.

The Metaphysical Philosophers

Of the metaphysical philosophers, Saandilya, Dadhyachi, Sanatkumaara, Aaruni and Yaajnavalkya are the most important, the last being the greatest of them all.

Saandilya

The complete philosophy of Saandilya is contained in the Chhaandogya Upanisad (III.14). In the main doctrines of his philosophy, he gives the cosmological proof of the Absolute, which he calls 'Tajjalaan' – that from which things are born, to which they repair and in which they live. Secondly, he elucidates the doctrine of *karma* according to which fate alone betakes a man in the next world for which he has paved the way by his works in this life. Thirdly, he characterizes the Atman in positive terms. This is, however, in contrast to the negative theology of Yaajnavalkya. Fourthly, the Atman is great and small; greater than the great, and smaller than the small; infinite and infinitesimal. Lastly, the end of human life consists in being merged in the Atman after death, a consummation, which, he is sure he will reach.

For him, everything is the Brahman, *sarvam khalu idam brahma*; the Atman residing in our innermost heart is the Brahman. He regards the Brahman as that from which everything is born, that in which it exists, and that into which it reenters (disappears).

Dadhyach

Like Vaamadeva, the sage Dadhyach is of Vedic repute and is referred to in Rigveda. He also occupies a prominent place in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad (II). The 'Mdhuvidya' referred to in Rigveda is expounded in great detail in this Upanisad.

This sage is introduced in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad as having held the doctrine of the mutual interdependence of things, because all of them are indissolubly connected in and through the Self. This doctrine is best explained in The History of Indian Philosophy (Vol.II) thus:

'All things are *mutuum commercium*, because they are bound together by the same *vinculum substantiale*, namely, the Self. The earth, says Dadhyach, is the honey of all beings, and all beings are the honey of the earth, just because the

same 'lustrous,' 'immortal' Self inhabits them both. The fire is the essence of all things, and all things are the essence of fire, just because the immortal Self is the essence of both. Similarly, are the wind, the sun, the space, the moon, the lightning, the thunder, the ether, and even law, truth, and humanity the essence of all things whatsoever, and all things are the essence thereof, inasmuch as the same law, the same element, the same indissoluble bond connects them both. Finally, the individual self is itself the essence of all things and all things are the essence of the individual self, inasmuch as the same Universal Spirit holds both of them together. It is this Universal Spirit, which is the lord and king of all things. As all the spokes are contained between the axle and felly of a wheel, all things and all selves are connected in and through the Supreme Self. It is on account of the Supreme Self, that all things stand related together. All things appear on the background of this eternal curtain. 'Nothing exists that is not covered by the Supreme Self. He becomes like unto every form, and all the forms are only partial revelations of Him. The Lord appears many through His magic power'. Thus does Dadhyach teach the doctrine of the supreme existence of the one, and the apparent existence of the many.'

Sanatkumaara

The sage Sanatkumaara is introduced in the Chhaandogya Upanisad as the preceptor of Narada. Philosophically, Sanatkumaara seems to teach spiritual hedonism. He teaches Narada that the Atman is the same as the Brahman. For him, happiness is spiritual happiness only, and is the spring of all action; action is the cause of faith; faith of belief; belief of thought; thought of knowledge; and knowledge leads to the truth. In this way, happiness, action, faith, belief, thought, knowledge and truth constitute a moral order to realization (VII.17-22).

Secondly, the sage teaches the doctrine of 'Bhuuman', which is infinite happiness that arises by the vision of the divinity all around. All else that is seen is '*alpa*' (small). Thus all possession in the shape of cows, elephants, horses, gold, servants, wives, lands, palaces, etc are of little consequence contrasted with Bhuuman (VII. 23-24). Thirdly, the realization of Bhuuman occurs when an experience as implied in the expression *sohamaatmaa* is attained (VII.25).

Lastly, he propounds that the Atman is the source of all things whatsoever. From the Atman spring hope and memory; from the Atman spring space, light and waters; from the Atman everything unfolds; and in the Atman everything

hides itself. The Atman is the source of all power, all knowledge, and all ecstasy (VII.26).

Aaruni

The sage Aaruni is considered the preceptor of the sage Yaajnavalkya. He is the greatest of the Upanisadic philosophers, barring Yaajnavalkya. There is resemblance between Aaruni and Yaajnavalkya in regard to their theories of Sleep and Dream on the one hand, and of Monistic Idealism and the doctrine of Appearance on the other. He teaches that everything comes out of Being (*sat*), for nothing could have come out of Non-being (*asat*). The ultimate Truth is the Atman itself and 'That art Thou'.

Aaruni is a great psycho-metaphysician. In regard to his psychological theories, he advances the 'Fatigue' theory of sleep (VI.8.2). In the state of sleep, the individual self becomes one with the Atman (VI.8.1). In regard to departing consciousness, he teaches that, while a man is dying, his speech first becomes merged in the mind; then his mind becomes merged in breath; then breath becomes merged in light; and finally light becomes merged in the deity (VI.15). This is the theory that Yaajnavalkya later develops upon.

As for the metaphysical doctrine, he views Substance from the cosmological point of view. He regards it as the final substratum of all things, in fact as a material cause of the universe, just as iron is the material cause of all things made of iron (VI.1.4-6). Secondly, he considers that this underlying Substance is 'alone real'; and all else is merely a name. He thus turns out to be an extreme nominalist and paves the way for the Doctrine of Illusion (VI.1.4-6).

Thirdly, he states that what exists as the primal hypostasis cannot be regarded as Not-Being, for from Not-Being nothing can emanate. Hence, the hypostasis is Being (VI.2.1-2). This Being produces from itself first fire, then water, then the earth in that order (VI.2.3-4). He uses the Sanskrit words *Tejas*, *Ap* and *Anna* to explain his concepts. These words may mean the energizing principle, liquid existence and solid existence respectively.

Fourthly, all things that exist in the world, both animate and inanimate, are made up of these elements by the process of *Trivritkarana*, a doctrine which Aaruni first enunciates. Things are unreal; the Elements alone are real; and more than the Elements, Being, the root of them all, is real (VI.3-4). It is this Being

which is also the Self in man. 'That art Thou' is the recurring instruction of Aaruni to his son Svetaketu (VI.8ff). The spirit in nature is thus, at the same time, the spirit in man.

Cosmologically, this Being is the subtle essence which underlies phenomena and which can be grasped only by faith (VI.12), and by apt instruction from the teacher (VI.14). Biologically, it is the supreme life-principle, which gives life to the universe. The branches may die and yet the tree lives; but when the tree dies, the branches also die. Similarly, the universe may vanish, but God remains; but God cannot vanish, and hence the latter alterative is impossible (VI.11).

Psychologically, the Being absorbs all individualities. Aaruni asks if juices do not lose individuality in honey (VI.9), and if the rivers do not lose individuality in the ocean. Likewise, all souls lose their individuality in the Atman. From the moral point of view, the Atman is truth. One who allies with truth, allies with the Atman, too (VI.16).

Metaphysically, the Atman pervades all. As salt pervades every particle of water into which it is put, the Atman fills every nook and corner of the universe. There is nothing that does not live in the Atman (VI.13). Thus Aaruni postulates idealistic Monism in which there is no scope for contradiction from within or without.

Yaajnavalkya

Yaajnavalkya, like his *guru*, is a great psycho-metaphysician. The philosophy of Yaajnvalkya emerges in his conversations with his adversaries in the court of the King Janaka, as well as his wife and the King Janaka himself. He is the greatest among the Upanisadic personages. He was the priest and guru of the King Janaka. Both must have belonged to at least the ninth century BC.

Yajnavalkya teaches the doctrine of the Atman and the Brahman. He teaches that all objects are centred in the Self, as all thoughts are centred in the mind, as all touches in the skin, and as all waters in the ocean (II.4.11). The Atman pervades all. He also uses the simile of the immanence of salt in water (II.4.12), borrowing it probably from his *guru* Aaruni.

Secondly, Yaajnavalkya teaches that all things exist for the Self. If we do not so regard them, they would vanish for us (II.4.6). Thirdly, he says that all things

are dear for the sake of the Self. In every act of mental affection, the Atman is calling unto the Atman. The realization of the Atman is the end of all endeavour (II.4, 5). Fourthly, he says that this Atman alone is real; all else is '*aartam*' – a mere tinsel-show (III.4.2 & III.5.1).

Yaajnavalkya then proceeds to characterize the Atman in negative terms. The Atman is neither large, nor small; neither short, nor long. The Atman is flavourless, eyeless, odourless and quality-less (III.8.8). The negative theology of Yaajnavalkya is in contrast with the positive theology of Saandilya.

As for the proof of the existence of the Atman, Yaajnavalkya draws upon what appears in nature. The Atman is the 'bund' of all existence; the Atman measures our very hours and days (III.8.9). The Atman is universally immanent. IT is the inner controller of all things. We are merely like little dolls, and throw out our hands and feet according as the Atman, the thread-puller, makes us dance (III.7). The Atman is the ultimate light of man; all other lights are lights by sufferance. When the Atman is realized as the light of man, one reaches self-consciousness (IV.3.1-6).

The Atman alone is the ultimate hearer, seer and thinker. There is no thinker beside IT (III.4.2). The Atman perceives Itself. Only when there is a duality, then one may see another; but when One alone is, the processes of perception and thought are impossible alike, and we are reduced to a state of solipsism (II.4.14).

But Yaajnavalkya takes care to say that the organs of perception of the percipient do not cease to function. From the points of view of epistemology, this concept is the relieving feature of his solipsism (IV.3.23-30).

As for psychology, Yaajnavalkya teaches that, in the state of dream, the Atman spreads out Its own light (IV.3.9). In this state, the Atman moves out from Its nest, guarding it, nevertheless, with breath (IV.3.12). The Atman only seems to move, or only seems to imagine in the state of dream, but does not really move or imagine (IV.3.7). He, therefore, advises that when a man is dreaming, no one shall wake him up suddenly for fear, apparently, that the Soul may depart (IV.3.14). A father in that state is not a father; a mother, a mother; a thief, a thief; a murderer, a murderer; a chandala, a chandala; and analogically, a Brahmin, a Brahmin (IV.3.22).

As regards the state of sleep, he advocates, like Aaruni, the theory of 'Fatigue'

(IV.3.19). He says that sleep is a twilight condition where one sees this world as well as the other world (IV.3.99).

As regards the departing consciousness, Yaajnavalkya tells the story of the process of death in such a realistic manner that one regards him as an exceedingly shrewd observer of nature. At the time of death, according to him, the *Prajna-Atman,* the intelligent self mounts on the *Saarira-Atman,* the corporeal self, and it moves along groaning like a heavy-laden cart (IV.3.35). Before the death occurs, the person in the eye first turns away (IV.4.1). The end of the heart is lighted, and by that light, the soul departs either by the way of the eye, or the head, or another part of the human body (IV.4.2).

At the time of death, the *karma* alone accompanies the person; it is the guardian of his destiny (IV.4.5). It is probably this doctrine of *Karma* that Yaajnavaklya might have imparted to Jaaratkaarava and silenced him (III.2.13).

According to him, when the Atman has prepared another abode for itself, then alone IT leaves the body. It is like a caterpillar leaving its original blade only when it finds another blade to rest upon (IV.4.3). He says that the newer existence must be even a brighter existence. It is like a goldsmith creating from an old ornament a newer and brighter one (IV.4.4).

If the Self has left any desires in him even while he lives in his body, he returns from his sojourn to this existence; if no desires are left in him, he becomes one with the Brahman (IV.4.6). At that stage, no consciousness remains. Consciousness is merely a 'fleeting' phenomenon owing to the entry of the Atman in the elements, which produce the bodily form (II.4.12).

Philosophically, Yaajnavalkya subscribes to Absolute Idealism. From that point of view, he even regards transmigration as a delusion. When the Atman alone is, at all places and at all times, from what would IT transmigrate, and to what?

Social Conditions of the Upanisadic Philosophers

Caste System

The castes evidently existed at the time of the Upanisads. The *Purushasukta*, anterior to the Upanisads, has a formulation of the caste system.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad has an unorthodox theory of origin of castes. According to it, the Brahman was the first to exist. As It was alone, It did not fare well. Therefore, It produced a better form, namely, the Kshatriya-hood. From the original Brahman were created such heavenly deities such as Indra, Varuna, Soma, Rudra, Parjanya, Yama, Mrityu and Isa. These constitute the warrior caste in the heavenly kingdom.

Even after having created the Kshatriya-hood, the Brahman did not fare well. Therefore, It created Vysya-hood in the heavenly kingdom. The Vasus, the Rudras, the Adityas, the Maruts and the Visvedevas constitute the Vysya caste in the heavenly kingdom.

Even then, the Brahman thought that It was deficient and, therefore, It created the Sudra order represented in the heavenly kingdom by the god Pushan. In order to give Itself completeness, again, the Brahman created *Dharma* (law) probably to bind all these castes together. Finally, the Brahman assumed the form of Agni who is the Brahmin of the gods. Then, the Upanisad states that the castes on the earth were created after the pattern of the castes in the heaven (I.4.11-15). In this unorthodox theory, we have the origin of the earthly caste system on the pattern of a heavenly caste system.

Asrama System

We learn from the Taittiriya Upanisad (I.11.1) that the Asramas of the student and the householder existed at the time of the Upanisads. Similarly, we learn that the Asrama of the *Sanyasin* did exist during the period as seen from such passages as 'to leave the world as soon as one becomes weary of it'. From the Mundaka Upanisad, it is seen that the order of the *Sanyasins* came last, and on completion of the three previously mentioned.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, we have all the four orders enumerated deliberately. The householders are advised to give themselves up to sacrifice, study and charity; the recluses to penance; and the students to a life of celibacy

with the *guru*, and extreme emaciation in his service. All the people following the Asrama-dharma verily reach the holy worlds after death. The Upanisad further mentions that he alone who lives in the Brahman, referring probably to the life of a *sanyasin*, attains to immortality (II.23.1). We thus find the foundations of the Asrama system firmly laid even in such an old Upanisad as the Chhaandogya.

Position of Women

In the Upanisads, we meet with three chief different types of women – Katyayani, the woman of the world, only once mentioned in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad; Maitreyi, the type of a spiritual woman, consort to the philosopher Yaajnavalkya; and Gaargi, one fully equipped in the art of intellectual discrimination, and daring to wrangle with Yaajnavalkya, the greatest philosopher in the court of the King Janaka, pressing him to an enquiry in regression *ad infinitum*. Though snubbed and subdued by Yaajnavalkya, she appears again with two more moderate questions, and elicits from Yaajnavalkya his doctrine of dynamic immanence (III.8.2).

The Relation of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad declares that a Brahmin ought to take his seat below that of a Kshatriya at the Raajasuya sacrifice. On the other hand, the Kshatriya must remember that, because Kshatriya-hood has been born from Brahmin-hood, even though he has attained to the highest stage, he must rest upon the Brahmin as his source, that is, he must live under the control and guidance of the Brahmins (I.4.11).

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, Jaivali says that Aaruni was the first in the Brahmin circle to receive spiritual wisdom and that the Kshatriya caste reigned supreme (V.3.7).

In the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, it is said that only when Aaruni went with the desire of living like a pupil to Jaivali, whom he regarded as superior to himself, that Jaivali could be prevailed upon to impart to him spiritual wisdom (VI.2.5-7).

Again, in the Kaushitaki Upanisad, it is said that King Chitra Gaargyaayani complimented Aaruni who had gone to him, fuel in hand, in a humble manner. Thereupon, the King proceeded to instruct him in spiritual knowledge (I.1). All

these passages indicate both the earthly and the spiritual supremacy of Kshatriya-hood to Brahmin-hood.

On the other hand, there are passages in the Brhadaaranyaka (II.1.15) and the Kaushitaki (IV.1-19) Upanisads that Gaargya, the proud Brahmin, had gone to King Ajatasatru to learn wisdom whereupon Ajatasatru told him that it was against the 'usual practice' that a Kshatriya should instruct a Brahmin in spirituality. But Ajatasatru, in the course his conversation with Gaargya, felt his superiority and convinced of his capacity to impart higher wisdom to Gaargya. When Gaargya, thereupon, approached him, fuel in hand, Ajatasatru imparted spiritual wisdom to him. It would seem from the above that the Brahmins were usually superior to Kshatriyas in spiritual knowledge, but that, occasionally, a Kshatriya might be superior to a Brahmin in that respect.

In the Brhadaaranyaka and the Maitri Upanisads, it is said that certain Brahmin sages were very superior to Kshatriya kings who learnt wisdom from their Brahmin preceptors. King Janaka says, astonished at the great intellectual and spiritual wisdom of the sage Yaajnavalkya, 'Here, O Yaajnavalkya, is my kingdom, and here am I at your service.' (IV.2.4).

In the Maitri Upanisad, it is said that King Brihadratha went to the sage Saakaayaanya in a state of remorse and repentance, and prayed to him to help him out of the world of existence, as one would help out a frog from a well without water (I.1-7). These passages indicate that the Brahmins did maintain, very often, their intellectual and spiritual superiority.

It is to be borne in view that occasionally a Kshatriya, and occasionally a Brahmin, would be the intellectual and spiritual head of his age according to his abilities and powers. It, therefore, follows that there could be no charter either to Brahmin-hood or to Kshatriya-hood that it alone should be the repository of intellectual and spiritual wisdom. It would be ridiculous to argue that either the Brahmins alone or the Kshatriyas alone were the custodians of spiritual culture in the Upanisadic era.

05
The Development of Upanisadic Cosmogony

a) Impersonalistic Theories of Cosmology

Search after the Substratum

In the Upanisadic philosophy, the primary impulse to thought came from cosmologic and cosmogonic speculation. The stars above, the regularities of the moving seasons, the roaring of wind in the firmament, the conflagrations of mighty fire, the periodic inundations of waters, and the general recurrence of very happenings in nature must have filled the natural enquirer with an impulse to find out the real meaning of all this phenomena. It is no wonder in the Upanisadic philosophy, as in Greek philosophy, that the primary search was after the cause and source of things. 'What is that, which abides in the midst of changes? What is that', which as the Chhaandogya Upanisad puts it, 'may be called the *Tajjalaan*? What is that from which all things spring, into which they are resolved, and in which they live and have their being? (III.14.1)' are the questions uppermost in the minds of the Upanisadic philosophers.

The Taittiriya Upanisad records that 'that alone might be regarded as the Ultimate Reality of things, from which all these things were born, by which they live when born, to which they repair and into which they are finally resolved' (III.1). This is very much like the way in which Aristotle explains the early Greek cosmologists conceived of their primary substance. Again, the Svetaasvatara Upanisad rather begins with this enquiry, 'from whom are we born, in whom do we live and have our being?' (I.1).

The search after the ultimate cause of things, the substratum is as characteristic of the early Upanisadic cosmogony, as it is of the later Greek cosmogony. There is, however, no justification for saying that Greek cosmogony was derived from the Upanisadic cosmogony, in spite of the priority of the Upanisadic speculation.

It is possible to divide the theories of the Upanisadic cosmogony into two main groups – the impersonalistic and the personalistic. Among the impersonalistic theories may be included the theories which regard either or all of the elements as a substratum of things. It may be even such abstract

conceptions as Not-being, or Being, or Life-force as lying at the root of all things whatsoever.

Among the personalistic theories may be included theories which try to account for the origin of creation from the Atman or God, and insist in various ways either on the dualistic aspect of creation, or the emanatory, or even the highly philosophic aspect implied in Theism proper.

When the Upanisadic sages regard the elements as a source of things, we must regard them as such, and not as equivalent to deities. When it is said that either fire or water or air is the source of things, we have to understand the sages to imply that it is the elements that go by those names that are to be regarded as responsible for the unfoldment of creation.

It is true that all theological commentators on the Upanisads such as Shankara, Ramanuja have understood these elements as meaning deities, and not the elements proper. An examination of the manner in which the theories were brought into being leaves no doubt that the Upanisadic sages meant by the elements the elements proper, and not the deities corresponding to those elements. It is true that the word 'divinity' is, on certain occasions, used in the case of these elements. It may be of interest to notice that Greek philosophers, too, used similar word in regard to their elemental substrata. The use of the word 'divinity' may be considered to lay emphasis on their inspiration to know the elements as elements constituting creation, but not to appropriating their role to unseen deities.

This view is reinforced from the fact that the idea of creation *ex nihilo* is generally repugnant to the Upanisadic mind. The Upanisadic philosophers firmly believed in the impossibility of the generation of anything from out of Nothingness or Not-being. When it seems to have been felt impossible by them that either the elements or such abstract conceptions as Not-being or Being could be conceived the basis of the creation, they felt the necessity of explaining that genesis from the Life force or the Cosmic-force. Finally, even when this could not be regarded as a sufficient explanation of creation, they were obliged to take recourse to the idea of the Person (*Purusa*), by whom the creation could be said to have been brought into being.

We may, however, note that, in an absolute system of metaphysics, there is

not much room for the idea of creation as such; all creation being only an illusion or appearance. Incidentally, the theistic idea of creation in the Upanisads is mainly the account given in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad.

Water as the Substratum

Taking the elements as constituting the source of creation, the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad records thus: 'In the beginning, verily, the Waters alone existed; from the Waters was born Satya or Truth; Satya produced Brahman, Brahman gave birth to Prajaapathi, and from Prajaapati were born the gods; these gods worship Satya alone' (V.5.1).

In this passage is said not that the Atman or any personal Being existed originally, but that the Waters were the first to exist, and that everything later came from them. It is curious to note that Brahman is here declared to have been created from Satya. It means that we are not to understand the word Brahman in the sense of 'Primeval Reality' as we understand it later. Further, when it is said that Satya was born from Water, we are to understand Satya as the ultimate 'concrete' existent.

Incidentally, it is said that the word Satyam consists of three syllables; the first is Sa; the second is Ti; the third is Yam; and the first and the third are considered real and the second unreal (V.5.1). Liberally interpreted, this passage may mean that unreality is enclosed by reality on both sides. It may mean that the present moment, which is evanescent, is enclosed on both sides by an eternity which is real. We move from eternity to eternity, halting for a while in the ever-changing present. It is rather exciting to note that the whole Satya(m) is stated to have come out of the Primeval Waters, being the substratum, the origin of all things, disposing of a belief in God as the creator of the Water itself.

This concept of creation in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad is almost Thalesian, for Thales, too, in Greek philosophy, regarded Water as the origin of all things.

Air

After water comes air. The sage Raikva holds the theory of air as the final absorbent of things and, therefore, probably as their origin. He explains the knowledge he possessed to the King Janasruti, in the Chhaandogya Upanisad thus. 'When fire is extinguished it goes to the air; when the sun sets it goes to the

air; when the moon sets it goes to the air; when the waters dry up they go to the air; thus, verily, is Air the final absorbent of all things whatsoever (IV.3.1-2). The logical conclusion from such a position is that if the air is the end of all things, it may also be regarded as the beginning of them, though he does not say so, in so many words.

The conception of Raikva may not have scientific value as it does not explain the actual process of the absorption of all things into air. But the Greek philosopher Anaximenes later explained both the origin and the end of all things in air by the process of rarefaction and condensation. However, the sage Raikva deserves all praise for his boldness to regard Air as the final absorbent of all things including Water and fire, which was an anathema to the other philosophers of his time.

Fire

The theory of fire as the origin of all things is not maintained specifically in the Upanisads. There is, however, a passage in Katha Upanisad, which says that Fire, having entered the universe, assumed all forms (II.5). This is almost equivalent in Greek philosophy to the Heracleitean formula that Fire is exchanged for all things and all things for Fire.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, on the other hand, it is said that Fire was the first to evolve from the Primeval Being, and that from Fire came Water, and from Water the Earth (VI.8.4). It is interesting to note that in this passage, the Heracleitean idea of the Way Up and the Way Down is also brought in, in as much as it is maintained that from fire is born water and from water earth, while, counter-logically, at the time of dissolution, the earth may be dissolved in water, the water in fire, and the fire in the Primeval Being.

It may be rather difficult for any philosopher to hold the opinion that Fire is the origin of all things as it is evident that fire burns up all. It is rather a fit instrument for the process of general annihilation. As such, it is possible to deduce from the theory advanced in the Chhaandogya Upanisad the idea of a periodic conflagration of things.

However, the difference between the Chhaandogya Upanisad and Heracleitus seems to be that while Heracleitus regards Fire as the very origin of all things, the Chhaandogya Upanisad considers that Fire is the first evolute from

the Primeval Being. Secondly, the Chhaandogya Upanisad does not insist upon the idea of change, while Fire seems to be the very basis of change for Heracleitus.

Space

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, Pravaahana Jaivali answers, when asked as to the final habitat of all things thus: 'All these things emerge from space and are finally absorbed in space; space is verily greater than any of these things; space is the final habitat' (I.9.1). This passage is corroborated by another passage from the same Upanisad thus: 'Space is really higher than fire. In space are the sun and the moon, the lightening and the stars. It is by space that man is able to call….. In space and after space are all things born. Meditate upon space as the highest Reality.'(VII.12.1). These passages suggest that space is to be regarded as a higher entity than water, air, fire, earth, either individually or collectively in two or more entities.

Even in the Greek philosophy, the conception of space as the 'arche' of things came very late in the development of thought. With Thales, Anaximenes, Heracleitus and Empedocles, we meet with the conceptions of water, air, fire, and earth, either individually or collectively in two or more entities. According to the evidence of Aristotle, it is with Philolaus that we get to the notion of space as the 'arche' of all things.

Water, air, fire and earth are rather tangible. But space to be regarded as the 'arche' of all things requires a higher philosophical imagination. This is so with Pravaahana Jaivali in Chhaandogya Upanisad as with Philolaus in the Greek philosophy.

Not-Being

There are certain passages in the Upanisads, which teach that Not-Being is the primary existent. The Taittiriya Upanisad records thus: 'At the beginning of all things, what existed was Not-Being. From It was born Being. 'Being' shaped itself of its own accord. It is thus called well-made or self-made' (II.7). Not-Being, here, is not to be understood as the 'arche' of all things. It is more appropriate to understand this passage thus: 'At the very beginning, it was 'as if' nothing had existed; not that Not-Being was verily the first concrete existent; and that it was from such a semblance of non-existence that Being was created.'

It is, however, worth mentioning that, in this agnostic conception of a primal non-existent, the Taittiriya Upanisad is anticipated by the famous Naasadiya-sukta in the Rigveda. The Sukta states that at the beginning of all things, there was neither Being nor Not-Being, but that what existed was only an ocean of Night (RV.X.129). Incidentally, it may be observed that the conception of a primary Void or Night is in the theory of Epimenides in Greek philosophy, too.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad has an interesting passage: 'In the beginning of all things, verily nothing was existent; but that everything was covered by Death or Hunger, for Hunger is verily Death. Death made up his mind, 'let me have a self'. Thus, worshipping, he began to move. From his worship were born the waters. The froth of the waters solidified, and became the earth. Death toiled on the earth and, as a result of his toil, fire was produced' (I.2.1-2).

In this passage, we have the origin of the elements water, earth and fire in the primeval Not-Bing. This Not-Being may be equated with the Death or Hunger of the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, or with the Void or Night of the Greek philosophy. In any case, in such passages is implied that there is a stage in the development of the human thought that it is compelled to take recourse to a logical conception like Not-Being, when it is impossible to conceive of any concrete existence at the beginning of things. This Not-Being is even conceived to be the source of the positive Being.

Even in the highly developed systems of philosophy as those of Plato and Aristotle, there is the recognition of a Not-Being. It cannot be gainsaid that, for the purposes of logic, the existence of Not-Bing has to be taken into account even in constructions of positive philosophy.

It is in this sense that the passages from the Taittiriya and the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisads are to be explained suggesting that by Not-Being, we must understand not absolute Not-Being, but only relative Not-Being. The concept of relative Not-Being is in the nature of appearance of non-existence as contrasted with concrete existence.

Not-Being and the Egg of the Universe

The Chhaandogya Upanisad connects the philosophy of Not-Being with the myth of the Universal Egg. The Upanisad records thus: 'What existed in the beginning was Not-Being. It then converted itself into Being. It grew and became

a vast egg. It lay in that position for a period of a year, and then it broke open. Its two parts were one of gold and the other of silver. The silvery part became the earth, and the golden part became the heaven. The thick membrane of the egg became the mountains; the thin membrane became the clouds; the arteries of the egg became the rivers of the world; the fluid in its interior became the ocean; while what came out of the egg was the sun. when the sun was born, shouts of hurrah arose.' (III.19.1-3)

This myth in the Chhaandogya Upanisad bears close similarity to the corresponding myths in the Babylonian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Persian and Greek mythologies. In Greece, in the Orphic cosmogony, Chronos and Adrastea produced a gigantic egg, which divided in the middle, with its upper half forming the sky, the lower the earth; out of the egg came Phanes, the shining God containing within himself the germs of all the other gods.

It is interesting to note that behind Chronos and Adrastea are ideas of time and necessity respectively, as we have them in the myth of the Chhaandogya Upanisad. It may be that the word 'Adrastea' in the Greek mythology looks to be the counterpart of the Sanskrit word 'Adrishta' which also signifies necessity. It seems probable that the idea of Adrishta was conveyed to the Greek people at a time when the Greek and the Indian Aryans lived together.

As for the myth of the sun coming out of the egg, it has parallels in the mythologies of many ancient peoples. But the creation of this egg from a primeval Non-existent seems to be peculiar to the Indian myth.

Similar to the universe being regarded by the Upanisadic seers as a huge egg, it also came to be regarded as 'a huge chest with the earth as its bottom, the heavens as its upper lid, the sky as its inside, and the Quarters as its corners, containing in its inside a rich treasure' (III.15.1). It is to be noted that the universe being regarded as a huge cubical chest is only as a contrast to the universe being regarded as the great spherical egg. It does not, however, have anything to do with the philosophy of Not-Being.

Being

After the conception of Not-Being as the 'arche' of things, we come to the conception of Being. Some passages of the Chhaandogya Upanisad are specific that Being alone existed at the beginning of things. It questions the theory of

those who suppose that the primeval Exist-ant must be regarded as Not-Being, and that Being must be regarded as having been produced therefrom. The Upanisad records thus in unequivocal terms:

'How could it possibly be so, how could Being come out of Not-Being, existence from non-existence? It is necessary for us to suppose that at the beginning verily all this was Being, and it was alone and without a second. This Primeval Being reflected, 'let me be many, let me produce'; having bethought, thus to itself, it produced fire. Fire thought, 'let me be many, let me produce'; and it produced water. Water thought, 'let me be many, let me produce'; and it produced the earth (food or matter)' (VI.2.1-4).

'The Primeval Being then thought, 'verily I am now these three deities. Let me enter into them by my Self, and unfold both Name and Form. Let me make each of them three-fold and three-fold' (VI.3.2-3).

'It thus comes about that what we call the red colour in a flame, belongs really to fire. Its white colour is that of water, and its black colour belongs to the earth. Thus does vanish the flame-ness of a flame. The flame is indeed only a word, a modification and a name, while what really exists is the three colours. What we call the red colour in the sun is really the colour of fire; its white colour is the colour of water; its black colour is the colour of the earth. Thus verily vanishes the sun-ness of the sun. The sun is only a word, a modification and a name. What really exists is the three colours. Thus, likewise does depart the moon-ness of the moon and the lightning-ness of the lightning. What really exists are the three colours only' (VI.4.1-4).

The following emerge out of the above passages. First, the primeval existent is regarded as Being. It is described as one without a second. Secondly, from the primeval Being is produced the three-fold *Prakrti* consisting of fire, water and earth. The three-fold *Prakrti* may also be known as *tejobannaatmika.* Thirdly, the Chhaandogya Upanisad defines the doctrine of *Trivritkarana,* which is the Upanisadic prototype of the *Panchikarana* of later Vedanta. Fourthly, the Upanisad states that there are three different colours belonging to the three different elements, namely, the red, the white and the black.

It is of interest to note that the same colours are borrowed by the Samkhya philosophy later to correspond to the three different qualities of the Samkhya

Prakrti. Finally, the Upanisad emphasizes that what really exists are the three different colours, are the three different elements. On the other hand, all such objects of nature such as the sun, the moon and the lightning are merely words or names or modificatory appearances of the original elements. In the spirit of an extreme nominalism, the Upanisad tries to reduce all later products to mere semblance or appearance, while it considers the three elements alone truly existent, all of them having been born of the Primeval Being. This is a kind of a philosophical Trinitarian Monism.

According to the doctrine of *Trivritkarana*, each of the three original elements, namely, fire, water and earth is to be regarded as being divided into two equal portions, one half being kept intact, while the other half is divided into two equal portions, the two quarters of the two other elements in combination with the one-half of the original element making up a transformed evolute of the original element.

Similar is the doctrine of *Panchikarana* of Vedanta. According to it, out of the five original elements, namely, fire, air, water, earth and space, half of each element is regarded as being kept intact, while the other half is regarded as being divided into four equal parts, four such parts from the different elements, one after another, going to make up a half, which, in combination with the half of the original element, makes up one transformed evolute of the original element.

This idea of the mixture of the elements in the Upanisad is a very interesting one from the point of view of its analogy with a similar idea in the philosophy of Anaxagoras. He teaches that there is a portion of everything in everything, and that is how the elements came to be mixed with each other and gave rise to transformed products.

Praana

Praana originally means breath. As breath seems to constitute the life of man, *Praana* has come to signify the life-principle. Just as the life-principle in man has come to be called *Praana*, similarly, the life-principle in the universe has also come to be designated *Praana*. By *Praana* is thus meant either life force or cosmic-force.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, Ushasti Chakraayana states that *Praana* is to be regarded as the ultimate substratum of all things, for 'verily it is into *Praana*

that all these beings enter and it is from *Praana* that they originally spring' (I.11.5). Again, Raikva brings out a correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm in the same Upanisad thus:

'*Praana* is verily the final absorbent; for when man sleeps, his speech is reduced into *Praana*; his eye, his ear and his mind are all absorbed in *Praana*. It is *Praana*, which is the final absorbent of all these things' (IV.3.3).

'We may thus say that there are these two absorbents; one in the macrocosm and the other in the microcosm, the one being Air, and the other being *Praana*' (IV.3.4).

The emphasis is that as air is the life-principle of the universe, breath is the life-principle in man. Recognizing the supremacy of *Praana*, the Chhaandogya Upanisad, in the doctrine, which Sanatkumaara imparts to Naarada, maintains that 'just as all the spokes in a wheel are centred in its navel, similarly, all these beings, and in fact, everything that exists is centred in *Praana*' (VII.15.1). *Praana* may thus be regarded as the very navel of existence.

The philosopher Kaushitaki declares in the Kaushitaki Upanisad that '*Praana* is the Ultimate Reality, the mind being its messenger, the eye the protector, the ear the informant, and the speech the tire-woman. To this *Praana* as the Ultimate Reality, all these beings make offerings, without *Praana* having ever sought them' (II.1).

The above passages make clear that *Praana* is to be recognized as superior to all the organs of sense in the human system.

The Controversy between *Praana* and the Organs of Sense

The Chhaandogya Upanisad records a myth to highlight the supremacy of *Praana* in relation to all other sense organs. The myth runs as follows.

It was once resolved by the senses of man to decide which of them was supreme, and for that reason they went to Prajaapati, their Creator. The Creator replied that 'sense' might be regarded as the sovereign of them all, which, after departing, leaves the body powerless, and in a pitiable condition. Thereupon, the senses resolved to run the race for supremacy.

Speech was the first to go out of the body. Having lived outside for a year, it came back and wondered how the body could exist in spite of its absence. It was

told that the body lived like a dumb man not speaking, but breathing with the breath, seeing with the eye, hearing with the ear and thinking with the mind. Thereupon, the speech returned.

Then the organ of vision departed. Having lived outside for a year, it came back and wondered how the body could exist in spite of its absence. It was told that the body lived like a blind man not seeing, but breathing, speaking, hearing, thinking with the corresponding organ. Thereupon, the organ of vision returned.

Similarly, the other organs, namely, the ear and the mind departed one after the other, and returned after a year to learn that the body functioned normally with all the other organs except the one that departed.

Then, finally, when the breath was about to depart, it tore up the other senses as a well-bred horse might tear up the pegs to which it is tethered. Then the organs of sense assembled and together told *Praana*, 'Thou art our lord; depart not from us'.

Individually, the organs of sense prayed to *Praana*. The tongue said to *Praana*, 'If I am rich, it is really thou that art rich'; the eye said, 'If I am the support, it is really thou that art the support'; the ear said, 'If I am wealth, it is really thou that art'; and the mind said, 'If I am the final abode, it is really thou that art the final abode'.

It is for this reason that people have declared the primacy not of the organs of sense such as the tongue, the eye, the ear, the mind, but of breath. For, the breath is verily all these (V.1.6-15).

The above in the Chhaandogya Upanisad is probably the earliest and the most classical as illustrating the controversy between the organs of sense and *Praana*, and the resulting supremacy of *Praana* over the organs. The same story occurs in the Kaushitaki Upanisad, too, at a later date. It may need no repetition.

In the Prasna Upanisad, the story is again told but with important variations which merit attention. First, the elements, namely, space, wind, fire, water and earth join hands with the organs of sense, namely, speech, mind, eye and ear in the controversy with *Praana*. Secondly, the body here is called *Baana*, probably meaning a harp. Both the elements and the organs of sense contend that they have the power to uphold this harp and to modulate it.

Thirdly, when the *Praana* wants to go out, it is compared to the queen-bee, which, when it goes out is accompanied by all the bees that move after it. Similarly, when it returns, the bees that return forthwith likewise follow it.

Fourthly, there is an almost henotheistic worship of *Praana* by the organs of the sense. Here it is regarded not merely as the sovereign of the organs of sense, but also as the sovereign of the deities of the universe. It is, thus, that *Praana* comes to be identified with Agni, Surya, Parjanya, Vaayu, Being as well as Not-Being. As in the prayer offered in the Chhaandogya Upanisad, here also (the Prasna Upanisad) the *Praana* is prayed not to move out, for it is which informs, and is immanent in the organs of sense such as speech, hearing, vision as well as mind (II.1-12).

