

**AN ENQUIRY CONCERNING THE DOCTRINE OF ĀTMAN
IN THE UPANISADS**

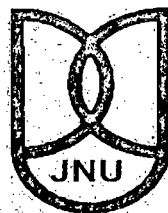
Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2011

TO —

My Parents

Who laid the foundations of whatever little I have achieved till now

DECLARATION

I, SHUBHRA JYOTI DAS, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **An Enquiry Concerning the Doctrine of *Ātman* in the *Upaniṣads*** submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an authentic work and has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma of this or any other institution or University to the best of my knowledge.

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CERTIFICATE

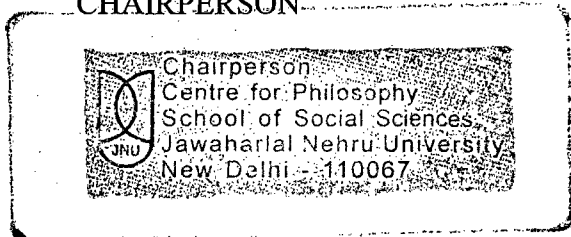
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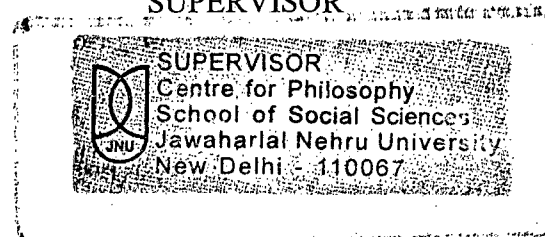
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Acknowledgement

With the blessings of Almighty, I have been able to complete my work in time. I wish to thank many people who have contributed in my work. First of all, I would like to express my heartiest gratitude to my supervisor Professor R. P. Singh for his timely guidance, encouragement and affection. This work would have not been possible without his support and cooperation. Thank you Sir.

I would also like to express my gratitude to other teachers of the Centre of Philosophy, Dr. Bhagat Oinam and Dr. Manidipa Sen for their encouragement and support.

I would also like to thank non - teaching staff specially Mr. Rajender Singh for his friendly support and cooperation.

I would express my deepest regards to my parents. They, from beginning, have been supportive in my journey from pure science to pure arts. Without their immense love inspiration and support this endeavour would have remained incomplete. I feel very lucky to have such wonderful parents. Thanks for the trust that you have bestowed upon me.

Apart from this, I would like to thanks all my seniors who always extended their helping hand whenever I needed that. I also extend my thanks to all my friends Ramesh, Sanjay, Idris, Sarat, Shruti, Akho and Mariyam for their support. Their constructive criticisms during the coursework were immensely helpful in developing my thoughts.

My special thanks to my friend Bins for being with me throughout this journey. I am grateful for all your support in all the stages of the formation and development of this work and for standing by my side in the face of all troubles and odds. Thanks God, for giving me such a nice friend. Finally thanks to all my well - wishers and friends whose names remain unmentioned here.

Shubhra Jyoti Das

PREFACE

The present work is **An Enquiry Concerning the Doctrine of *Ātman* in the *Upaniṣads***. There has been a philosophical unrest, anxiety and apprehension concerning consciousness through all ages. The *Upaniṣads* belong to the Vedic corpus. Since they occur in the end as the concluding portion of the *Vedas* (*Vedasya antah*), they are called *Vedānta*. They are not only the concluding portion, but also the consummation of the *Vedas*, and so they are also called '*Veda-sīras*', the crown of the *Veda*. Traditionally the number of *Upaniṣads* is said to be hundred and eight. But here I have taken eleven *Upaniṣads* known as major *Upaniṣads*, which Śaṅkara has commented upon.

This consciousness, termed as *Ātman* in the larger *Upaniṣadic* context, has been seen as a principle which subsists through the changes of the body and mind and even survives the death of the physical body. But there has been a lot of difference among commentators regarding the further details of this *Ātman*. This has happened due to the metaphorical and paradoxical language used by the *Upaniṣadic* seers in describing the same. My present work is an attempt to re – examine the texts of the *Upaniṣads* to see if a single view of the *Ātman* can be formed.