Praana, a Bio-psycho-metaphysical conception

In the Kaushitaki Upanisad, there are certain noticeable features in the account of *Praana* that do not occur in the Chhaandogya or the Prasna Upanisads.

First, *Praana* is directly identified with life (*aayu*h). This is to say that life exists so long as *Praana* exists, and life departs as soon as *Praana* departs. Secondly, *Praana* is identified with consciousness (*prajnaa*). It is, however, worthy of note that consciousness here is distinguished from life, as the higher category of existence. But wherever there is consciousness, there must be life. The Kaushitaki Upanisad recognizes this difference and describes *Praana* not merely as the principle of life, but also the principle of consciousness. Thirdly, the Upanisad identifies *Praana* with the Atman itself, the Ultimate Reality which is infinite and immortal, and which does not increase by good actions nor diminish by bad actions (III.2-9).

It, therefore, establishes that *Praana* is life from the biological point of view, consciousness from the psychological point of view and the Atman from the metaphysical point of view. Verily, this is a philosophical apotheosis of *Praana*.

b) Personalistic Theories of Cosmogony

The Idea of a Creator and the Creation of Mythological and Philosophical Dualities

In all the theories of creation so far stated, there has been no mention of any creator with a personal existence. All of them are of naturalistic Cosmo-genesis. On the other hand, there are theories that take into account of the personal element in creation.

In the Prasna Upanisad, Pippalaada says that at the beginning of creation, the Creator became desirous of creating. With that end in view, he practiced penance. After having practiced penance, he first created a pair, namely, Rayi and *Praana* corresponding to matter and spirit respectively. His intention was to create all existence whatsoever from that pair.

Pippalaada deserves credit for his notion of duality of primary existences, Rayi and *Praana*, almost corresponding to Aristotle's Matter and Form. But the application, which Pippalaada makes of his two-fold principle, is rather amusing. He says that the moon is matter, while the sun is spirit; the path of the fathers is matter, while the path of the gods is spirit; the dark half of the month is matter, while the bright half is spirit; and night is matter, while day is spirit. It was in this way that the Creator was able to create all the dual existence whatsoever in the world (I.3-13).

The Taittiriya Upanisad also records in a similar vein: 'The Creator at the beginning of things practiced penance, and having practiced penance, created all things that exist, and having created them entered into them, and having entered into them, became himself both the manifest and the un-manifest, the defined and the undefined, the supported and the unsupported, the conscious and the unconscious, the true and the false' (II.6).

Between the Taittiriya and the Prasna Upanisads, the common factor is that the Creator, at the beginning of things, was required to practise penance. But the Taittiriya Upanisad differs from the Prasna Upanisad in that the former conceives of the philosophical duality of the defined and the undefined, the conscious and the unconscious, the true and the false, while the latter conceives of the mythological duality of the dark half of the month and the bright half of the month, the path of the fathers and the path of the gods, night and day, the

moon and the sun, and so on.

The important factor in both the passages is the introduction of the idea of a Creator at the beginning of things, a personalistic account of creation as contrasted to the impersonalisitc account of creation of the earlier theories. This can be regarded as a marked advance over the earlier ones.

The Atman and the Creation of the Duality of Sex

The duality of existence as for sex occurs in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad. It states thus.

'The Atman alone existed in the beginning of things and he had the form of man …. He first said to himself, 'I am he', and it was for this reason that he came to be called I. It is for this reason also that when a man is asked who he is, he first replies it is I, and then he gives out his name…This Atman was afraid; it is for that reason that when a man is alone, he fears. Then the Atman began to reflect, 'why should I fear if there is nothing existing beside me, of which I might be afraid'? It was thus that all fear departed from him…It is said verily that fear proceeds only from a second. But the Atman could not still find satisfaction; for that reason, it is that when a man is alone, he does not find satisfaction. The Atman, therefore, wished for a second, ……and having divided himself into two halves, became the husband and the wife, man as well as woman. The woman began to reflect, 'how, having generated me from himself, he seeks intercourse with me?' 'Let me hide myself' she said, and so she became a cow; the Atman, however, became a bull and had intercourse with her… She became a mare, while he became a horse; she became a she-ass, and he became a he-ass, and had intercourse with her. It was thus that both the male and the female creatures were created by the Atman up to the very ants. All these were created by him' (I.4.1-4).

This passage gives an explanation of the generation of duality of sex from the Atman in the organic world, but does not explain the inorganic generation.

Creation by the Atman through the Intermediary Person

The Aitareya Upanisad offers a detailed explanation of the generation of all the objects in the universe.

According to it, 'in the beginning, the Atman alone existed and that there was

no blinking thing whatsoever. The Atman thought to itself, 'let me create the worlds'; whereupon he created the four worlds, namely, those of the super-celestial region of waters, the heavens with their celestial lights, the mortal earth, and the subterranean region of waters. It was thus that the heaven and the earth were encompassed on the upper and the nether sides by regions of water. After these worlds were created, the Atman proceeded to create first a World-Person – an intermediary entity subsisting between the Atman, the primary Reality, and the universe, the object of latter creation – whom he fashioned out of waters, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'

It is of interest to note that this is the only analogue in the cosmogony of the Upanisads corresponding to the Logos in the Greek or Christian philosophy. The concept of the Logos in the Upanisad plays a secondary and subservient role to the Atman.

The Atman then brooded upon this World-Person, and as a result of his brooding, created first his various organs of sense, then the functions corresponding to them, and, lastly, the deities or the world-governors corresponding to such functions in the cosmos.

'He first created the Mouth from which proceeded Speech, and from Speech, Fire

He created the Nostrils from which proceeded Breath, and from Breath, Air

He created the Eyes from which proceeded Sight, and from Sight, the Sun

He created the Ears from which proceeded Hearing, and from Hearing, the Quarters

He created the Skin from which proceeded Hair, and from Hair, the Herbs and Trees

He created the Heart from which proceeded Mind, and from Mind, the Moon

He created the Navel from which proceeded the Down-Breath, and from Down-Breath, Death.

Finally, He created the Generative Organ from which proceeded Semen, and from Semen, Water.'

In this explanation of the creation of various categories of existence, the

function follows the structure in the microcosm of the intermediary Person. But it always precedes it in the macrocosm of the universe. Thus, the organs of sense such as the mouth, the nostrils, the eyes and the ears are stated to have been created in the Person before their functions such as speech, breath, sight and hearing came into being. These functions, having been created are stated to have been the cause of the objective existences such as fire, air, the sun and the quarters in the macrocosm of the universe.

The Atman, thereupon, attacked the Person with Hunger and Thirst. (Hunger and Thirst in the Aitareya cosmogony corresponded to Love and Hate in the Empedoklean cosmology.) Hunger and Thirst said to the Atman, 'find us place in this creation'. The Atman replied to them that he would find them places in the deities themselves, and thus he made them co-partners with them. It is for this reason that whenever any offerings are made to any deity, Hunger and Thirst are always allotted a share in those offerings.

After the creation in this way of the Worlds, the Cosmic Person, the World-governors, and Hunger and Thirst, the Atman then proceeded to create Matter as food for them all. Thereafter, the Atman finally proceeded to create the Soul in the human body.

The Atman thought to himself, 'How shall this body live without me? But how do I enter this?' Having thus bethought, he rent open the place where the hair is made to part, and entered by the door. This is called the 'door of division'. This is also the 'place of rejoicing'. It is at that place that women part their hair. It is at that place that, on the skulls of children, we see a hole. It is on that spot that, when a *sanyasin* dies, a coconut is broken with the object of releasing his pent-up soul.

When the Atman entered the body by the door of division, an individual soul was born. At this stage, the Atman began to be subject to the three states of consciousness, namely, the waking, the dream and the deep-sleep state. After having been born, the individual soul began to look about it, and at all things, to see whether it was separate from them. But to its great astonishment, it only saw the Supreme Brahman spread everywhere. It is for the reason that the individual soul saw (*draa*) the Brahman (*Idam*) spread everywhere that it is called *Idamdra*. By contraction, the name *Idamdra* has become Indra, a mysterious name given to the Godhead by the mystery-loving gods (I.1-3).

Thus the individual soul was the last object to be created by the Atman; and the individual soul has a metaphysical identity with the Supreme Soul.

Atman and the Theory of Emanation

In the Taittiriya Upanisad, there is an emanatory theory of cosmogony. It states thus: 'From the Atman, in the first instance, proceeded Space, from Space, Air, from Air, Fire, from Fire, Water, and from Water, the Earth' (II.1). This is a complete enumeration of the five different Elements, which are described as having proceeded one after another from the primeval Atman. The Atman here is described, to all intents and purposes, as not playing any active part in creation.

The word used to state the fact of emanation is *sambhutih*, meaning generation, not creation. What the passage means is that from the Atman emanated Space and from Space were generated the rest of the Elements one from the other in the order stated earlier. It does not say that the Atman created Space, and from Space were created the other Elements one after the other.

The manner of emanation – from the Atman, the space; from the space the air, from the air, the fire; and from the fire, the water; and from the water, the earth – is the Way Down in Greek philosophy. Similarly, at the time of dissolution of the universe, counter-logically, the earth dissolves in water, water in fire, fire in air, air in space and space in the Eternal Atman. This is the Way Up in Greek philosophy.

This passage is very significant. First, it enumerates most definitely, for the first time in the realm of the Upanisads, the five different Elements. Secondly, it introduces the Heracleitean conception of the Way Up and the Way Down. Thirdly, this introduces the theory of emanation / generation as opposed to creation. Fourthly, this reduces everything except the Atman to an appearance or illusion as everything emanates from or is dissolved into the Atman.

The Personal-Impersonal Theory of Creation in Mundaka

The Mundaka Upanisad offers a connecting link between the emanatory theory of creation in the Taittiriya Upanisad and the theistic theory in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad. It is in the nature of a Personal-Impersonal theory of the origin of the universe. It states thus:

'At the beginning of creation, there existed a heavenly Formless Person who was unborn, without a mind, lustrous, and super-immutable. From him were born life, mind, senses, space, air, light, water, and earth, which last is the basis of the universe…From him also were born gods of various descriptions, angels, men, beasts, and birds. From him were born rice and barley, penance and faith, truth, celibacy, and religious law..…. He was likewise the source of all the oceans and mountains, the rivers which run to and fro, the herbs and trees, and the essence which runs through them, by which verily the inner Soul holds them all together' (II.1.2-9).

According to this Upanisad, all earthly and celestial existences, all organic and inorganic matters, all moral and psychological qualities were born from the primeval Person; yet the primeval Person is described as formless and beyond what we even call the immutable. Even this account of origin of the universe from the primeval Person is not entirely untainted by mythological considerations. It approaches the theistic theory of creation of all sorts of existences by the primeval Person. Yet, the theistic concept is still lacking as this passage describes the Person as impersonal, and speaks of emanation (*syandante*) or generation (*jaayate*) instead of creation as such.

The Theistic Theory of Creation in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad

The entirely personal setting for the Supreme Godhead is in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad. It may be that this Upanisad was written in the interest of a Saivite theory of theism. But the Upanisad equates the god Siva with the Supreme Godhead at many places.

This Upanisad tries philosophically to account for the creation of the world by the Godhead, by the method of construction through criticism of the various extant opinions on the subject of the origin of the world. The Upanisad enumerates the different opinions held at the time it was written, as to the origin of the world thus:

'Some people say that it is Time, others Nature, others Necessity, others Chance, others the Elements, others yet the Person, still others the Combination of these, and yet a few others the Atman which is the cause of all things whatsoever (I.2).

The Upanisad criticizes all these theories and puts forth a constructive view of Saivite theism explaining the origin of the universe. It records that we cannot say that Time is the origin of all things, for, is not God the very Time of Time, or the Taittiriya (III.10.6) Upanisad puts it, Death to the very God of Death? (VI.2&16). We cannot try to explain the origin of the world from Nature, for, is not Nature itself brought to maturity by the presence of God inside it? (V.5). We cannot say that Necessity and Chance are the origin of things; they are either too fatalistic or too un-philosophical ways for the explanation of the creation.

The Elements cannot be regarded, as the 'arche' of things, for the Elements are merely the garment of God, and it is due to His supreme skill in work that earth, water, fire and space were created (VI.2&11). We cannot say that the combination of these Elements is a veritable 'arche', as, for these to be combined, we must have an Eternal Being who is the primal cause of their combination (VI.1). We cannot finally say that either the *Purusa* of the *Saamkhyas*, who is too free from creation to be ever regarded as responsible for it, or the Atman of the Vedantins, who is really a powerless Being if we just consider that he is the cause of happiness as well as sorrow, can be regarded responsible for creation.

Rudra alone who rules the world by his powers, who stands before every being at the time of destruction, and who created the universe at the time of its origin can be regarded as the creator of all things that exist. He is the Supreme Godhead, to whose power the whirling round of the wheel of the universe is due (III.2& VI.1). He is the supreme cause, the lord of all souls; of him there is neither generator nor protector; he is the self-subsisting mover of the unmoving manifold, and causes the one primal seed to sprout in infinite ways (VI.9&12).

In this manner does the Svetaasvatara Upanisad advance a truly philosophic theory of creation, in which all power is ultimately due to a personal Godhead who causes the whole universe to move round his finger.

The Theory of Independent Parallelism as an explanation of the Analogies of Upanisadic and Greek Philosophies

There are analogies that subsist between the Upanisadic and the Greek theories of cosmogony. Three theories may be considered to explain their extraordinary similarities. First is the Theory of Borrowal either by Greece from India, or by India from Greece that could find historical justification only after

the period of Alexander. Just as Greece left a mark upon Indian progress in the realms of sculpture and numismatics after Alexander's invasion, similarly, India left a deep impression upon the Platonists of Alexandria in the realms of *yogic* ecstasy and their borrowal of the three qualities of *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* from the *Saamkhya* philosophy.

But the far more important question in the general Greecko-Indian problem is how the two cultures were related before the invasion of Alexander. Diogenes, the biographer of Greek philosophers, and Jamblichus, the Neo-Platonist, narrate stories of the visits of the early Greek philosophers to Brahmins in India. Such philosophers include Thales and Pythagoras. This fact is yet to be proved historically. The absence of even a single reference in the works of Plato to the Indian philosophy forbids the truth of such a statement.

Second is the Theory of Common Origin. This is to explain the many analogies of Comparative Mythology and Comparative Philology as having had the same source. As for Comparative Mythology, there are several examples. The Universal Being being an egg-like sphere, and Phanes, the shining god, coming out of its two lids, namely, the earth and the sky; the bi-partition of the primeval Atman into two portions, the man and the woman, with its analogy in Hebrew literature; similar descriptions of the Asvattha in the Katha Upanisad and the Igdrasil in Scandinavian mythology may all be traced to a period when the European and the Indian Aryans lived together. As for Comparative Philology, the several great analogies of the entire grammatical structure of the two languages could hardly be explained except on the theory of a continued stay together of the two peoples.

Third is the theory of Independent Parallelism. This is of special value in explaining the analogies of philosophical concepts. For instance, the definitions of the primary substances in the two philosophies are identical. The query of Hesiod at the beginning of his work corresponds almost exactly to the query at the beginning of the Svetaasvatara Upanisad. The conception of water as the 'arche' in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad has its counterpart in the theory of Thales. The doctrine of air as the final absorbent in the Chhaandogya Upanisad has its analogue in the theory of Anaximenes. The conception of Hereacleites of the exchange of fire for all things has its analogue in the Katha Upanisad. The concept of the earth being the basis of the cosmos in the Mundaka Upanisad has

its echo in Hesiod. The conception of space as the fifth element recognized in the Taittiriya Upanisad has its parallel in the theory of Philolaos.

Similarly, the conceptions of Not-Being and Being in the Taittiriya and the Chhaandogya Upanisads have their parallels in the theories of Gorgias and Parmenides. The Way Up and the Way Down in the Taittiriya Upanisad are repeated in the theory of Heracleitus. The conception of Trivritkarana in the Chhaandogya Upanisad has its analogue in the Anaxagorian doctrine of there being a portion of everything in everything.

As for the extra-cosmological resemblances, they are no less interesting. The doctrine of Transmigration of the period of Rigveda has its analogue in the Pythagorean doctrine. The Phaedrus myth of Charioteer and the Horses is quite similar to the myth in the Katha Upanisad. The representation of the idea of the Good in Plato as the Sun of the world of ideas has its counterpart in the description in the Katha Upanisad of the Atman as verily the Sun who is the eye of the world, and is free from all imperfections. The concept of *Maya* of the Vedanta has its echo in Plato, corresponding phonetically, philologically and even philosophically. The famous criticism by Shankara of the Naiyaayika idea of the Universal corresponds to the attack by Parmeides in Plato against the Universal of the Idea. The Vaak in the Rigveda is an analogue to the Logos in Heracleitus.

We cannot explain these cosmological and extra-cosmological analogies by the Theory of Borrowal, for it cannot be proved historically. It is not possible to explain them by the Theory of Common origin because, in spite of the similarities, the philosophical concepts of the two lands are placed in a setting of their own. For example, the Pythagorean Theory of Numbers and the Platonic Theory of Ideas are as peculiar to the Greek thought, as the Upanisadic doctrine of *Turiya* and the *Mimaamsaka* doctrine of the *Sphota* are peculiar to the Indian thought. What applies to Comparative Mythology and Comparative Philology may not apply to the cosmological and the extra-cosmological analogies stated above.

In this context, the Theory of the Independent Parallelism of Thought can be of help to explain the analogies. History is replete with instances of simultaneous discoveries in the realm of science by people unconnected and from regions unrelated. So is the case with the poets and philosophers in different ages

striking the same notes in totally dissimilar circumstances. The concepts of cosmogony in the Indian and the Greek thought are similar, rather identical, in some cases, in spite of there being no possibility of borrowal or of having the same origin.

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06
Varieties of Psychological Reflection

The Upanisadic seers were the foremost in their age in philosophical reflection in general, and psychological reflection in particular. The areas of their speculation in the realm of Psychology may be classified as the Empirical, the Abnormal and the Rational.

Empirical Psychology

The Relation of Mind to Alimentation

Empirical Psychology has been a science of recent development. We cannot expect to find a full-fledged empirical investigation of the science of mind in the days of the Upanisads.

The Upanisadic philosophers are of the view that the mind for its formation is dependent upon alimentation.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that the mind is supposed to be produced by the food that we take (VI.5.4). 'The food that we take is transformed in three different ways; the heaviest part of it becomes the excrement, that of medium density is transformed into flesh; and the subtlest part goes to form the mind' (VI.5.1). 'Just as in the churning of the curds the subtlest part rises up and is transformed into butter, so when food is eaten, the subtlest part rises up and is transformed into mind' (VI.6.1-2).

Even in the days of the Bhagavad-Gita, we find that the three different mental temperaments, namely, the *satvika*, the *rajasika* and the *tamasika* are supposed to be due to the different kinds of food that we eat (XVII.8-10). When once it is believed that the qualities of the food consumed form the quality of the mind, it is natural to insist, in the interest of the highest morality, upon a kind of catharsis is alimentation.

'When the food is pure, the whole nature becomes pure; when the nature becomes pure, memory becomes firm; and when a man is in possession of a firm memory, all the bonds which tie a man down to the world become loosened. It was because he (Narada) had his impurity destroyed that the venerable Sanatkumaara pointed out to him the way beyond darkness' (VII.26.2).

It, therefore, follows that the way beyond darkness is to be sought in the purity of alimentation, which involves the purity of mind.

Attention Involves Suspension of Breath

One of the acute observations made by the Upanisadic seers is the fact that, in the process of attention, we always hold our breath, and seem neither to breath out nor to breath in.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that when we speak, we neither expire, nor inspire (I.3.3). When we 'produce fire by rubbing two sticks together, or run a race, or bend a bow and string it, we neither exhale nor inhale' (I.3.5).

Our attention in such acts is concentrated on the action itself. It is not diverted to subsidiary processes as those of breathing out or in. This is called 'inner sacrifice' in the Kaushitaki Upanisad. It is also called the Praatardana sacrifice named after the sage Praatardana in the Upanisad.

According to Praatardana, while a man is speaking, he is not able to breathe. Therefore, he may be said to sacrifice his breath in his speech. On the other hand, while he is breathing, he is not able to speak. He may, therefore, be said to sacrifice his speech in his breath. 'These two endless and immortal oblations, man offers always, whether awake or asleep. All other oblations have an end, for they consist of works. Knowing this, the ancient sages did not offer the ordinary sacrifice' (II.5).

These passages suggest that when one knows that an inner sacrifice is ever going on inside one, there is no need for one to perform the ordinary external sacrifice (rite).

Analysis of Fear

Another observation, which the Upanisadic seers made, concerns the analysis of the emotion of fear.

The Taittiriya Upanisad states that it is only when a feeling of otherness arises in us that we entertain the emotion of fear (II.7). The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states that the primeval Atman feared, as he was alone; but 'on finding out that there was no other person whom he should fear, he became fearless; for it is only from (the idea or existence of) a second that fear proceeds' (I.4.2). When a man recognizes his own true Self, fear departs from him, for this recognition implies

that beside his own true Self, there is no other entity that can be the source of fear to him.

The Claim of Will for Primacy

As for the psychology discussed in the Upanisads, the conflict between the Will and the Intellect for primacy manifested in the Chhaandogya Upanisad is important. This may be considered as the commencement of the conflict between Voluntarism and Intellectualism.

The Upanisad records as to the claim of the Will as the primary reality thus: 'All these, therefore, …… centre in will, consist of will, and abide in will. Heaven and earth willed, air and ether willed, water and fire willed. Through the will of heaven and earth, rain falls; through the will of rain, food wills; through the will of food, the vital airs will; through the will of the vital airs, the sacred hymns will; through the will of sacred hymns, the sacrifices will; through the will of the sacrifices, the world wills; through the will of the world, everything wills. This is Will. Meditate on the Will. He who meditates on Will as the Brahman …… he is, as it were, lord and master as far as Will reaches – he who meditates on Will as the Brahman' (VII.4.2).

The seer of this Upanisad is evidently imbued with the all-pervading power of Will. It seems that this passage, among others, must have influenced Schopenhauer, who authored the book 'The World as Will and Idea' (Book 1). A passage from his book makes an interesting reading.

'If we observe the strong and unceasing impulse with which the waters hurry to the ocean, the persistency with which the magnet turns ever to the north pole, the readiness with which iron flies to the magnet, the eagerness with which the electric poles seek to be reunited, and which, like human desire, is increased by obstacles; if we see the crystal quickly take form with such wonderful regularity of construction… If we observe the choice with which bodies repel and attract each other …. If we observe all this, I say, it will require no great effort of the imagination to recognize, even at so great a distance, our own nature. That, which in us pursues its ends by the light of knowledge, but here in the weakest of its manifestations, only strives blindly and dumbly in a one-sided and unchangeable manner, must yet in both cases come under the name of Will.'

The doctrine of Schopenhauer is alike that of the Chhaandogya Upanisad that

the whole world seems to be filled with the force of Will. 'What appears as motivation in human beings is the same as what appears as stimulation in the vegetative life and as mechanical process in the inorganic world'; motivation, stimulation and mechanical process are just different manifestations of the same force of Will.

The Claim of Intellect for Primacy

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, the affirmation of the primacy of Intellect follows the primacy of Will. For the seer of the Upanisad, the affirmation of Will is the thesis, while the affirmation of Intellect is the antithesis. The Upanisad records on the primacy of Intellect thus:

'Intellect is better than Will. For, it is only when a man thinks that he wills… All these centre in Intellect, consist of Intellect, abide in Intellect. Therefore, if a man does not think, even if he knows much, people say of him, he is nothing…. But if a man thinks, even though he knows little, people indeed desire to listen to him. Intellect is the centre, Intellect is the self, Intellect is the support of all these. Meditate on Intellect. He, who meditates on Intellect as the Brahman …. He is, as it were, lord and master as far as Intellect reaches – he who meditates on Intellect as the Brahman' (VII.5.1).

The seer of this passage asserts the supremacy of Intellect over Will. Voluntarism here makes way to Intellectualism. A passage from the Maitri Upanisad supports this view: 'He (man) sees by the mind alone; he hears by the mind; and all that we call desire, will, doubt, belief, disbelief, resolution, irresolution, shame, thought, fear – all this is but mind itself.' (VI.30) This passage stresses that the mind in its reflective aspect is the fount and source of all mental modifications whatsoever.

Classification of Mental States

The Aitareya Upanisad makes a classification of various mental functions. Intellection is the basis of the classification. The Upanisad records the classification thus:

'Sensation, perception, ideation, conception, understanding, insight, resolution, opinion, imagination, feeling, memory, volition, conation, the will-to-live, desire and self-control are all different names of Intellection.' (III.2) This

passage appears to be the earliest contribution to a classification of mental states in the Upanisadic literature.

In this passage, the seer of the Upanisad not only mentions the different levels of intellectual experience such as sensation, perception, ideation, conception as different from one another, but also recognizes feeling and volition as the other two forms of experience. He makes a distinction between volition, which need not involve the idea of activity, and conation, which does. He also recognizes the process of imagination and memory. Finally, he makes intellect the fount and source of all mental activity whatsoever.

Intellectualistic Psychology and Idealistic Metaphysics

It generally occurs that intellectualistic psychology makes room for idealistic metaphysics. The intellectualistic seer of the Aitareya Upanisad is an idealistic as well. He, therefore, points out how Intellect is not merely the backbone of psychical functions, but of reality itself. The passage reads thus:

'This god Brahma, and this god Indra, these five great elements (earth, air, ether, water and fire) …… creatures born from the air, from the womb, and from perspiration, sprouting plants, horses, cows, men, elephants, whatsoever breathes whether moving or flying, and in addition whatsoever is immoveable – all this is led by Intellect and is supported on Intellect. The world is led by Intellect. Intellect is the support. Intellect is the final reality.' (III.3) This passage is nothing but outspoken Idealism.

The seer says that the entire moveable and the immoveable objects in the world, all those creatures that walk or fly, all the elements or gods exist by virtue of intellect and in intellect. This bears close resemblance to what Berkeley writes in his 'Treatise' thus:

'All the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word, all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world have not any subsistence without a mind; that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in my mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some Eternal Spirit – it being perfectly unintelligible and involving all the absurdity of abstraction to attribute to any single part of them an existence independent of a Spirit.'

A passage from the Maitri Upanisad reiterates the above view and states thus: 'It is the inner self which governs external existence. It is the inner *Praana* that is the source of the existence of the sun. This knowledge is given only to a few' (VI.1).

Varieties of Psychological Reflection

Abnormal Psychology

The Problem of Death in the Chhaandogya Upanisad

The question as to what becomes of a man's soul after death of the body recurs time and again in the Upanisads. The seers of the Upanisads are not content to discuss man's life here on earth. They make the eschatological question assume an extraordinary importance. The question often asked, according to the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, is this: 'The tree, if hewn down, springs anew from the previous root; what must be the root of a man's life in order that it may spring up again, even though hewn down by Death'? (III.9.28)

The Upanisadic seers have presumed that eschatological knowledge is of the highest kind. No one is considered wise unless one knows of what becomes of man after death.

The conversation between the sage of Jaivali and Svetaketu, the son of Aaruni in the Chhaandogya Upanisad illustrates the importance of this issue. The conversation is as follows.

'Boy, has your father instructed you?'

'Yes Sir'

'Do you know where all the creatures go to, hence?'

'No Sir'

'Do you know how they return again?'

'No Sir'

'Do you know where the path of the gods and the path of the fathers diverge?'

'No Sir'

'Do you know why that (the other) world never becomes too full?'

'No Sir'

'Then, why did you say that you had been instructed? How can a man who does not know these (simple) things say that he has been instructed?' (V.3.1-4)

The Problem of Death in the Katha Upanisad

The Katha Upanisad records the dialogue between Nachiketas and Yama, the god of Death, according to which eschatological knowledge is regarded as the 'highest good'. Nachiketas declines to choose, for his boon, nothing short of the knowledge of the soul's existence after death of the human body. The dialogue runs on the following lines.

Nachiketas: 'There is this doubt in the case of a dead man; some say that he is, others say he is not. I would like to be instructed by Thee in this matter. This do I choose for my third boon.'

Yama: 'Even the gods have formerly entertained doubt about this matter. Nor is this matter easy of comprehension, being a subtle one. Choose another boon, O Nachiketas, press me not, and let me alone on this point.'

Nachiketas: 'Verily, the gods themselves have entertained doubt about this matter and Thou hast thyself said that this matter passes comprehension. It is impossible for me to find another instructor in that subject beside thyself, nor do I find that any other boon would be equal to this.'

Yama: 'All those desires which are impossible to be satisfied in this world of mortals, ask me for them if you so wish; these damsels with chariots and musical instruments such as are indeed impossible for men to obtain, be waited upon by these, which I shall present to you; but, Nachiketas, do not ask me about death.'

Nachiketas: 'All these, O God of death, are but ephemeral objects, and wear out the vigour of the senses. Moreover, life itself would be short (for their full enjoyment); keep them unto thyself – these horses, these dances and these songs. What mortal would delight in a long life, after he has contemplated the pleasures which beauty and enjoyment afford? No. That which has become a matter of doubt and enquiry, O Death, speak to me about that great Hereafter! Nachiketas

chooses no other boon than that which concerns this great secret.' (I.1.20-29)

The Problem of Sleep – the Fatigue and Puritan Theories

After the question of the nature of death arises the question of the nature of sleep. The Upanisadic seers have advanced interesting theories on this issue.

A passage from the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad explains the fatigue theory of sleep as advanced in modern physiology. It records thus: 'As a falcon or any other bird, after having flown in the sky, becomes tired, and folding his wings repairs to his nest, so does this person hasten to that state where, when asleep, he desires no more desires, and dreams no more dreams.' (IV.3.19)

In the Prasna Upanisad, it is said that sleep is caused by the senses being absorbed in that highest 'sensorium', the mind. 'As all the rays of the sun, O Gaargya, become collected into the bright disc at the time of sunset, and emerge again from it at the time of sunrise, so do all the senses become collected into that highest sensorium, the mind; that is the reason why (in deep sleep) man is not able to hear, see or smell. People say about him that he has slept.' (IV.2)

It is later said that the deep-sleep is that the mind is merged into the ocean of light. 'And when he is overpowered by light, then does this god (soul) see no dreams, and, at that time, great happiness arises in the body.' (IV.6)

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, it is said that sleep is caused by the soul getting lodged in the arteries. 'When a man is fast asleep, and, being happy, knows no dreams, then his soul has moved in the arteries. (VIII.6.3)

In the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, the same idea is elaborated in the nature of a physiological explanation. It appears as a mythological explanation altogether in the context of the present day science. It is said that the heart sends forth about 72,000 arteries to the 'Puritat' which corresponds to the pineal gland so for as its function is concerned. But it differs from it in its location from the point of view of anatomy. The Upanisad records it thus: 'When a man is fast asleep and when he is not conscious of anything, his soul moves by means of the arteries, called Hitaah, which are 72,000 in number, and which are spread from the heart to the Puritat; there he sleeps like a youth, or a great king, or a great Brahmin who has reached the summit of happiness (II.1.19).

The Puritat may have to be considered as meaning a kind of membranous sac

around the heart. It is the view of the Upanisadic seers that, in deep sleep, the soul moves from the heart by means of the arteries and gets lodged inside the Puritat when sleep follows.

The same idea is later developed in the Nyaaya philosophy where sleep is explained as being due to the soul moving right inside the Puritat. The state of dream is said to be due to the position of the soul just on the threshold of the Puritat – the soul knocking for entrance inside it. In the waking state, it is imagined that the soul keeps moving from the heart to the Puritat. This doctrine of Nyaaya philosophy is sourced in the passage of the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad.

The Problem of Sleep: The *Praana* and the Brahman Theories

The Chhaandogya Upanisad offers another explanation of the phenomenon of sleep. 'As a bird, when tied by a string, flies first in every direction, and finding no rest anywhere, settles down at last on the very spot where it is fastened; exactly in the same manner, my son, mind is fastened to breath' (VI.8.1-2). In other words, sleep occurs when the mind is merged in *Praana*, that is, breath or energy.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad offers another explanation. According to it, sleep occurs when the soul goes to rest in the 'space' inside the heart. Ajaatasatru undertakes an experimental enquiry to prove this doctrine to Gaargya. He takes Gaargya by the hand to a place where a person is sleeping. He calls out to the sleeping person thus: 'Thou, great one, clad in white raiment, Soma, King of all'. The sleeping man does not rise. Then he rubs him with his hand (strikes him with stick). Then the sleeping man gets up.

Then Ajaatasatru explains thus: 'When this man was asleep, where then was this Person, full of intelligence, and whence did he return?' With no answer from Gaargya, Ajaatasatru continues, 'When this man was asleep, then the Person, full of intelligence (the soul), lay in the space which is in the heart.' (II.15-17) This amounts to stating that in deep-sleep, the soul is one with the Brahman.

The Prasna Upanisad also has a similar explanation of the state of deep-sleep. 'The mind, which is the sacrificer, is carried everyday to the Brahaman' (IV.4).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad corroborates this view. 'When a man sleeps, then, my dear son, he becomes united with the True; he is gone to his own (Self).

Therefore, they say, 'svapiti', he sleeps, because he is gone (apita) to his own (sva)' (VI.8.1).

The idea is that in deep-sleep, the soul is one with the Brahman; and thus deep-sleep is likened to the state of ecstasy. There is as much likeness, or as little, between deep-sleep and ecstasy as between God and dog. The same letters are, reversed; and they make all the difference. This difference is rather appreciated at a later stage even in the Upanisads when it is said that, even though the soul is one with the Brahman in deep-sleep, still it is not aware of this. 'As people who do not know a field, walk again and again over a golden treasure hidden somewhere in the earth, and yet are not able to discover it. Similarly, all these creatures, though they become merged in the Brahman, day after day, they do not discover it, as they are carried away by untruth' (VIII.3.2).

The Dream Problem

The Upanisadic seers have made an analysis of the dream-state of consciousness in relation to the state of deep-sleep. The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states thus: 'The soul moves away from his nest (wherever he likes); guarding with breath the lower nest, the immortal one moves away from his nest, to where he can roam at will – that golden Person, the lovely bird! Going hither and thither at the end of sleep, the God creates manifold forms for himself, either rejoicing with women, or eating or seeing terrible sights' (IV.3.9-18).

The same passage elucidates how the states of sleep and dream constitute an intermediate state between consciousness and unconsciousness: 'There are two states for that person, the one here in this world, the other in the other world, and there is an intermediate third state (may be, the twilight state of consciousness), consisting of the states of dream and sleep; remaining in this third state, he sees both those states which belong to this and the other world.'

The passage further states that the soul in this state resembles a fish moving from bank to bank: 'As a large fish moves along both the banks, the nearer and the farther, so does this person move along both these states, the state of deep-sleep and the state of waking.'

The passage also states that the soul puts forth a great deal of creative activity in this state: 'And there are no chariots, nor horses, nor any roads, but he himself creates the chariots, the horses and the roads; there are no joys, or pleasures, or

any blessings, but he creates the joys, the pleasures and the blessings; there are no ponds, or lakes, or rivers, but he creates the ponds, the lakes and the rivers – because he is indeed the Maker.' This passage is illustrative of the constructive activity of the soul in the state of dream.

The Prasna Upanisad states that even though the dreams are usually a mere replica of actual waking experience, occasionally they involve absolutely novel construction: 'There that god experiences greatness in sleep. What is seen over and over again, he sees once more (in the dream); what is heard over and over again, he hears once again (in the dream)….. What is seen and not seen, what is heard and not heard, what is enjoyed and not enjoyed, he experiences all, because he is the All (IV.5). This is in the nature of a very subtle analysis of dream experience.

Early Psychical Research

There are accounts of psychical research undertaken by the Upanisadic seers, however rudimentary they may appear to be. An account in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states that the sage Bhujyu, the son of Laahyaana, as a pupil, went to the house of Pathanchala in Madra country. Pathanchala had a daughter who was possessed by a Gandharva, an aerial spirit. With a view to releasing the girl from the hold of the spirit, Bhujyu asked the spirit who he was, and received the answer that he was Sudhanvan, the son of Angirasa. On knowing this, Bhujyu asked the spirit two more questions. One related to the actual extent of the world and the other related to the location of the sons of Parikshit. The Upanisad does not mention as to the answers received by Bhujyu. But it throws light on Bhujyu being an occultist, who worked according to his own understanding, on the lines of modern psychical research (III.3.1).

The Power of Thought

The Upanisads are a storehouse of passages or sutras laying stress on the thaumaturgy of Thought – the power of Thought.

'He who knows and meditates on the foot of the Brahman, consisting of the four quarters as resplendent, becomes (himself) endowed with splendour in this world' (Chhaandogya IV.5.3).

'He who meditates on the Brahman as luster, becomes illustrtious, reaches the

illustrious and bright words' (Chhaandogya VII.2.2).

'When the Sun was born, all sorts of shouts rose round about him….; he who knows this, and meditates on the Sun as the Brahman, him shall reach pleasant shouts from all sides, and shall continue, yea, shall continue' (Chhaandogya III.19.4).

'When (if) one meditates on the Brahman as support, he himself will find support; if as greatness, he himself will become great; if as mind, he himself will receive honour; if as the *parivara* of the Brahman, round about (*pari*) him shall die (*mri*) all the enemies who hate him' (Taittiriya III.10.3-4).

'He, who meditates on the Brahman as Not-Being, shall himself cease to exist; he, on the other hand, who will meditate on the Brahman as Being shall (always) exist; this is what they know.' (Taittiriya II.6).

Varieties of Psychological Reflection

Rational Psychology

The Seat of the Soul

When the question of the seat of the soul is raised, a spatial view of the habitation of the soul arises. As the soul is bereft of all spatial connotations, it is generally ignored. Yet, Rational Psychology has concerned itself with a discussion of the part or parts of the body with which the soul comes more directly into contact.