As an enquiry into the doctrine of *Ātman* as Being, I have analysed it from Ontological, Metaphysical and Psychological standpoints. The concept of *pancakōśa* in the ontological domain, the concept of *Sat – Īit – Ānanda* in metaphysics and the states of *Jāgrata – Svapna – Suṣupti* has been taken up in the psychological analysis of *Ātman*. Apart from that, an exploration has been made into the *Upaniṣadic* exposition of the self as an epistemological subject. Various *pramānas*, their definitions and their limitations in grasping *Ātman* has been highlighted. This has been supplemented by discussing the intimations of Self – realization as enumerated by the *Upaniṣadic* seers. And finally I have analysed the value – system propagated by the *Upaniṣads* having *Ātman* as its locus. The four *Upaniṣadic* values *Dharma, Artha, Kāma*, categorised as *Abhyudaya* and *Mokṣa*, termed as *Niḥśreyasa* and their practices in four *āśramas* viz. *Brahmacārya, Gr̥hastha, Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa* have been taken up in detail.

I was greatly helped by the commentaries of Śaṅkara, translated by Swami Gambhirananda of Ramakrishna Mission, on the major *Upaniṣads*. Rāmānuja's works on the *Brahmasutras* were of great use since he has not written any commentary on the *Upaniṣads*. I am also helped by Dr. Radhakrishnan's work on *Upaniṣads* as they have been written within the academic framework. Apart from that, many articles which gave me insight to flourishing my ideas were also instrumental in formulating my standpoint. I am also grateful to all those authors whose works have directly or indirectly helped me out.

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INTRODUCTION

I, in the present dissertation, have enquired into the doctrine of *Ātman* in the major *Upaniṣads* i.e. in the *Upaniṣads* which Śaṅkara has commented on. As a matter of fact, the intellectual expedition in the doctrine of *Ātman* is extremely complex and multifaceted. In the extensive field of philosophy we come across self as an ontological, metaphysical and psychological being, an epistemological subject, a moral agent, an aesthetic being and so on. *Upaniṣads*, apart from looking into all these facets in the self, goes deeper into the mystical aspects of it and deals with it also as a yogic subject.

There has been a philosophical unrest, anxiety and apprehension concerning consciousness all through the ages. The ancient saints, seers and sages expressed the problem in the form of a forceful interrogation '*Koaham?*' i.e. who am I? something which echoes the famous Delphian inscription 'Know thyself'. Therefore, I plan to look into all these facets of the self in detail in the light of the *Upaniṣads*.

In this study, I have used hermeneutic method for interpreting the texts of the *Upaniṣads*. The method of dialogue and dialectics has been employed in the interpretations of the texts which are metaphorical, paradoxical, symbolic and suggestive. My research work has proceeded mainly through decoding metaphors and expanding the aphorisms described in the *Upaniṣads*.

The method of dialogue has been continuously used in almost all *Upaniṣads*. The dialogue between Satyakāma and his mother Jābāla in *Chāndogya*, Prajāpati and his sons in *Bṛhadāranyaka*, Yama and Naciketa in *Kaṭha*, Nārada and Sanatkumāra in *Chāndogya* are some of the classical examples of how the method is used in developing Philosophical thoughts. To put very precisely, "A dialogue is a process of conversation, argumentation and mutual supplementation of ideas between two individuals. With dialogue, a method has evolved in which the encounters with other thinkers are essential. It is just opposed to a monologue which can formulate nothing but a dogma."¹ The method demands that the

¹ Singh, R. P., *Consciousness: Indian and Western Perspectives*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2008) p.82

opposition should be allowed speak and express his view regarding the same subject matter. Thus a dialogue is possible only when both the speakers “(a) speak, (b)listen, (c)aim at truth, (d)understand each other’s language, (e) understand each other’s way of thinking and (f) do not live in two worlds whose contents totally differ.”² Thus the process of dialogue proceeds with both disagreement and consensus. Dialogue comes to an end if there is either complete agreement or total disagreement.

Again, Dialectic, as a method can be seen in two ways – first, it is a mode of argumentation to bring out a contradiction in the views of the other party. By examining the pros and cons of a question, brings about a clear consciousness into antinomies into which reason gets bogged up and hints at a way out of the impasse by rising to a plane higher than the existing one. And therefore secondly it resolves, dissolves or sublates the contradictions at a higher level. For example in the dialogue between Uddālaka and Naćiketa, we find that it begins with the empirical experiences, the *vyavahārika sattā*. In order to resolve contradictions at the *vyavahārika* level, we go to the *pāramāthika* level. In short, “There is always a need to overcome and sublata the contradiction either in terms of higher ideas or by recognizing the superiority of the leading philosopher”³

Hermeneutics, as a method, points to the different ways of explaining a text. Hermeneutics began as a method of interpreting religious and law texts and today it encompasses not only all forms of written texts but also the interpretative process itself. It is the science and theory of interpretation whose object is to explain a text proceeding from its features, both objective i.e. grammatical meaning of the words along with the historical variations and subjective i.e. the authors intentions. Due to the structure of the language and the context in which it is used, a text acquires different meanings. It is a way of looking at the various possibilities of the text for a better understanding.

² Paperzak, A. T., *Systems and History in Philosophy* (State University of New York Press, 1986), p84

³ Singh, R. P., *Consciousness: Indian and Western Perspectives*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2008) p.86

The following are the problematic issues that I have taken up in my work

1. The first problem in understanding the *Ātman* in the *Upaniṣads* is with and within the *Upaniṣads*. *Ātman* has been described through many paradoxical expressions, metaphors and variety of suggestions. Therefore there are various commentaries on *Upaniṣads* describing the ontological status of the same. Absolutists, like Śāṅkara, describe *Ātman* as one, eternal and all-pervading, whereas, some or the other kind of dualism in *Upaniṣads* is read by all the theists like Rāmānuja. I shall try to find out whether the divergent metaphysical positions have inevitably emerged out of the dichotomous views expressed in the *Upaniṣads* or if there is any essential *Upaniṣadic* view on *Ātman* underlying all the varieties.
2. The second problem is epistemological and logical. The *Upaniṣadic* philosophy advocates six *pramānas* or means of valid knowledge viz. *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna*, *śabda*, *anupalabdhi* and *arthāpatti*. However different schools have different positions on the *pramānas*. And apart from that how the *Ātman*, which defies all these categories, becomes an object of knowledge gives rise to the epistemological problems in *Upaniṣads*.
3. The third problem is ethical. The notions of *Puruṣārthas* have been divided into *Abhyudaya* and *Nihśreyasa*. But there are different narratives regarding *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*. These values again have to be practiced in four *Āśramas* or stages of life viz. *Brahmacārya*, *Gr̥hastha*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa*. Different schools have emphasized different aspects of this system. This has given rise to discrepancies in *Upaniṣads*. Here, the ethical implications of the theory of *Ātman* will be explored.

The *Upaniṣads* belong to the Vedic corpus. Since they occur in the end as the concluding portion of the *Vedas* (*Vedasya antah*), they are called *Vedānta*. They are not only the concluding portion, but also the consummation of the *Vedas*, and so they are also called 'veda-śiras', the crown of the *Veda*.

The *Upaniṣads* form a literature which has been growing from early times. Their number exceeds two hundred though the Indian tradition puts it at one hundred and eight. Śaṅkara commented on eleven, *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Praśna*, *Mundaka*, *Māṇḍukya*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chhāndogya*, *Brhadāranyaka* and *Śvetāśvatara*.

There is a general agreement that the ancient prose *Upaniṣads*, *Aitareya*, *Chhāndogya*, *Kena*, *Taittirīya*, and *Brhadāranyaka*, together with *Īśa* and *Kaṭha* belong to the Eighth and seventh century B.C. These *Upaniṣads* belongs to what Karl Jaspers calls the Axial Era of the world, ranging from 800 to 300 B.C., when man for the first time simultaneously and independently in Greece, China and India questioned the traditional patterns of life.⁴ As many of the early literatures of India were anonymous, the names of the author of the *Upaniṣads* are not known.

There are four Vedas and each Veda has four sections- *Samhitā*, *Brāhmana*, *Āranyaka* and *Upaniṣads*. While *Samhitā* contains hymns praising gods and goddesses, the *Brāhmanas* deal with the sacrificial rites. The *Āranyakas* exposition consists of the meditative practices. The *Upaniṣads* are philosophical treatises discussing the fundamental problem of existence and its purpose. The transition from the *Samhitās* to *Upaniṣads* is comparable to the change from the mystifying twilight to the bright and brilliant sunlight of the day. What is implicit or suggested in the hymns becomes explicit through in-depth rigorous exploration in the philosophical tracts. For example, the Great-person of *Puruṣa-Sukta* with thousands of heads, eyes and feet can be read as an all pervading conscious principle which is in some way witness to everything.