'In some manner, our consciousness is present to everything with which it (the soul) is in relation.' Some consider that the soul is a space-filling principle. Descartes images that the seat of the soul is the pineal gland. Lotze maintains that the soul is located somewhere in the 'structureless matrix of the anatomical brain-elements, at which point …. all nerve-currents may cross and combine'. Prof. James considers that it is related to the cortex of the brain. Aristotle supposes that the seat of the soul is in the heart. The bases of this finding are interesting. 'The diseases of the heart are the most rapidly and certainly fatal; the physical affections such fear, sorrow and joy cause immediate disturbances of the heart; and that the heart is the part which is the first to be formed in the embryo'.

The Upanisadic Psychology is of the view that the soul is located in the heart. It is not till a later era in the evolution of Indian thought that the seat of consciousness is transferred from the heart to the brain. It is only in the Yogic and the Tantric texts that the cerebro-spinal system comes to be recognized; and it is here that consciousness comes to be referred to the brain instead of the heart.

The Heart and the Brain as Seats

In the Taittiriya Upanisad, it is said as to the way in which the soul in the heart moves by a passage through the bones of the palate right upto the skull where the hairs are made to part. On the way it greets the Brahman who is his lord and master. The Upanisad characterizes the soul in the heart as the *manomaya purusa* and the Bhahman that resides in the brain as the *manasa-spati*, the overlord of the soul.

A cryptic passage in this Upanisad states thus: 'What we know as the space inside the heart, therein is this immortal golden being, namely, mind (or soul). What we know as hanging like a nipple between the bones and the palate, through it, is the entrance to the Lord on the passage right upto the skull where the hairs are made to part. When the (mystic) words *Bhuh, Bhuvah, Suvah and Mahaha* are uttered, the soul moves right up to the Brahman. The soul gains autonomy, joins the ruler of mind (soul), becomes the lord of speech, the lord of sight, the lord of hearing, the lord of knowledge, becomes the Brahman who bodies himself forth in space (I.6.1-2).

The above passage is open to different interpretations. According to it, the sense-centres as well as the intellect-centre are to be referred to the brain, as it says that the soul can obtain mastery over these only by moving to the brain from the heart. But the actual path it takes cannot easily be identified.

What is the nipple-like appearance referred to in the passage? Is it the uvula or the pituitary body? Max Muller understands it to be the uvula. Are we understand that the Upanisadic-seer was so struck by the hanging uvula that he regarded it to be the door to the over lord of the soul? Or, are we to understand that Max Muller and others took into account the experiences of the mystic who regards the uvula as the medium by which he comes to taste the nectar, which oozes in the state of ecstasy from the ventricles of the brain into the pharynx? Or, are we to suppose that the Upanisadic-seer was so fortunate as to witness a skull

dissected open, and to observe that the pituitary body is situated just above the pair of bones of the hard palate, and then to be able to suppose that the soul in the heart could travel along the course of the pituitary body, and through it move further to its over lord in the lateral ventricle, around which, in the grey matter, are situated the various special sense-centres? Or, are we to suppose that the Upanisadic-seer could gain enough knowledge of anatomy to trace the actual path in a spiritually inspired way? Any of these courses is possible but the last one appears to be more probable.

The Relation of the Body and the Soul

The Upanisadic philosophers have considered the psychological question of relation between body and soul.

The Maitri Upanisad, though a later one, raises the question of an efficient cause, and endows the soul with the power of motion. It states that some sages in ancient times called the Vaalakhilyas went to the Prajaapati Kratu and asked him as to who is the driver of the chariot of the body. They asked: 'The body, venerable Sir, is verily like an unmoving cart; may your Honour be pleased to tell us if you know who is the mover of it.' The Prajaapati replied to them that the mover of the body-chariot is the soul, 'the pure tranquil, imperishable, unborn entity who stands independently in his own greatness' (II.3-4).

The Kaushitaki Upanisad also states that the soul must be regarded as the master of all bodily faculties, the lord of all sense-functions. It records thus: 'As a razor is placed in a rajor-case, or fire in the fire-hearth, similarly does this conscious self pervade the body up to the very hairs and nails (and is contained with the body). These senses depend upon the soul as the relatives do upon the rich man. As the rich man feeds with his kinsmen, and the kinsmen feed on the rich man, even so does this conscious self feed with the senses, and the senses feed on the self' (IV.20). This passage establishes how the senses in the body are dependent on the self, and how the self is immanent in the whole body.

The History of the Spatial Extension of the Soul

The passage of the Kaushitaki Upanisad quoted above may have been the source of the Jaina doctrine that the soul is as large as the body; the soul of the elephant is as large as the body of the elephant, while the soul of the ant is only as large as the body of the ant. This is a belief in the extended nature of soul,

which is not considered separate except under spatial limitations.

The history of the doctrine of the space-filling nature of the soul as advanced in the Upanisads is rather interesting. The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad records that 'the intelligent luminous self in the heart is as small as a grain of rice or barley, and yet it is the ruler of all and lord of all, over-ruling all this and whatsoever else exists' (V.6.1).

On the other hand, the Katha Upanisad declares that the soul is no longer conceived as of the size of a mere grain of rice or barley, but is thought to be of the size of a thumb. It states thus: 'This soul, who is the lord of all things that have been and that are to be, and is, therefore, over-awed by none of them, is of the measure of a thumb and dwells in the midpart of the body (heart)' (II.2.12).

But in the Chhaandogya Upanisad, the soul is understood as not of the size a thumb, but of the measure of a span (V.18.1). The soul is here called *praadesamaatra abhivimaanam*.

These references to the soul in the Upanisads have occasioned considerable difficulty to the commentators. Shankara understands the soul as all pervading. He cannot, therefore, reconcile to the statement that the soul should be merely a span long – *praadesamaatra*. The word *praadesa* in the Chhaandogya Upanisad is quite relevant. In the Amarakosa, it is understood as meaning a span, as also in the Medinikosa. But in Jaabaalasruti, this word is used as meaning the span's length from the forehead to the chin.

There are some uses of this word in this fashion. In the Mahabharata, Bhimasena is described as being a span's length taller than Arjuna. In the Maitri Upanisad, the word has manifestly the same meaning. As such, Shankara takes the word to mean the span's length between the forehead and the chin. The other word used is *abhivimaan*. Shankara explains the word as meaning one who knows oneself – I am I. Etymologically the word may not admit of such interpretation. It may mean simply 'measuring'.

Against this background, the expression *praadesamaatram abhivimaanam* may be understood as equivalent to 'measuring the span's length from the forehead to the chin'. In such an event, the meaning of the passage in the Chhaandogya Upanisad may be understood thus: 'He who worships the Self as measuring the span's length from the forehead to the chin, and as existing in all men, he enjoys

food in all worlds, in all beings and in all selves.'

In fact, this passage indicates that we are to worship the Soul who resides the span's distance between the forehead to the chin and who is, therefore, the master of the head, which, by a consensus of opinion, is recognized in Hindu thought as the *uttamaanga* or the best part of the body. This interpretation may corroborate the statement of Prof James in his Principles of Psychology I when he says that 'the Self of selves, when carefully examined, is found to consist mainly of the collection of these peculiar motions in the head, or between the head and the throat'.

The Soul Infinitely Large and Infinitely Small

The earlier references to the soul are related to its size and being contained within the body. We now come to the idea of the soul as not being restricted to any part of the body, but being verily infinite and occupying all space.

The Mundaka Upanisad speaks of the 'eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent, subtle and imperishable Soul who is the origin of all beings, and whom the wise alone can perceive (I.1.6).

The Katha Upanisad states that 'the wise man ceases to grieve when he has known this great all-pervading Soul (I.2.21).

The Maitri Upanisad does not make a choice among the rival theories about the size of the soul, and offers an easy eclecticism by combining all of them together. It states that a man 'reaches the supreme state by meditating on the soul, who is smaller than an atom, or else of the size of the thumb, or of a span, or of the whole body' (VI.38). In this statement, the Upanisad does not advocate any particular size of the soul. The interpretation by Raamatirtha that the soul is 'of the size of a thumb in the span-sized heart in the body' does not make matters easy to understand.

The Katha Upanisad, however, seeks to reconcile the contradictory statements in the Upanisads as to the size of the soul stating that 'the soul of the living being is subtler than the subtle, and yet greater than the great, and is placed in the cavity of the heart'. Even this statement is seemingly contradictory (I.2.20).

Yet it is corroborated in the Chhaandogya Upanisad thus: 'My soul in the

heart is smaller than a grain of rice or barley, or a mustard or a canary seed; and yet my soul, which is pent up in the heart, is greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than the heaven, greater than all these worlds (III.14.3).

The thory, which attributes a spatial limitation to the soul, is contradicted by the above theories. There appears to be no way out of the difficulty except on the supposition that the soul transcends all spatial limitations.

Analysis of the States of Consciousness

When we consider that the soul comes to inhabit the body, it is to be recognized as passing through certain psychical states. The Mandukya Upanisad makes an acute analysis of the four states of consciousness, which is wholly extraordinary.

The Mandukya Upanisad rightfully deserves credit for the concept of the 'superconscious' introduced in the elaboration of the states of consciousness. The seer of the Upanisad states that there are not merely the three obvious states of consciousness, but a fourth one must also be recognized, which corresponds to what is generally called the 'Superconscious'.

The word 'superconscious' does not appear to be a happy one to designate the fourth state. To say that the fourth state of consciousness is 'superconscious' is to utter a solecism. This state of consciousness is better explained by the word self-conscious. In such a case, it can be conceived that the Upanisad states that the soul experiences four states of consciousness, namely, waking, dream, deep-sleep and pure self-conscious.

The Upanisad states thus: 'This soul is four-footed (four conditions). The first condition is that of wakefulness, when the soul is conscious only of external objects and enjoys the gross things, and then it is to be called Vaisvaanara. The second condition is that of dreaming, when the soul is conscious of internal objects and enjoys the subtle things, and then it is called Taijasa. When the person in sleep desires no desires, and dreams no dreams, that state is to be called the state of sound-sleep. Thus the third condition of the soul is that of sound-sleep, when being centred in itself and being full of knowledge and bliss, it feeds on bliss; it is then called *Praajna*. The fourth state of the soul is that of pure self-consciousness, when there is no knowledge of internal objects nor or external ones, nor of the two together; when the soul is not a mass of intelligence,

transcending as it does both consciousness and unconsciousness; when it is invisible, uncommunicable, incomprehensible, indefinable; when it is beyond thought and beyond the possibility of any indication, being virtually the quintessence of self-intuition, in which all the five kinds of sensation are finally resolved; when it is tranquil and full of auspiciousness and without a second; it is then to be called Atman (2-7).

The Microcosm and the Macrocosm

The recognition of the four chief states of individual consciousness and the names assigned to the soul in these states, namely, Vaisvaanara, Taijasa, Praajna and Atman have played an important role in the later, more systematized Vedanta. Because of the detailed elaboration of the states of consciousness, the Mandukya Upanisad is regarded as a late Upanisad.

One important point to be noted is that this Upanisad does not make mention of the corresponding four states of consciousness of the Cosmic Self. In later Vedanta, the Cosmic Self, as it passes through its four states, is called the Viraat, Hiranyagarbha, Isa and the Brahman respectively. Corresponding to the four states of the microcosm, there come to be recognized the four aspects of the macrocosm, more correctly named 'makranthropos'.

The cosmic consciousness comes to be regarded as corresponding, state by state, to the individual consciousness; and what is in the individual comes to be found also in the cosmos. Even though this idea is not fully brought out in the Upanisads, it is stated in an incipient way.

The theory of representation by Leibnitz is already present in the Chhaandogya Upanisad: 'Within this city of Brahman (this body), there is a small lotus-like place (the heart), and within it a small internal space; that which is within this small space is worthy of search and understanding…. Of the very kind as this outer space is, of the same kind is this internal space inside the heart; both heaven and earth are contained within it, both fire and air, both the sun and the moon, both the lightning and the stars' (VIII.1.1-3).

The above passage is the root of the theory that the individual is to be regarded as the world in miniature, and the world is the individual writ large. The individual object serves as a mirror in which the whole of reality is reflected, a theory to which Leibnitz gives expression in his book Monadology thus: 'In the

smallest particle of matter, there is a world of creatures, living beings, animals, entelechies, souls. Each portion of matter may be conceived as like a pond full of fishes'

The Sheaths of the Soul

One interesting issue related to the Upanisadic psychology is the issue of the so-called sheaths or bodies of the soul. Modern Theosophists attach great importance to the conception of these 'bodies of man'. Corresponding to these bodies, the Theosophists have recognized seven different planes on which the several bodies of man keep functioning. The physical, the astral, the mental, the intuitational, the spiritual, the monadic and the divine are the seven planes.

As for the bodies or sheaths of the soul, there is mention only in the Taittiriya Upanisad: 'Within this physical body which is made up of food, is another body which is made up of vital air; the former is filled with the latter, which is also like the shape of man. More internal than the body, which is made up of vital air is another body, which consists of mind; the former is filled with the latter, which is again like unto the shape of man. More internal still than the mental body is another body which is full of intelligence; the former is filled with the latter, which is again like unto the shape of man. Finally, still more internal than this body of intelligence is another body consisting of bliss; the former is filled in the latter, which is still is like the shape of man' (II.2-5).

What the Upanisad says is that various bodies are pent up within the physical body; the one who knows that the bodies or sheaths are what may be called, by sufferance, the physical, astral, mental, intuitional and beatific bodies of man; every internal body is enclosed within an external one; and finally, all these bodies are in the shape of man. It may be that the concept of sheaths stated here may have spread the notion of *pancha-kosas* or the five bodies of man.

Limitations on Interpretation of Sheaths

The Theosophists believe in the 'etheric double', which, for them, is exactly like the shape of the human body. For them, the etheric double of a child lingers for three days after its death; and for an adult, it lingers longer to cover the period of mourning. In dreams, we may have the curious experiences of flying like a bird in mid-air, or swimming like a fish in the seas. According to them, it is our etheric double, which, by a kind of endosmosis, is transmitting its experience

into the physical body. They also believe that the scheme of the five bodies mentioned in the Upanisad is only a description of the 'manifest' bodies of man, and that over and above these, there are two more 'unmanifest' bodies called the Monadic and the Divine – the *Anupaadaka* and the *Aadi* or, in the Buddhist terminology, the *Parinirvaana* and the *Mahaaparinirvaana.*

This theory of the Theosophists suffer from the fact that it takes words for things, and that it refuses to see that the 'bodies' of man stated in the Upanisad are nothing more than mere allegorical representations of certain psychological conceptions.

Man is made up of physical body, of vital air, of mind and intellect, and of the faculty which enables him to enjoy an ecstatic bliss. This is only what the passage indicates. To ignore its mere psychological aspect, and to build an occultist philosophy upon the doctrine, is not justifiable.

Shankara recognizes the 'kosas'. But he understands them as having merely an ideal existence. According to him, we have to discriminate, in our thinking, the five different kosas, and to find our true self beyond the physical body, the vital air, the mind and intellect, and even beyond our beatific consciousness. As for identifying the Brahman, he may not be specific whether it is at the level of the beatific consciousness, or beyond it. But, in any case, he is specific that the kosas or sheaths have no real existence; and a theory built upon the conception of sheaths is a theory 'built upon ignorance'.

Sheaths – Substance

The seer of the Taittiriya Upanisad rules out of order the theories that 'matter', 'life', 'mind' or 'intellect' could be regarded as the principle of things and comes to the conclusion that 'intuitive bliss' alone deserves to be regarded as the source of Reality. This is explained in the form of a parable, worthy of recounting.

The sage Bhrigu approaches his father Varuna to learn of the nature of the Ultimate Reality. The father directs him to practise penance and learn the truth for himself. He only gives him the hint that the ultimate principle should be one 'from which things spring, in which they live, and into which they are finally resolved'. After practicing penance, the son returns to the father and informs him that food (matter) may be regarded as the principle of things. The father is not

satisfied, and asks him to continue the penance. The son does penance and returns to the father second time to report to him that vital air may be regarded as the principle. With the father not being satisfied, the son returns with the successive answers of mind and intellect; and the father is still not satisfied. The son finally brings the answer that the beatific consciousness may be regarded as the source of all things. The Upanisad breaks off at this point, and we have no way of knowing whether the father is satisfied with his answer. It only makes mention of the fact that this piece knowledge shall forever be known mysteriously as the Bhaargavi Vaaruni Vidyaa and that this is 'exalted in the highest heaven' meaning thereby that it is honoured even among the gods (III.1-6).

The Idea of Transmigration - an Aryan Idea

It is now established that the real source of belief in transmigration among any people, under certain circumstances, lies in their own ethno-psychological development, and not in an unproven or unprovable inter-influence from one country to another. This is the hypothesis for the up springing and continuance of the idea of transmigration among the Greeks from Homer downwards through Orpheus to Pythagoras in the early Greece. It is the same hypothesis for the development of the same idea among the Indian Aryans from the Rigveda through the Brahmanas to the Upanisads. To consider that the Aryan-Indians borrowed the idea from the aborigines is only to expose ignorance of the historical forces. The idea of Transmigrations appears clearly to have developed stage by stage in the Aryan thought itself.

Transmigration in the Rigveda – the Tenth Mandala

In the major part of the Rigveda, the idea of Transmigration is rather absent. The cheerful and the joyous attitude of the Indian Aryans did not make them think too much of the life after death. They believed in the world of the gods and of the fathers; and they did not care to believe in anything else. It was sufficient for them to know that the godly men, on physical death, went to a heaven which overflowed with honey; and that the community went to a world where Yama had the privilege first to go, and to gather a number of men about him, a place 'of which it was impossible that anybody could be robbed'.

Even though, the idea of Transmigration is not on display conspiculously in

Rigveda, it is, however, true that an approach is made to that idea in certain places. The first stage in the evolution of this idea consists in taking an animistic or hylozoistic view of the world.

For instance, the verse of the sixteenth hymn of the tenth Mandala is devoted to the description of a funeral occasion. In this verse, the seer asks that the eye of the dead man be moved back to the sun which is its analogue in the makranthropos, the *anima* to the wind which is its analogue, and the *animus* be directed to go to the heaven or the earth according to its *dharma* (qualities). Otherwise, the seer asks it to move even to the waters or the plants if it so suited it.

This verse does not express the idea of Transmigration proper, but it puts forth certain hints towards an animistic or hylozoistic view of the world. But the word *dharma* introduced here is very significant. It is possibly the earliest reference to the theory of *karma*, as the soul is asked to go to heaven or earth according to its qualities.

A still more definitive passage is in another hymn of the tenth Mandala of the Rigveda where a hylozoism is advocated with greater vigour. Here the whole hymn (Rigveda X.58.1-12) is addressed to a departed spirit. The seer states that he is going to recall the departed soul in order that it may return and again live. The spirit 'which may have gone to heaven or earth or to the four-cornered globe, which may have been diffused in the various quarters or have taken resort in the waves of the sea or the beams of the light, which may have ensouled the waters or the herbs, or gone to the sun or the dawn, or rested on the mountains, or which may have spread through the whole universe and become identical with the past and the future' – that soul, the seer says, he will recall by means of his song, and make it take on a tenement. This is indeed a great belief in the power of song.

The narration of the hymn is symbolic of the view that the soul is not wholly lost after the death of the body, being mixed with the elements.

Transmigration in the Rigveda – the First Mandala

The hymn of the Rigveda (1.164) consists of 52 verses. It breathes a sceptico-mystical atmosphere, and it is full of riddles. Its main import is that He who made all this does not Himself probably know its real nature. It sets a high price

on the mystical knowledge, which it glorifies that anyone who is in possession of this knowledge may be said to be his father's father.

Even though the hymn occurs in the first Mandala of the Rigveda, it is not, for that reason, to be considered that it belongs to the oldest part of the Rigveda. For example, the hymn advocates a facile unity of Godhead, which is only a later development of thought. It also quotes the very same verse, which we find in the Purusha-sukta; but Purusha-sukta has been recognized to be one of the later productions of the Vedic period. It even contains the famous verse on the 'Two Birds', which plays an important part in the Mundaka Upanisad. All these observations point unmistakably to the fact that this hymn of the Rigveda must have been a later hymn, though included in the first Mandala.

It is true that the hymn contains allusions to such conceptions as those of the Fire, the Cow and the Calf, and the First-born of the Law. In spite of all that, the psychological vein ever-present though the whole hymn, and the reference to the Two Birds meaning the individual soul and the universal soul make it clear that the seer of the hymn is expressing, in his own metaphorical way, his ideas about the nature of soul, and the relation between the individual soul and the universal soul.

The seer asks cryptic questions: 'Who has ever seen the precise mode in which the boneless soul – the very life-blood and informing spirit of the earth – comes to inhabit a bony tenement? If a man does not know this himself, has he ever moved out of himself and gone to the wise man to receive illumination on it?' He himself answers categorically that this breathing, speeding and moving life-principle is firmly established inside these tenements of clay. Further, the immortal principle conjoined with the mortal one moves backwards and forwards by virtue of its natural power. The wonder of it is that the mortal and the immortal elements keep moving ceaselessly in opposite directions. As a result, the people are able to see one, but are unable to see the other.

It is felt that these last verses provide sufficient evidence as to the proof of existence of the idea of Transmigration in the Rigveda, for the soul is said to be a moving, speeding life-principle which comes and goes, moves backwards and forwards, comes in contact with the body, and then moves from it in the opposite direction.

The pinnacle of the whole doctrine is reached when the seer tells us that he himself saw (probably in his mind's eye) the guardian of the body, moving unerringly by backward and forward paths, clothed in collective and diffusive splendour, and that it kept on returning frequently inside the mundane regions.

That this 'guardian' is no other than the soul is evident from the verse following the verse 30, which mentions the 'breathing, speeding, moving life-principle'. Further the word *varivarti* is indicative of the frequency of the soul's return to this world. It may be that, with this idea uppermost in his mind, the seer speaks of those who come hither as those who are moving away, and those who are moving back as already returning hither.

The Ethno-psychological Development of the Idea of Transmigration

The main elements in the idea of Transmigration are the passage of the soul from the body, its habitation in other forms of existence like the plants and waters, and its return to the human form. These elements are implicitly found in the Rigveda. These elements are coupled with the incipient idea of the quality of action called *dharma*, which determines a future existence.

The principles of ethnic-psychology, as already established, lay down that every nation contains with in it the possibility of arriving at the idea of Transmigration from within its own proper psychological development.

Whenever there is recognized the possibility of the soul coming to inhabit a body as a god-like principle from without, wherever it is supposed that the soul could likewise part from the body as it came, wherever it is thought that the soul, after parting from the body, could lead a life of disembodied existence, and wherever it is supposed to return to the earth and inhabit any form of existence whatsoever, there is a kind of undying life conceived for the soul. From here the step to actual Transmigration is not far, indeed. Except the utterance of the sage Vaamadeva that he was in a former life ' Manu or the Sun', there is no specific evidence to attribute the doctrine of Transmigration as such to the Vedic seers.

Transmigration in the Upanisads

In the Upanisads, the idea of Transmigration has been most explicitly advanced.

In the Katha Upanisad, when the father of Nachiketas tells Nachiketas that he has made him over to the god of Death, Nachiketas replies that it is no uncommon fate that is befalling him. 'I indeed go at the head of many to the other world; but I also go in the midst of many. What is the god of Death going to do to me? Look back at our predecessors (who have already gone); look also at those who have succeeded them. Man ripens like corn, and like corn he is born again.' (I.1.5-6).

Nachiketas says that just as a corn of grain ripens and perishes and is born again, so does a man live, and die to be born again.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad makes a detailed account as to the manner in which a man dies and is born again. At the time of birth, all the elements wait upon the approaching soul, their lord and king; again, all the elements wait upon the soul to give him a send-off when he is about to depart.

The Upanisad records thus: 'And as on the approach of a king, the policemen, magistrates, charioteers, and governors of towns wait upon him with food, drink, and tents saying 'he comes, he approaches,' similarly do all these elements wait on the conscious self, saying 'this Brahman comes, this Brahman approaches'; and again, at the time of the king's departure, the policemen, magistrates, charioteers, and governors of towns gather round him, similarly do all vital airs gather round the soul at the time of death' (IV.3.37-38).

The Upanisad then makes a very realistic description of the actual manner of death: 'When the vital airs are gathered around him, the self collecting together all the portions of light moves down into the heart; and when the 'person in the eye' has turned away, then he ceases to know any forms. He becomes concentrated in himself, that is the reason why they say he is not able to see; he becomes one with himself, that is the reason why they say he is not able to speak, or hear, or know. Then the tip of his heart is filled with light, and, through that light the soul moves out either by the way of the eye, or the head, or any other part of the body. As the self moves out, life moves after it; and as the life moves, the various vital airs depart after it. Him follow his knowledge, his works, and his former consciousness' (IV.4.1-2).

It is important to notice that in this last sentence a doctrine of *karma* is being advanced, which becomes still more explicit almost immediately: 'And as a

caterpillar, after reaching the end of a blade of grass, finds another place of support and then draws itself towards it, similarly this self, after reaching the end of this body, finds another place of support, and then draws himself towards it. And as a goldsmith, after taking a piece of gold, gives it another newer and more beautiful shape, similarly does this self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled ignorance, take on another, newer, and more beautiful form, whether it be of one of the Manes, or Demi-gods, of Gods, or of Prajaapati, or Brahma, or of any other beings. This self, then, as his conduct and behaviour has been, so does he become. He whose works have been good becomes good; he whose works have been evil becomes evil. By holy works, he becomes holy; by sinful works, sinful. It is for this reason that they say that a person consists merely of desire; as his desire is, so is his will; as his will, so his work; as his work, so his evolution' (IV.4.3-5).

These passages are important from various points of view. First, the soul finds out its future body before it leaves the present one. As such, it calls in question the possibility of the state of 'disembodied' existence. Second, the soul is a creative entity. It creates a body as a goldsmith creates an ornament of gold. Third, the soul is like a phoenix, which, at every change of body, takes on a newer and more beautiful form. Fourth, the soul is amenable at every stage to the law of *karma* and receives a holy body if its actions have been good, and a sinful body if its actions have been bad.

The Upanisad is specific in elaboration of the doctrine: 'As to the man who has no desires left in him, who is desireless because of he has all his desires fulfilled, he desires being centred only in the Self, the vital airs do not depart; such a man being the Brahman (while he lived) goes to the Brahman (after death). Of that import is this verse – *when a man becomes free of all desires that are in his heart, mortal as he is, he nevertheless becomes immortal and obtains the Brahman*. And as the slough of a snake might lie on anthill, dead and cast away, even so does his body lie. Being verily bodiless, he becomes immortal; his vital spirits are (merged in) the Brahman, and become pure light' (IV.4.7-9).

The Destiny of the Evil Soul

As for the destiny of the evil soul after death of the physical body, there are several passages in the Upanisads.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad records thus: 'Joyless indeed are the regions, and also enveloped in pitchy darkness where ignorant and unenlightened men go after death' (IV.4.11).

The Isa Upanisad declares thus: 'Demonic are the regions and also enveloped in pitchy darkness, where those who have destroyed their souls are obliged to go…. Those who worship what is not real knowledge enter into gloomy darkness' (3 & 9)

The same idea is expressed elsewhere in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, too (IV.4.10).

The Katha Upanisad declares thus: 'Those who make a gift of barren cows which have drunk water and eaten hay and given their milk, themselves go to the joyless regions' (I.1.3).

The above passages are illustrative of the belief of the Upanisadic philosophers in a sunless region where the ignorant, the unenlightened, the self-destructive, and the pseudo-charitable are obliged to go after death. There is also nothing in the Upanisads to show whether these evil souls have to suffer damnation eternally in this dark region, or whether their stay in that region is only temporary.

Eschatology in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad

As to the other souls, the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad says that a soul after death ascends through the regions of the wind, the sun, and the moon, and comes, at last, to a region, which is free from grief and snow, and dwells there, through eternity. The Upanisad records thus: 'When a man goes away from this world, he comes to the wind. There the wind opens for him a hole as large as the hole of a chariot-wheel. Through it he moves upward and comes to the sun. There the sun opens for him a hole as large as the hole of a 'Lambara'. Through it he moves upward and comes to the moon. There the moon opens for him a hole as large as the hole of a drum. Through it he ascends and comes to a world which is sorrowless and snowless, and there remains for aye' (V.10.1).

The above passage is to be regarded as one of the oldest of the eschatolocal passages in the Upanisads. It has some ramifications. First, it is not clear whether such a fate is reserved for all souls, or for good souls only. It speaks of souls

without distinction. Secondly, the world of the moon is regarded as situated at a greater distance from us than the world of the sun. Thirdly, the region of the Blessed of which the passage speaks is a region 'without snow'. Fourthly, the idea of 'eternity' is introduced in this passage, implying that such a soul lives in the region of the Blessed forever and ever.

The reference to the 'region of the Blessed' as being 'without snow' is possibly an indicator that the Upanisadic philosopher, who made the passage, was tormented by too much cold in the region where he lived.

Eschatology in the Chhaandogya Upanisad – the Two Paths

The eschatological passages in the Chhaandogya Upanisad have to be regarded as of a later date, as they go into very great detail over the respective fates of the ascetic or the householder, and consigns the one to the way of the Gods, and the other to the way of the Fathers. The Upanisad speaks of two ways open to the mortals, the bright way, and the dark way. The two ways are known by different names such as the *archirmaarga* and the *dhumamaarga*, the *devayaana* and the *pitriyaana*, and the Way of the Gods and the Way of the Fathers. These two paths are later immortalized in the Bhagavad-Gita. They already find mention in the Rigveda.

The Upanisad states that as regards those who practise penance and faith in a forest, whether, after their death, people perform their obsequies are not, their souls enter the path of light. They move successively 'from light to day, from day to the bright half of the month, from the bright half of the month to six months during which the sun moves to the north, from these months to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon and from the moon to the lightning. There is a person not human who carries them to the Brahman. This path is known as the path of the Gods or the path of the Brahman. Those who proceed on this path never return to the cycle of human existences, yea never return' (IV.15.5-6).

Over against this path, according to the same Upanisad, there is another path reserved for those, who, living in towns, lead a life of charitable deeds and perform works of public utility. Such people do not indeed travel by the path of the Gods, which is reserved only for the penance-performing ascetics of the

forest.

They travel by the path of smoke, 'from smoke they go to night, from the night to the dark half of the month, from the dark half of the month to the six months during which the sun moves to the south, but they do not reach the year. From these months they go to the world of the Fathers, from the world of the Fathers to the sky, from the sky to the moon. There they dwell till the time comes for them to fall down. Thence they descend by this path; from the moon they come down to the sky, and from the sky to the wind. Having become wind, they become smoke; having become smoke, they become mist; having become mist, they become a cloud, having become a cloud, and they rain down. Then they are born as rice or barley, herbs or trees, seasamum or beans. At this stage, verily, the path is difficult to follow. Whoever eats the food or discharges the seed, like unto him do they become' (V.10.1-6).

The Moral Backbone of the Upanisadic Eschatology

The two paths stated in the Chhaandogya Upanisad appear to be mythological explanations of an insoluble problem. Indeed, there is no need for one to believe in the Two Paths, as stated by Ramadaasa. What becomes of the soul after death is not given to man to understand. Philosophically, we may not be concerned with the actual stages of the ascent or descent of the soul, but only with the idea of ascent and descent as such.

From this point of view, it is a matter of admiration that the ideas of ascent and descent are placed on a firm moral foundation such as 'according as a man's works are, so does he become. It is this moral backbone of the Upanisadic eschatology that gives it a great philosophical value.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad further says that a 'beautiful' character quickly attains to a covetable birth, that of a *brahmana, kshatriya* or *vaisya.* Those of an 'ugly' character speedily attain to a miserable birth as that of a dog, swine or pariah (V.10.7).

The Kaushitaki Upanisad makes this issue more definitive and declares thus: A soul is said to take on the body of 'a worm or a moth, a fish or a bird, a leopard or a lion, a serpent or a man, or any of these other creatures, according to his *karma* and knowledge (I.2).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad treats the creatures low in the scale of evolution on a different footing. The Upnaisad denies them the right to enter on the path of liberation, ordaining that they must forever be fixed in the round of births and deaths. These creatures are not allowed to tread on the Path of the Gods or the Path of the Fathers. They keep up the round of living and dying. Their rule is not 'die to live', but 'live to die'. It is rather extraordinary that the Upanisad includes even 'a tiger or a lion, or a wolf or a boar' in the same category with 'a worm or a moth, a gnat or a mosquito' (V.10.8 &VI.9.3).

Variation in the Conception of the Path of the Gods

There is a later phase in the development of the conception of the Path of the Gods. The Kaushitaki Upanisad makes a curious development in this path. It states that when a soul comes to the Path of the Gods, 'he first goes to the world of Fire, then to the world of Varuna, then to the world of the Sun, then to the world of Indra, then to the world of Prajaapati, and finally to the world of the Brahman'.

This Upanisad does away with the relays recognized in the Brhadaaranyaka and the Chhaandogya Upanisads, and substitutes new ones. In the place of such conceptions as 'the world of the day', 'the world of the bright half of the month', 'the world of the six months during which the sun is moving towards north', or 'the world of the year', it substitutes 'the worlds of deities', recognized as deities proper.

It further states that 'when such a soul has reached the world of the Brahman, the Brahman directs His attendants to run towards the soul and receive him with all the glory which is due to Himself alone. He says that as the soul has reached the Ageless River, he can never become old. Upon the command, five hundred celestial damsels move toward the soul – a hundred with fruits, a hundred with ointments, a hundred with garlands, a hundred with clothes, and a hundred with perfumes. They decorate the soul with all the ornaments, which are due to the Brahman. Being so decorated, the soul, knowing the Brahman, moves towards the Brahman. He comes to the Ageless River, which he crosses merely by the motion of the mind. He then shakes off his good deeds as well as bad deeds. His beloved relatives partake of good deeds, and the unbeloved of the bad deeds. And as a man driving last in the chariot looks down on the revolving wheels, so does the soul look at day and night, good and bad, and all the pairs of

opposites. Being free from good and evil, knowing the Brahman, he moves towards the Brahman' (I.4).

The Idea of Immortal Life

The idea of immortal life is the pinnacle of the Upanisadic psychology. There appears to be a systematic evolution of the ideas held on the subject of Immortality. The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that the best kind of eternal life that can be conceived for anybody is that he should be 'lifted to the region of the deity' whom he has loved and worshipped during the life, and that he should partake of all happiness available in that region (II.20.2).

The Mundaka Upanisad declares that the best kind of eternal life should be regarded as a 'companionship' of the highest God with whom the soul should be liberated at the time of the Great End (III.2.6). Another passage in the same Upanisad states that the eternal life consists in attaining to an absolute 'likeness' to God, and enjoying the life of personal immortality (III.1.3 & III.2.7-8). Incidentally, this view has played a major role in the theology of Ramanuja. On the other hand, Shankara cares for nothing short of an 'absorption in divinity' and a life of impersonal immortality.

The Prasna Upanisad states thus. 'As rivers which flow into the sea disappear into the mighty water and lose their name and form, even so does the wise soul become 'absorbed in the transcendent Person and lose its name and form (VI.5).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states thus. 'As when honey is prepared by the collection of various juices, the juices cannot discriminate from which trees they came, even so when the souls are merged in the Real, they cannot discriminate from which bodies they came' (VI.6.10).

All these passages declare nothing short of a doctrine of Impersonal Immortality.

The Mundaka Upanisad states that the soul of a man who has come to self-consciousness becomes mingled after death with the whole universe (III.2.5). Such a soul becomes a great diffusive power; its voice is on the rolling air; it stands in the rising sun; and it may be seen in star or flower or wherever the eye may be cast.

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07
Roots of Later Philosophies

General

The Upanisads constitute the bottom line for the growth and development of various systems of Indian thought such as the Buddhist as well as the Jain philosophy, the *Samkhya* as well as the *Yoga*, Mimamsa as well as Saivism, the theistic-mystic philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita, or the Dvaita, the Visista-Advaita and the Advaita. The Upanisads do not advocate any one single doctrine. From the Upanisads spring various streams of thought, which gradually become more and more systematized into the architectonic systems of the later Indian philosophy.

The Upanisads and Buddhism

It is important to note that the end of the Upanisadic period and the beginning of the Buddhist period are contemporaneous. The former gradually and imperceptibly merges into the latter.

When the Chhaandogya Upanisad says that in the beginning verily Not-Being alone existed, and that later Being was born of it (VI.2.1), we are to infer that a reference was made here to a doctrine which was to become full-fledged in the later denial of existence, and maintenance of a Void in the Buddhist literature. Shankara states in his commentary on the above passage of the Chhaandogya Upanisad that this may as well refer to the doctrine of the Buddhists who maintained that '*sadabhaava*' alone existed before the creation of anything.

Incidentally, the meta-physical maintenance of Not-Being has its psychological counterpart in the maintenance of the doctrine of the Denial of Soul. When the Katha Upanisad says that 'when a man is dead, various people think variously about the spirit that inspired him, some saying that it still lives, others saying that it has ceased to exist' (I.1.20), we have the *anattaa-vaada* of the Buddhists in its embryo, the theory of Denial of Soul. Probably, the Buddhists held this theory in common with the *Chaarvaakas* for whom there is no soul except the body.

The pondering of Nachiketas in the Katha Upanisad that everything exists

only for the moment and never for the morrow, that objects of sensual enjoyment wear away in the vigour of the senses, that life is only as short as a dream, that he who contemplates the delights issuing from attachment to colour and sex may never crave for longevity (I.1.26, 28) may all be taken as the outpouring of Buddhism. It may be of interest to note that Buddhism is almost contemporaneous with the thoughts put into the mouth of Nachiketas that everything in this world is full of sorrow – '*sarvam duhkham, duhkham*'; that everything that exists is fleeting and evanescent – '*sarvam kshanikam, kshanikam*'.

The injunction in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad that a man, disgusted with the world, should rise from desires for progeny or wealth, and take to the life of a mendicant (IV.4.22) is only a precursor to the order of Bhikkus in Buddhim and Jainism.