The problem of *Ātman* or consciousness has been very exhaustively dealt in the *Upaniṣads*. Dialogue is the method of the *Upaniṣadic* saints. An example of this is found in *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* in the dialogue between the sage Yājñavalkya and his wife Maitreyi who asks him about the way to realize the Absolute or the Ultimate truth. In the fourth *Brāhmana* it comes like:

⁴ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953) p.22

Yājñavalkya: Maitreyi, verily, I am about to go forth from this state (of householder). Look, let me make a final settlement between you and that Kātyāyani

Maitreyi: If indeed, Venerable Sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal through that?

Yājñavalkya: No Like the life of the rich even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth

Maitreyi : What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal? Tell me that, indeed, venerable Sir, of what you know (of the way to immortality)

Yājñavalkya: Ah, dear, you have been dear (even before), and you (now) speak dear words. Come, sit down, I will explain to you. Even as I am explaining reflect (on what I say). Verily, not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear but a husband is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the wife is wife dear but a wife is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the sons are the sons dear but the sons are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of wealth is wealth dear but wealth is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of brāhminhood is brāhminhood dear but brāhminhood is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of kṣtriyahood is kṣtriyahood dear but kṣtriyahood is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the worlds are the worlds dear but the worlds are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of gods are the gods dear but gods are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of the beings are the beings dear but the beings are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, not for the sake of all is all dear but all is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, O Maitreyi, it is the self that should be seen, heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. Verily, by the seeing of, by the hearing of, by the thinking of, by the understanding of the Self, all this is known.⁵

As the dialogue proceeds Yājñavalkya convinces her that it is the *Ātman* that should be known and when this knowledge is achieved everything in the universe is known, because there lies an identity between *Ātman* (self) and *Brahman* (The Ultimate Reality).

⁵ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 2.4.1 to 2.4.5 p.195-197

Therefore the focal point of all the five *Mahāvākyas* or great teachings (literally great sentences) of *Upaniṣads* is nothing but this *Ātman*. They are as follows:

1. *Prajñānam Brahma* “Consciousness is *Brahman*”⁶
2. *Aham Brahmāsmi* “I am *Brahman*”⁷
3. *Tattvamasi* “Thou art that”⁸
4. *Ayam Ātma Brahma* “This *Ātman* is *Brahman*”⁹
5. *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma* “Everything is *Brahman*”¹⁰

The *Mahāvākyas*, in brief, are the different paths of the realization of the Absolute. The statement *Prajñānam Brahma* directs the seeker to meditate on the *Chitsvarupa* (Pure consciousness form of *Brahman*), leading to the merger of that individual consciousness in the Universal and the attainment of *mukti* (Liberation from the worldly bondage) and the state of Supreme Bliss (*Paramānanda*). *Aham Brahmāsmi* is an endeavor to make the pupil engage in deep meditation to realize the Absolute. In the *Tattvamasi*, the teacher is trying to make his pupil realize that his innate being is a part of the Absolute. *Ayam Ātma Brahma* also accomplishes the same thing.

Upaniṣads present self as an ontological being, an epistemological subject, a moral being, a psychological being and so on.

For example, different layers of the self, from the ontological standpoint, have been illustrated in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*¹¹. Self has been seen as a combination of five layers viz. *Annamaya*, the food layer, *Prānamaya*, the layer of life energy, *Manomaya*, the mental layer, *Vijñānamaya*, the intelligence layer and *Ānandamaya* the bliss layer. On the

⁶ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Aitreya Upaniṣad*, III. 1.3 p66

⁷ *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), I.4.10 p100

⁸ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, VI.8.7 p468

⁹ *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), II.5.19, p280

¹⁰ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, III.14.1, p208

¹¹ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, III. 1.1 to 1.6 p392-396

other hand, looking from the metaphysical stand *Upaniṣads* describes it as *Sat-Ānanda* i. e. Existence- Knowledge- Bliss Absolute. In its Psychological analysis, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* expresses self in three states of *Jāgrata- Svapna- Susupti* i. e. waking, dream, deep sleep and talks about a fourth state of consciousness called *Turīya* which transcends all these three. In *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* self comes as a moral being. *Kaṭha* divides happiness into two¹² categories *preyas* (pleasant) and *śreyas*(good) and declares pursuit of *śreyas* or good as the true nature of the self. Since the nature of self is bliss Absolute, righteousness becomes the true nature of self as it leads to supreme happiness.

The first problem, dealt in the first chapter, comes from the very texts of the *Upaniṣads*. We find, in describing the self, both dualistic and monistic passages in *Upaniṣads*. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says “In this world there are two souls which taste the fruit of action, both of which are lodged in the recess of human heart, and which are as different from each other as light and shade.”¹³

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad further adds, “There are two birds, companions and friends, both sitting on the same tree, of which one partakes, of sweet fruit of the tree, while the other without eating merely looks on.”¹⁴ The noteworthy in the passage is - how can we regard the Universal soul as enjoying the fruit of action? The enjoyment of the fruit of action could be predicted only about the individual soul and not about the Universal soul which must be regarded as above such enjoyment. Hence, it was probable, that *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* relieved the Universal Soul of the burden of enjoyment of the fruits of such action, and laid the fact of enjoyment at the door of the individual soul. In any case it is worthwhile noting that the individual soul is in the above passage spoken of as being entirely distinct from the Universal Soul.

Rāmānuja agrees with Madhva in maintaining the utter separateness of the individual soul and God. But Rāmānuja differs from Madhva in regarding the Absolute to be the

¹² Ibid., vol.1, *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.2.2 p148

¹³ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Kaṭha*, I.3.1, p150

¹⁴ Ibid., vol.2, *Muṇḍaka* III.1.1, p151

nature of triune unity - a sort of tripod composed of matter, individual soul and Brahman. For this doctrine of threefold unity, Rāmānuja finds ample justification in the passage from the *Śvetāśvatara* which tells us that there are, “three ultimate existences, all of them eternal and all together constituting the Absolute, namely, the powerless unknowing soul, the powerful knowing Brahman, and the eternal *prakṛti*, which exists for the enjoyment of the individual, and from which he receives recompense for his works.”¹⁵

And yet again that “Man need to know only 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”¹⁶

We are told in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* by the help of a simile which is oft repeated in the *Upaniṣad* that “This Self, already mentioned, is the ruler of all beings, and the king of all beings. Just as all the spokes are fixed in the nave and the felloe of a chariot wheel, so are all being, all gods, all worlds, all organs and all these individual selves are fixed in this Self.”¹⁷

In another passage, the same *Upaniṣad* tells us, by a change of metaphor, that “As a spider moves along the thread (it produces), and as from a fire tiny sparks fly in all directions, so from this Self emanates all organs, all worlds, all gods and all beings. Its secret name (*Upaniṣad*) is ‘the Truth of truth.’ The vital force is truth and it is the Truth of that”¹⁸ In these passages we are told how *Brahman* may be regarded as the Soul of souls and we are also unmistakably told that the Supreme soul is the Real of the reals.

This is corroborated by another passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* which tells us that Supreme 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

¹⁵ Ibid. *Śvetāśvatara* I.9, p153

¹⁶ Ibid. *Śvetāśvatara* I.12, p 153

¹⁷ *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya, tr.Swami Madhavananda*, (Kolkata:Advaita Ashrama, 2009) II.5.15 p272

¹⁸ Ibid.II.1.20 p202

verities, and He is the supreme verity.”¹⁹ Both the moving and the stationary are thus the forms of Supreme; this is much as to say, that Supreme 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 governor.

Regarding the immortality of the Soul, many passages seem to extend support to dualistic theories. A passage from *Chhândogyâ* tells us that the worshipper is lifted up to the region of the deity whom he worshipped in life. It goes like, “He who thus knows Rājana (Sāma) as fully established on gods, attains the sphere of these very gods.”²⁰ This supports the dualistic doctrine that absolution consists not in being merged in the Absolute, nor even being assimilated to Him, but in coming near his presence and participating in His glory so that the devotee may be lifted, according to the requirements of the doctrine of *kramamukti*, along with God whom he has worshipped, to the state of highest absolution at the end of time.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, extending support to Rāmānuja says, “When the seer sees the Puruṣa – the golden – hued, creator, lord, and the source of inferior Brahman – there the illumined one completely shakes of both merit and demerit, becomes taintless, and attains absolute equality”²¹ While to Madhva, beatitude consists in being lifted up to the region of the deity and coming to his presence, to Rāmānuja it consists in divine assimilation and in being like him though different from him.