The elaboration of the existence in the world in the Aitareya Upanisad based on the five great elements, of all the beings born on the earth in different ways, all horses, cattle and men, rather everything that breathes or moves or flies or is stationary being known by intellect or based in intellect (III.3) is perhaps the root principle of the metaphysics and the epistemology of Vijnaanavaadins whose concept is that there is only an easy passage from '*prajnaana*' to the world '*vijnaana*'.

The dialogue between Jaratkaarava and Yaajnavalkya in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad in private centres around the nature of *karma*, and both agree that a man becomes holy by holy actions, and sinful by sinful actions (III.2.13).

The same thought is reiterated in the Katha Upanisad, which says that the souls take on a new body in inorganic or organic matter according to their works and wisdom (II.5.7). The principle of *karma* enunciated in these Upanisads is the true inspiration of Buddhism and other systems of philosophy in India. In fact, the principle of *karma* has a peculiar moral force in Buddhism as in no other system of philosophy.

It is thus evident that all the main rudiments of Buddhism such as the doctrine of Not-Being, the doctrine of Denial of Soul, a contempt of sense-pleasure, the order of mendicants, the idealistic theory of knowledge, the doctrine of *Karma*, etc are present in embryo in the Upanisads.

It is true that with these rudiments Buddhism has constructed and developed

a philosophy, fundamentally different from the philosophy of the Upanisads, but found sufficient inspiration in them. The Upanisads may rightly be considered the parents of Buddhism.

The Upanisads and the Saamkhya Philosophy

Like Buddhism, Saamkhya was a system of philosophy that came into existence very early. Its origin may be traced to the Upanisadic literature, if not earlier. It is true that the Saamkhya and the Yoga systems of philosophy find mention in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad, rather a later one (VI.13). But the basic ideas of Saamkhya are to be found in the much earlier Upanisadic literature.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, what is said of the three primary colours – the red, the white and the black that may really be said to exist, while all other things that are constituted out of them are merely a word, a modification and a name constitutes the rudiments of the theory of the three *gunas* of the later Saamkhya philosophy (VI.4.1).

In the Svetaasvatara Upanisad, the three colours are made use of in the description of the original *Prakrti* (IV.5). It, therefore, follows that, for the origin of the three gunas in the Saamkhya philosophy, we are to go to the concept of the three colours in the Chhaandogya Upanisad repeated in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad.

Again, we have an interesting specimen of how the Saamkhya philosophy was yet in the making at the time of the Katha Upanisad. It is said in the Katha Upanisad that 'above the Mind is Buddhi, above Buddi is Mahat Atman, above Mahat Atman is Avyakta, above Avyakta is Purusa, and beyond and above Purusa, there is nothing else' (I.3, 10-11). A little later, it is further said that 'the Mind must be merged in the Jnaana Atman, and the Jnaana Atman in the Mahat Atman, and the Matha Atman in the Saanta Atman' (I.3, 13).

When we integrate the two passages of the Katha Upanisad stated above, we have to equate the Buddhi of the first passage with the Jnaana Atman of the second, the Mahat Atman of the first with the Mahat Atman of the second, and the Purusa of the first with the Saanta Atman of the second. Only the Avyakta of the first passage between the Mahat Atman and the Purusa is elided in the second. Such elision may be for the sake of convenience or for the sake of metre.

In any case, it stands to reason to presume that in these passages there is a clear enunciation of the concepts of the Mind and Intellect, the Mahat, the Avyakta and the Purusa. These categories play a pivotal role in the later Saamkhya philosophy.

In the Prasna Upanisad, the nature of the Purusa with sixteen parts is reiterated time and again. 'In this body, verily is that Being who is made up of sixteen parts' (VI.2). The constituents of the Person are said to be 'breath, faith, space, air, light, water, earth, the senses, mind, food, power, penance, ritual, karma, the worlds, and the name' (VI.4).

It may be that the sixteen parts that are here declared to constitute the Person are more or less mythological and fabulous in their nature. What we are concerned here is with the *idea* of the Person with sixteen parts, rather than with the constituents of the Person themselves. The later conception of the *linga-sarira* consisting of seventeen parts in the Saamkhya philosophy must have been based on this concept of the Person with sixteen parts in the Prasna Upanisad, in spite of the difference between the two conceptions.

It is, however, to be noted that the *Praana*s and the elements, the senses and the mind enumerated in the Prasna Upanisad as constituting the Person with sixteen parts are included in the concept of the *linga-sarira* in the later Saamkhya philosophy. The Saamkhya philosophy only elaborates these constituents and makes the *linga-sarira* consist of the five elements, the five *Praana*s, the five senses, and the mind all of which are included in the scheme of the Prasna Upanisad. The only addition is Intellect.

Further, the relation of the sixteen parts in the Prasna Upanisad to the Person is also worthy of note, for it is said that these parts are to the Person as rivers are to the ocean. While the sixteen parts merge themselves into the real being of the Purusa, so do the rivers into the ocean. What exist really and ultimately is the Person in one case, and the ocean in the other.

The Upanisad explains graphically thus: 'As the rivers which flow to the ocean disappear after having reached the ocean, their very name and form are destroyed, and they are simply called the ocean, even so these sixteen parts tend towards the Person, and reaching him disappear, their very name and form are destroyed, and they are simply called the Person, who is himself without parts

and immortal' (VI.5). It is also said that 'these parts are centred in the Person as spokes in the navel of a wheel' (VI.6).

In any case, it is clear that the concept of the Person with sixteen parts in the Prasna Upanisad may be regarded as the precursor to the later Saamkhya conception of the *linga-sarira*, which finds its way later into the Vedantic philosophy.

The Saamkhya Philosophy in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad gives a detailed account of the Saamkhya philosophy as understood at the time the Upanisad was written. It is necessary to bear in view that the Svetaasvatara Upanisad was written at a time when the Vedanta, the Saamkhya and the Yoga were yet fused together. At that time, there was no definite cleavage between the Maya of the Vedanta and the *Prakrti* of the Saamkhya. The Saamkhya, like the Yoga, was theistic in its metaphysical standpoint.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad, on its own, wavers between the theistic and the deistic view of the Godhead. In one place, it describes God as bringing to maturity Nature of *svabhaava*, when He is said to preside over the process of development and to utilize the *gunas* as best as He may (V.5). It also describes God as the Lord of Pradhaana or *Prakrti*, of individual souls, as well as of *gunas* (VI.16). Like a spider that weaves a web out of the material from within itself, the Godhead unfolds by means of the qualities born of *Prakrti* (IV.10). The *Prakrti* is merely God's magic power, and God is the great magician (VI.10). With His powers, God is creating the world while the individual soul is bound in the chains forged for him by the Universal Soul (IV.9).

In this way, we have a theistic description of Godhead endowed with all activity, and the power of creation and governance. On the other hand, the Upanisad has passages where God is described as living apart from *Prakrti* in a transcendent sphere, while the individual soul lies by *Prakrti*, and is caught in the meshes of its love, blindfolded by ignorance (IV.5).

In a truly deistic spirit, the Upanisad describes God as only the spectator of actions, absolutely free from the influence of qualities, uncontaminated by *Prakrti* (VI.11). The Upanisad does not speak of any specific doctrines about the Nature and God, and their interrelation. This is proof of the Saamkhya and the Vedanta

still being together at the time of the Upanisad. This view is further strengthened by the way in which the Upanisad describes the tawny-coloured being (*Kapila*) as first created by the Godhead looking upon him while he was being born (V.2).

There is considerable controversy about the interpretation of the word *Kapila*. One view is that the *Kapila* referred to in the Upanisad was no other than the originator of the Saamkhya philosophy. It may not be denied that the seer of the Svetaasvatara Upanisad had no idea of the existence of *Kapila*, the originator of the Saamkhya philosophy. But a couple of passages of the Upanisad clearly bring out that the word *Kapila* in the said passage is merely the equivalent of *Hiranyagarbha*, the Intermediary Person, the Logos of Indian Philosophy, who was the first to be created by God, and who was endowed by Him with all powers (III.4 & IV.12). The last passage of the Upanisad clearly spells that it was Brahma, the Creator, who was first created by the Godhead as the intermediary between Himself and creation (VI.18). This places beyond the shadow of doubt as to the identity of the *Kapila* Rishi of the Svetaasvatara Upanisad (V.2) with the *Hiranyagarbha* (III.4 & IV.12) as well as Brahma, the Creator (VI.18).

The Upanisads and Yoga

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad is the source of the Yoga system, too. The second chapter of the Upanisad refers to the rudiments of the practice and philosophy of the Yoga doctrine as later formulated. First, it draws attention to the posture of the body at the time of practising the yoga. It anticipates the Bhagavad-Gita when it states that the practitioner of yoga should hold the trunk, the neck, and the head in a straight line at the time of meditation. It does not, however, relate any scheme of *Aasanas*, which has, however, been the principal theme of the later Upanisads, especially those that have brought *Rajayoga* in line with *Hathayoga*.

Secondly, the Svetaasvatara Upanisad advises the yoga practitioners to control senses by means of mind, a process equivalent to the *Pratyaahaara*. Thirdly, it advises to regulate breath implying that it should be rhythmical, which practice may be considered to be the later *Praanaayaama*. Fourthly, it states that the environment in which one should practise meditation should be pure and be away from sand and fire as well as sounds and water pools. As far as possible, the meditation is to be practised in the recesses of a cave. Fifthly, it informs of the harbingers of a spiritual daylight to come such as the forms of mist and smoke, the sun and the fire as well as other appearances. Sixthly, it

speaks of the secrets of the physiological effects produced by the 'fire of yoga'. It states that one who practises *yoga* may become ageless and immortal; and that one feels one's body to be light, and completely healthy. Lastly, the Upanisad carries to the highest result secured by the practice of *Yoga*, namely, the state of *samadhi*, where the individual soul becomes one with the Universal Soul (II.8-15).

This Upanisad does not separately mention the process of *dhaarana* and *dhyaana* as preparatory to *samadhi*, for both of them may be considered to be parts of, and thus capable of being incorporated in, the highest state, that is, *samadhi*. But the Upanisad mentions of *dhyaana* while advising the practitioner to meditate upon the Godhead and bring Him out of the recess of the heart (I.14).

The Katha Upanisad, however, makes mention of *dhaarana* and states that this consists in continued equanimity of the senses, mind and intellect. It calls *dhaarana,* the highest state of *Yoga* (II.6, 10-11).

We thus see that if we just add the *Yama* and the *Niyama* of the later Yoga philosophy to the various elements of yoga mentioned in the early Upanisads, namely, the *Aasana*, the *Praanayaama*, the *Pratyaahaara*, the *Dhaarana* and the *Dhyaana*, all as preparatory to *samadhi,* we have the full-fledged eight-fold scheme of the Yoga, or the Way to Spiritual Realization.

Further, the deistic conception of God advanced in the Yoga-sutras is already present in the Upanisads. For instance, in the Mundaka Upanisad (III.1.1), it is said that the Universal Soul merely looks on, while the individual soul is engaged in the enjoyment of *Prakrti*. In the Katha Upanisad (II.5.11), it is said that the Godhead is beyond the reach of the sorrows of the world, just as the sun, the eye of the world, is beyond the reach of the defects of vision.

Finally, the physiological basis of yoga is also discussed in the Maitri and the Kaushitaki Upanisads. The Maitri Upanisad enumerates seven *dhaatus*, namely, bone, skin, muscle, marrow, flesh, semen, and blood; four *malas,* namely, mucus, tears, faeces, and urine; and three *doshaas*, namely, wind, bile and phlegm (I.2).

The Kaushitaki Upanisad states that the blood vessels that go from the heart to the Puritat are so small as a hair divided thousand-fold, and that they are either tawny-coloured or white or dark or yellow or red (IV.19). The Chhaandogya Upanisad describes the same blood vessels, before the time of the Kaushitaki Upanisad, as being tawny white, blue, yellow and red (VIII.6.1). The

Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad describes the same vessels, much earlier, as white, blue, tawny, green, and red (IV.3.20).

It is evident from the above that whatever is said of the colour of the blood vessels, the seers of these passages are aware of the distinction between the blue and red blood vessels, and this is a matter of great physiological importance. The physiological basis of yoga was being discussed in the days of the Kaushitaki and the Maitri Upanisads when, it seems, an impetus was being given to the physiological thought. This was later advanced by the embryological and other discussions in the Garbha Upanisad.

It is thus the study of yoga, which has been the cause of rise of the physiological science, which was the precursor to the later day full-fledged systems of medicine propounded by Charaka, Agnivesha and others.

The Upanisads and Nyaya-Vaiseshika

The Upanisads are generally considered entirely different from the tenor and argument from the systems of Nyaya-Vaiseshika. The Vaiseshika philosophy makes a catalogue of ultimate existences in Nature; and the Nyaya philosophy discusses the Nature of dialectic and its aberrations; while the Upanisads state the metaphysical doctrines of the Atman.

The only point of contact between the Nyaya-Vaiseshika systems on the one hand and the Upanisads on the other, in so far as their metaphysics is concerned, is *moksha* – liberation. The Nyaya-Vaiseshika systems derive it from the Upanisads. Further these systems of philosophy require a highly developed stage of logical thought that cares more for the instruments of knowledge, than for knowledge itself. As such, we do not find much content of the doctrines of these philosophies in the Upanisads.

But the doctrine of the Puritat, as enunciated in the Upanisads, is lifted in toto by the Nyaya-Vaiseshika systems of philosophy. These systems rather refine its concept.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states, for the first time, that the Soul moves by the *Naadis* to the Puritat in which it gets lodged and causes the physiological action of sleep (II.1.19). The Nyaya philosophy takes up this idea and substitutes Mind for Soul, and states that it is the Mind, which moves through the arteries to

the Puritat, and when the Mind is lodged in the Puritat, sleep occurs. The reason for this change in the Nyaya philosophy may appear to be that it is rather possible for one to predicate sleep about the Mind, and not about the Soul.

The Vaiseshika philosophy enumerates the *Dravyas* – the five different Elements along with *Kaala, Manas* and *Atman,* the *Dik* included in *Akaasa*. For this enumeration, this philosophy draws upon several passages from the Upanisads where the five Elements along with other conceptions are mentioned. For instance, in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad, it is said that the Atman is the Time of Time, and that the Elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air, and ether are merely his handiwork (VI.2).

The Naiyaayika philosophy defines Akasa of being the carrier of sound. It borrows this concept from the Chhaandogya Upanisad where it is said that by Akasa that man calls; it is by Akasa that man hears; and it is by Akasa that man is able to hear the echo of a sound (VII.12.1). But the Mimansa doctrine is that the air is the carrier of sound, not ether. This is a fact corroborated by modern science. As such the Mimansa doctrine is more scientifically correct than the Upanisadic – Naiyaayika doctrine.

The Upanisads and Mimansa

The Mimansa school of thought is rooted in the ritualistic issues and, as such, does not have much in common with the philosophy of the Upanisads, as the concern of the Upanisads is as to the nature of the Ultimate.

But the Isa Upanisad advocates one important doctrine of the Mimansakas. It states thus: 'Those who walk on the path of ignorance, namely, that of works, go to pitchy darkness; while those who walk on the path of knowledge go to greater darkness still. Ignorance leads to one result, while knowledge leads to the other. This is what we have heard from the sages, who have told us about the nature of ignorance and knowledge. But he, who knows both the paths of ignorance and knowledge together, by his knowledge of the one, is able to cross the bund of death, and by his knowledge of the other, to attain to immortality (9 -11).

This passage speaks of the synthesis of the conflicting claims of works and knowledge. On the one hand, mere works are insufficient; on the other, mere knowledge is insufficient. In this context, the Purva Mimansa, which speaks of the one, and the Uttara Mimansa, which advocates the other may both be said to

take partial views. As against both these, the Isa Upanisad states that he who knows how to reconcile the claims of both works and knowledge is able to extricate himself from the evils inherent in either, and to enjoy the advantages of both, by going even beyond the both.

In later times, there was a very great conflict among the schools of Prabhaakara, Kumaarilabhatta and Shankara. Prabhaakara maintained that absolution could be attained only by means of works and, for him, knowledge itself is regarded as work. Kumaarilabhatta maintained that absolution could be attained only by a combination of knowledge and works. Shankara maintained that absolution must be attained only by knowledge. The Isa Upanisad puts forth an idea, which supports neither the doctrine of Prabhaakara nor the doctrine of Shankara, but only the doctrine of Kumaarilabhatta that absolution is to be attained by a synthesis of knowledge and works. And the Upanisad goes further and asserts that both knowledge and works are to be negated in the higher synthesis of realizations.

As Kumaarilabhatta says that a bird cannot fly in the sky merely by one wing, but by means of both wings together, the Isa Upanisad says that man is to reconcile the claims of both knowledge and works to be able to soar in the regions of the Infinite. Here the synthesis of soaring is superior to the fact of equipoise.

The theory of the Isa Upanisad later became the doctrine of the moderate Mimansakas, supporting, as it does, neither the doctrine of the ultra-Mimansakas, nor that of the ultra-Vedantins.

The Upanisads and Saivism

As for the roots of Saivism in the Upanisads, the Svetaasvatara Upanisad is the bottom-line. The earlier Kena Upanisad mentions of Uma as a heavenly damsel. But, for a detailed and systematic philosophy of Saivism, the Svetaasvatara Upanisad is the source.

It is true that the conception of Rudra-Siva finds mention in the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda. But it is only in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad that the doctrine of Siva is placed on a philosophical foundation. The Upanisad states thus: 'It is the God Isa who supports both the mutable and the immutable, the manifest and the un-manifest. As contrasted with Him is the powerless Atman, who is bound on

account of his being the enjoyer of the fruits of action; but that, when this Atman knows the Isa, he is relieved of his bonds, namely, the *Paasas* (fetters)' (I.8). The philosophy of *Pasu*, *Pati* and *Paasa* is already in an embryonic state in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad. The passages in the Upanisad are quite revealing in this context.

'Rudra is only Lord God. They do not maintain another God. He rules these worlds by means of his powers, standing before every man's face, and destroying the created world in anger at the time of the Great End' (III.2).

'He is the Lord Siva who, hidden in all beings, is the sole enveloper of the universe, who is like the very subtle film at the top of ghee, by the knowledge of whom alone comes freedom from the meshes of ignorance' (IV.16).

'Verily does the God spread manifold the meshes in his hands, and move on the surface of this globe. He creates and recreates, and maintains his sovereignty over all the worlds' (V.3).

In this way, God Rudra, identified with Siva or Isa, is magnified in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad as the only Lord God, the Supreme Soul of souls, and the Governor of the universe. By the knowledge of Him alone, the individual soul, bound in the meshes of ignorance, can attain absolution. This is the manner in which the Svetaasvatara Upanisad paved the way for the later-day Saivism. The theistic way, in which God Rudra is glorified, is suffused with a Trinitarian Monism, becoming the pivot of the doctrines of Kashmir Saivism and Southern Saivism.

Phrase-logical and Ideological Identities between the Upanisads and the Bhagavad-Gita

There is a great truth in the famous saying that 'the Upanisads are like a cow; Krishna like a milkman; Arjuna like the calf that is sent to the udders of the cow before milking; and the Bhagavad-Gita like the milk nectar that is churned from the udders of the cow'.

The Bhagavad-Gita borrows ideas, phrases, and even sentences from the Upanisads.

The passage from the Katha Upanisad - 'The Atman is never born nor is ever killed, he never comes from anything, nor becomes anything, he is unborn,

imperishable, eternal, has existed from all eternity and is not killed even when the body is killed' (I.2.18) – is reproduced almost word for word in the Bhagavad-Gita (II.20).

Another passage from the same Upanisad – 'When a killer thinks he is killing, and when the killed thinks he is being killed, neither of them verily knows, for the Atman is neither killed nor ever kills' (I.2.19) – is reproduced in the very same words in the Gita (II.19).

A passage from the Katha Upanisad – 'The Atman is not even so much as heard of by many, that even hearing Him people do not know Him, that the seeker of the Atman is a miracle, that the obtainer of Him must have exceeding insight, that he who comes to know Him after being instructed by such a wise man is himself a miracle' (I.2.7) – is paraphrased and adopted in the Gita (II.29).

Another passage from the same Upanisad – 'What word the Vedas declare, what word the penances busy themselves about, what word inspires the life of spiritual discipleship, that word, briefly I tell thee, is AUM (I.2.15) – is also reproduced almost word for word in the Gita (VIII.13).

Further, the Upanisads, which borrowed the concepts of Devayaana and Pitriyaana (V.10.1-5 of the Chhaandogya Upanisad) – the path of the Gods and the path of the Fathers – from the Veda hand them over to the Bhagavad-Gita. The Bhagavad-Gita describes the two paths (VIII.24-25) in the very same strain as the Upanisads that those who by the path of the Gods move towards the Brahman, while those who go by the path of the Fathers return by the path by which they have gone.

Development of the Bhagavad-Gita over the Upanisads

Besides adopting some verses from the Upanisads, word for word, the Bhagavad-Gita has borrowed, transformed, and developed some thoughts from the Upanisads to suit its own particular philosophy.

The passage from the Isa Upanisad that 'a man should spend his life-time only in doing actions, for it is only thus that he may hope to be untainted by action' (2) has given an idea of extraordinary consequences that the Bhagavad-Gita has built a whole philosophy of *Karma-yoga* thereupon. This passage is also used as the means as well as the goal of moral life even without a connecting

medium. This is the precursor to the principal theme of the Bhagavad-Gita that a life of activity is to be coupled with the effects of action-less-ness through the linkage of non-attachment and indifference to the fruits of action.

The passage in the Mundaka Upanisad describing the Cosmic Person with fire as his head, the sun and the moon as his eyes, the quarters as his ears, the Veda as his speech, air as his Praana, the universe as his heart, and the earth as his teeth (II.1.4) is a miniature description of the Visvarupa in the Bhagavad-Gita (XI) on the transfigured personality of Krishna.

It may be that the Mundaka Upanisad probably borrowed the idea from the Purusa sukta. But it is equally true that the Upanisad supplies the Bhagavad-Gita with a text upon which the latter enlarges, and evolves the conception of the Cosmic Person, who fills all, who is all-powerful, to whom the past and the future are like an eternal now, and submission to whom and assimilation to whom constitute the ends of moral endeavour.

While the Katha Upanisad gives a scheme of psychological and metaphysical existences mixed together when it declares that 'beyond the senses are the objects, beyond the objects is mind, beyond the mind is intellect, beyond the intellect is Mahat, beyond the Mahat is the Avyakta, and finally beyond the Avyakta is the Purusa, beyond whom and outside whom there is nothing else (I.3.10-11), the Bhagavad-Gita simplifies the scheme retaining only the psychological categories while doing away with the metaphysical ones. This is for the reason that the passage has only the psychological significance rather than a metaphysical one. The Bhagavad-Gita, therefore, states that beyond the senses is mind, beyond the mind is intellect, and beyond the intellect is Purusa (III.42). It drops the categories of the objective world, namely, the Mahat and the Avyakta. It simplifies the scheme immensely.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, the devotional impulse of Naarada when he implores Sanatkumaara to initiate him into spiritual wisdom (VII.1) as well as the fervent appeal of Brihadratha, in the Maitri Upanisad when he requests Saakaayanya to lift him out of the mire of existence like a frog from a waterless well (I.7) are emotional attitudes scarcely noticed in the Upanisads in contrast with the otherwise generally dry intellectual argumentation. But these emotional attitudes constitute the bottom-line for the theistic-mystic philosophy of the Bhagavad-Gita in which the dry intellectualism and the speculative construction

of the Upanisads are absent. On the other hand, there is a rare combination of poetry and philosophy in the Bhagavad-Gita glorifying a truly mystic life, whose end is the realization of God.

The Asvattha in the Upanisads and the Bhagavad-Gita

In one important aspect, however, the Bhagavad-Gita takes a position antagonistic to the position advanced in the Upanisads. In the Katha Upanisad, there is the description of 'the eternal Asvattha tree with its root upwards and branches downwards, which is the pure immortal Brahman, in which all these worlds are situated, and beyond which there is nothing else (II.6.1). According to this passage, the Asvattha tree is the Brahman itself, and that it is imperishable.

On the other hand, the Bhagavad-Gita (XV) states that 'the Asvattha tree has its root upwards and branches downwards. Its leaves are the Vedas. It sends out its branches both downwards and upwards, which are nourished by the *Gunas*. The sensual objects are its foliage. Yet again, its infinite roots spread downwards in the form of action in the human world. It is not possible to have a glimpse of that Tree here in this fashion. It has neither end, nor beginning, nor stationary-ness whatsoever. After cutting off this Asvattha tree, which has very strong roots, by the forceful weapon of nonattachment, we should then seek after that celestial abode from which there is no return, and reach the primeval Person, from whom all existence has sprung of old' (XV.1-4).

The issue here does not relate to the merits or demerits of the description of the Asvattha tree in the Bhagavad-Gita. Nor does it concern with the contradictions introduced therein. The issue is to find how far the description in the Bhagavad-Gita corresponds to the description in the Katha Upanisad.

First, there is an agreement between the Upanisad and the Bhagavad-Gita so far as the Asvattha tree is regarded as having its root upwards and its branches downwards. Secondly, while the Upanisad states that the Asvattha tree is real and identical with the Brahman and is, therefore, impossible of being cut off, the Bhagavad-Gita states that the Asvattha tree must be regarded as unreal, and identical with existence. It further states that it is necessary to cut off this tree of existence by the potent weapon of nonattachment.

The two descriptions thus seem to be opposed to each other. It may be of interest to know that the descriptions of the Asvattha tree in the Upanisad and

the Bhagavad-Gita have an analogue in the description of the tree Igdrasil in the Scandinavian mythology. It is relevant to note that the description of the Igdrasil agrees with that of the Upanisad in making the Tree identical with Reality, and, therefore, having a real concrete existence. On the other hand, it agrees with the Bhagavad-Gita in making the actions, the motives, and the histories of mankind the boughs and branches of this Tree of Existence. In the words of Carlyle, '…. It is Igdrasil, the Tree of Existence. It is the past, the present and the future; what was done, what is doing, what will be done; the infinite conjugation of the verb *to do*'.

The Krishna of the Chhaandogya Upanisad and the Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gita

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, there is mention of a Krishna who was the son of Devaki.

In the third chapter of the Chhaandogya Upanisad, there is a passage the purport of which is to liken a man to a sacrificer, and thus institute a comparison between the human life and the sacrificer's life. The passage states that Ghora Aangirasa, the reputed teacher of Krishna who was the son of Devaki, institutes a comparison between the life of a sacrificer and the life of a man in general.

As for the life of a sacrificer, when he undertakes to perform a sacrifice, he is first disallowed to take food or drink water or enjoy in any other way. This is in the nature of his *diksha*. Secondly, there are certain ceremonies called the *upasadas* in that sacrifice in which he is allowed to eat, drink, and enjoy. Thirdly, when such a sacrificer wishes to laugh, eat, and practise sexual intercourse even while the sacrifice is going on, he is allowed to do so if he just sings the hymns of praise called the Stuta-sastras. Fourthly, he must give *dakshinaas* or gifts to the sacrificial priests in honour of the sacrifice being performed. Fifthly, he pours out the Soma libation, which is equivalent to a new birth of the sacrificer. Finally, the sacrificer takes the *Avabhritha* bath at the end of the sacrificial ceremony, which puts an end to the sacrifice. These are the stages through which a sacrificer's life passes while performing the sacrifice.

As for the life of a man, at the initial stage, he has to serve merely as an apprentice, and cannot eat and drink and enjoy on certain occasions. Secondly, another stage opens before him when he can eat and drink and enjoy. Thirdly,

when he grows a little older, he can laugh and eat and practise sexual intercourse. Fourthly, the price, which he has to pay for leading a holy life, is that he should cultivate the virtues such as penance, liberality, straightforwardness, harmlessness, and truthfulness. Fifthly, when he has procreated, it can be said that he is born again in his child. The final act of human life takes place when death is about to overtake him.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, Ghora Aangirasa tells Krishna that, at such a critical time in the life of man, he must take refuge in three thoughts – 'Thou art the indestructible! Thou art the unchangeable! Thou art the very edge of life!' (III.17.1-6). When this knowledge was imparted to Krishna, it is said in the passage that he never thirsted for further knowledge.

Based on this passage, some commentators have argued that Krishna, the son of Devaki, must be regarded as identical with Krishna, the divine hero of the Mahabharata. This argument seems to be without proof. For instance, there is no mention, whatsoever, of Ghora Aangirasa of the Chhaandogya Upanisad, in the Mahabharata. If Ghora Aangirasa were to be considered as a teacher of Krishna, the Mahabharata, the great epic, could not have left his name without being mentioned. Secondly, if the Krishna of the Chhaandogya Upanisad is to be identified with the Krishna of the Mahabharata, are we to identify the Harischandra of the Aitareya Brahmana who had a hundred wives, with the Harischandra of mythology who had only one wife?

Mere similarity of names does not prove anything. But the mention of the gifts by the sacrificer to the priests of the sacrifice stated in the passage in the Upanisad makes an interesting reading. The gifts a sacrificer should make are of the virtues such as *Tapas, Daanam, Arjavam, Ahimsaa*, and *Satyavachanam*. This list is quite similar to the virtues enumerated in the Bhagavad-Gita (XVI.1-2) and almost in the same order, with only an addition of some more virtues. Even this fact does not establish the identity of the two persons; for the Bhagavad-Gita has borrowed similar quotations, phrases, and ideas from the Upanisads quite extensively.

There may be another point for consideration. The Bhagavad-Gita has not incorporated the teachings of Ghora Aangirasa that a man at the last moment of his life should take resort to the three thoughts 'Thou art the indestructible! Thou art the unchangeable! Thou art the very edge of life!', but only advises that a man

should utter AUM at the time of his death and meditate upon God. If there is identity between the Krishna of the Chhaandogya Upanisad and the Krishna of the Bhagavad-Gita, it is very probable that the Bhagavad-Gita would have adopted the teachings of Ghora Aangirasa, too, which are very noble.

In the result, it does not stand established that the Krishna of the Chhaandogya Upanisad is the same Krishna of the Mahabharata.

The Upanisads and the Schools of the Vedanta

The relation of the Upanisads to the Brahmasutras is as interesting and important as the relation of the Upanisads to the Bhagavad-Gita. As is known, the philosophy of the Vedanta in its various schools has been based upon these three foundations, namely, the Upanisads, the Brahmasutras and the Bhagavad-Gita.

Baadaraayana, the author of the Brahmasutras, borrows frequently and immensely from the Upanisads. All his aphorisms are rooted in the texts of the Upanisads. It is rather impossible to understand or interpret the Brahamasutras without a perpetual reference to the texts of the Upanisads.

Each of the three great schools of the Vedanta philosophy, namely, the schools of Madhva (Dvaita), Raamaanuja (Visistaadvaita) and Shankara (Advaita) interprets the Brahmasutras and the Upanisads in its own way. The Suddha-advaita, the Dvaita-advaita and other interpretations of the philosophy of the Brahmasutras and the Upanisads are merely varied combinations of the ultimate positions reached in these three systems of philosophy.

When the three main schools of the Vedanta philosophy are discussed, a number of fundamental propositions arise. The difference in the treatment of the systems constitutes difference in the systems themselves. The main problems which these philosophies have to answer are – 'What is the nature of God? Is He different from, included in, or identical with the Absolute? In other wards, are the theological conception of God and the philosophical conception of the Absolute one and the same? What is the relation of the individual soul to the Universal Soul in these systems? Do these systems maintain the reality of creation, or, do they suppose that, after all, creation is only an appearance and an illusion? What is the doctrine of Immortality in these systems? What do these systems say about the immanence and transcendence of God? How can we

define the Absolute – in positive terms, in negative terms, in both, or in neither?'

The answers to the above and other problems of the same kind constitute the fundamental division of the systems themselves.

Madhva-ism in the Uapanisads

The dualistic school of philosophy initiated by Aanandatirtha based on the separateness of the individual and the universal souls is sourced in the Katha Upanisad that 'in this world there are two souls which taste of the fruits of action, both of which are lodged in the recess of the human heart, and which are as different from each other as light and shade' (I.3.1).

This view is further elaborated in the Mundaka Upanisad thus: 'There are tow birds, companions and friends, both sitting on the same tree, of which one partakes of sweet fruits of the tree, while the other, without eating, merely looks on (III.1.1).

The difficulty in the above passage is how to regard the Universal Soul as enjoying the fruits of action. The enjoyment of the fruits of action can be predicated only about the individual soul, and not about the Universal Soul, which must be regarded as above such enjoyment. It is, therefore, probable that the Mundaka Upanisad relieves the Universal Soul of the burden of the enjoyment of the fruits of such action. It relates the fact of enjoyment only to the individual soul.

It is, however, important to note that in the two passages above, the individual soul is entirely distinct and separate from the Universal Soul, though the former is probably dependent upon the latter.

The Bhagavad-Gita also states in a similar vein. 'There are two Persons in this world, the Mutable and the Immutable; the Mutable is all these beings, while the Immutable is the one who exists at the top of them' (XV.16).

The import of the above passages is often considered to support the doctrine of the entire disparateness of the individual and the universal souls by the followers of Madhva. Again, when they speak about the existence of a supreme God who is the creator, the preserver and the destroyer of the universe, who exists as a personal Being, and as overlord of all the souls who are his servants, they draw justification from the Svetaasvatara Upanisad thus:

'There is a single God who is hidden in all beings, who pervades all, and who is the inner Soul of all souls' (VI.11).

'Beyond this universal God, there exists nothing, than whom there is nothing subtler or greater, who stands motionless, like a tree in the sky and fills every nook and corner of the universe' (III.9).

'God is all eye and all ear, with his face everywhere, his hands and feet everywhere, who creates the beings of the earth and the fowl of the air, and who brings into being both the heaven and the earth (III.3).

Such a theory of the sovereignty of the law over organic as well as inorganic beings brings, in its train, a realistic theory of creation. Traittiriya Upanisad states thus: 'All these beings were created from Him; they live and move and have their being in Him; and they are ultimately resolved in Him' (III.1). 'Space being the first to come out of Him, from which later were produced air and fire and water and earth, and the herbs and the trees and the food in the universe' (II.1).

The realistic account of creation implied in the above passages is really an obstacle to those who try to make creation merely an appearance or an illusion. These texts support the doctrine of the realistic theory of creation of Madhva, as of none else.

It is true that Shankara tries to explain the ablative implied in '*yatovaa*' or '*tasmaadvaa*' as being '*Adhishthaana-panchami*'; Ramanuja tries to explain it as merely '*Upaadaana-panchami*'; while Madhva explains it truly as '*Nimitta-panchami*'.

In other words, according to Shankara, the Atman or the Ultimate Reality stands behind the universe as the support and substratum of all creation, which merely appears on it. According to Ramanuja, the Atman is the material cause of the universe as gold of gold ornaments or earth of earthenware. According to Madhva, the Atman or the Supreme Soul is the creator of the universe, or the instrumental cause of its unfoldment.

Finally, so far as the doctrine of Immortality is concerned, the Chhaandogya Upanisad states that 'the worshipper is lifted up to the region of the deity whom he has worshipped in life' (II.20.2). Even this passage supports the doctrine of Madhva that absolution consists not in being merged in the Absolute, not even in

being assimilated to Him. It consists in coming near His presence, and participating in His glory so that the devotee may be lifted, according to the doctrine of Krama-mukti, along with the God he has worshipped, to the state of the highest absolution at the end of time.

The Triune Absolute of Ramanuja

Ramanuja agrees with Madhva in the concept of the individual souls being separate from God, the reality of creation, and, to a great extent, the doctrine of Immortality. But he differs from the latter in regarding the Absolute to be of the nature of a Triune Unity – a kind of a philosophic tripod – of which Nature, the individual souls and God form the bottom-line. As for the relation between the souls and God, he disagrees with Madhva in maintaining a qualitative Monism, though he agrees with him in maintaining a numerical pluralism.

For his doctrine of Triune Unity, Ramanuja draws justification from the Svetaasvatara Upanisad thus: There are 'three ultimate existences, all of them eternal and all together constituting the Absolute, namely, the powerless unknowing Soul, the powerful knowing God, and the eternal *Prakrti*, which exists for the enjoyment of the individual soul, and from which he receives recompense for his works' (I.9).

'Man need but know the three entities which constitute the Absolute, namely, the enjoyer, the enjoyed, and the mover, and that when a man has known these three, nothing remains to be known' (I.12).

From the above, it may be seen that the Absolute of Ramanuja consists of Nature, Soul and God, Gob being identical with the Absolute considered in His personal aspect. The difference between God and the Absolute is that while God is the theological conception, the Absolute is the philosophical conception of the Triune Unity. It thus comes about that God is as much the Soul of Nature as He is the Soul of souls. This is the fundamental platform and the bottom-line in the philosophy of Ramanuja

God – the Soul of Nature

How is God the Soul of Nature? A passage in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states that God is the *Antaryaamin* of the universe. He lives inside and governs the universe from within. This doctrine of *Antaryaamin* is advanced in the

conversation between Uddaalaka Aaruni and Yaajnavalkya in the Upanisad. This constitutes the fundamental position in the philosophy of Ramanuja when he says that God is the Soul of Nature.

Uddaalaka Aaruni asks Yaajnavalkya two questions. 'Pray, tell me, what is the Thread by which this world and the other world and all the things therein are held together? Pray, tell me also, who is the Controller of the Thread of this world and the other world and all the things therein?' These are the two celebrated questions propounded in the Upanisad, the doctrine of the Thread and the doctrine of the Thread Controller.

Yaajnavalkya answers the first question stating that Air might be regarded as the Thread by which this world and the other world and all the things therein are held together. He answers the second question by saying that He alone might be regarded as the Inner Controller 'who dwells in the earth and within the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, who from within controls the earth. He is thy Soul, the Inner Controller, and the Immortal. He who dwells in the waters and within the waters, whom the waters do not know, whose body the waters are, who from within controls waters, He is thy Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal'.