The *Upaniṣad*, of course, contain passages which support the monistic theory of Śaṅkara. The fundamental platform of Śaṅkarite Philosophy is that the universe is One: that there is no difference within it, or without it. From death to death does he go, says *Kaṭhapaniṣad*, who sees difference in this world; non-difference can be perceived only

¹⁹Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II.3.1-6, p155

²⁰ *Chhândogyâ Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), II.20.2

²¹ *Eight Upaniṣads, with the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Muṇḍaka* III.1.3 p141

by the highly trained intellect. It reads like, “What is indeed here is there; what is there is here likewise. He who sees as though there is difference here, goes from death to death”²²

Brahman is alike throughout its structure, and the knowledge of any part of it is the knowledge of the whole. *Chhândogya Upaniṣad* reads, “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 a 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”²³

The same *Upaniṣad* further reads, “...This is Brahman. After departing from here (this body), I shall become identified with this (Brahman). He who has this belief truly, and has no doubt, (He will attain Brahmanhood). This is what Śāṅḍilya says in the days of yore. Śāṅḍilya said this”²⁴ The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* says, “...While he who worships another god thinking, ‘He is one and I am another’, does not know. He is like an animal to the gods”²⁵ and finally the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* teaches the identity of the soul, pent up in the recess of the human heart with the supreme person, and identifies both with the Universe. It goes like, “The Purusa is alone is all this – (comprising) *Karma* and Knowledge. He who knows this supreme, immortal *Brahman*, existing in the heart destroys here the knot of ignorance, O good – looking one.”²⁶ These passages are verily a crux to the Non-advaitic interpreters of the *Upaniṣad*.

²² Ibid., Vol.1, *Kaṭha*, II.1.10, p190

²³ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Chhândogya* VI.1.2-7 p157

²⁴ *Chhândogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), III.14.4 p214

²⁵ *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), tr. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), I.4.10 p100

²⁶ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, II. 1.10 p120

It has been customary among commentators of *Upaniṣad* to regard the variegated philosophical texts as constituting one systematic whole. Thus they have tried to interpret all these texts and have attempted to press all the *Upaniṣadic* texts into the service of the particular dogma they uphold. We, of course, have seen that these texts extend partial support to all of them. But all these views seem to be one-sided, incapable of giving a complete picture of the self

In my work, I have examined if any such unity really exists in these texts. To find if there is any essential picture of the self, underlying all these views, has been the aim of the work. The last issue that I have taken up is - In the midst of all the metaphysical conflicts, we come across in the *Upaniṣads*, what is the core *Upaniṣadic* teaching? Shall our minds be only tossed on the wave of philosophical conflicts, or can we have a ballast which will give the necessary poise to our philosophical speculation? Shall our minds be sunk in the mire of metaphysical conflicts of Pluralism, Qualified Monism and Monism as we find them in the *Upaniṣad*. Is there any, at the basis of these various attempts, at the solution of the central metaphysical problem, one fundamental conception, which will enable us to string together the variegated philosophical speculations of the *Upaniṣad*?

The second problem I have dealt with in my second chapter is epistemological. *Upaniṣads* accepts six *pramanas* or means of valid knowledge viz. *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna*, *śabda*, *anupalabdhi* and *arthāpatti*. All the schools of philosophy have not accepted all these categories. Chārvaka accepts only one i.e. perception or *pratyakṣa* and maintains that there is nothing called *Ātman* as separate from the physical body as it is not given in any kind of perception. Nyāya accepts only four *pramānas* viz. *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna* and *śabda* whereas Sāṅkhya excludes *upamāna* and keeps the rest three.

But the biggest epistemological problem lies within the *Upaniṣad* as it itself maintains that *Ātman* does not come within the general categories of Epistemology. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads* says, "...He is never seen, but is the witness; is never heard but is the Hearer; He is never thought, but is the Thinker; He is never known but is the Knower. There is no

other witness but Him, no other hearer but Him, no other thinker but Him, no other knower but Him. He is the internal ruler, your own immortal self. Everything else but Him is mortal”²⁷

But this raises another fundamental question. Granted that the *Ātman* is the eternal knower, how the knower knows himself? In my work, I have tried to find which epistemological category *Upaniṣad* resort in order to know the *Ātman*. The problem here is that soul has been accepted in *Upaniṣads* as the subject of all knowledge. It is not any kind of object in itself. Thus the epistemological categories are applicable only to the objects of knowledge. Therefore these categories will not be sufficient to grasp Soul. How then we know the soul at all becomes the epistemological problem in *Upaniṣad*.

The last problem I have taken up in the third chapter regarding *Ātman* is ethical. There are mainly four values described in *Upaniṣad* which are called *Puruṣārtha* or the meaning of being a person. In order, they are put as *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma*, and *Mokṣa*.