Thus Yaajnavalkya goes on to tell Uddaalaka Aaruni that the Inner Controller is He who is immanent likewise 'in fire, in the intermundane, in air, in the heavens, in the sun, in the quarters, in the moon, in the stars, in space, in darkness, in light, in all beings, in *Praana*, in all things and within all things, whom these things do not know, whose body these things are, who controls all these things from within. He is thy Soul, the Inner Controller, and the Immortal. He is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the un-thought thinker, the un-understood under-stander; other than Him there is no seer; other than Him there is no hearer; other than Him there is no thinker; other than Him there is no under-stander; He is thy Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal. Everything beside Him is naught' (III.7). In this way, Yaajnavalkya declares the immanence within, and the inner control of the universe by the all-pervading God.

In the same way, the Taittiriya Upanisad declares thus: 'At the time of creation, God entered everything that He created, and after having entered, became both the This and the That, the Defined and the Undefined, the Supported and the Support-less, Knowledge and Not-knowledge, Reality and

Unreality – yea, He became the Reality; it is for this reason that all this is verily called the Real' (II.6). This passage also declares the immanence of God in all things whatsoever, even in contradictories. It defines that what thus comes to exist is the Real.

The whole of Nature is thus the handiwork of God. It is like God's garment. It is filled and inspired by God who is its Inner Controller and Soul.

God – the Soul of souls

How is God the Soul of souls? The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad explains it with the help of a simile and a metaphor, often repeated in the Upanisads.

'Just as the spokes of a wheel are held together in the navel and felly of a wheel, similarly, in this Supreme Soul are centred all these beings, all gods, all worlds, all the individual souls. The Supreme Soul is the king of them all' (II.5-15).

'Just as little sparks may come out of fire, even so from the Supreme Soul all *praanas*, all worlds, all gods, all beings come out. This is to be mystically expressed by saying that the Supreme Soul is the verity of verities; the *praanas,* as well as other things mentioned along with them, are verities, of whom the Universal Soul is the supreme verity' (II.1.20).

These passages make clear that God may be regarded as the Soul of souls, that the Supreme Soul is the Real, the Verity of verities, the individual souls and the world being themselves verities.

Another passage of the same Upanisad corroborates the view that God is the All. 'Both the formed and the formless, the mortal and the immortal, the stationary and the moving, the 'this' and the 'that'….He is the verity of verities, for all these verities, and He is the supreme verity' (II.3.1-6).

According to this passage, both the moving and the stationary are the forms of God. This is to say that God is the Soul of organic as well as inorganic nature. He fills the souls as He fills the universe, and controls them both, as their inner controller.

Ramanuja's Doctrine of Immortality

Ramanuja's doctrine of Immortality is based on the passage from the

Mundaka Upanisad, which states that 'when the devotee sees the golden-coloured Person who is the all-doer, the all-governor, and the source of the universe, he shakes off both sin and merit, and from these, attains to divine likeness' (III.1.3).

To Ramanuja, beatitude consists in attaining to divine assimilation and in being like him, no different from him. This, however, varies for Madhva and Shankara. For Madhva, beatitude consists in being lifted up to the region of the deity and coming into his presence. For Shankara, it consists in being finally atoned to Divinity, and being absorbed in that Divine Life in such a way that no trace of personal existence remains. These conceptions of Immortality are the logical outcome of the philosophical positions advanced by these seers.

There is the further point in which Madhva and Ramanuja agree with each other, but differ from Shankara. The Mundaka Upanisad states that 'a man, who has attained to a perfect catharsis from evil, and has his intellect firmly rooted in the principles of the Vedanta, after death, goes to the regions of Brahma with whom he attains to final absolution at the time of the Great End (III.2.6). This passage preserves the personal immortality of the souls and keeps them from being absorbed in divinity. This doctrine is called 'Kramamukti', and conforms to the concepts of Madhva and Ramanuja, and against the philosophical position of Advaita.

According to Advaita, it is possible for man to attain to *Jivanmukti* as it is called, to become free while living, and though living, to say nothing about the state of the soul after man's death. When a man realizes God, he becomes one with Him, and is absorbed in Him. There is no need to invoke any celestial God to carry a devotee to the state of liberation at the time of the Great End.

The Fundamental Propositions of Shankara's Philosophy

For Shankara, from the point of view of the Absolute, Nature, Soul, and God are all appearances. Ontologically, the Absolute alone is; Nature, Soul and God are, only so far as they are, the Absolute. But at the physical level, there is Nature, there are the souls, and there is God. Shankara makes the great distinction between the *Paaramaarthika* and the *Vyaavahaarika* views of reality, similar to the distinction made by Kant between the noumenal and the phenomenal.

It is from the phenomenal point of view that we may say that souls are different from God; that Nature exists; and that God creates. But noumenally, the Absolute alone exists; Nature, souls and God are all merged in the Absolute. Shankara asks, 'for him who sees the Atman everywhere, what difference can ever remain? All difference vanishes for him'. Theologians may battle among themselves, but the Absolutist battles with none. It is from this point of view that the doctrines of Dualism and the Non-dualism of the Qualified Brahman of the Vedanta are subsumed in the higher synthesis of Monism.

The Absolute - the Only Reality

The fundamental basis of the philosophy of Shankara is that the universe is one; and there is no difference within it, or without it. The Katha Upanisad substantiates this view: 'From death to death does he go, who sees difference in this world; non-difference can be perceived only by the highly trained intellect' (II.4.11).

The Brahman is alike throughout its structure, and the knowledge of any part of it is the knowledge of the whole. In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, it is said that when Svetaketu returns from his teacher's house proud, self-satisfied and thinking learned, his father asks him whether his teacher has taught him the knowledge of Ultimate Existence, 'by hearing which everything that is not heard becomes heard, by thinking which everything that is not thought becomes thought, by knowing which everything that is not known becomes known'.

Svetaketu confesses ignorance and requests his father to convey the supreme instruction to him. Thereupon, Aaruni, his father tells him that, 'just as by the knowledge of a lump of earth, everything that is made of earth comes to be known, all this being merely a word, a modification and a name, the ultimate substratum of it all being the earth; that just as by the knowledge of a piece of iron everything made of iron becomes known, all this being merely a word, a modification and name, the ultimate substratum of it all being iron; that just as by the knowledge of a pair of nail-scissors, everything made of steel becomes known, all this being merely a word, a modification and a name, the ultimate substratum of it all being steel' (VI.1.2-7). The argument continues – when any part of the Brahman is known, the whole of it is known, the ultimate substratum of it all being the Brahman itself, which is self-identical, self-subsistent, and self-known.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad corroborates the above view in the conversation between Yaajnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi thus: 'All this Brahmana-hood, all this Kshatriya-hood, all these worlds, all these gods, all these beings, in fact, everything that exists is Atman. Just as when a drum is being beaten, one is not able to grasp the external sound, but by grasping the drum or the beater of the drum, the sound becomes grasped; just as when a conch-shell is being blown, one is not able to grasp the external sound, but by grasping the conch-shell or the blower of the conch-shell, the sound becomes grasped; that just as when a lute is being played, one is not able to grasp the external sound, but by grasping the lute or the prayer of the lute, the sound becomes grasped' (II.4.6-9). The argument continues – in the case of the knowledge of the external worlds, if one is not able to grasp the external world as it is in itself, by grasping the Mind or the Atman, the external world becomes grasped.

The Atman here is compared to the lute player, the drum beater or the conch-blower, while the Mind by means of which the Atman perceives is compared to the lute, the drum or the conch as the case may be, while the external world is compared to the sounds that issue from these instruments. This is, of course, idealistic Monism in which the active part is attributed to the Atman, while the Mind serves as the instrument of the activity.

In another passage in the same Upanisad, Yaajnavalkya tells Maitreyi that the Atman is the only knower and that he cannot be known by anyone except himself. 'It is only when there seems to be a duality that one smells the other, that one sees the other, that one hears the other, that one speaks about the other, that one imagines about the other, that one thinks about the other; but where the Atman alone is, what and whereby may one smell, what and whereby may one perceive, what and whereby may one hear, what and whereby may one speak, what and whereby may one imagine, what and whereby may one think? He who knows all this, by what may anybody know Him. He is the Eternal Knower, by what may He be known' (II.4.13-14).

The doctrine contained in this passage takes Yaajnavalkya near the position of Absolute solipsism. But he extricates himself from this position in his conversation with the King Janaka in a latter chapter. 'When it is said that such a one does not see, the real truth is that he sees and yet does not see; for never is the vision of the seer destroyed, for that he is indestructible; but there is nothing

besides him, and outside him, which may be said to be seen by him. When it is said that such a one does not smell or taste or speak or hear or imagine or touch or know, he does all these things and yet does not do them, for never are the olfaction, the taste, the speech, the audition, the imagination, the touch, and the knowledge of him destroyed, for they are indestructible; there is, however, nothing outside him and different from him which he may smell, or taste, or speak, or hear, or imagine, or touch or think' (IV.3.23-31).

The outcome of these passages is that for the Absolutist, there is nothing different from or outside the Atman, that knowledge of any part of him is the knowledge of the whole, that all causation is ultimately due to him, that everything beside him is an appearance, that he is the only eternal knower, and that it is only when he becomes entangled in the phenomenal acts of perception and knowledge that he may be said to perceive to know; and yet the truth is that he does not perceive and know. The Atman is the only entity to exist, and there is nothing else beside him.

The Negative-Positive Characterization of the Absolute

Metaphysical philosophy requires a rigourous conception of the Absolute. But for the purposes of religion and to explain the phenomenal existence of the world, there appears to be a need for the conception of God. In the Mandukya Upanisad, such God is conceived to be the lord of all, the knower of all, the inner controller of all, and the final haven of all. Even Advaita does not negate such a concept of God. It, too, requires God for the above purposes.

But, Advaita regards philosophically the concept of the Absolute higher than God. To an Advaitin, God is the personal aspect of the Absolute. Conversely, the Absolute is the impersonal aspect of God. It is in this spirit that the Mandukya Upanisad makes a distinction between the conceptions God and the Absolute, and considers the latter philosophically more relevant. The Upanisad states thus:

'The Absolute is neither inwardly cognizant, nor outwardly cognizant, nor on both sides together. It is not a cognition-mass. It is neither knower, nor not-knower. It is unseen, impracticable, ungraspable, indefinable, unthinkable, and unpointable. It is the essence of the experience of self-identity; in it this entire universe ceases. It is tranquil, blessed, and without a second' (6.7).

It is true that there are a few positive characterizations of the Absolute in this

passage. But the general description of it is in negative terms. It is not possible for any Absolutist philosophy to say anything, and to say, at the same time, that it is not outside itself. Even if a rigourously monistic philosophy describes the Absolute in negative terms, the very negation becomes affirmation, and the positive characterization of the Absolute ensues.

The description of the Absolute in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad is totally negative. 'The not-gross and the not-subtle, the not-short and the not-long, the not-glowing and the not-shadowy, the not-dark, the not-attached, the flavour-less, the smell-less, the eye-less, the ear-less, the speech-less, the mind-less, the *Praana*-less, the mouth-less, the un-internal, the un-external, consuming nothing and consumed by none' (III.8.8).

The Katha Upanisad mixes the negative and positive characteristics of the Absolute. The Brahman is 'sound-less, end-less, greater than the great and eternal, garnering which one is able to escape the clutches of death' (I.3.15). The Mundaka Upanisad also states similarly. The Brahman is 'un-pointable, un-graspable, without family and without caste, without eye and without ear, without hands and without feet, eternal, all pervading, omnipresent, extremely subtle, imperishable, and the source of all beings' (I.1.6).

The formulation of negative characterization of the Absolute is, typically, in the famous formula '*Neti, Neti*', in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, which is itself interpreted in a negative as well as a positive signification. The import of this expression is that the Absolute is characterless and indefinable and that whatever is predicated of it falls outside it, and thus fails to define it.

This is best explained in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad itself. 'The Atman is ungraspable for he cannot be grasped; he is indestructible for he cannot be destroyed; he is unattached for he clings to nothing; he is unbound, he does not wriggle, he is not injured …… Know this to be the secret of immortality, said Yaajnavalkya to Maitreyi, and forthwith he entered the order of *Samnyaasa*' (IV.5.15; also III.9.26; IV.2.4; and IV.4.22).

'… It is for this reason that they described the Absolute as '*Neti, Neti*'; there is nothing which exists outside it, the Brahman being all-inclusive' (II.3.6).

The inclusive character of the Absolute leads to transcendental view about it which the same Upanisad describes as full both 'of light and not-light, of desire

and not-desire, of anger and not-anger, of law and not-law, having verily filled all, both the near and the far-off, the this and the that, the subject and the object' (IV.4.5).

It is, therefore, apparent that the Upanisadic characterization of the Absolute passes from the negative state of neither-nor, through the affirmative state of inclusiveness to the transcendental state of either-or.

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Shankara's Doctrines of Identity, Creation and Immortality

Shankara dwells on the relation between the Absolute and the Self. It is true that the Absolute is the only reality. But what is to be said of the reality of what is empirically called the self? Shankara says that the self is empirically real, but transcendentally ideal.

From the phenomenal point of view, we may say that the self exists as a separate entity. But transcendentally, it is identical with the Absolute. There are several passages in the Upanisads, which support this view of Shankara.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that 'the self which inhabits the body is verily the Brahman, and that, as soon as the mortal coil is thrown over; it will finally merge in the Brahman (III.14.4).

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states that 'the individual self flutters like a swan in the wheel of the Brahman, considering itself and its Mover as separate entities; but it is only when it becomes one with It that it becomes immortal' (I.6).

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states that 'he who worships the deities as separate from himself is merely the beast of the gods' (I.4.10).

The Taittiriya Upanisad asserts an identity between the person in the Man and the person in the Sun (II.8).

The Mundaka Upanisad asserts the identity of the soul in the recesses of the human heart with the Supreme Person, and identifies both with the universe (II.1.10). In the instruction, which Aaruni imparts to Svetaketu, in the Chhaandogya Upanisad, he stresses the absolute identity of the self and the Brahman (VI.8.7).

As for creation, empirically, Shankara draws upon the Mundaka Upanisad.

'Just as a spider creates and retracts its thread, as the herbs and trees grow upon the surface of the earth, just as from a living person the hairs of the head and the body grow, similarly, from this immutable Brahman does all this universe spring' (I.1.7).

'Just as from a fire well-lit thousands of scintillations arise, and into it are resolved, similarly, from this immutable Brahman, manifold beings come into existence and into it are merged' (II.1.1).

As for the doctrine of the Immortality, Shankara asserts the impersonal immortality of the liberated souls in their final mergence in the Absolute.

'Just as rivers, which flow into the ocean, disappear in it after having thrown away their name and form, similarly, the sage, after having thrown off his name and form, enters the highest heavenly Person' (III.2.8 of the Mundaka Upanisad).

'His breath does not expire; being Brahman himself, he goes to the Brahman; as a serpent may throw off his slough, even so does the sage cast off his mortal body' (IV.4.6-7 of the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad). This passage also implies the state of *Jivanmukti* in as much as it asserts that, having realized his identification with the Brahman even while being alive, he merges into the Brahman when he casts off his mortal coil.

Three Theories about the Origin of the Doctrine of Maya

There are three different theories, which try to account for the Doctrine of Maya in three different ways. First, the Doctrine of Maya is a mere fabrication of the fertile genius of Shankara. Second, the Doctrine of Maya as found in Shankara is to be traced entirely to the influence of the *Sunyavaada* of the Buddhists. Third, Shankara's Doctrine of Maya is to be found already full-fledged in the Upanisads of which is only an experiment.

To say that the Doctrine of Maya is a fabrication of Shankara is to deny the presence of its sources in the Upanisads. To say that it is the outcome of the Nihilism of the Buddhists is only to interpret the philosophy of Shankara in a negative and nihilistic way. To say that the Doctrine of Maya is already full-fledged in the Upanisads by his time is to deny the process of the development of thought in the most ingenious mind of Shankara. All these three theories will only be disproved if we find sufficient justification for the sources of the Doctrine of Maya in the Upanisads and if Shankara can be shown to have developed these to bring them to a state of maturity.

To find out whether the Doctrine of Maya is present in the Upanisads or not, we must examine the ideology of the Upanisads. It cannot be by way of tracing words referring to Maya in the Upanisads, and build a system to determine the sources of the Doctrine of Maya.

If we follow this methodology, we come across definite traces of that doctrine in the Upanisads. It is possible to realize that Shankara has found his inspiration in Upanisads only. Befitting his role of a great thinker and philosopher, he has only elaborated the Doctrine of Maya out of the inchoate mass of the Upanisads and built the philosophy of Non-dualism thereupon.

The Doctrine of Maya in the Upanisads

The Isa Upanisad states that truth is veiled in this universe by a vessel of gold, and it invokes the grace of God to lift up the golden vessel, and allow the truth to be seen (15). The veil that covers the truth is described as golden implying that it is rich, gaudy, and dazzling that it takes away the mind of the observer from the inner contents, and rivets it upon itself. The Upanisad warns not to be dazzled by the appearance of gold, for everything that glitters is not gold. The seeker is to penetrate deeper and see the reality that lies within ensconced. We thus have the first conception of a veil, which prevents truth from being seen overtly.

The Katha Upanisad has another image. It states how people think themselves wise, while living in ignorance and moving about wandering, like blind men following the blind, in search of reality, which they would have easily seen had they lodged themselves in knowledge instead of ignorance (I.2.4-5). Here there is a conception of blindness meaning that we deliberately shut our eyes to the truth before us.

The Mundaka Upanisad compares ignorance to a knot, which a man has to untie before he gets possession of the Self in the recess of his own heart (II.1.10).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states vividly how knowledge is power, and ignorance impotence (I.1.10). In a way we are exhibiting at every stage the power of the impotence that lies in us, when we move about in the world without attaining to the knowledge of the Atman. The Upanisad further states that a cover of Untruth hides the ultimate Truth from us, just as the surface of the earth hides from us the golden treasure that lies hidden in it. We move unconsciously to the region of Truth day after day. Still we labour under the power of Untruth, for we do not know the Atman. This Atman is verily inside our own heart. It is only he, who reaches Him everyday, that is able to transcend the phenomenal world (VIII.3.1-3). Maya is compared here to an untruth – an *anrita*.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad carries the famous prayer in which a devotee is praying to God to carry him from Not-Being to Being, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality. The prayer merely voices the sentiment of the spiritual aspirant who seeks to rid himself of the power of evil over him. Here unreality is compared to Not-Being, to darkness, or to death (I.3.28).

The same Upanisad quotes a passage of the Rigveda where Indra is declared to have assumed many forms by his Maya (II.5.19). Here the word Maya may apparently mean power instead of illusion.

Again, this Upanisad contains a famous passage that speaks of 'as if there were a duality,' implying that really there is no duality. It signifies the identification of Maya with a semblance, as if it were an appearance (II.4.14).

The Katha Upanisad declares that the sages never find reality and certainty in the unrealities and uncertainties of this world (II.4.2). Maya is described here as an *adhruva* – an unreality or an uncertainty.

The Prasna Upanisad states that we cannot reach the world of the Brahman unless we have shaken off the crookedness in us, the falsehood in us, the illusion (Maya) in us (I.16). It is important to note that the word Maya is directly used in this passage, and in the sense of an illusion.

Further in the celebrated conversation between Svetaketu and Aaruni, the Chhaandogya Upanisad states that everything besides the Atman is merely a word, a mode, and a name (VI.1.4).

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states that it is only by meditation upon God, by union with Him, and by entering into His Being, that at the end there is the cessation of the great world-illusion (I.10). Here again the word Maya may mean nothing but illusion.

The Upanisad describes God, in another passage, as a *Maayin*, a magician, a powerful being who creates this world by his powers while the other, namely, the individual soul is bound down again by *Maya* (IV.9). It is, however, to be borne in view that there is yet no distinction drawn, as in later Vedanta philosophy, between the Maya that envelops Isvara and the *Avidya* that envelops *Jiva*. In this passage, the word Maya may only mean power.

Then again, in this Upanisad, Maya is identified with *Prakrti* (IV.10) – a

commonplace usage in the Vedanta literature later. This Upanisad also contains passages, which describe the Godhead as spreading his meshes and making them so manifold that he catches all the beings of the universe in them, and rules over them (III.1). Here we have the conception of a net or meshes, inside which all beings are entangled.

We may thus notice from an examination of the various passages in the Upanisads that even though the word Maya may not have been used many times therein, still the conception that underlines Maya is already present there. Even though we do not find there the full-fledged doctrine of illusion in its philosophical aspects as in Gaudapaada and later writers, still we do find in the Upanisads all the material that may have led Shankara to elaborate a theory of Maya out of it.

When we consider that we have the conceptions of a veil, of blindfold-ness, of a knot, of ignorance, of Not-Being, of darkness, of death, of unreality and uncertainty, of untruth, of crookedness, of falsehood, of illusion, of the power of God, of this power of God as identical with Nature, of meshes, of semblance, of an appearance, and finally, of a word, a mode and a name, it is appropriate to conclude that they constitute sufficient evidence as to being the traces of the Doctrine of Maya in the Upanisads.

Vicissitudes in the Historical Development of the Doctrine of Maya

Having traced the sources of the Doctrine of Maya in the Upanisads, it is but proper to have a brief account of that doctrine in its historical development in the post Upanisadic period. The Doctrine of Maya is enunciated in detail by Gaudapaada and elaborated by Shankara. It may be very relevant to consider its transformation by Gaudapaada and Shankara, more particularly the evolution of the doctrine by Shankara from the teachings of the Upanisads and those of his spiritual guru Gaudapaada.

In the Bhagavad-Gita, the word Maya is used in the sense almost of magical power, and God, the great magician, is declared to cause the Spirit-host to revolve as by the power of His divine magic (XVIII.61). It also states that the beings in the world are declared to be resorting to the demonical sort of life when God robs them of their wisdom by His power (XVII.15).

Here again, we are to bear in view that we have to consider the Doctrine of Maya in ideas rather than in words. Also, the Bhagavad-Gita is a short treatise compared to the Upanisads. Further the theistic-mystic trend of the argument in the Bhagavad-Gita does not leave much room for a philosophical development of the conception of Maya.

When we come to Gaudapaada, we find that a great stride forward is taken in the development of the doctrine. Gaudapaada uses Buddhist terminology, but sets forth an original doctrine. He attempts a systematic treatise on philosophy rather than giving a lift to the spiritual impulse of man in the sense of the Bhagavad-Gita. He, therefore, states his opinion deliberately and at length.

He maintains in his Kaarikaas the doctrine that the world is not simply an appearance or an illusion, but that the world was never created at all. His doctrine may be described as *Ajaatavaada* – the Doctrine of Non-creation. 'If there were a universe, the question might arise whether it would hide from our view; but the universe is not; duality is only Maya; non-duality is the only reality' (I.17).

Gaudapaada, however, is not decided as to whether he should regard the world as a dream or an illusion, or not. In one place, he praises those who have called the world an illusion; he calls such people the 'well-versed in the Vedantic science' (II.31). On the other hand, when he is enumerating the various views about the creation of the universe, he is stating the view that 'the world is a dream or an illusion' as a view which is held by others beside himself. 'Some people regard the universe as the greatness of God, others as His creation, others as a dream, others as an illusion, others regard it as merely the will of God; ……still others the object of His enjoyment, some people call it the play-thing of God, and yet others regard it as God's nature' (I.7-9). As contrasted with these views, he states his position that he is one with those who maintain the doctrine that the universe was not created at all (IV.4-5).

But, for the purpose of spiritual perfection and ethical conduct, Gaudapaada takes account of the world as a verity. 'That is the state of the highest *samadhi*, in which all talk is at an end, all anxiety is at an end, which is full of the highest tranquility and eternal illumination' (III.37). 'Creation has been recommended by the sages for the benefit of those who cannot but find the world to be real (*upaalambhaat*) and who must needs be led on the path of good conduct

(*samaachaaraat*)' (IV.42).

From the above passages, we see that Gaudapaada has to take some cognizance of the world as real, though it may be for the perfection of mystical endeavour or ethical conduct. Even then, philosophically, he may regard it as not having been created at all.

Shankara considers all the conceptions that have preceded him, and weaves his full-fledged doctrine out of the teachings of the Upanisads and Gaudapaada. The expressions Shankara uses about Maya in his commentary on the Brahmasutras and elsewhere give an insight into his approach towards this concept. Inexplicability (*sada sada anirvachaniya svarupatva*), super-imposition (*atasmin tadbuddhih*), illicit-transformation (*rajjusarpa* and *suktikaarajata*), subjective modification (*aakaase talamalinatvaadi*), postulation of negation (*khapushpa, mrigatrishnaa, aindrajaalika, sasavishaana and vandhyaputra*) are the words he uses to designate the phenomenal appearance of the world. These words convey the sense that he places himself between the doctrines of less reality and illusion.

His concept of the world is totally unmistakable. For him, the world is merely an appearance on the background of the Brahman. The world is real, but only phenomenally. Noumenally, it is unreal. He draws a distinction between the *paaramarthika* and the *vyaavahaarika* views of reality. He is the first in the Indian thought to bring into vogue the distinction between empirical reality and transcendental reality.

The recognition of the distinction between the *vyaavahaarika* and the *paaramaarthika* views of reality, added to the recognition of the *praatibhaasika* and the *svaapnika* views, which are all contained in his philosophy, yields a doctrine of the Degrees of Reality. This is indeed implicit in his philosophy, though it is never explicitly stated. He proves himself to be neither an epistemological idealist, nor an epistemological nihilist.

Greater reality than the reality of the world of illusion belongs to the world of dream; greater reality than the reality of the world of dream belongs to the world of life; greater reality than the reality of the world of life belongs to the world of the Self, or God, or the Absolute, all identical to one another. Every system of philosophy must needs take account of some sort of appearance.

There is an extraordinary 'moral' meaning in the doctrine of Appearance. In the words of Carlyle, 'Thus, like a God-created, fire breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste storm fully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane…But whence? – O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that is through Mystery to Mystery, and from God to God'

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08
The Ultimate Reality in the Upanisads

General

The Supreme Philosophical Problem

The supreme question that arises in relation to the Upanisads is 'what is the core of Upanisadic teaching?' Does it relate only to the metaphysical conflicts of Pluralism, Qualified Monism, and Monism? Is there any one fundamental conception, which will enable us to string together the variegated philosophical speculations of the Upanisads? All these issues raise a very important problem – the problem of Ultimate Reality as understood by the Upanisadic seers.

The Upanisadic seers have sought to solve the problem by taking recourse to conception of the Atman. This word originally signified the breathing principle in man, but came in the end to denote the essence of the universe. The Atman has turned out to be the ultimate category of existence to the Upnisadic seers.

The Three Approaches to the Problem of the Ultimate Reality in the History of Thought: Cosmological, Theological and Psychological

The history of philosophical thought reveals that the problem of Ultimate Reality has been approached in various ways. The three chief types of approach are the Cosmological, the Theological, and the Psychological.

It is said that, by the very constitution of man's mind, there have been only three ways of thinking open to him. In the words of Dr. Caird, in his book Evolution of Religion, 'he (man) can look outward upon the world around him; he can look inward upon the Self within him; and he can look upward to the God above him, to the Being who unites the outward and inward worlds, and who manifests himself in both'.

According to him, the consciousness of objects is prior in time to self-consciousness, and the consciousness of both subject and object is prior to the consciousness of God. In the same book, Dr. Caird states that 'man looks outward before he looks inward, and he looks inward before he looks upward'.

The question still remains. Is this account of the development of the

consciousness of Reality ultimately valid? The solutions thrown open by the history of philosophy are varied. For Descartes, the Self is the primary reality; self-consciousness is the primary fact of existence; and introspection is the beginning of the real philosophical process. According to him, the Self leads to the conception of God, the cause of the Self. As such we are to regard God as more perfect than the Self. And it is from God that we arrive at the world, which we initially negated, regarding it as the creation of a deceptive evil spirit.

On the other hand, for Spinoza, neither the Self nor the world is the primary reality. To him, God is the be-all and the end-all of all things of existence. From God, philosophy starts, and in God, philosophy ends.

The approach of the Upanisadic philosophers to the problem of Ultimate Reality is different from either of the two above approaches. They regard the Self as the ultimate existence, and subordinate the world and God to the Self. To them, the Self is more real than either the world or God. It is only ultimately that they identify the Self with God, and thus bridge the gulf that exists between the theological and psychological approaches to Reality.

No doubt, they start looking out into the world, but they find that the solution of the ultimate problem cannot come from the world outside. They, therefore, say that it is necessary to go back to the psychological category. They try another experiment; they go by the theological approach to the problem of Reality. But they find that also to be wanting. Finally, they try the psychological approach, and arrive at the solution to the problem of ultimate existence.

Thus the problem of Ultimate Reality to the Upanisadic philosophers is a cosmo-theo-psychological one. Finding the cosmological and the theological approaches deficient, they take recourse to the psychological approach and arrive at the conception of the Self, which they call the Atman.

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The Cosmological Approach

Regress from the Cosmological to the Physiological Categories

An ordinary man is likely to consider the forces of nature as the Ultimate Reality. But a deeper speculation into events shows that the phenomenal forces cannot be taken to be ultimate realities. The Chhaandogya Upanisad illustrates this aspect in a story.

A disciple by name Upakosal lives with his preceptor Satyakaama Jaabaala When Upakosala had once gone to the forest, the three sacrificial Fires, whom he had assiduously served in his preceptor's house, rose in bodily form before him. The first Fire, namely Gaarhapatya, told him that the Ultimate Reality is to be found in the sun. The second Fire, namely Anvaahaaryapachana told him that it is to be found in the moon. The third Fire, namely Aahavaniya told him that it is to be found in the lightning. Upakosala seemed to be satisfied with the instruction imparted to him one after the other, and returned to his preceptor.

On Upakosala explaining his experience in the forest to the preceptor, the preceptor tells him that the teaching imparted to him by the Fires was deficient and inferior to the teaching, which he himself knew.

Ultimately the preceptor imparts the true teaching to his disciple that the Ultimate Reality is to be found neither in the sun, nor in the moon nor in the lightning, but in the image of the person reflected in the human eye. Satyakaama Jaabaala says, 'It is this image which is the Atman. It is this image, which is fearless, and the Ultimate Reality. It is this image, which brings all blessings. It is this image, which is the most resplendent thing in all the worlds. He who knows it to be so, will himself be resplendent in the worlds' (IV.10.15).

The above passage indicates a regress from the cosmological to the physiological category. Satyakaama Jaabaala is not satisfied with objective existences being regarded as Ultimate Reality. He, therefore, declares that the Ultimate Reality is to be found in a physiological category, namely, the eye. Though this may not be the truth – it may be an inferior truth – it has the merit of taking us from the outside world to the physiological sphere.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states, in another passage, that the light 'which

shines in the high heaven in transcendent space is the same light which is within man, and of this we have tactual proof, namely, when we feel the warmth in the body, and audible proof when after closing of ears we hear what may be regarded as the thunder of heaven, or the bellowing of an ox, or the sound of a burning fire. He who meditates on Ultimate Reality as thus dwelling in the human body, becomes himself conspicuous and celebrated' (III.13).

The Maitri Upanisad expresses the same idea when it speaks of the Ultimate Reality in man as being verily the sound, which a man hears after shutting his ears (II.8).

In the above passages, we thus have a regress from the cosmological to the physiological categories, namely, the eye, the bodily warmth or the sound that man hears after shutting his ears. But the Upanisadic seers realize the limitations of the physiological categories to explain the Ultimate Reality satisfactorily.

Regress from the Cosmological and Physiological to the Psychological Categories

Both the Kaushitaki (IV.1-18) and the Brhadaaranyaka (II.1.1-15) Upanisads have a passage, which states that both the cosmological and the physiological categories must be regarded as deficient, and, therefore, they must necessarily pave the way for the psychological category. The passage relates to a discussion between the proud Baalaaki and Ajaatasatru, the King of Kashi. The conversation runs on the following lines.

Baalaaki goes to Ajaatasatru and tells him that he imparts superior wisdom to the latter. Ajaatasatru welcomes him. Baalaaki states that true wisdom consists in regarding the sun as the Ultimate Reality and that the Ultimate Reality is to be found, one after another, in such objects as the moon, the lightning, the thunder, the wind, the sky, the fire, the water, the mirror, the image, the echo, the sound, the body, the right eye and the left eye. Ultimately, Baalaaki's mouth gets gagged when he could proceed no further in this way of philosophizing.

Then Ajaatasatru takes Baalaaki by the hand to a man who is in deep sleep. He calls upon him, 'Thou great one, clad in white raiment, O King Soma'. The sleeping man still remains lying. Then Ajaatasatru pushes him with the stick, which then gets up. When Ajaatasatru tells Baalaaki that, in the person in deep-sleep, the sleeping consciousness may be regarded as the Ultimate Reality.

In this passage, we have evidently the deficiency of both the cosmological and the physiological categories brought out in favour of the psychological category, namely, the deep-sleep consciousness. Even this is an inferior answer to the problem that has been raised.

The Cosmological Argument for the Existence of God – God is All-powerful

The cosmological approach has been tried and found wanting, in favour either of physiological or psychological categories to explain the Ultimate Reality. That does not mean that the cosmological speculations of the Upanisadic philosophy did not lead the Upanisadic philosophers independently to the positing of Absolute Existence. On deeper analysis, it is possible to find cosmological proof for the existence of the Absolute.

The Taittiriya Upanisad declares that, behind the cosmos, there must be an existence, which must be regarded as responsible for its origin, sustenance, and absorption. It states thus, 'that from which all these beings come into existence, that by which they live, that into which they are finally absorbed, know that to be the eternal verity, the Absolute' (III.1).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad declares that a man must compose himself in the belief that the world has come out of, lives in, and is finally absorbed in the Absolute. The seer of the Upanisad expresses the whole conception by a single word *tajjalan*, which means that it is from the Absolute that the world has sprung, it is into it that it is dissolved, and it is by means of it that it lives (III.14.1).

All the students of philosophy are aware of this cosmological proof for the existence of an eternal verity behind the cosmos, by reference to the origin, existence, and destruction of the world. The same thing is in the Upanisads, too.

When once an eternal verity behind the cosmos has been postulated, the Upanisadic philosophers have no hesitation in making it the fount and source of all power whatsoever. They consider it to be the source of Infinite Power, which is only partially exhibited in the various phenomena of Nature. Thus the forces of Nature that we are aware of are ultimately only partial manifestations of the power that is in the Absolute.

The Kena Upanisad explains the above concept in a parable. Parables and myths in philosophical works are to be understood as merely allegorical representations of philosophical truths. All the parables and myths in the Upanisads are to be understood in that way. The parable in the Upanisad runs on the following lines.

Once there was a great fight between the gods and the demons, and the gods were successful. The gods thought that their success was entirely due to their power. Forgetting that this power was only a manifestation of the power of the Brahman in them, they became proud. Aware of this, the Brahman suddenly made Its appearance before them, and the gods were wonderstruck, non knowing what It was.

Then they sent forth the god of Fire, one of them, to the Brahman as an emissary to know of the real nature of that Great Being. The god of Fire went to the Brahman in all pride. The Brahman asked who he was. The god of Fire answered that he was Jaatavedas, in who lay the power of burning the whole of the earth, if he so desired. The Brahman then threw a blade of grass before him and asked him to burn it, which the god of Fire could not. When he returned disappointed, the gods sent the god of wind with the same mission to the Brahman. On being asked by the Brahman who he was, the god of Wind said that he was Maatarisvan, in who lay the power of blowing away anything off the surface of the earth. The Brahman again threw a blade of grass before him, which the god of Wind was not able to move it.

On the return of the god of Wind disappointed, the gods sent Indra to the Brahman with the same mission. He was more modest than the other two, and tried to know the nature of the Brahman in a humble way. The Brahman then disappeared from his sight for the only reason that he was more humble than the earlier two gods.

Then suddenly sprang before Indra a beautiful celestial damsel. Indra enquired her as to who that Great Being was that had just disappeared. The damsel told him that it was the Brahman, and that it was due to the power of the Brahman that the gods had gained victory over the demons, and not because of their own power.

God Indra was shrewd enough to realize that the power of the gods was only

a manifestation of the power of the Absolute. It was his humility that made it possible for him to go the Brahman, touch It; and he became the foremost of the gods. The Upanisad explains the essence of the parable thus. 'It is verily the power of the Brahman which flashes forth in the lightning, and vanishes again. It is the power of the Brahman which manifests itself as the motion of the soul in us and bethinks itself' (III.IV).

The essence of the parable is that all physical as well as mental power is to be regarded merely as a manifestation of the power of the Brahman. The philosopher of the Upanisad arrives cosmologically at the conception of an un-manifested Power, which lies at the back of the manifest powers of Nature and mind, and which must, therefore, the understood as the primary reality.

God is Supreme Resplendence

It is not merely that all the power in the world is ultimately due to the Brahman; the very resplendence and illumination in the world are also to be regarded as manifestations of the great un-manifest luminosity of the Absolute.

The Katha Upanisad asks: 'Does the sun shine by his own power? Do the moon and the stars shine by their own native light? Does the lightning flash forth in its native resplendence? Not to speak of the paltry earthly fire, which obviously owes its resplendence to something else!'

Shall we say that all these so-called resplendent things are resplendent in their own native light, or are we to assert that they derive their power of illumination from a primal eternal verity which lies at the back of them all, and whose illumination makes possible the illumination of the so-called luminous objects of nature. The Upanisad clearly states the concept as follows.

'Before Him the sun does not shine; before Him the moon and the stars do not shine; before Him the lightning does not shine; far less this earthly fire. It is only when the Absolute shines first, that all these objects shine afterwards. It is by His luminosity that they become luminous.' (II.5-15)

God is the Subtle Essence underlying Phenomenal Existence

The Upanisadic philosophers say that the Brahman which is the fount and the source of all existence and which is the origin of all power and resplendence is

also the subtle essence underlying all the gross manifestations in the world.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad explains this concept, in a parable, in the conversation between a preceptor and his pupil. It is on the following lines.

With a view to convincing the pupil of the subtlety of the underlying essence, the preceptor directs him to bring to him a small fruit of the Nyagrodha tree. When the disciple brings one, the preceptor asks him to break it open and see what is inside the fruit of the tree. When the disciple looks into it, he sees that there are seeds infinite in number, and infinitesimal in size. The preceptor again directs him to break one of the seeds open and see what further is there. Breaking open the seed, the disciple says, 'nothing, sir'.