Dharma, which controls *kāma* and *artha*, generally means righteousness. *Muṇḍaka* says, “Truth alone wins, and not untruth. By truth is laid the path called Devayāna, by which the desireless seers ascend to where exists the supreme treasure attainable through truth”²⁸ In general context, it means *āchāra*, *vyavahāra* and *prāyaścīt* i.e. conduct, dealing with the world and a sense of repentance in mistake. This may be understood as living the right values of life.

Artha primarily implies two things – wealth and meaning. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says, “His vow is that he should not deprecate food”²⁹ Money and material wealth has not been condemned in *Upaniṣad*. Rather it has been accepted as one of the basic assets for life. But wealth becomes a *puruṣārtha* or it acquires a value only when it is earned following

²⁷ *The Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), III.7.23, p354

²⁸ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Muṇḍaka* III.1.6 p146

²⁹ *Ibid. Vol. 1, Taittirīya* III.7.1 p 400

the principles of *dharma* and utilized for right purposes. Both the coming and going of wealth determines its value.

The third *puruṣārtha* is *kāma*. It means enjoyment. To live a meaningful life one must also have enjoyment. But this enjoyment has also to be done within the bounds of *dharma*. So both *artha* and *kāma* is controlled by *dharma*, the right principles of conduct.

The last and the most important *puruṣārthas*, according to *Upaniṣad* is *mokṣa*. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* says “That self is dearer than a son, is dearer than wealth, is dearer than everything else and is innermost. If one were to say to a person who speaks of anything else than the Self as dear he will lose what he holds dear, he would very likely do so. One should meditate on the Self alone as dear. He who meditate on the Self alone as dear, what he holds dear verily will not perish”³⁰ It means liberation from the cycle of birth and death. We all are subject of pain because we are moving in a cycle of birth and death. The final goal of life is to get out of it and regain one’s freedom. This is the final goal of the whole *Upaniṣadic* discourse.

Now these four *puruṣārthas* have been further divided to two classes. *Dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* have been clubbed together and called *Abhyudaya*. The other value *mokṣa* is called *Niḥśreyasa* signifying fulfillment.

Now there are various narratives regarding these *puruṣārthas*. According to *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* virtue is threefold. It reads, “Once upon a time the gods, men and demons all went to their common father, Prajāpati and asked him to communicate to them the knowledge which he possessed. To the gods Prajāpati communicated the syllable *Da*, and having asked them whether they had understood what he had said to them, received the answer that they had understood that they were asked to practice self control (*Dāmyata*), upon which Prajāpati expressed satisfaction. To the men he also communicated the syllable *Da*, and after having asked them whether they had understood

³⁰ Radhakrishnan, S: *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* I.4.8 p167

what he had said to them, received the answer that they had understood that they should practice Charity (*Datta*), upon which Prajāpati said he was satisfied. To the demons likewise, Prajāpati communicated the syllable *Da*, and having asked them whether they had understood what he had said to them, received the answer that they had understood that they should practice compassion (*Dayādham*), upon which Prajāpati expressed satisfaction again”³¹

Again in the *Chhāndogya*, we meet with a different list of virtues. We read “Then those are his austerity, charity, sincerity, non – injury, speaking of truth – they are his *dakṣiṇas*.”³² Then in the same *Upaniṣad* we read, “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 even associates with them”³³

Thus there are many narratives of *Dharma*. Similarly we find narratives on the other values. We shall try to find the essential meaning of the human values and the true significance of *Abhyudaya* and *Niḥśreyasa*.

Thus my work has been divided into five parts comprising of three chapters in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. My introductory part has covered the research problems I have taken up in my work. In the first chapter I have discussed the metaphysical, ontological and psychological aspects of the soul described in the *Upaniṣads*. This has covered the five layers of being as described in the *Upaniṣad*, the exposition of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute and psychological states of waking, dream and deep sleep states.

In the second chapter, I have taken up the Epistemological issues related to *Pramānas* or means of valid knowledge. The meaning of different *pramānas* and their expositions in different schools have been taken up. The use of different *pramānas* in the *Upaniṣad* has

³¹ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) , *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* V.2.1-3 p225

³² *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, III.17.4 p229

³³ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) , *Tattārīya* 1.9 p226

been explored. Their validity and limitations in describing and grasping the *Ātman* has been discussed. This is followed by a discussion on the *Mahāvākayas* and the means to attain the knowledge described in them. The third chapter has been devoted to the ethical issues related to *Upaniṣadic* value system. There is an attempt to form proper definitions of *Nihśreyasa* and *Abhyudaya* having *Ātman* as its locus.