Thereupon, the preceptor says, 'My dear boy, it is of the very subtle essence that you do not perceive there – it is of this very essence that the great Nyagrodha tree is made. Believe it, my dear boy' (VI.12).

This parable explains how the underlying essence of things is to be regarded as subtle and un-manifest, and how the gross and manifested objects are to be understood as merely phenomenal appearances.

There is a further point in the parable, which deserves attention. When the preceptor tells his disciple that behind the Nyagrodha tree there lies a subtle essence, which is un-manifest, he also tells him that it is to be identified with the Self and further that the disciple must identify himself with it (VI.12). We see here the limitation of the mere cosmological conception of an underlying essence of things. It seems that cosmology invokes the aid of psychological categories before the essence underlying the cosmos could be identified with the essence that lies at the back of the human mind. Thus the whole world become one, only when we suppose that there is the same subtle essence underlying both the world of nature and the world of mind.

The Physical-theological Argument

In the history of thought, the cosmological argument seems to take the help of the physical-theological proof, and the two together seem to offer a formidable front to the thinking mind. It happens similarly in the case of the Upanisadic philosophy, too.

The argument from design and the argument from order are merely the

personal and impersonal aspects of the physical-theological argument. Those who believe in God believe in design. Those who believe in an impersonal Absolute believe only in order. Very often, the personal and impersonal aspects are fused together, as in the case of the Upanisadic thinkers.

It is said in the Chhaandogya Upanisad that the Self, as personal existence, is yet 'an impersonal bund which holds the river of existence from flowing by. Neither night nor day, neither age nor death, neither grief nor good nor evil is able to transgress this eternal bund of existence' (VIII.4.1).

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad elaborates further thus: 'It is at the command of this imperishable existence that the sun and the moon stand bound in their places. It is due to the command of this Absolute that the heaven and the earth stand each in its own place. It is due to the command of the imperishable Brahman that the very moments, the hours, the days, the nights, the months, the seasons, and the years have their appointed function in the scheme of things. It is at the command of this Brahman that some rivers flow to the east from the snow-clad mountains while others flow to the west' (III.8.9).

We do not disentangle here the personal and impersonal aspects of the physical-theological proof, the aspect of design and the aspect of order. We only note the presence of the physical-theological proof in the Upanisads, pointing out that the Absolute must be regarded as the ballast of the cosmos, dynamic in a perfect way.

The Theological Approach

Regress from Polytheism to Monotheism

The Upanisadic philosophers went by the theological approach to the conception of reality. They began by enquiring how many gods must be supposed to exist in the universe. They could not rest content until they arrived at the idea of one God, the ruler of the whole universe. Ultimately they identified this God with the inner Self in man. In this way did theological categories become subservient to the psychological category of the Self.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad records the controversy between Vidagdha Saakalya and Yaajnavalkya on this concept. The former asks the latter how many

gods must be regarded as existing in the world. Yaajnavalkya answers 'three and three hundred'. He follows it up saying, 'three and three thousand'. Saakalya is not satisfied with the answer and again asks him how many gods are there. Yaajnavalkya replies 'thirty-three gods'. On further enquiry by Saakalya, Yaajnavalkya says that there are six, three, two, even one and a half gods, and finally that there is only one God without a second.

While giving different numbers of the gods, Yaajnavalkya is only testing the insight of Saakalya whether he will be satisfied with the different answers. When he is not satisfied with any, he finally says that there is only one God. By mutual consent, Saakalya and Yaajnavalkya conclude that He alone is the God of the universe, 'whose body the earth is, whose sight is fire, whose mind is light, and who is the final resort of all human souls' (III.9.1-10).

The Theistic Conception of God and His Identification with the Self

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad develops the conception of a personal God. It declares that the one God with no second is Rudra who rules the worlds with his powers. He stands behind all persons, creates all the worlds, and, at the end of Time rolls them up again. He has His eyes and face everywhere; His hands and feet are omnipresent. He creates the men of earth and endows them with hands. He creates the fowl of air and endows them with winds. He is the only God who has created the heaven and the earth (III.2.3).

In another passage, the same Upanisad enquires further into the nature and attributes of this God. This God is called the Lord of the universe, the creator, the preserver and the destroyer of all. To those who regard this God as identical with the Self within belongs eternal happiness, to none else. It emphasizes the concept thus.

'Some so-called wise men, being under a great philosophic delusion, regard Nature, and others Time, as the source of being. They forget that it is the greatness of the Lord, which causes the wheel of the Brahman to turn it round. It is by Him that all this has been covered. He is the only knower; he is death to the god of Death; the possessor of all qualities and wisdom. It is at His command that creation unfolds itself, namely, what people call earth, water, fire, air, and ether. He is the permanent as well as the accidental cause of unions. He is

beyond the past, the present and the future, and is truly regarded as without parts. That universal god, who is immanent in all these beings, should be meditated upon as dwelling in our minds also – that God who is the Lord of all gods, and who is the adorable Ruler of the universe. There is no cause of Him, nor any effect. There is none equal to Him, nor any superior. The great power inherent in Him manifests itself alike in the form of knowledge and action. There is no master of Him in this world, nor any ruler, nor is there anything which we might regard as His sign. He is the only Cause, the Lord of all those who possess sense organs. There is no generator of Him, nor any protector. He is the self-subsistent mover of the unmoving manifold, who causes the one seed to sprout in infinite ways. It is only to those who regard this Universal Being as immanent in their own selves, to them belongs eternal happiness, to none else' (VI.1-12).

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad propounds this theistic description and states that God is the only cause of the world, and ultimately He is to be regarded identical with the Self within. Here, the purely theological category becomes subservient to the psychological category of the Self. It, therefore, appears that the ultimate category of existence to the Upanisadic philosophers is God-Atman.

The Immanence-Transcendence of God

There are references in the Upanisads to the immanence and transcendence of God. Some passages declare merely His immanence, and others His transcendence. Some passages bring the two aspects together.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad (II.17) states that 'God is to be regarded as being present in fire and in water, in the entire universe, in herbs and plants'. The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad (I.4.7) states that God-Atman is immanent in the whole body, as a razor is entirely closed up within the razor box, or as a bird is pent up within its nest.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad (VI.13.1-3) brings into relief this aspect of the immanence of God through a parable. A preceptor asks his disciple to place a small piece of salt in water at night. The next morning, the preceptor asks his disciple of what has become of the salt piece. The disciple does not find it as it has already melted in the water. The preceptor asks him to taste the water from the surface, in the middle and at the bottom. The disciple informs him that it is all saltish in all places. Then the preceptor tells him that even though it seems to

have disappeared in the water, it is thoroughly present in every part thereof. The clever preceptor then explains to the disciple that verily the subtle Atman is immanent in the universe, whom we may not able to see, but whom we must regard as existing as the supreme object of faith.

All these passages speak of the thorough immanence of God.

The Katha Upanisad states that the Universal Self is to be regarded as beyond all the happiness and the misery of the world 'like the celestial sun who is the eye of all the universe and is untouched by the defects of our vision' (II.5.11). In this passage, the transcendence of God is clearly brought into relief.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad has passages stating as to how God is to be regarded as having 'filled the whole world and yet remained beyond its confines'.

'Like the fire and the wind which enter the world and assume various forms, the Universal Atman is immanent in every part of the universe and protrudes beyond its confines.'

'Verily motionless like a lone tree, does this God stand in the heaven and yet by Him is this whole world.'

This is how the Svetaasvatara Upanisad declares the transcendence and immanence of God (III.14).

From all the above passages, it is evident that God-Atman is to be regarded as having filled every nook and corner of the universe, and yet having overflowed it without limit. In any case, the God in the universe is to be regarded as identical with the Self within us. According to the Upanisadic philosophers, it is only when this identification takes place that we arrive at the ultimate conception of the Reality.

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The Psychological Approach

The Conception of the Self Reached by an Analysis of the Various Physiological and Psychological Categories

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, in a dialogue between Yaajnavalkya and the King Janaka, says that Yaajnavalkya asks Janaka as to what psychological doctrines the latter has heard about the nature of the Ultimate Reality. Janaka is very inquisitive and philosophically inclined; he has, therefore, known all the opinions on the subject that have been imparted to him by different sages. He tells Yaajnavalkya the opinions of various philosophers and the dialogue between the two is on the following lines.

Janaka says, 'Jitvan Sailini told me that speech is the Ultimate Reality.' Yaajnavalkya responds that it is merely a partial truth. Janaka then says that Udanka Saulbaayana told him that breath is the Ultimate Reality. Yaajnavalkya again says that it is only a partial truth. Janaka then says Varku Vaashini told him that the eye is the Ultimate Reality. Yaajnavalkya remarks that this is also a partial truth. The King then says how Gardabhi-vipita Bhaaradwaaja, Satyakaama Jaabaala and Vidagdha Saakalya told him that the ear, the mind and the heart respectively is the Ultimate Reality. Yaajnavalkya says that all these are only partial truths (IV.1.2-7).

In this enumeration of the opinions of different Upanisadic scholars as regards the various physiological or psychological categories as constituting the Ultimate Reality, and in Yaajnavalkya's rejection of each one of them in turn, there lies the conception, though implicitly, that the Ultimate Reality cannot be found in the accidental adjuncts with which the Self may be clothed, but only to be found in the Self alone.

The same idea is evident in the Kena Upanisad which says thus: 'The Self must be regarded as the ear of ear, as the mind of mind, as the speech of speech, as the breath of breath, as the eye of eye. Those who know the Self thus are released from this world and become immortal'

'That which speech is unable to give out, but that which itself gives out speech, know that to be the Ultimate Reality, nor that which people worship in vain. That which the mind is unable to think, but which thinks the mind, know that to be the Ultimate Reality; that which the eye is unable to see, but that which

enables us to see the eye, know that to be the Ultimate Reality; that which the ear does not hear, but that which enables us to perceive the ear, that which breath is not able to breath, but that by which breath itself is breathed, know that to be the Ultimate Reality' (I.2-8).

It is evident from the above passage that the Self must be regarded as the innermost existence, while all the physiological and psychological elements are only external vestures, which clothe reality but which do not constitute it.

The States of Consciousness: Waking-Consciousness, Dream-Consciousness, Sleep-Consciousness, and Self-Consciousness

The Chhaandogya Upanisad records a parable, which states how we must arrive at the conception of the Self-conscious Being within us as constituting the Ultimate Reality. In a clear analysis of the psychological states through which a man's soul passes, the Upanisad states how the Ultimate Reality must not be mistaken with body-consciousness, dream-consciousness, and even the deep-sleep-consciousness. It is the pure Self-consciousness, which is beyond all bodily or mental limitations. The parable runs on the following lines.

Once the gods and the demons were both anxious to learn the nature of the Ultimate Reality and went to Prajapati for instruction. Prajapati tells them of the Ultimate Reality as 'that entity, which is free from sin, free from old age, free from death and grief, free from hunger and thirst, which desires nothing, and imagines nothing, must be regarded as the Ultimate Self'.

The gods and the demons were anxious to know what this Self is. The gods sent Indra and the demons Virochana as their emissaries to Prajapati to learn the final truth. They stayed with Prajapati for 32 years to be eligible to secure instruction in spiritual wisdom.

Initially Prajapati tells them that the Self is nothing more than the image we see in the eye, in water or in a mirror. It is to be regarded as the immortal and the fearless Brahman. Both Indra and Virochana are satisfied with the instruction, and return to their respective groups.

Virochana tells the demons that he has been in possession of the secret of the Self, which is no other than the image that one sees in the eye, in water or in a

mirror. In other words, the Self is no other than the mere image of the body. The Upanisad, here, mentions that it is the gospel of the *Asuras*. Incidentally, it may be of interest to note that the Chaarvaakas of a later period also maintained that the Self is nothing more than the mere consciousness of the body.

Indra, however, realizes that Prajapati must not have given him the final answer in the matter. He contemplates thus. 'It is true that, when the body is well adorned, the Self is well adorned; when the body is well dressed, the Self is well dressed; when the body is well cleaned, the Self is well cleaned; but what if the body were blind, or lame, or crippled? Shall not the Soul itself be thus regarded as blind, or lame, or crippled?'

Then he returns to Prajapati, explains the difficulty in accepting the earlier instruction, and requests him to tell him the truth of the Ultimate Reality. Prajapati advises him to practise penance once more for 32 years. On Indra complying with the injunction, Prajapati tells him thus. 'The true Self is he who moves about happy in dreams. He is the immortal, the fearless Brahman.' In other words, Prajapati informs Indra that dream-consciousness must be regarded as identical with the Self.

Indra returns, but again contemplates. 'Do we not feel as if we were struck or chased in our dreams? Do we not experience pain, and do we not shed tears in our dreams? How can we account for this difficulty if the Self were to be identified with dream-consciousness?' He returns to Prajapati and informs him that the knowledge imparted to him cannot be considered final in as much as the dream-consciousness is affected by feelings of pain and fear.

Prajapati considers Indra as a disciple worthy to know things better. He advises him to do penance for another spell of 32 years. On Indra complying with the injunction, Prajapati instructs Indra that the true Self must be regarded as identical with the deep-sleep consciousness in which there is perfect rest and repose.

Indra returns but again contemplates. 'In deep-sleep, we are conscious neither of our own selves, nor of objects. In fact, in deep-sleep, we were only logs of wood. There is neither consciousness of Self nor consciousness of the objective world'. He is, therefore, convinced that the deep-sleep consciousness cannot be identified with the Self. He returns to Prajapati and informs him of his conviction

that the deep-sleep consciousness cannot be identified with the Ultimate Self. For, in that state, there is neither self-consciousness, nor any consciousness of the objective world, and the soul appears annihilated in that state. As such this cannot be considered as true wisdom.

Prajapati sees Indra, in his insight, as a disciple worthy of receiving the highest knowledge. So he asks Indra to do penance for another 5 years. On Indra complying with the injunction, he goes to Prajapti for the final instruction. Prajapati tells him thus.

'Verily, O Indra, this body is subject to death, but it is at the same time the vesture of an immortal Soul. It is only when the Soul is encased in the body that it is cognizant of pleasure and pain. There is neither pleasure nor pain for the Soul once relieved of its body. Just as the wind and the cloud, the lightning and the thunder are without body, and arise from heavenly space and appear in their own form, so does the serene being, the Self, arise from this mortal body, reach the highest light, and then appear in his own form. This Serene Being, who appears in his own form, is the highest Person' (VIII.7-12).

This passage gives an idea of the true nature of Ultimate Reality as being of the nature of self-consciousness. 'That which sees itself by itself, that which recognizes itself as identical with itself in the light of supreme knowledge' must be regarded as the Ultimate Reality. The Ultimate (Final) Reality is reached in that theoretic, ecstatic, self-spectacular state in which the Self is conscious of nothing but itself.

There is a great meaning in this parable. By an analysis of the different states of consciousness, the seer of the Upanisad points out that the bodily consciousness must not be mistaken for Ultimate Reality, nor the consciousness in dream or deep-sleep. The Soul is of the nature of pure-self-consciousness in the form of 'I am I'.

Those who mistake the Ultimate Self as identical with bodily-consciousness are materialists. Those who identify it with the consciousness in the dream state are like the modern Theosophists who call the Self the etheric-double. Those who regard the Self as identical with the deep-sleep consciousness are also mistaken as in that state there is no consciousness either of the objective world or of the Self. The true Self can only be the self-conscious Being, shining in his own light,

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thinking in his own thought, the supreme theoretic Being, the eternal Self-spectator.

The Ontological Argument for the Existence of the Self

The Taittiriya Upanisad gives certain characteristics of the Ultimate Reality from the point of view of ontology. The Upanisad says, 'The Absolute is Existence, Consciousness and Infinity' (II.1).

In the identification of the Absolute with Consciousness, the real nature of the Atman is brought out in bold relief. Existence here means Consciousness. The Aitareya Upanisad repeats the same idea. '…. of the gods of the heaven and the beings of the earth, whether produced from eggs, or embryo, or sweat, or from the earth, everything that moves, or flies, or the stationary – Self-consciousness is the eye of all these. They are rooted in Self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the eye of the world; it is Self-consciousness which is the Absolute' (III.3). In this passage, we have the ontological argument that the Ultimate Existence must be identified with Self-consciousness.

Thus, a survey of the different approaches to the problem of Reality, namely, the cosmological, the theological, and the psychological, we see that the Upanisadic philosophers have sought to establish Reality on the firm foundation of Self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the eternal verity to them. God is not God unless considered identical with Self-consciousness. Reality is not reality if it does not express, through its very structure, the marks of pure Self-consciousness. Self-consciousness thus constitutes the ultimate category of existence to the Upanisadic philosophers.

The Significance of Self-Consciousness

Self-Consciousness – Its Epistemological and Metaphysical Significance Contrasted with the Mystical Significance

Some important questions that confront the Upanisadic seekers after truth are these. If Self-consciousness were the final Reality, how would it be possible for us to realize it? Can bare intellect give us a vision of this final Reality? Or are there any other processes beyond the reach of intellect, which has the power of taking

us to the portals of pure Self-consciousness?

The answers from the Upanisads are clear. Mere intellect will never enable us to realize pure Self-consciousness. Pure Self-consciousness can only be reached in a state of mystic realization. The mystical faculty is what we call intuition.

Intuition is a superior faculty to either mere sensuous perception or intellective apprehension. But the philosophic aspect of pure Self-consciousness may be looked at from the epistemological and the metaphysical points of view.

The Epistemology of Self-Consciousness

Epistemologically, the Upanisads state that it will not be possible for us to know the Self in the technical meaning of the word 'knowledge'. It may be of interest to recall that Kant also regards Reality, consisting of God and the Self, as technically unknowable. These are matters of faith.

What the Upanisads say is that it is true that God and the Self are unknowable, bur they are not merely objects of faith; they are objects of mystical realization. Secondly, the Upanisads do not regard the Self as unknowable in the agnostic sense of the word. Rather it is 'unknowable' from the standpoint of philosophic humility.

The Upanisadic philosophers say that the Atman is unknowable in his essential nature. The Taittiriya Upanisad (II.4) states thus: 'That, from which our speech turns back along with mind, being unable to comprehend its fullness is the Ultimate Reality.' The Kena Upanisad (I.3) states thus: 'That where the eye is unable to go, where neither speech nor mind is able to reach – what conception can we have of it, except that it is beyond all that is known, and beyond all that is unknown! The same Upanisad (II.3) says in a graphic way that he who thinks he knows, does not know; while he who thinks he does not know, does really know.

The Katha Upanisad, in a similar way, states thus: 'The Self is not in the first instance open to the hearing of men, but that even having heard him, many are unable to know him. Wonderful is the man, if found, who is able to speak about him; wonderful, indeed, is he who is able to comprehend him in accordance with the instruction of a teacher' (I.2.7). All these passages are indicative as to how the Atman is to be regarded as unknowable in his essential nature.

There is another side to the un-know-ability of the Atman. The Atman is

unknowable because He is the Eternal Subject who knows. How could the Eternal Knower be an object of knowledge? The Svetaasvatara Upanisad (III.19) states that 'the Atman is the Great Being who knows all that is knowable; who can know Him who himself knows?'

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad makes bold speculations in this regard

'That by whom everything is known, how could He himself be known? It is impossible to know the Knower' (II.4.14)

'It would not be possible for us to see the seer, to hear the hearer, to think the thinker, and apprehend Him by whom everything is apprehended' (III.4.2)

'He is the Eternal Seer without himself being seen; He is the Eternal Hearer without himself being heard; He is the only thinker without himself being thought; He is the only comprehender without anyone to comprehend Him; beyond Him there is no seer, beyond Him there is no hearer, beyond Him there is no thinker, beyond Him there is no being who comprehends' (III.7.23).

These passages elucidate that the Atman is unknowable because He is the Eternal Subject of knowledge, and cannot, therefore, be an object of knowledge to another beside Him.

This assessment raises another fundamental question. Granted that the Self is the Eternal Knower of objects and there is no other knower of Him, would it be possible for the Knower to know Himself? When Yaajnavalkya is asked of this subtle question in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, he states that it is possible for the Knower to know Himself. In fact, Self-knowledge or Self-consciousness is the ultimate category of existence. The Self can become an object of knowledge to Himself.

According to Yaajnavalkya, nothing is possible if there is no self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is the ultimate fact of existence. He regards both introspection and self-consciousness as the verities of experience. Introspection is a psychological process corresponding to self-consciousness as a metaphysical reality. Self-consciousness is possible only through the process of introspection.

The Self is endowed with the supreme power of dichotomizing Himself. The empirical conditions of knowledge do not apply to the Self. The Self can divide

Himself into the knower and the known. According to Yaajnavalkya, the self-consciousness is not only possible, but alone real. The dialogue between Yaajnavalkya and the King Janaka, on this subject, throws considerable light. The dialogue is on the following lines.

On being asked as to what is the light of man, Yaajnavalkya first says that it is the sun. On account of the sun, man is able to move about, to go forth to work, and to return. On being asked as to what is the light of man when the sun sets, he states that it is the moon. For, having the moon for light, man can move about, do his work and return. On being asked as to what is the light of man when both the sun and the moon set, he states that it is the fire. For, having fire for his light, man can move about, do his work and return. On being further asked as to the light of man in the absence of the sun, the moon and the fire, Yaajnavalkya replies thus: 'Now, verily, you are pressing me to the deepest question. When the sun has set, when the moon has set, and when the fire is extinguished, the Self alone is his light' (IV.3.2-6).

Yaajnavalkya is clearly positing here the act of self-contemplation in which the Self is mysteriously both the subject as well as the object of knowledge.

The Metaphysics of Self-consciousness

Philosophically, there has been conflict among the metaphysicians regarding the nature of the relation between the Absolute and the Self. Some have regarded the Self as entirely distinct from the Absolute, others regarded it as a part of the Absolute, and yet others regarded the Self and the Absolute wholly identical. These constitute respectively the fundamental positions of the three great metaphysical schools, namely, the dualistic, the quasi-monistic, and the monistic.

The situation leads to some fundamental questions. How is it that each of these different metaphysical schools comes to interpret the same Upanisadic passages as confirming its own special metaphysical doctrines? Shall we not say that the Upanisads are higher than the commentators? Is there not a common body of metaphysical doctrine in the Upanisads which each of the metaphysical schools has only partially envisaged? Is the utterance of the greatest of the Indian philosophers to be regarded as vain when he said that the schools may battle among themselves, but yet the philosophy is above the schools? May we not find a supreme clue to the reconciliation of the different doctrines? Is there any way

out of the difficulty?

To find answers to the above questions, we need to go back to the Upanisads themselves. It is true that reconciliation of different schools must come, if at all, only through mystical experience. It is only in mystic experience that each school and each doctrine can have its own appointed place and level.

To find answers to the said questions, one way is to arrange the different stages of spiritual experience, as developed in the Upanisads, philosophically interpreted, in a series of five developing propositions. It may be that it is like five ascending steps on the ladder of spiritual experience.

The first step of spiritual experience, according to the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, consists in realizing the Self, in mystically apprehending the glory of the Self within us, as though we were distinct from him (II.4.5). The second step is, again according to the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, that the Being, which calls itself the 'I' within us, must be identified with the Self that is hitherto fore realized. It means that we must experience that we are really the very Self, and that we are not the bodily, the sensuous, the intellectual or the emotional vestures; that we are in our essential nature entirely identical with the pure Self (IV.4.12).

The third step of spiritual experience is when we come to realize, again according to the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, that the Self that we have realized is identical with the Absolute. This is the identification of the Brahman and the Atman, of the individual spirit and the Universal Spirit, of the Self and the Absolute. This view is reinforced in the Isa Upanisad where it is said that the Atman must be regarded as verily the Brahman, that the Atman is infinite in its nature as also the Brahman, that the Atman derives its being from the Brahman, that subtracting the infinity of the Atman from the infinity of the Brahman resulting in the residue being infinite. The meaning of this assertion is that we should see that there is no difference between the Self and the Absolute (II.5.19).

The fourth step is this. If the Being that calls itself the 'I' within us is the Atman according to the second step, and if the Atman is to be entirely identified with the Brahman according to the third step, then, it follows syllogistically that I am the Absolute. In other words, if I am the Self, and the Self is the Absolute, then I am the Absolute. It is said, also in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad (I.4.10),

that we must identify the 'I' with the Absolute. The Chhaandogya Upanisad proclaims another aspect of the same doctrine when it says that 'Thou' also is to be 'projectively' identified with the Absolute (VI.8.7).

The fifth and the last step is this. If the 'I' is the Absolute, and if the 'Thou' is equally the Absolute, in other words, if both the subject and the object are the Absolute, it follows that everything in this world, Mind and Nature, the Self and the Not-Self, equally constitute the Absolute. Whatever is within apprehension makes up the fullness of the Absolute. According to the Chhaandogya Upanisad, the Brahman is verily the 'All' (III.14.1). This is verily the position of Absolute Monism.

Whether the state of Absolute Monism is to be merely intellectually apprehended or mystically realized depends upon whether we are destined to be mere theorists or mystics in the spiritual pilgrimage. The choice is of the seeker coupled with the grace of the Divine.

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09
The Ethics of the Upanisads

General

Metaphysics, Morality and Mysticism

The moral issues in the Upanisads are connected with their metaphysics on the one hand, and the mysticism on the other. The problems of the relation of metaphysics and morality, and mysticism and morality have been debated from very ancient times.

It is rather hard to decide as to which of the two – metaphysics and morality, or mysticism and morality – is to receive primacy in consideration of the development of man's consciousness as a whole. Similarly, it is equally hard to decide which of the two plays a more important role in that development.

If we take into account, however, the integrity of man's consciousness as a whole, it would seem absolutely impossible, in the interests of the highest development of which man's consciousness is capable, to sunder the intellectual to the moral, as the moral from the mystical element. Intelligence without morality is as retrograde and degenerate as is mysticism without morality. Again, just as morality, to be ratiocinative, must be firmly linked to the intellect; similarly, for its consummation, it must end in the mystical attitude, which alone is the goal and end of human life.

In short, metaphysics, morality, and mysticism are as inseparable from each other in the interest of the highest development of man, as intellect, will, and emotion are inseparable for his highest psychological development. The moral problem in the Upanisads, thus, provides the connecting link between the metaphysical position reached therein and the final mystical realization therein taught.

In the Upanisads, we have a fairly good discussion of all the important ethical problems. The solutions reached at least in some cases may be relevant to the present day, as they are based on the eternal truths of Atman experience. It is true that in the Upanisads we do not have a detailed discussion of the theories of the moral standards, as distinct from the theories of the moral ideals. As for the theories of the moral standards, they relate to abstract thought, while the theories

of the moral ideals relate to the concrete problems of the ends of human life.

It is rather true that, in the discussion of the practical side of ethics, the Upanisadic period is surpassed by the Neo-Upanisadic period, for the reason, in the latter period, the metaphysical interest waned and the interest in practical conduct got the upper hand.

Theories of the Moral Standard

Heteronomy

While considering the theories of moral standard as advanced in the Upanisads, we are to bear in view that, as in the childhood of man, so in the beginning of the race, heteronomy is the first principle that dictates rules for moral conduct.

Reference is always made in such cases to the conduct of others, of those who are better situated morally than ourselves, as dictating to us the principles of our conduct. It may be for this reason that Aristotle thought that the opinion of men of trained character should count as the principle of moral authority in cases when one is not able, on account of one's ignorance, to choose the way of moral action for oneself.

The Taittiriya Upanisad contains a celebrated passage in which the disciple is told that 'he should follow only the good actions of the spiritual teacher; that he might even more profitably follow the good action of those who are still better situated than the spiritual teacher; that if ever he should seek to find out the intimate nature of duty or conduct, then he should always be guided by this one principle only, namely, how the Brahmins, who are cautious, gentle, and intent upon the law, conduct themselves in that particular case' (I.11).

The import of the above passage is that we should always mould our conduct on the pattern of the conduct of those who are better than ourselves, and are in a position to give us rules of conduct by their example. The opinions of the society in general, or of the state are rather vague terms in defining the nature of heteronomy duty. It may not be possible for either the society or the state to impart uniform principles of moral conduct. On the other hand, the opinions of the society or the state are themselves based on the maxims of conduct provided

to them by wise men. There is an oligarchy in morality, as there is an oligarchy in the society or the state. According to the Taittiriya Upanisad, it is the voice of the moral oligarchy that is to prevail in providing the pattern of conduct.

Theonomy

Theonomy is also a sort of heteronomy in as much as the 'theos' is also 'heteros' from the moral point of view. But it may be helpful to separate Theonomy from Heteronomy in as much as the Law of God stands in a somewhat different category from the Law of Man.

Unless it is possible to know the wishes of God in every particular case affecting moral conduct, unless it is possible to know what principles might be regarded as constituting the wishes of God, it may not be possible to set down in detail the Laws of God as enjoining the performance of certain duties on us. The performance of such duties is in preference to or in cancellation of other duties. More important to consider is that we cannot equate the dictates of conscience to be the wishes of God.

But in communities, which entertain a vague fear about God as a Being separate from us, the laws 'attributed' to God my man, ever hang, like the sword of Damocles, on the moral agent. In such an event theo-phobia instead of theo-pathy supplies the rules of moral life.

The Katha Upanisad (II.6.2-3) says that 'God is that great fearful Thunderbolt which is raised over our head; by knowing which alone can man become immortal. For, is it not through His fear, that the fire burns, the sun shines, the god of gods, the wind, and death as the fifth, run about doing their work?' Of the same import is the passage from the Taittiriya Upanisad (II.8), which only reiterates the passage from the Katha Upanisad with slight alterations.

Whatever is said in favour of the Law of God, on a careful consideration of the intimate nature of moral action, it may become evident that the law issuing from anybody except one's own-self can never be regarded as a guarantee for the moral tone of actions.

Autonomy

The moralists consider that Autonomy alone supplies the true principles of moral conduct. For them, it is not the society, the state or God that gives us the

essential rules for moral conduct. Moral conduct must entirely spring from within.

It is not possible to deduce that the Upanisads envisage this principle of moral action. The passages from the Chhaandogya Upanisad that the mind should be meditated upon as the Ultimate Reality (III.18.1), or to regard the mind as verily the Atman in us, as also the Ultimate Reality (VII.3.1) involve, according to some commentators, the theory of Intuitionism.

In the above passages, it is the Mind, which is equated with the Highest Reality, and not the Self, which is considered separate. As such it may be proper to consider the above passages as involving a lower Intuitionism instead of the higher Intuitionism of Autonomy.

Incidentally, it is not till the Bhagavad-Gita in the history of Hindu Ethics that the real nature of Autonomy was clearly appreciated. The categorical imperative of duty finds its true definition in the Hindu Ethics only in the Bhagavad-Gita.

We may have, therefore, regard that the Upanisadic Ethics, on the whole, as deficient in the principle of Autonomy as supplying the rules of moral conduct.

Theories of the Moral Ideal

Anti-Hedonism

In formulation of the theories of the Moral Ideal, the Upanisadic seers are at their best. The formulation of such theories is a more concrete problem than the formulation of the theories of the Moral Standard, which is rather abstract. As there are many metaphysical theories, there are many theories about the nature of the Moral Ideal.

First we have an entirely anti-hedonistic theory as advocated in the Katha Upanisad. The Upanisad records that ‘there are two different paths, the path of the good and the path of the pleasant, and that these two diverse paths try to seduce a man each to itself. Of these, he who follows the path of the good is ultimately rewarded by the fulfillment of his aim, while he who follows the path of the pleasant loses the goal, which is pursuing. When the good and the pleasant present themselves before a man, he looks about him if he the wise, and decides which of them to choose. The wise man chooses the good before the pleasant,

while the fool chooses the pleasant before the good' (I.2.1-2).

In this passage from the Katha Upanisad, we have a classical expression of the conflict between the good and the pleasant as experienced even in the Upanisadic era. This is so with Nachiketas. Even though the God of Death tries to seduce Nachiketas by the offer of a life of pleasure and glory, Nachiketas refuses to be imprisoned in the chains forged for him by Yama (I.2.3). Thereby he proves that he is not an ordinary man that runs after pleasure and glory to be ultimately disillusioned. A true anti-hedonist, Nachiketas refuses to be seduced by the life of pleasure.

Similar is the choice of Virtue by Hercules in Xenophon between the two maidens Pleasure and Virtue.

Pessimism

It is possible that anti-hedonism may degenerate into utter pessimism. This is stated in so many words in the Upanisads.

The Katha Upanisad asks in a pessimistic vein: 'What decaying mortal here below would delight in a life of the contemplation of the pleasures of beauty and love, when once he has come to taste of the kind of life enjoyed by the un-ageing mortals?' (I.1.28)

The above passage is similar in spirit to what Schopenhauer says that the best thing for man here below is not to have been born at all, and the second best to have died young. In a similar spirit, the Katha Upanisad condemns the desire for a long life of sensual enjoyment in preference to even a momentary contemplation of the life immortal.

The Maitri Upanisad expressly brings forth the pessimistic mood. Brhadratha asks, 'What is the use of the satisfaction of desire in this foul-smelling and unsubstantial body, which is merely a conglomeration of ordure, urine, wind, bile and phlegm, and which is spoilt by the content of bones, skin, sinews, marrow, flesh, semen, blood, mucus and tears? What is the use of the satisfaction of the desires in this body, which is afflicted by lust, anger, covetousness, fear, dejection, envy, separation from the desired, union with the undesirable, hunger, thirst, old age, death, disease and grief? Verily all this world merely decays. Look at the flies and the gnats, the grass and the trees that are born merely to perish.

But, what of these? The great oceans dry up, the mountains crumble, the pole-star deviates from its place, the wind-cords are broken, the earth is submerged, and the very gods are dislocated from their positions' (I.2-7).

Contemplating such a situation, Brhadratha entreats Saakaayanya to save him 'as one might save a frog from a waterless well'. This pessimistic attitude of Brhadratha is only the logical extension, carried to the extreme, of the anti-hedonistic attitude characterized in Nachiketas.

Asceticism, Satyagraha and Quietism

Closely associated with pessimism is the theory of asceticism and its monastic practices. Unless a man begins to feel interest in life waning for him, he does not see the necessity of harbouring the ascetic virtues. Only when his heart is set on the Eternal, does he wish to adopt the life of renunciation.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states that the wise men of the old age feel that there is no use for them of any wealth or fame or progeny. 'What shall we do with progeny if it does not bring us nearer to the Eternal?' In this manner, the wise men leave all ambition for progeny, wealth and fame, and adopt the life of an ascetic (IV.4.22).

The Kaushitaki Upanisad goes even further. Through an analogy, it advocates the attitude of Satyagraha. 'Just as *Praana* which is identical with the Brahman is served by the mind as its messenger, the eye as its guard, the ear as its informant, the speech as its tire-woman, and just as all the senses bring offerings to *Praana* even though it does not solicit them, similarly all these beings will bring offerings to a man who knows this secret even though he does not solicit them. For him, the rule of life is 'Beg not'. When he goes to alms in a village and does not find any, he may sit down with the resolve that he shall not partake of anything that may be offered to him, and those who had formerly refused him shall come near him and speak to him good words – for this is verily what happens to a man who does not solicit alms – and bring offerings to him and say they shall give' (II.1).

The above passage from the Kaushitaki Upanisad enjoins on an ascetic the attitude of non-begging in the firm belief that when he does not beg, things will come to him of their own accord. The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad gives additional characteristics of the life of an ascetic and states thus: 'A Brahmin ought to grow

disgusted with all wisdom, and lead a life of childlike simplicity' (III.5.1). The same Upanisad recommends the life of quietude; it states that 'he (the seeker) should never give himself up to too many words, for that is verily a weariness of the flesh' (IV.4.21).

Spiritual Activism

There is, however, a positive side to the life of quietude taught in some Upanisads. The Mundaka Upanisad states thus: 'We should verily leave away all words, but should devote ourselves to the knowledge of the Atman, for the Atman is the bund of immortality. Meditate upon the Atman with the help of the symbol AUM; for, thus alone may it be possible for you to go beyond the ocean of darkness. Sages see Him by the help of the light of knowledge, for He manifests himself, the Immortal One, in the form of bliss (II.2.5-7).

The import of the above passage is that though we are to lead a life of quietude, it is only as a kind of recoil from the unreal and the empty world of sense. It may, however, contain within itself the marrow of Self-Realization .

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states thus: 'It was, thus, that one who lived a peaceful life of self-control, of cessation from activity, and of patient suffering, having collected himself, saw the Atman within himself, saw a in fact everything as verily the Atman. Evils cease to have any power over him, for he has overcome all evil. Sin has ceased to torment him, for he has burnt all sin. Free from evil, free from impurity, free from doubt, he had become properly entitled to the dignity of a Brahmana' (IV.4.23).

The Mundaka Upanisad makes a more positive assertion thus: 'A man who has left off all argument in the superiority of his spiritual illumination begins to play in the Atman, and to enjoy the Atman, for that verily constitutes his action. Thus does he become the foremost among those who have known the Brahman' (III.1.4).

In other words, though, to all appearances, such a person may be leading a life of spiritual solitude, he still has an object to play with, and to enjoy; and it is the Atman. In fact, his life in the Atman is a life of intense spiritual activity, and not, as it may appear to others, a life of quietude and retirement.

Phenomenal Activism

In contrast to Spiritual Activism is the Phenomenal Activism with which ordinary people are quite familiar. The Isa Upanisad states thus: 'A man should try to spend his life-span of hundred years only in the constant performance of actions. It is thus only that he can hope not to be contaminated by actions' (2).

Though the above passage tells us that we should spend our lifetime in doing action, the actions implied here do not exceed sacrifices stated in the Vedic texts. Further, this passage does not insist, in clear terms, of the need of freedom from contagion with the fruit of action. It does not say, as does the Bhagavad-Gita at a later date, that even in the midst of the life of action, actionlessness may be secured only if attachment to action is annihilated and no calculating desire is entertained for the fruit of action.

Nevertheless, this Upanisad tries to reconcile the life of action with the life of knowledge. 'To pitchy darkness do they go, who pursue the path of ignorance, namely the path of action. To greater darkness still do they go, who devote themselves to the life of knowledge for its own sake. Sages have told us from very ancient times that knowledge leads to the one result, while action leads to the other. But he alone who can synthesize the claims of knowledge and action is able by means of action to cross the ocean of death, and by means of knowledge to attain to immortality' (9-11).

The Upanisad thus states that the life of bare contemplation and the life of bare activity are alike fraught with evil. He who harmonizes the two different paths alone attains to the goal of life. It thus reconciles the claims of knowledge and action for spiritual growth.

Eudaemonism

From the theory of Phenomenal Activism is deduced a theory of the moral ideal which needs take account of phenomenal good. The moral good may not be regarded as the *summum-bonum*, and worldly good may be recognized on par with it, while formulating the conception of the *summum-bonum*.

On the other hand, the Svetaasvatara Upanisad (last verse of the fourth chapter) echoes the spirit of the Vedic prayer that worldly good is craved for as being even a superior moment in the conception of the highest good. The

Upanisad states thus: 'Make us not suffer in our babies or in our sons; make us not suffer in lives, or in cows, or in horses; kill not our powerful warriors, O Rudra, so may we offer to Thee our oblations forever and ever!' (IV.22).

When the eye of the moral agent is not turned inwards, the good he seeks is evidently the external good only. On the other hand, the Taittiriya Upanisad states that, when the internal good is also recognized as of no mean value, we are to choose both the Truth and Law, which have moral value, along with Happiness and Prosperity which have material value (I.2.1).

This is illustrated in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad. On being asked whether he desires wealth and cattle, or controversy and victory, Yaajnavalkya says that he wants both; you wants the cows along with their golden coin as well as victory in the battle of philosophical arguments with the other sages in the court of Janaka. The apology, which he offers for his conduct, is that 'he was enjoined by his father not to take away any wealth without having imparted spiritual instruction' (IV.1.1 & 7).

It is evident that Yaajnavalkya desires both material as well as spiritual goods. In spite of his supremely idealistic teaching, he possibly sets an example by showing that the consideration of external good cannot be entirely ignored even by idealists as constituting as part of the conception of the highest good.

Beatificism

The Taittiriya Upanisad states that there is no distinction of kind between physical good and spiritual good, and that the two are commeasurable in terms of each other. It makes an analysis of the conception of bliss.

Physical good is itself an aspect of 'bliss', as spiritual good constitutes the acme of 'bliss'. The Upanisad considers that there is a scale of values connecting the so-called bliss on the one hand with the highest spiritual bliss on the other.

What then is the unit of measurement? The Upanisad indicates that the unit of measurement may be taken as 'the happiness of a young man of noble birth and of good learning, who is very swift and firm and strong, and to whom is granted the possession of the whole earth full of wealth. Of a hundred such blesses is made the bliss of the human genii; of a hundred blesses of these genii is made the bliss of the Divine genii; of a hundred of these latter blesses is made the

bliss of the Fathers; of a hundred blesses of the Fathers is made the bliss of the gods who are born gods; of a hundred of these is made the bliss of the gods that may have become gods by their actions; of a hundred such blesses is made the bliss of the highest gods; of a hundred blesses of these gods is made the bliss of Indra; a hundred blesses of Indra constitute the bliss Brhaspati; of a hundred such blesses is made the bliss of Prajapati; and a hundred blesses of Prajapati make the bliss of the Brahman. Each time, the bliss, severally and progressively, belongs to the sage who is free from all desires' (II.8).

It is important to note that there is no distinction of any kind brought out between the physical good on the one hand and the spiritual bliss on the other. It may be that the Upanisad implies that the physical good may be taken to be as good as nothing before the highest bliss.

It is also important to note that all these various blesses are said, at all times, to belong to the sage who is free from all desires. If desirelessness is to constitute the highest bliss, it may be that the highest good cannot be measured in terms of the unit of physical good; it does not also seem possible that spiritual good can be of the same kind as physical good. The two are entirely incommensurate, differing not in degree but in kind. The bliss of the sage who has realized the Brahman cannot be measured in terms of the physical happiness of any beings whatsoever, however divine they may be.

Self-Realization

There cannot be any physical scale for measurement of spiritual values. The bliss of Self-Realization is entirely of its own kind. If someone says that the Self has already been realized, he only mentions of a metaphysical fact. On the other hand, when it is said that the Self is to be realized, we are to take into account the whole ethical and mystical process by which the allurements of the not-Self, naturally ingrained in the human being, are to be gradually weaned out, and the Self is to be made to stand in its purity and grandeur.

It is in the doctrine of Self-Realization that the ethical and the mystical processes meet. According to the Upanisadic seers, by Self-Realization is meant the unfolding and the visualization of the Atman within us. This concept differs from the European moralists such as Bradley who consider that Self-Realization is equivalent to realization of the various faculties of man such as the intellectual,

the emotional, and the moral.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states that the Atman, who constitutes the Reality within and without us, is and ought to be the highest object of our desire. It is, therefore, to be higher than any phenomenal object of love such as progeny, wealth, or the like. The Atman, being the very core of our existence, is nearest to us. 'If a man may say there is another object of love dearer to him than the Atman, and if another replies that there be God overhead who shall destroy his object of love, verily it shall so happen as this man says. Hence, it is that we ought to meditate on the Atman as the only object of desire. For him, who worships the Atman in this way, nothing dear shall ever perish' (I.4.8).

The Upanisad further states that the Self should be regarded as the highest object of desire for the reason that, when one has attained to the Self, there are for him no desires left to be fulfilled, and he becomes entirely desire-less (IV.3.21 & 4.6). But the Upanisadic doctrine of Self-Realization implies more than that the Atman is the sole object of desire. The conversation between Yaajnavalkya and Maitreyi in the Upanisad is a pointer to this issue. When Yaajnavalkya desires to partition his estate between his two wives Kaatyaayani and Maitreyi, Maitreyi chooses the spiritual portion. She says, 'supposing I obtain the possession of the whole earth full of wealth, by that I shall never attain to immortality'. Yaajnavalkya replies, 'verily not, thy life will be only like the life of those who have all kinds of convenience for them; but there is no hope of immortality by the mere possession of wealth'. Thereupon, Maitreyi asks, 'what shall I then do with that by which I do not grow immortal?'

Yaajnavalkya replies, 'verily most dear to me art thou, my wife, who art talking thus. Come, I shall instruct thee in spiritual wisdom. It is not for the sake of the husband, that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Atman; it is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is dear, but for the sake of the Atman; it is not for the sake of the children that the children are dear, but for the sake of the Atman; it is not for the sake of wealth that wealth is dear, but for the sake of the Atman…. It is not for the sake of everything that everything is dear, but for the sake of the Atman. This Atman, O Maitreyi, ought to be seen, ought to be heard, ought to be thought about, ought to be meditated upon; for it is only when the Atman is seen and heard and thought about and meditated upon, does all this become verily known' (II.4.2-5).

It is important to note that this passage is not to be interpreted as an egoistic theory of morals but as the doctrine of Self-Realization . We are to interpret the word Atman throughout the passage in the sense of the Self, the Ultimate Reality. The passage is, therefore, to mean that the love that we bear to the wife or the husband or the sons is only an aspect of, rather a reflection of, the love that we bear to the Self. It is, in fact, for the sake of the Self that all these things become dear to us. The Upanisad enjoins upon us to realize this Self by means of contemplation.

The Ethical and the Mystical Sides of Self-Realization

The Chhaandogya Upanisad fuses together the ethical and the mystical sides of Self-Realization . There is an enquiry in the Upanisad as to what induces man to perform actions. When it is said that the consideration of happiness is what impels man to act, the Upanisad states that real happiness is the happiness that one enjoys in the vision of the Infinite. Every other kind of happiness is only so-called, and transitory.

The Upanisad considers that there are radically two different kinds of happiness, the Great and the Small. Great happiness consists in seeing, hearing, and meditating upon the Atman. Small happiness consists in seeing, hearing, and meditating upon other things than the Atman. Great happiness is immortal; Small happiness is perishable.

Great happiness consists in its own greatness, and possibly not in its own greatness. People say that cows and horses, elephants and gold, servants and wives, lands and houses constitute greatness. The Upanisad says that greatness does not lie in the possessions, as they rest in something else; but it rests in the Infinite as the Infinite rests in itself.

Great happiness is experienced when the Infinite is seen above and below, before and behind, to the right and to the left, and is regarded as identical with everything that exists; when the Being that calls itself the 'I' within us is realized above and below, before and behind, to the right and to the left, and is regarded as identical with everything that exists; when the Atman is seen above and below, before and behind, to the right and to the left, and is regarded as identical with everything that exists.

He who thus realizes the triune unity of the Infinite, the 'I' and the Atman,

and experiences the truth of *So Aham Atma* is alone entitled to enjoy the highest happiness. One, who comes to see this, think about this and meditate on this, really attains to liberation; he loves his Self, plays with his Self, enjoys the company of his Self, and revels in his Self (VII.22-25).

In this way, according to the Chhaandogya Upanisad, the ethical *summum-bonum* consists in the mystical realization of the triune unity as the goal of the seeker's endeavour.

Supermoralism

There is a phase of the theory of the Moral Ideal propounded in the Upanisads, called Supermoralism. It is the state of being beyond good and bad, the ethical counterpart of the metaphysical theory of Absolutism.

There is, however, a distinction between the Supermoralism of Bradley and Nietzsche on the one hand, and the Supermoralism of the Upanisads on the other. Nietzsche's Supermoralism affects only the superman, who, in the possession of absolute strength, defies, and, therefore, rises above all conception of good and bad. The Supermoralism of Bradley affects only the Absolute, which, in its absoluteness, should be regarded as being beyond both good and bad.

On the other hand, the Supermoralism of the Upanisads affects the individual as well as the Absolute, the individual in so far as he may be regarded as having realized the Absolute in himself.

The Katha Upanisad states that 'the Absolute is beyond duty and beyond non-duty, beyond action and beyond non-action, beyond the past and beyond the future' (I.2.14).

The Chhandogya Upanisad echoes a similar view. 'The bodiless Atman is beyond the reach of the desirable and the undesirable' (VIII.12.1).

The Mundaka Upanisad states thus: 'The moral Agent shakes off all conceptions of merit and demerit, that is, it goes beyond the reach of virtue and vice, and good and bad, when he has attained to divine assimilation after realizing the golden coloured Being who is the lord and governor of all (III.1.3).

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad similarly states that the Atman who lives in the citadel of our heart, and who is the lord and protector of all, grows neither great by good actions nor small by evil actions (IV.4.22). On the other hand, he

who contemplates upon this Atman himself attains to a like virtue, when his greatness ceases to grow by good actions, or diminish by bad actions (IV.4.23).

The above passages indicate that the moral agent goes beyond the reach of good and bad only when he attains to likeness with, or merged in, in the Atman, who is, metaphysically speaking, beyond the reach of good and bad.

Practical Ethics

Virtues in the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad enumerates three cardinal virtues. 'Once upon a time, the gods, men, and demons all went to their common Father, Prajapati and requested him to grant them the knowledge which he possessed. To the gods, Prajapati conveyed the symbol *Da*. On being asked of what they understood of it, they told him that they had understood it to mean that they should practise self-control (*daamyata*); and Prajapati expressed satisfaction.

To the men, Prajapati communicated the same syllable *Da*. On being asked of what they understood of it, they told him that they had understood it to mean that they should practise charity (*datta*); and Prajapati expressed satisfaction.

To the demons, Prajapati likewise communicated the same syllable *Da*. On being asked of what they understood of it, they told him that they had understood it to mean that they should practise compassion (*dayadhvam*); and Prajapati expressed satisfaction (V.2.1-3).

Even though, Prajapati gave the same instruction to the different groups, they understood the import of the instruction according to their own understanding, and learnt what the right thing to do was, for them.

The Upanisad explains the underlying philosophy thus: 'When the celestial voice, the Thunderbolt repeats *Da, Da, Da,* it intends to communicate the three different sets of virtues, namely, self-control, charity and compassion'. These then are the three cardinal virtues for people born of *sattvika, rajasika* and *tamasika* qualities predominating in them. To those who, like the gods, occupy an elevated position, the divine voice says, 'be self-controlled, for otherwise, out of your elation, you might do acts of unkindness'. To those who are in the position of men, equals among equals, the divine voice says, 'be charitable, and love your

fellowmen'. To those who, like the demons, have in them the capacity of doing infinite harm, the divine voice says, 'be compassionate'. Be kind to those with whom you would otherwise be cruel'.

The Upanisad thus says that self-control, charity and compassion are the three cardinal virtues for three different sets of people each of which is having a predominant psychological temperament.

Virtues and Vices in the Chhaandogya Upanisad

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, the dialogue between Ghora Angirasa and Krishna, the son of Devaki enumerates virtues. The chief virtues are said to be austerity, charity, straightforwardness, harmlessness and truthfulness (III.17.4).

The Upanisad also contains, a little later, the chief sins of which man is capable. 'He who steals gold, he who drinks wine, he who pollutes the bed of his teacher, he who kills a Brahmin, all these go down to perdition; likewise also, he who associates with them' (V.10.9).

The thief, the drunkard, the adulterer, the Brahmocide, and the man who associates with them, are all worthy of major punishment. This is very much like the latter injunctions in Manu and Yaajnavalkya where the same crimes are described as the greatest of all sins.

The Hortatory precepts in the Taittiriya Upanisad

The Taittiriya Upanisad is the most hortatory of all the Upanisads. Its tone is didactic, and it lists a number of virtues to be observed. To respect the law, to tell the truth, to practise penance, self-control and tranquility, to offer ceremonial and daily oblations to the Fire, to receive guests for hospitality, to practise humanism and to procreate to multiply the race are the important virtues.

The Upanisad records the opinions of three different Moralists each of whom insists upon a special virtue. Satyavachas Raathitara teaches the virtue of truth. Taponitya Paurusishti teaches the virtue of penance. Naka Maudgalya teaches that there is no virtue higher than the study and teaching of the sacred scriptures (I.9).

The Upanisad contains the direct advice of a preceptor to an outgoing disciple on completion of his study at the preceptor's house. The preceptor advises his disciple to speak the truth, to respect the law, not to swerve from the

study of the Veda; after paying such *guru-dakshina* as the disciple is capable of, he is to move into the outside world, and marry to beget children to keep the family lineage. The disciple is not to swerve from his duties to the gods and the Fathers, to regard his mother, his father, the preceptor, and the guest as gods. He is to perform such actions regarded by the society as being without fault. He is to 'give a seat' always to those higher than him in Brahminhood, which is also to mean that 'in the presence of such, not a word should be breathed by the disciple'. Finally, the preceptor tells the disciple that the virtue of charity be practised with faith, magnanimity, modesty, awe and sympathy (I.11.1-3).

The Taittiriya Upanisad thus enumerates the different virtues necessary for practical life.

Truth – The Supreme Virtue

In the Upanisads, the virtue Truth is considered superior to all other virtues.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad contains a famous parable. Satyakama, the son of Jaabaala, who lived a wanton life in her youth, asks his mother as to his father. She informs him that she can only mention that he was born to her, and she is not sure of which person he was born. When Satyakama goes to his spiritual teacher to get himself initiated, the latter enquires him of his parentage. Satyakama gives a straightforward reply that he does not really know from what family he has come, that he knows only his mother's name, and that his mother told him that she herself does not know of which person he (Satyakama) was born. The spiritual teacher tells him thus: 'Heigh! These words could not come from a man who was not born of a Brahmin. Come, I shall initiate you, because you have not swerved from the Truth' (IV.4.1-5).

This parable tells us how even the son of a wanton woman could be elevated to the position of a Brahmin only for having told the pure and unadulterated truth.

The same Upanisad states how truth has the power of saving a man even from death, for truth is merely the counterpart of Reality. 'When a man who has committed theft is brought handcuffed to the place of trial, they heat an axe for him, and if he has really committed the theft, then he covers himself with untruth, catches hold of the axe and is burnt to death. On the other hand, if he has not committed the theft, he covers himself with truth, catches hold of the axe,

and is not burnt at all, but acquitted' (VI.16.1-2). This is how they used to distinguish the culprit from the innocent in ancient times.

Whatever may be said of the efficacy of such a trial, the fact remains that, underlying the idea of this trial, there lies an unshakable belief in the power of Truth. 'Be true and fear not. Your strength would be as the strength of ten persons, if only your heart is pure'. On the other hand, if one hides untruth in one's bosom, one shall be in mortal fear ever.

The Prasna Upanisad relates a passage to Bhaaradwaja when he says that if a man tells the untruth, he shall be dried up from the very roots; hence, it is that he dare not tell the untruth (VI.1).

The Mundaka Upanisad states that truth alone becomes victorious in the world, and not a lie. By truth is paved the path of the gods, by which the sages travel. The sages have all their desires fulfilled. To their path lies the highest repository of Truth (III.1.6).

The above passages indicate as to how the practice of truth as a moral virtue enables one to reach the Absolute.

In the dialogue between Narada and Sanatkumara in the Chhaandogya Upanisad, Narada explains of the instruction of his teacher as to the nature of Truth. When Narada seeks to know the nature of Truth, his teacher (Sanatkumara) tells him that it is only when a man realizes the Ultimate that he might be said to tell the truth, while other truths are truths only by sufferance (VII.16.17). Sanatkumara gives a positive interpretation of Truth when he says that ultimate Truth is to be found only in the attainment of Reality. What people call truth is really no truth at all; and it is truth only by sufferance.

Thus the Chhaandogya Upanisad considers Truth as the ultimate moral correlate of the realization of the Absolute.

Freedom of the Will

The problem of the Freedom of the Will relates to a very high stage in the development of moral philosophy. The treatment of this problem in the Upanisads is rather scanty. There are, however, a few remarks showing a rather acute insight into the problem, in the Upanisads.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states that man is merely a conglomeration of

desire, will and action. 'As his desire is, so is his will; as is his will, so is the action that he performs; as his action is, so is the fruit that he procures for himself' (IV.4.5). There is here a very clever discussion of the relation between desire, will, action and the effect of action – a contribution indeed of the Upanisadic sages to the psychology of the Moral Self.

Kaushitaki Upanisad enunciates a theological determinism that man is but a puppet in the hands of God, who makes him do good actions if he wishes him to rise, and bad actions if he wishes him to fall (III.9). This is in the nature of denial of the freedom of man. The Upanisad thus indicates that man does not posses true freedom at all as moral philosophy understands that expression.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad gives a different account. Even though true freedom cannot be said to belong to man before the realization of the Atman, still it does belong to him after that realization. Man, in the foolishness of the contemplation of his small success, regards himself to be the lord of all he surveys. He believes that he may be the master of any situation in which he may be placed, and that he may compel nature any time to bend to his sovereign will. But events in life prove that these are, after all, false expectations. Even though a little freedom is available to man in small matters, he is just not free in the highest sense of the term.

While in prison, a man still thinks that he is free; but he is free only to drink and eat, and not to move about. A falcon with a string tied to its foot can only fly in the sphere permitted by the length of the string, and not beyond. Similarly, man may vainly imagine that he can do any actions he pleases; but his freedom is no more than that of the tethered falcon.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that, it is only when we have known the Atman that there is freedom for us in all the worlds. But if we have not known the Atman, there is no freedom for us at all (VIII.1.6). The Upanisad further states that when we have known the Atman we can obtain any object we please, thus testifying to the sovereignty of man's will over nature, which proceeds from the realization of the Atman (VIII.2.10).

Though there is no discussion in the early Upanisads of the conflict of motives which leads to the moral choice, the Mukti Upanisad states thus: 'The river of desire runs between the banks of good and bad, but that, by the effort of

our will, we should compel it to move in the direction of the good (II.5.6). This is a great contribution to the psychological aspect of the problem of freedom.

The Ideal of the Sage

What is the ideal of the Upanisadic Sage?

The Upanisadic sages have considered that moral values are invariably linked with mystical values. Just as there can be no true mysticism unless it is based upon the sure foundation of morality, so morality, to be perfect, must end in the mystical attitude.

In the Upanisads, there is no mere moral agent whose morality does not consummate in mystical realization. The Upanisadic sage differs from the Stoic sage in that the Stoic sage represents in himself the acme of moral perfection connected with an intellectual contemplation, where as an Upanisadic sage seeks mystical realization of the Absolute.

The Upanisadic sage differs from the Christian sage in that a Christian sage sticks to faith, hope and charity as the norms of conduct but centres his hopes for mystical perfection in Jesus Christ, and not himself. On the other hand, the Upanisadic sage believes in the possibility of mystical realization for every being according to his or its worth, character, belief and endeavour. He sees the Atman in all, and sees the Atman alone.

The Isa Upanisad states that 'for a man to whom all these beings have become the Atman, what grief, what infatuation, can there possibly be when he has seen the unity in all things?' (7)

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states thus. 'Such a person has gone to the end of sorrow, and has torn asunder the ether-like skin of desire that had so long enveloped him in darkness and despair' (VI.20).

The Mundaka Upanisad states thus. 'All his desires have been at an end, because he has attained to the fulfillment of the highest desire, namely, the realization of the Atman' (III.2.2).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states thus. 'As the drops of water may not adhere to the leaf of a lotus, even so may sin never contaminate him' (IV.14.3).

The Taittiriya Upanisad states thus. 'There is no feeling of repentance for him:

he never bethinks himself as to why it was that he did not do good action, or why he did only evil ones. He has come to learn of the nature of Reality, and has thus gone beyond the reach of these duals' (II.9).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states thus. 'If ever anybody may intend evil to him, or try to persecute him, his hopes will be shattered, as anything dashing itself against an impenetrable rock may shatter itself to pieces, for, verily, the sage is an impenetrable rock' (I.2.8).

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states that, 'he has attained to eternal tranquility', because as the Upanisad puts it, he has 'collected' the Godhead (IV.11).

The Katha Upanisad states thus. 'All his senses along with the mind and intellect have become motionless on account of the contemplation of the Absolute in the process of Yoga' (II.6.10-11).

The Svetaasvatara Upnaisad states thus. 'Having realized the Atman, he has found eternal happiness everywhere' (VI.12).

10
Intimations of Self-Realization

Philosophy is to Mysticism as Knowledge is to Being

According to the Upanisadic seers, the Atman is unitary, and fills the whole world of Nature as of mind, from whom the world comes into being, in whom the world lives, and into whom the world is finally absorbed. It is this conception, which gives a proper place to the various constructions of Reality in the Ultimate explanation of things.

The Upanisadic seers are not content with merely constructing an intellectual explanation of Reality. They suggest means for the practical attainment of it. It is true that the doctrine and the process of Self-Realization is not expounded in deliberate fashion by them. They only throw hints and suggest ways for realizing the Self. This is for the only reason that the great mystic experience, by word of mouth, would ever fall short of reality, as much as any mediate, intellectual or expressed knowledge would fall short of immediate, intuitive, first-hand experience. There is always the gulf between the expression of an experience, and its enjoyment, as there is between knowledge and being.

Nevertheless, mystic experience has itself to be suggested and communicated in a concealed fashion so as to enable the seekers after mystic life in their otherwise purposeless life-sojourn, to know the milestones on the mystic way. It is thus that we find in the various Upanisads mystical imitations of the realization of the Self, hidden like jewels beneath an intellectual exterior. He who has an eye for them can alone discern them to be of immeasurable value.

The Lower Knowledge and the Higher Knowledge

The Upanisadic seers fully realize the fact that no amount of mere intellectual equipment would enable us to apprehend the Reality intuitively. They draw the distinction between *Aparavidya* (lower knowledge) and *Paravidya* (higher knowledge). The distinction is like between opinion and truth.

The Mundaka Upanisad states that there are two different kinds of knowledge to be known, one the higher and the other the lower. Of these, the lower knowledge is knowledge of the Veda, of grammar, of etymology, of metre, of the science of heavens; and the higher knowledge is that alone by which the

imperishable Being is reached (I.1.4-5).

The dialogue between Narada and his spiritual guru Sanatkumara in the Chhandogya Upanisad brings out the same typical distinction between the way of knowledge and the way of realization. Sanatkumara asks Narada as to what branches of knowledge he has hitherto studied. Narada tells Sanatkumara that he has 'studied all the Veda sakhas, all history and mythology, the science of the manes, Mathematics, the science of portents, the science of time, logic, ethics, the science of the gods, the science of the Brahman, the science of the demons, the science of weapons, astronomy, the science of charms, and fine arts'.

Nevertheless, grief overtakes him that all this knowledge is not sufficient to land him beyond the ocean of sorrow. He has studied only the different mantras, but has not known the Self. He has learnt from great sages that he alone, who can cross the ocean of sorrow by the saving bund of the Atman, can in fact go beyond it. Would his spiritual teacher enable him to cross the ocean of ignorance and grief? (VII.1.2-3)

The above passage makes the distinction between the lower knowledge and the higher knowledge clear. It sets the knowledge of the Self on a high pedestal that all intellectual knowledge seems to be merely of no consequence.

The Kena Upanisad demonstrates the extremely practical character of the Upanisadic seers towards the problem of Self-Realization . It states that the end of life may be attained only if the Self were to be realized even while the body lasts; for if Self-knowledge does not come while the body lasts, one cannot even so much as imagines what ills may be in store for one after death (II.13).

The Katha Upanisad also expresses a similar idea that unless a man is able to realize the Self while the body lasts, he must needs have to go from life to life through a series of incarnations (II.6.4).

Qualifications for Self-Realization

The question arises thus. If the Atman is capable of being realized even while the body lasts, why is it that all people do not realize the Atman in their lifetime, or yet again, if some can realize the Atman, what are their qualifications for that realization?

The Upanisads abound in references to the qualifications necessary for

spiritual life, the way to Self-Realization .

The Katha Upanisad states that introversion is the first qualification. 'Our senses have been created by God with a tendency to move outwards. It is for this reason that man looks outside himself rather than inside himself. Rarely a wise man, who is desirous of immortal life, looks to his inner-self with his eye turned inwards' (II.4.1).

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad emphasizes the same outward tendency of the senses. 'The individual self lives pent up in its citadel of nine doors with a tendency to flutter everytime outside its prison-house (III.18).

The above passages emphasize the need for the spiritual aspirant, at the outset, to shut himself up entirely to the outside world, so as to be able to look entirely within himself. This is the stage of introversion.

The second qualification is catharsis. The Katha Upanisad states that unless a man stops from wrong-doing, unless he entirely composes himself, it may not be possible for him, however highly-strung his intellect may be, to reach the Self by force of mere intellect (I.2.24).

The Mundaka Upanisad emphasizes upon truth and the life of penance, right insight, the life of celibacy as the essential conditions for the unfoldment of the Self within us (III.1.5).

The Katha Upanisad brings into relief the super-intellectual character of Self-Realization . It declares that the Self can be reached neither by much discourse, nor by keen intellect, nor by polymaths (I.2.22).

The Isa Upanisad, in a very famous passage, states that knowledge is even more dangerous when ignorance in as much as those who pursue the path of ignorance go after death to a region of pitchy-darkness, while those who pride themselves upon their possession of knowledge go to greater darkness still (9).

The Mundaka Upanisad points out that a man who does not have sufficient tenacity to live the severe life of spirituality cannot realize the Atman. A man whose life is a bundle of errors cannot also attain to the Atman (III.2.4).

The same Upanisad gives further characteristics of the life of Self-Realization . 'Unless a man feels disgusted with the worlds to which his actions may bring him, and unless he believes firmly that the world which is beyond the reach of

actions can never be obtained by any actions however good, he has no right to enter into the spiritual world, to seek which he must forthwith go in a humble spirit, fuel in hand, to a spiritual teacher who has realized the Self' (I.2.12). In other words, the life of Self-Realization is uniquely superior to the life of action.

From the above, we realize that, for the realization of the Self, the Upanisads inculcate a life of introversion with an utter disgust for the world, catharsis from sins, a spirit of humility, a life of tranquility, truth, penance, insight, strength and right pursuit. Unless these conditions are fulfilled, the seeker after spiritual life may never hope to realize the Self.

Necessity of Initiation by a Spiritual Preceptor

While being equipped in moral virtues is the first step on the path of Self-Realization , initiation by a worthy spiritual preceptor, *guru* is the second step. The Upanisads insist upon the necessity of initiation by a *guru*.

In the Chhaandogya Upanisad, Satyakama tells his teacher that he has heard that unless one is initiated on the path of Self-Realization by a *guru*, one cannot attain to the goal of mystic life (IV.9.3).

The Katha Upanisad states that spiritual knowledge naturally descends from a higher level to a lower level. 'Unless the spiritual teacher is really of a superior calibre, spiritual knowledge would be hard of attainment, and again, that unless the initiation comes from a spiritual teacher who has realized his identity with the Self, there can be no knowledge of the subtle path which transcends all power of logic and argumentation. Let us not divert our intellect into wrong ways by mere logic-chopping; for how can we hope to attain to the knowledge of the Atman unless we are initiated by another?' (I.2.8-9)

The same Upanisad states in another passage thus: 'Arise, awake, and learn from those who are better than ye; for the path of realization is as hard to tread as the edge of a razor. Very wisely have sages called it an inaccessible path' (I.3.14).

The above passages make it clear that the knowledge of the Self cannot be attained by an individual striving for himself on his own behalf; for the knowledge is so subtle and mystic that nobody can, on his own individual effort, ever hope to attain it. Secondly, it is necessary that the *guru* to whom the seeker

goes to seek wisdom must have realized his identity with the Ultimate Self. Unless the *guru* has realized such an identity, that is, unless he stands on the pedestal of unitive experience, the knowledge which he can impart can never the expected to be of any utility to the seeker receiving it.

Doubt has oftentimes been expressed as to the necessity of having a spiritual preceptor from whom one is to seek spiritual wisdom. Can one not attain it by reference to books? One is only to compare the value of knowledge obtained from books and from a spiritual preceptor by word of mouth. Knowledge through the books is entirely without life; knowledge from the spiritual preceptor is the outcome of the spiritual life of the latter. This makes all the difference. Books are never a substitute for a realized *guru* to guide a seeker on the path of Self-Realization .

The Parable of the Blindfolded Man

The Chhaandogya Upanisad illustrates, in a parable, how a *guru* carries his disciple step by step on the path of Self-Realization .

Some robbers carry a person from his country called the Gaandhaaras, with his eyes covered, to a very lonely and uninhabited place. They leave him there to roam about in any direction he pleases. He cries out piteously for help and instruction to be able to reach his original home. Someone suddenly appears before him and tells him, 'Go in that direction – in that direction are the Gaandhaaras.' Thereupon, exercising his intelligence as best as he can, he asks his way from village to village on his return journey and finally returns, after much travail, to his original home' (IV.14.1-2).

This parable is full of spiritual wisdom. It exhibits, in a very typical fashion, the whole process of the original banishment of the soul and its later illumination. Our real country is the land of the Brahman from which we are led away by the thieves, namely, the passions into the forest of utter ignorance, with our eyes blindfolded by lust for unreal things. Then we cry aloud and piteously that some help may come about, which may give us more light and lead us back to the Brahman.

Suddenly, we meet with a spiritual preceptor, probably as the consequence of our past meritorious actions. The guru imparts to us knowledge of the way to our original home. Exercising our faculties as best as we can, we go, from stage

to stage, on the spiritual path until we reach the land of the Brahman, which is our original home.

Precautions to be observed in Imparting Spiritual Wisdom

A spiritual preceptor is to observe certain precautions before he imparts mystic knowledge to the aspiring disciple.

The Mundaka Upanisad states that unless the disciple has performed such a difficult task as that of carrying fire over his head, his spiritual preceptor should not impart the knowledge of the mystic way to him (III.2.10). In other words, the passage embodies the principle that no disciple has the right of entrance into the mystic path unless he is a 'shave-ling'. This means that only a *sanyasin* is worthy of entry on to the spiritual path for mystic wisdom.

It is, however, to be mentioned that several other passages in the Upanisads do not always describe *sanyasa* as being the only *asrama* of life for receiving mystic wisdom.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that 'mystic knowledge may be imparted to either the eldest son, or to a worthy disciple who has lived with his master for a long time, but to none else. Not even a treasure, which fills the whole sea-girt earth, would be a sufficient recompense for communicating mystic knowledge' (III.11.5-6).

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad, which introduces the word Bhakti in the Upanisadic literature for the first time, states that unless the disciple has absolute Faith (*Bhakti*) in God as in *guru*, the spiritual secret should not be imparted to him (VI.22-23).

The import of the above passages is that the spiritual preceptor, *guru* is to be very judicious in imparting the knowledge of the mystic path to a disciple. The Bhagavad-Gita also states that the mystic knowledge should not be imparted to one who does not make himself worthy of it by long penance, who has no faith either in God or in the guru, who has no desire to listen to the spiritual wisdom, or who harbours within himself an antagonism to spiritual knowledge.

Meditation by means of AUM – The Way to Realization

The actual means of meditation, which a spiritual preceptor imparts to his disciple, is the symbol AUM, according to all the Upanisads. The Upanisads

describe AUM as not merely the supreme means of meditation, but the goal to be reached by the meditation itself. The symbol AUM occupies in Indian philosophy the same position, which the Logos occupies in Christology.

The Katha Upanisad states thus: 'The word which the Vedas declare and which is the subject of all austerities, desiring which men lead the life of religious studentship, that word, I tell thee, is briefly AUM; that word is the Supreme Brahman; that word is the Supreme Symbol; that word is the Supreme Support' (I.2, 15-17). This passage identifies the means of meditation with the goal to be reached by it; the symbol, in short, stands for both the means and the end of spiritual life.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad declares that all speech is interwoven on this symbol AUM, in the same manner as the leaves of a tree are woven together on a stalk (II.23.3).

The Mundaka Upanisad states, in the form of a simile, thus. 'We should take into our hand the bow of the Upanisads, and put up on it the arrow of the Soul, sharpened by devotion. We should next stretch it with concentrated attention, and penetrate the mark, which is the Supreme Brahman. The mystic symbol is the bow; the arrow is the Soul; and the Brahman is the mark to be pierced. We should penetrate it with undistracted attention, so that the arrow may become one with the mark' (II.2.3-4).

The above passage graphically describes how devotion is necessary for whetting the point of the arrow, how concentrated attention and undistracted effort are necessary for making the arrow of the Soul pierce the target of the Brahman, and, how, finally, the arrow is to become so absorbed in the target that it ceases to exist as a separate entity. The metaphor of the arrow and the target most fittingly characterize the communion of the lower and the higher selves so as to involve the utter annihilation of the separate individuality of the lower self.

Further, the symbol AUM has the cosmic efficacy besides the individual efficacy, as well. It serves to help the meditation of an individual and also the sun. It is said in the Chhaandogya Upanisad that the sun traverses the universe, singing the symbol AUM (I.5.1, 3).

The Prasna Upanisad brings out the moral efficacy of meditation by means of AUM, in the dialogue between Satyakama and his preceptor. Satyakama

enquires of his teacher as to what happens to a man by his continuing to meditate by means of that symbol till the hour of his death. His preceptor replies that 'just as a snake is relieved of its slough, similarly is the man who meditates on AUM, relieved of his sins, and, by the power of his chants, is lifted to the highest world where he beholds the Person who informs the body, and who stands supreme above any living complex whatsoever' (V.1-5).

The Exaltation of AUM in the Maandukya Upanisad

The Mandukya Upanisad gives us a unique exaltation of AUM and its spiritual significance. It states that AUM consists not merely of the three letters, but a fourth one too. The reason for this four-fold division of AUM may be the intention of bringing into correspondence the parts of the AUM with the states of consciousness on the one hand, and the kinds of soul on the other.

The syllable AUM is supposed to represent, in miniature, the state of wakefulness, the state of dream, the state of deep-sleep, as well as the supreme self-conscious state, also known as the fourth state of consciousness. On the other hand, it is supposed to stand for the different kinds of soul, namely, the *Vaisvaanara,* the *Taijasa,* the *Praajna,* and the *Atman*.

The *Vaisvaanara* is the enjoyer of gross things; the *Taijasa* is the enjoyer of the subtle; the *Praajna* is 'the Lord of all, the all-knowing, the inner controller of all, the origin and end of all beings'. Contrasted with these is the Atman which what the philosophy calls the Absolute. It is 'neither inwardly nor outwardly cognitive, nor yet on both sides together. It is not a cognition-mass, and is neither knower nor not-knower. It is invisible, impracticable, incomprehensible, indescribable, unthinkable, and unpointable. Its essence is the knowledge of its own self. It negates the whole expanse of the universe, and is tranquil and blissful and without a second' (I.12).

The spiritual significance of the psycho-metaphysical correspondence of the parts of AUM is supposed to lie, in its meditation, in intuiting the Atman in the fourth state of consciousness, after negation of the other kinds of soul in the three other states of consciousness. Except in the Maandukya Upanisad, we do not find such exaltation of AUM and the great value for the spiritual life of meditation by means of that symbol.

Practice of Yoga

The aim of the Upanisads is practical realization of the divine Godhead. Throughout the Upanisads, there are hints for practical realization of the Godhead by means of Yoga.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states that our body should be regarded as the lower stick, and meditation on *Pranava* the upper one. By rubbing them together, we have to churn out the fire of God hidden in us (I.14).

The Katha Upanisad states that just as the earthly fire is ensconced within the two churning sticks like a fetus in the womb of a pregnant woman, and just as the fire is to be worshipped with offerings day after day by people who keep awake for that purpose.

It may be helpful to integrate the two passages above together to have a better understanding of their import. The two sticks mentioned in the Katha Upanisad (II.4.8) may be considered as the body and the *Pranava* stated in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad. Between these two sticks is ensconced the spiritual fire, which we have to worship day after day by keeping ourselves awake, and giving it the offerings of the psychical tendencies in us.

The passage of the Katha Upanisad may be interpreted in another way, too. The Upanisad states, a little latter, that the two sticks in the process of Yoga, may be regarded as the upper breath and the lower breath – the *praana* and the *apaana*, and between these two is seated the beautiful God whom all our senses worship (II.5.3).

In this background, instead of considering the two sticks in the yoga as the body and the *Pranava* as in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad, we may as well take them to mean the upper and the lower breaths in between which is seated the beautiful Atman.

The Mundaka Upanisad has also a reference in this regard. It states that the mind, for its purification, is dependent upon the *Praanas,* and that it is only when the mind is purified after initial control of the *Praanas* that the Atman reveals himself (III.1.9).

Yoga Doctrine in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad

The doctrine of yoga in the Svetaasvatara Upanisad is more developed than in other Upanisads. In the second chapter of the Upanisad is detailed a classic and almost systematic description of the practices and effects of Yoga. This is likely to lead to the conclusion that this Upanisad may be quite near the time when the Yoga doctrine came to be systematized in a new school of philosophy.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states thus. 'We should hold our body with its three erect parts quite even, and that we should open our mind, along with our senses, in the heart. We should concentrate upon the Brahman, and with the help of that boat, cross all the fearful streams that bar our spiritual progress. Controlling our breath and with our actions quite measured, we should throw out by the nose our *Praana* when it becomes quite exhausted in the process of inspiration, and we should regulate our mind which is like a chariot to which are yoked very evil horses. We should sit for the practice of the Yoga on an even and pure piece of ground which is free form pebbles, fire and sand, and which is also free from sounds and watery resorts. The place where we sit for practice should be delightful to the mind, and not jarring to the eye; and we should choose for practice a place in the still recess of a cave' (II.8-10).

The Upanisad also lets us into the mystery of the physiological effects achieved by this practice of Yoga. 'When the five-fold result of Yoga arising from the different elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air, and ether comes well to operate, the practizer of Yoga knows neither disease, nor old age, nor death, for verily his body has become full of the fire of Yoga. His body now becomes very light, the pulse of health beats within him, he becomes free from desires, his complexion becomes clear, and his pronunciation very pleasing. He emits a smell which is holy, and his excretions very slight; it is by these marks that one should know that the novice in Yoga is being well established in his practice' (II.12-13).

The Faculty of God-Realization

The purpose of the practice of yoga is evidently the realization of God. The question arises as to by what faculty a mystic is able to realize God. Is it Sense or Thought or any super-sensuous or super-intellectual faculty of Intuition by means of which one is able to realize God?

The Katha Upanisad states that the form of God does not fall within the ken

of our vision. 'Never has any man been able to visualize God by means of sight, nor is it possible for one to realize Him either by the heart, or by the imagination, or by the mind. It is only those who know this sublime truth that become immortal' (II.6.9).

There are some who interpret this particular verse in the Upanisad differently, from its structure in Sanskrit, so as to mean that it 'may be possible for us to realize Him by means of the heart, or by the imagination, or by the mind', though it may not be possible to 'visualize' the form of God. This is not valid. The earlier interpretation in the above paragraph alone stands to reason from the verse following this one in the Upanisad. It states that it is 'not possible to realize God either by word of mouth, or by the mind, or by the eye. It is only those who know that God is; to them alone, and to none else, is God revealed' (II.6.12). The latter verse makes it clear that it is not possible at all to realize God by means of the mind.

The latter verse makes another important philosophical point that the nature of God-realization is like that of a 'fact'. It is not open to question. Nor is it open to any argument. One can never think about it. If one only knows that God is, then only one realizes God.

The value of a fact can never be disturbed by any probing into its *pros* and *cons*, by logical manipulation about its nature, or by any imaginative or highly-strung intellectual solutions. It thus becomes clear that neither Sense nor Thought enables us to realize God.

But another question arises. If God can be realized at all, has man got any Faculty by means of which he can so realize Him? The same Upanisad answers this question in another verse. 'This Atman who is hidden in all beings is not patent to the eyes of all. It is only the subtle seers who can look with the one-pointed and piercing faculty of Intuition (*buddhi*) that are able to realize God (I.3.12).

Opinions differ as to whether even this *buddhi* can lead us to the vision of God. The Bhagavad-Gita (VI.21) states that the happiness of God-realization can be apprehended by means of *buddhi*. In another passage (III.42), the Gita says that just as God is beyond all sense and mind, similarly He is beyond even this faculty of *buddhi* or intuition.

When words fail exactly to describe the nature of The Faculty of God-Realization, it may become necessary psychologically to 'invent' a term to call it either *Buddhi* or Intuition, and then to make it responsible for the vision of God.

The Upanisads take yet another turn, and look at the issue of God-realization not from the psychological but from the moral point of view. The Mundaka Upanisad states that 'it is only when a perfect catharsis of the whole moral being takes place by the clearness of illumination, that one is able to realize the immaculate God after meditation; for He can be attained neither by sight, nor by word of mouth, nor by any other sense, nor by penance, nor by any actions whatsoever' (III.1.8).

The Katha Upanisad has also a similar passage. 'It is only when the whole moral being is purged of evil that one is able to realize the greatness of God' (I.2.20). Incidentally, in this verse in the Upanisad, the Sanskrit word *Dhaatuprasada* is to be understood as 'purification of the moral being', instead of treating it as *Dhaatuhprasada* bringing in the idea of *Dhatri* or Creator, as it is totally irrelevant.

The Thorough Immanence of God

Often times it is said in the Upanisads that the mystic is able to 'see' God.

The Katha Upanisad states thus: 'We ought to extract the Atman courageously from our body, as one extracts a blade of grass from its sheath. When the Atman is thus drawn out, let a man know that he is the lustrous Immortal Being – yea, the lustrous Immortal Being' (II.6.17).

The process of the extraction of the Atman from the body implies a thorough immanence of the Atman in the body. The Atman is to the body what the wheat is to the chaff. The wheat must be separated from the chaff, even though the chaff may temporarily cover it. Even so must the Atman be extracted from the body, even though, for a while, the body may serve as a covering for it.

The Kaushitaki Upanisad declares the immanence of the Atman thus. 'Just as a razor is laid in a razor-case or a bird is pent up in its nest, even so is this Conscious Being placed in the body up to the very nails, up to the very hair of the body' (IV.20).

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states that 'just as oil is hidden in sesame, or

ghee in curds, just as water is hidden in springs, or fire in the churning sticks, even so is the Atman immanent in the body' (I.15).

The same Upanisad also states in another passage that 'just as there is an extremely subtle film on the surface of ghee, even so does the God-head who is immanent in all beings envelop the whole universe, by knowing Whom alone is a man released from all bounds' (IV.16).

The essence of all these teachings about the immanence of God is that if man tries in the proper way, he is able to realize God within himself.

Types of Mystical Experience

It is only the possibility of God-realization within himself that vindicates the mystic's search after God, by a long process of purification and contemplation. There are references in the Upanisads to the visions and auditions, which the mystic experiences on his spiritual journey.

Four types of experience, on the whole, are to be found scattered in the Upanisads. They bear upon the forms, the colours, the sounds and the lights experienced by a mystic in the process of contemplation.

In the second chapter of the Sevetaasvatara Upanisad, there is a classic reference to the different forms and lights experienced by a mystic on the threshold of his spiritual pilgrimage. The mystic is said to experience forms such as those of 'mist and smoke, the sun, the fire and the wind, the firefly and the lightning, the crystal and the moon' (II.11).

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states in the same strain that 'to the vision of the advancing mystic appear such forms as those of the saffron-coloured raiment, of the red-coloured beetle, of a flame of fire, of a lotus flower and of a sudden flash of lightning. These constitute the glory of the advancing mystic' (II.3.6).

It, however, appears, on the whole, that the Upanisadic mystics are morphists or photists, rather than audiles. There are very few references to the experience of audition in the Upanisads, and even those available are not well documented.

In the Brhadaaranyaka (V.9.1) and the Maitri (II.6) Upanisads, it is said that the mystic hears certain sounds within himself, which are attributed by the Upanisads to the process of digestion going on within the system. It is said that

'the sound is a result of the processes of digestion and assimilation that a man is able to hear it merely by shutting his ears and finally that when a man is dying, he is not able to hear the sound'.

The Chhaandogya Upanisad also states in a similar strain that the indication of the presence of Reality within us can be obtained merely by shutting our ears and by being able to hear sounds like those of the roaring of an ox, or the peal of a thunder or the crackling of fire (III.13.8).

Mystic experience has shown that it is not merely by shutting our ears that we are able to hear the mystic sound, but that we can hear it even with our ears quite open, and that finally even a deaf man who cannot hear anything else is yet able to hear this sound. We cannot call the mystic sound a result of the processes of digestion and assimilation within us. It is true that the mystic sound is, to a certain extent, dependent upon physiological circumstances. But to call the sound a result of those circumstances is like putting the cart before the horse.

We thus see that even though a reference is made to the auditions experienced by a mystic, the Upanisadic seers may not be right in giving their *raison deter*, nor even in defining their exact nature.

On the other hand, when they come to deal with the photic experiences, the Upanisadic mystics are evidently at their best.

The Mundaka Upanisad states in clear terms of the Brahman. 'On a Supreme disc set with gold is the spotless and immaculate Brahman, which is light of all lights which the seekers after Atman experience' (II.2.9).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that 'after having crossed the bund of phenomenal existence, even though a man may be blind, he ceases to be blind; even though he may be pierced, he is as good as not pierced; after having crossed this bund, the very night becomes like day, for before the vision of the aspiring mystic, the spiritual world is suddenly and once for all illumined' (VIII.4.2).

The same Upanisad, in another passage, states that before such a mystic there is neither any sunset nor any sunrise. 'Only if this be true, may I not break my peace with God! When there is neither any sunrise nor any sunset, there is eternal day before the aspiring soul (III.11.2-3)

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad reiterates the same idea. 'When there is neither

day nor night before the mystic, when there is neither being nor not-being, God alone is' (IV.18).

The above passages testify to the transcendence of God beyond both night and day, beyond both being and not-being, as a result of their total concealment in the Divine omnipresence.

The Acme of Mystic Realization

The photic or auditive experiences, though they may be the harbingers of a full-fledged realization to come, do not yet constitute the acme of Self-Realization .

The Mundaka Upanisad, in a celebrated passage, states that the Atman cannot be realized except by one whom the Atman himself chooses; before such a one does the Atman reveal his proper form (III.2.3). This is verily the Doctrine of Grace.

The import of the doctrine of Grace is that man's endeavours, after realization of God, may always fall short of the ideal unless grace comes from above. It is only when the Atman chooses the seeker for the manifestation of his supreme glory that the mystic will be able to perceive Him. It is only then that the golden-coloured Being of the Chhaandogya Upanisad who can be seen on the sun, 'with golden mustaches and golden hair, and who shines like gold up to his very toes,' can come to be identified with the Being within oneself (I.6.6). It is only then that the individual spirit can be one with the Universal Spirit.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad explains the concept further. 'Just as a mirror, which is cleaned of impurities becomes lustrous and capable of reflecting a lustrous image, even thus does the mystic see Himself at the height of his spiritual experience and reach the goal of his endeavour. Just, again, as with the help of a lamp one is able to see an object, similarly, by the help of the individual self, he sees the lustrous Universal Self, who is unborn, who is the highest reality and who is beyond all existences' (II.14-15).

The mystic imagery implied in the passages of the Svetaasvatara Upanisad is made further clear in the teaching of Maitri to his disciple 'the highest secret of the Upanisads'. Maitri instructs his disciple in the Maitri Upanisad that, at the acme of spiritual experience, the mystic sees his own form in a flood of supreme

light arising within him, which constitutes the realization of the immortal and fearless Atman (II.1-3).

Reconciliation of Contradictions in the Atman

The Upanisads abound in passages, which try to reconcile opposite qualities in the Atman as realized.

The Svetaasvatara Upanisad states thus: 'The Atman is neither male nor female, nor is the Atman of an intermediate sex; what body He takes, in that body does He lie ensconced' (V.10).

The Isa Upanisad states thus: 'The Atman may be said to move and yet not to move. He is far as well as near. He is inside all things as well as outside all things' (4&5).

The Katha Upanisad states thus: 'Who except himself (a mystic) has been able to realize the Atman who rejoices and rejoices not, who can walk in a sitting posture and move about everywhere in a lying one?' (I.2.21)

The Mundaka Upanisad makes an attempt to reconcile the infinite greatness of the Atman with his infinite subtlety. 'Great and lustrous is that in-contemplate-able Being, and yet he is subtler than the subtle. He is farther than the far-off and quite near to us, being shut up in the cave of our heart' (III.1.7)

The Katha Upanisad, in an oft-repeated passage, states that the Atman is subtler than the subtle, and greater than the great, and is pent up within the recesses of our heart (I.2.20).

On the other hand, there are passages as in the Svetaasvatara (V.8-9) and the Katha (II.6.17) Upanisads that the Atman is of the size of a thumb, and glorious like the sun; or is as small as the tip of a needle, or a hundredth part of the end of a hair divided into a hundred infinitesimal portions.

What is meant exactly by saying that the Atman is neither male nor female, that He moves and yet does not move, that He is both far and near, that He is greater than the great and smaller than the small, or that He is of the size of a thumb or of a tip of a needle, etc, only the mystics may know. We, the ordinary mortals, judging from outside, can have no idea how the seeming contradictions can be reconciled in the infinite variety and greatness of the Atman.

Effects of Realization on the Mystic

The Upanisads discuss in many places the psychological and other effects, which the realization of God produces upon a realized mystic.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad states thus: 'One who knows his identity with the Self and comes to realize that he is the Atman – for what reason should such a man enter into any feverish bodily activity, for his desires are fulfilled and his end is gained' (IV.4.12). This is to say that when the identification with the Atman comes to take the place of the identification with the body in a fully realized mystic, all his desires for bodily accommodation vanish immediately.

The Mundaka Upanisad states thus: 'The knots of his heart are broken, all his doubts are solved, and the effects of his actions are annihilated, when once he has seen God who is higher than the highest' (II.2.8). In other words, the doubts that have long afflicted his mind and the actions he has suffered from break away immediately. The one principal mark to recognize a realized mystic is that he has no more doubts to solve, for he is in possession of reality.

The same Upanisad, in another passage, narrates the great contrast between the want of power in the mystic before Self-Realization and the attainment of power after it. 'Though the individual soul was lying so long with the Universal Soul on the same tree, he was yet infatuated and was grieving on account of his complete impotence, but when he has once become atoned with the Highest which is the source of all power, his grief vanishes immediately, and he begins to participate in the Other's infinite power' (III.1.2)

The Taittiriya Upanisad has a classic description of the unlimited bliss that a realized mystic experiences after his communion with the Highest.

The Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad likens the bliss of God-realization to the bliss arising from union with dear wife. 'Just as when a man is embraced by his dear wife, he knows nothing outside nor anything inside; similarly, when the individual self is embraced by the Universal Self, he knows nothing outside nor anything inside; for he has attained an end which involves the fulfillment of all other ends, being verily the attainment of the Atman which leaves no other ends to be fulfilled (IV.3.21). The analogue in this passage is in the nature of erotic mysticism, may be imperfect and partial. It cannot be said how far this analogue can be justified. There ought to be and can be no analogue for the unique relation

between the Self and God in the state of ecstasy.

The Taittiriya Upanisad states that the direct result of the enjoyment of divine bliss is that the mystic is divested of all feeling of fear. The feeling of bliss kills the emotion of fear, once and for all. Whom and what may such a realized mystic fear, when he finds infinite joy in all direction and at all times? 'He becomes fearless because he has obtained a lodgment in that invisible, incorporate, indefinable, fearless, support-less support of all' (II.4 & 7).

The Chhaandogya Upanisad states that 'if such a mystic should ever want to have any end fulfilled at all, he should wait upon the Atman, and pray to him, without the slightest touch of egoism, for the fulfillment of his desire; immediately is the end fulfilled for him, for which he had prayed to God' (I.3.12).

The same Upanisad states further thus: 'The Atman is sinless without age, without death, without fear, without any hunger or thirst and has all his desires or ends fulfilled. This Atman should be sought after; this Atman should be known. He who realizes the Atman in this way after having sought after him, for him all the worlds are gained, and all desires fulfilled' (VIII.7.1).

The Mundaka Upanisad also sates thus: 'A man can have all his desires fulfilled, and obtain any world he may seek, even if he only waits upon and worships a mystic who has realized the Self' (III.1.10).

The above passages clearly establish that the immediate effects of God-realization on a mystic are the abatement of bodily excitement, the resolution of all doubts, the attainment of infinite power, the enjoyment of unlimited joy, the annihilation of all fear, and the fulfillment of any end contemplated by the mystic.

Raptures of Mystic Ecstasy

The Upanisads have a few mystic monologues, which contain the essence of the raptures of spiritual experience.

The Mundaka Upanisad contains a monologue of the sage of the Upanisad when he realizes the immortal Brahman. 'The Brahman is before me and behind me, to my right and to my left, above and below; this is the best of all possible worlds' (II.2.11). He considers himself fortunate to have been born into this world at all, for it is appearance on the earth that has led him, by proper means

and through proper stages, to the vision of the Godhead wherever his eye is cast.

In the Brhadaaranyaka Upanisad, the sage Vaamadeva states thus. 'Just as, at the origin of things, the Brahman came to Self-consciousness, and then understood that it was verily the All; similarly, whoever among the gods, or the mortals, or the sages comes to self-consciousness becomes verity the All.' He further exclaims thus: 'He it was who had lived in Manu, and that he it was who had given light to the sun' (I.4.10). For this sage, the infinite past is like an eternal now.

This passage is like the exclamation of the Maratha Saint Tukaram who, at a much later date, exclaimed that, in bygone ages, when Suka had gone to the mountains to attain to Self-Realization , he was himself present to watch the Great Act in spirit, if not in body.

The Mystic of the Chhaandogya Upanisad declares that even as a horse might shake its mane, similarly he had himself shaken off all his sin, that even as the Moon might come out in full, after having suffered an eclipse from Rahu, even so having been freed from the mortal coil, had he obtained the eternal life in the Atman (VIII.13.1).

The Taittiriya Upanisad records the utterances of Trisanku, and they are remarkable for the grandeur of the ideas involved in them. After attaining to Self-Realization , he feels as if he were the 'Mover of the Tree'. What is the Tree to which Trisanku refers? It may be the Tree of the body, or it may be even the Tree of the world. It is rather customary for the Upanisadic and the post-Upanisadic seers to speak of the body or the world as verily a Tree.

In fact, Trisanku states that, like the true Soul that he is, he can move the Tree of the bodily or worldly coil. Furthermore, his glory is 'like the top of a mountain'. In other words, when he had come to realize the Self, he felt that everything else looked mean and insignificant to him from the high pedestal of the experience of the Atman that he felt as if he had been on the top of all things whatsoever.

Trisanku states further that 'the source from which he had come was Purity itself'. This is possibly a reference to the purity of the Divine Life from which all existence springs.

Trisanku says again that he is as if it were 'the Immortal Being in the sun'. This is in the nature of identification of the individual spirit with the Universal Spirit, in the context of the Isa Upanisad.

Trisanku regards himself 'as a treasure of unsurpassable value'. He probably refers to the infinite wealth of the experience of the Atman that he has obtained.

Finally, he states that he is verily 'the intelligent, the immortal and the imperishable One'. He identifies himself with the Absolute Spirit (I.10).

The Taittiriya Upanisad records the post-ecstatic monologue of the greatest of the mystics, whose grandeur is unsurpassed. When he transcends the limitations of his earthly, etheric, mental, intellective and beatific sheaths, he sits in the utter silence of solipsistic solitude. He sings the song of universal unity thus: 'How wonderful, how wonderful, how wonderful; I am the food, I am the food, I am the food; I am the food-eater, I am the food-eater, I am the food-eater; I am the maker of their unity, I am the maker of their unity, I am the maker of their unity.'

These utterances only mean, metaphysically, that he is himself all matter, all spirit as well as the connecting link between them both. Epistemologically, he is himself the subject-world and the object-world as well as the entire subject-object relation. It is a stage of spiritual experience, which a modern idealistic thinker may consider it as a stage where the difference between the field, the fighter and the strife vanishes all together. It is the culmination of the celestial song (III.10.5-6)

Appendix

List of Upanisads

The Muktika Upanisad lists 108 Upanisads as being part of different Veda sakhas as stated hereunder. Some scholars mention of more Upanisads varying up to 250 Upanisads most of which may not have been related to the Veda sakhas, and may have been much later additions.

Rigveda((10)

Aitareya
Atmabodha
Kaushitaki
Mudgala
Nirvana
Nadabindu
Akshamaya
Tripura
Bahvruka
Saubhagyalakshmi

Yajurveda:(50)

Katha
Taittiriya
Isavasya
Brihadaranyaka
Akshi
Ekakshara
Garbha
Prnagnihotra
Svetasvatara
Sariraka
Sukarahasya
Skanda
Sarvasara
Adhyatma
Niralamba
Paingala
Yajnavalkya
Satyayani
Amrtanada
Amrtabindu
Kshurika
Tejobindu
Dhyanabindu
Brahmavidya
YogakundalinI
Yogatattva
Yogasikha
Varaha
Advayataraka
Trisikhibrahmana
mandalabrahmana
Hamsa
Kalisantaraaa
Narayana
Tarasara
Kalagnirudra
Dakshinamurti
Pancabrahma
Rudrahrdaya
SarasvatIrahasya

SamaVeda: (16)

Kena
Chandogya

Atharvaveda:(32)

Prasna
Mandukya
Mundaka
Atma
Surya
Narada-Parivrajakas
Parabrahma
Paramahamsa-Parivrajakas
Pasupatha-Brahma
Mahavakya
Sandilya
Krishna
Garuda
Gopalatapani
Tripadavibhuti-mahnarayana
Dattatreya
Kaivalya
Nrsimhatapani
Ramatapani
Ramarahasya
HayagrIva
Atharvasikha
Atharvasira
Ganapati
Brhajjabala

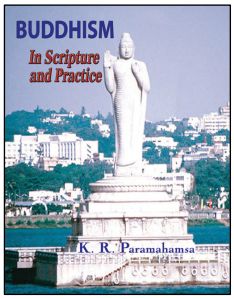
Mantrika
Muktika
Subala
Avadhuta
Katharudra
Brahma
Jabala
Turiyatita
Paramahamsa
Bhikshuka

Mahat
Maitrayani
Vajrasuci
Savitri
Aruneya
Kundika
Maitreyi
Samnyasa
Jabaladarsana
Yogacudaman
Avyakta
Vasudevai
Jabali
Rudrakshajabala

Bhasmajabala
Sarabha
Annapurna
TripuratapanI
Devi
Bhavana
SIta

Other books by K.R. Paramahamsa

Buddhism in Scripture and Practice



Buddhism arose more than 2500 years ago in India in an atmosphere of great philosophical ferment. It was the atmosphere in which the sacrificial religion was systematized in the Mimamsa, the philosophical ideas of the Upanisads were crystallized, and the ideas of independent thinkers, not owing allegiance to either, were trying to gain their foothold in the Indian thought. All these philosophies were philosophies of life according to the reality as understood by their profounder. All the philosophical sects at that time, except the Chaarvaakas, were indeed ascetic.

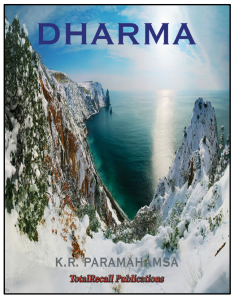
Buddhism arose out of the sects independent of the *Mimamsa* and the *Vedanta.* It incorporated what it considered to be the best from all, both the orthodox and the heterodox. It became one of the world's greatest religions, and contributed one of the highest of philosophies.

The founder of Buddhism, Gautama, known to the world as the Buddha, the Enlightened, participated in a critical and creative movement to synthesize ancient, traditional worldviews, which vied for the collective heart of India in his time. Interestingly, some of the most influential thinkers the world has ever known such as Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, Zoroaster and Socrates in Persia and in Greece, Jeremiah and Deutero Isaiah in Israel also belonged to the same period with a variation of a few decades on either side. The Buddha was the most influential individual to emerge from the then intellectually and religiously stimulating period in India.

The Buddha evoked the admiration of even the orthodox *Mimamsakas* and *Vedantins* by the gentleness and nobility of his character, and also by the clarity and simplicity of his teachings. He was accordingly absorbed into the Hindu pantheon. His philosophy, in its latest stages, looked so similar to the *Vedanta* that it was eventually assimilated to it. As such, Buddhism gradually lost justification for separate existence and disappeared from India, except for a few border areas.

Title:	**Buddhism in Scripture and Practice**
Author:	K.R. Paramahamsa
Publishing House:	TotalRecall Publications, Inc.
Publication Date:	6/27/2007
ISBN:	978-1-59095-892-6
ISBN eBook:	978-1-59095-893-3

DHARMA



DHARMA , a Sanskrit word, has two principal meanings. The ***dharma*** of an individual is his essential nature, the intrinsic law of his 'being' and development. It also signifies the law of righteousness and piety. The implications of this double meaning are significant. Man's duty, how he ought to live, what he ought to believe, and what he ought to do about his beliefs are, among others, conditioned by his essential nature, his constitution and temperament.

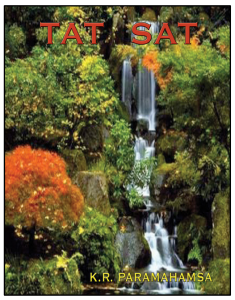
The principles of ***Dharma*** including ethics enunciated in the book, except those specifically attributed to other sages, philosophers and thinkers, are the essence of the teachings of **Sri Sathya Sai** spread over the last six decades. The teachings of the sages and philosophers in all ages and all parts of the world are essentially the essence of ***Sanatana-dharma*** – the philosophy of eternity, the religion of humanity – mainly spiritual in content and character. The principles of *dharma* including ethics enunciated by Sri Sathya Sai look no different from the content of *dharma* and ethics enunciated by the sages and the divinely inspired philosophers of the past, in the east as well as the west.

Title:	**DHARMA**
Author:	K.R. Paramahamsa
Publishing House:	TotalRecall Publications, Inc.
Publication Date:	7/27/2007
ISBN Book:	978-1-59095-887-2
ISBN eBook:	978-1-59095-884-1

Http://www.totalrecallpress.com

Other books by K.R. Paramahamsa

TAT SAT



The Brahman, the Supreme Being, is referred to by three words OM, Tat and Sat. The Brahman is the ultimate reality. It is pure consciousness devoid of all attributes (nirguna) and all categories of the intellect (nirvisesa). Being associated with Its potency (Maya), the Brahman appears as the qualified one, Saguna Brahman, or the Lord (Iswara) who is the Creator, Preserver or Destroyer of the world which is nothing but His appearance. It is thus, because of Maya, the Brahman is said to be the Creator of the world.

Maya is not pure illusion. It is not only absence of knowledge, but also positive wrong knowledge and is, therefore, Bhavarupa (of positive nature). It is indescribable. It is neither existent nor non-existent, nor both. It is not existent for the Brahman alone is the existent (sat). It is not non-existent for it is responsible for the appearance of the world on Brahman. It cannot be both existent and non-existent as such a statement is self contradictory. It is thus neither real nor unreal; it is Mithya; but is not a non-entity like the horn of a hare. A rope is mistaken as a snake. The rope is the ground on which the snake is super-imposed. When right knowledge arises, this error vanishes. The relation between the rope and the snake is neither that of identity nor of difference, nor of both. It is unique and known as non-difference (tadatmya). Similarly, Brahman is the ground on which the world appears through the power, Maya. When right knowledge dawns, the real nature of the so called Jiva is realized and Maya vanishes.

Tat Sat is a book detailing Advaita Vedanta – the mainstay of the Indian Philosophy, in its intricacies. It forms part of the rich content of Vedic literature in English on the World Wide Web portal Sri Sathya Sai Veda Pratishtan at www.vedamu.org .

Title:	**TAT SAT**
Author:	K.R. Paramahamsa
Publishing House:	TotalRecall Publications, Inc.
Publication Date:	8/2/2007
ISBN Book:	978-1-59095-889-6
ISBN eBook:	978-1-59095-886-5

Http://www.totalrecallpress.com

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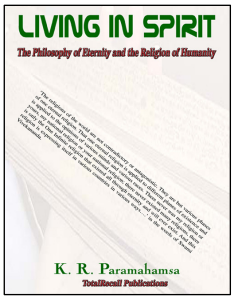
Living in Spirit



'The religions of the world are not contradictory or antagonistic. They are but various phases of one eternal religion. That one eternal religion is applied to different planes of existence and is applied to the opinions of various minds and various races. There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion; there never existed many religions, there is only the One Infinite religion that existed all through eternity and will ever exist. And this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways….' in the words of Swami Vivekananda.

This eternal religion is ***Sanatana-dharma*** , the Philosophy of Eternity and the Religion of Humanity. It is as old as God Himself; it is not confined to any time and place; and it is now everywhere. The word 'religion', in its original meaning, is something that binds, and it is literally true in respect of ***Sanatana-dharma .***

Reduced to its elements, the Philosophy of Eternity and the Religion of Humanity consists of three propositions. First is that man's real nature is divine. Second is that the aim of human life is to realize this divine nature. Third is that all religions, as they are differently called, are essentially in agreement with the first two elements.

The spiritual faith of humanity is that religious truth is not absolute, but relative, continuous and progressive. The founders and spiritual promoters of all religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, abide in the principle of the organic unity of mankind as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution. All religious faiths recognize the unity of God, uphold the principle of an unfettered search after truth, and condemn all forms of superstition and prejudice.

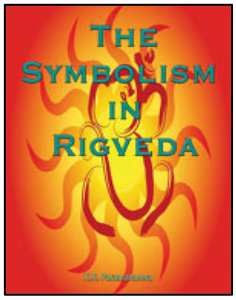
All religious traditions agree that bliss is an authentic sign of spiritual life. Bliss is an elusive thing; it cannot be sought after, and attained in itself. It is what results from a way of life that is centered on God, and sensitive to the whole of creation.

To live a spiritual life is to live in all its fullness. Fullness points to integration of the physical, the mental and the spiritual dimensions of human life. Spirituality involves the dynamic integration of all the three dimensions in living.

Title:	**Living in Spirit**
Author:	K.R. Paramahamsa
Publishing House:	TotalRecall Publications, Inc.
Publication Date:	6/27/2007
ISBN Book:	978-1-59095-890-2
ISBN eBook:	978-1-59095-891-9

Other books by K.R. Paramahamsa

The Symbolism in Rigveda



Sri Aurobindo puts the question: 'Is there at all, or is there still the secret of the Veda?'

We have in the Rig-veda Samhita, a body of sacrificial hymns couched in a very ancient language. The hymns present a number of almost insoluble difficulties. 'Yet these obscure and barbarous compositions have had the most splendid good fortune in all literary history. They have been the reputed source not only of some of the world's richest and profoundest religions, but of some of its subtlest metaphysical philosophies', in the words of Sri Aurobindo.

The Rig-veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of the human thought when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the human race was concealed in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols. The reasons why it so happened may now be difficult to determine.

One of the leading principles of the Vedic mystics is sacredness, secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the gods. For the mystics, this wisdom is unfit, rather dangerous, to the ordinary human mind. It is liable to perversion, misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits.

The ritual system recognized by Sayanacarya stands in its externalities. The naturalistic sense discovered by the European scholars, in its general conceptions, may call for acceptance. But behind them is the true and still hidden secret of the Veda, the secret words spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge.

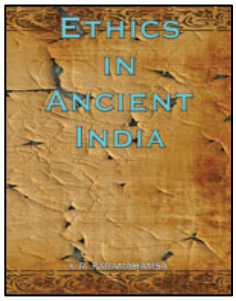
Sri Aurobindo's book 'The Secret of the Veda' establishes that the Vedic literature is only the precursor to the Vedantic literature the objective of which is to lead the seeker on the path of Truth to Self-Realization .

This book 'Symbolism in Rigveda' is only an abridged version of 'The Secret of the Veda', *Sri Aurobindo Revisited*, intended for the benefit of beginners among students of Vedic literature.

Title:	**The Symbolism in Rigveda**
Author:	K.R. Paramahamsa
Publishing House:	TotalRecall Publications, Inc.
Publication Date:	08/01/2008
ISBN Book:	978-1-59095-880-3
ISBN eBook:	978-1-59095-881-0

Other books by K.R. Paramahamsa

Ethics in Ancient India



The ultimate goal of a human being, in general parlance, relates to human conduct in society. What relates to human conduct in society is called ethics. The word 'ethics' or 'ethic' means a pattern or norm or code of conduct adopted by a group of people.

Ethical Philosophers formulate and formalize existing standards. Often they propose new standards, new norms and patterns of conduct for observance by the groups. The standards lead afar encompassing considerations of, among others, duty, responsibility, equality, justice, rights, legitimate authority and benefit.

Ethical deliberation begins with specific problems of individuals facing a choice and being uncertain about what to do. Every human being faces one problem or other, and deliberates to some extent in search of a satisfactory solution.

Moral virtues such as liberality, temperance, benevolence, charity come about as a result of habit. That is why its name *ethike* - *ethics* is derived from the word *ethos* (habit). It, therefore, follows that none of the moral virtues arises in us by nature. In a way, we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

Ethics is, therefore, 'the discipline dealing with what is good and bad, or right and wrong, or moral duty and obligation…' The word 'conduct' implies only persons in as much as only persons *conduct* themselves, while animals behave, machines function and stars move.

This book Ethics in Ancient India is a compendium of the ethics elaborated in great detail in Mahabharata, Arthasastra, Bhagavata Purana and Brahma Purana. The authors of these works have narrated ethics in their entire gamut through the personages, known in those works as epitomes of flawless ethical conduct. The object may be to give authenticity to the principles of ethics so enumerated, as they reflect the standards of ethics then sought to be followed in the society at large, at the time of their compilation.

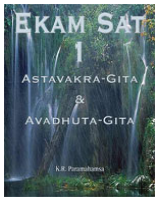
Title:	**Ethics in Ancient India**
Author:	K.R. Paramahamsa
Publishing House:	TotalRecall Publications, Inc.
Publication Date:	08/01/2008
ISBN Book:	978-1-59095-878-0
ISBN eBook:	978-1-59095-879-7

Other books by K.R. Paramahamsa

EKAM SAT SERIES

Ekam Sat is the name of the series of Gita literature other than Bhagavad-Gita in five volumes, containing 19 Gitas. Volume 1 carries a detailed exposition of Monism, too. The translation into English of each sloka (verse) of the Gitas in Sanskrit is rendered corresponding to the verse in each chapter of the Gita concerned. Explanatory paragraphs are added to each translated verse, wherever considered necessary, to elaborate the essence of the content of the verses from the point of view of Monism.

Author: K.R. Paramahamsa



Title: **Ekam Sat 1**
Pub Date: 05/01/2007
ISBN Book: 9781590958889
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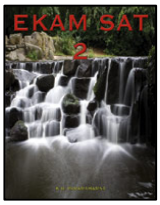

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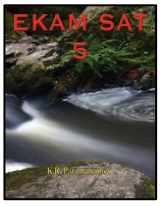

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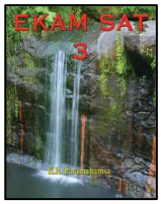

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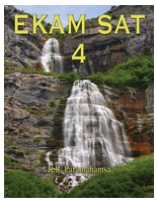

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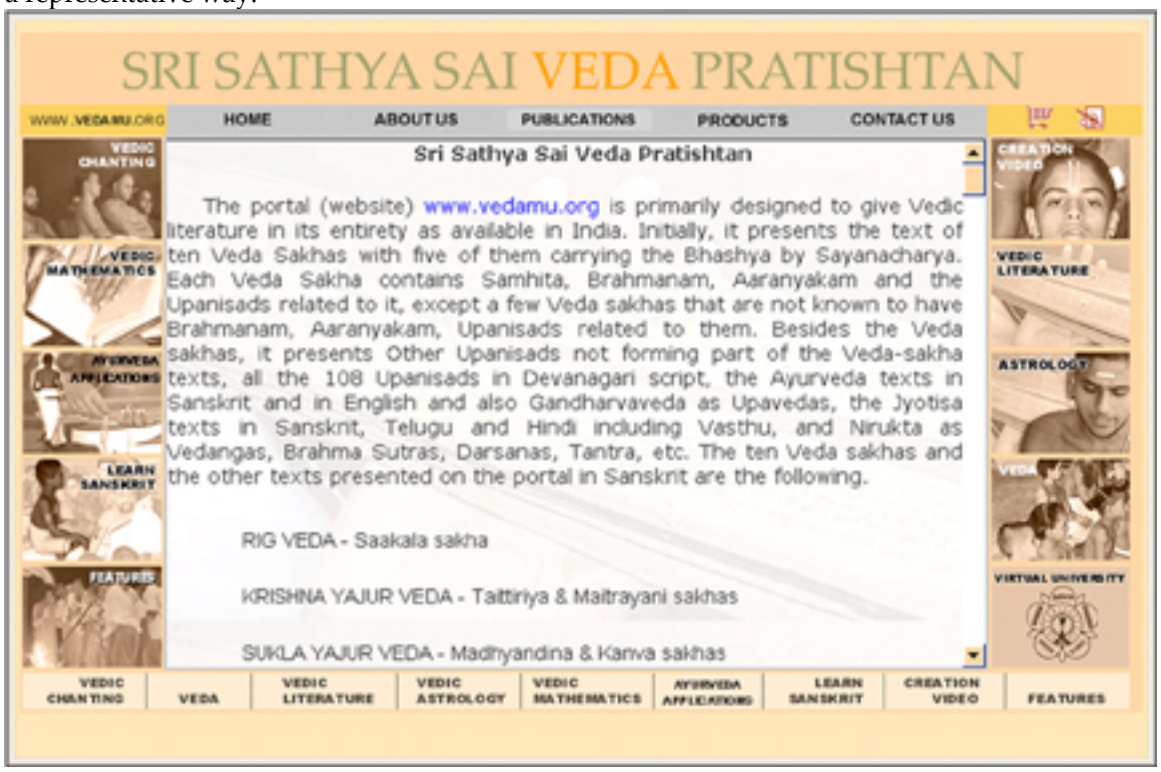
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