To sum up, all the three dimensions taken up for study i.e. the Metaphysical, Epistemological and Ethical aspects of the *Ātman*, as a matter of fact, have an underlying unity. The nature of epistemology determines the nature of metaphysics in any system. For example, when Charvākas accept perception as the only source of knowledge, matter eventually becomes the only reality. They don't accept consciousness as independently real because it is not given to the sense – perception. Similarly the value – system or Ethics depends upon the metaphysics or the theory of reality associated with the system. Thus I have tried to form a comprehensive view of *Ātman*, in the light of *Upaniṣads*, by combining the metaphysical, epistemological and ethical dimensions of it and have concluded the whole work by giving reasons for my own position.

Chapter One

The Doctrine of *Ātman* as Being in the *Upaniṣads*

In this chapter, I am going to deal with the *Upaniṣadic* treatment of the *Ātman* as being in three domains viz. Ontological, Metaphysical and Psychological. All the major *Upaniṣads* have taken up this vital issue very exhaustively. This issue has been explored from various angles in different *Upaniṣads*. Some *Upaniṣads* like *Taittirīya* have dived into the ontological aspects of it. *Upaniṣads* like *Chhāndogya* have talked about the psychological aspects and some others like *Bṛahadāraṇyaka* have plunged into the metaphysical aspects of the same.

The method employed would be that of 'dialogue'. This is the method employed by the sages in the *Upaniṣads* themselves. Most parts of the *Upaniṣads* are written in the dialogic form. '*Upaniṣad*' literally means 'sitting near to'. One of its imports could be that these texts are consequences of at least two people sitting together and engaging in a dialogue or that one needs to approach a teacher to have a proper understanding of these texts.

Dialogue is possible only when at least two people come together willing to discuss some relevant issue. There can be more than two speakers in a dialogue but if it is less than two, dialogue gets reduced to monologue. There must be at least a minimum amount of agreement and some kind of disagreement between the speakers. Dialogue proceeds on the background of this agreement, through sorting out disagreements, to solution of the problems and evolution of knowledge. Both complete agreement and total disagreement leads to the cessation of the process of dialogue.

The Ontological status of *Ātman* : The *Panćakoṣā*

Ontology is the Philosophical study of the nature of being, existence or reality as such. In *Upaniṣads* too, the problem of ontology has been dealt with very exhaustively. The study of 'Being as such' has been taken in almost all the major *Upaniṣads*. What is the true nature of the existence and more particularly what is the true nature of our own being has been given an intensive treatment.

In the *Upaniṣadic* literature, we find the discussion on the ontological status of the *Ātman* in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. The existence of a human being has been seen as a combination of some 'sheaths'. There is a discussion¹ between Bhr̥gu and his father Varuna in the third part of the *Upaniṣad* regarding *Brahman*, the Ultimate Reality of this universe. It goes as follows:

Bhr̥gu, the well known son of Varuna approached his father with the (formal) request
Bhr̥gu: O revered sir, teach me *Brahman*

Varuna: Food, vital force, eye, ear, mind, speech – these are the aids to the knowledge of *Brahman*. Crave to know well that from which all these beings take birth, that by which they live after being born, that towards which they move and into which they merge. That is *Brahman*.

Bhr̥gu practised concentration and having practiced – realized food (i.e. *Virāt*, the gross cosmic person) as *Brahman*. For its verily from food that all these beings take birth, on food they subsist after being born, and they move towards and merge into food. Having realized that, he again approached his father Varuna with the (formal) request.

Bhr̥gu: O revered sir, teach me *Brahman*.

Varuna: Crave to know well through concentration, concentration is *Brahman*.

Bhr̥gu practised concentration and having practiced – knew the vital force as *Brahman*. For from the vital force, indeed, spring all these beings; having come into being they live through the vital force, they move towards and enter to the vital force. Having realized that, he again approached his father Varuna with the (formal) request.

Bhr̥gu: O revered sir, teach me *Brahman*.

Varuna: Crave to know well through concentration, concentration is *Brahman*.

Bhr̥gu, having practiced concentration – knew the mind as *Brahman*. For from the mind, indeed, spring all these beings; having been born, they are sustained by the mind, and they move towards and merge into the mind. Having known that, he again approached his father Varuna again and made the (formal) request.

Bhr̥gu: O revered sir, teach me *Brahman*.

Varuna: Crave to know well through concentration, concentration is *Brahman*

He practiced concentration. He, having practiced concentration – knew the knowledge as *Brahman*. For from knowledge, indeed, spring all these beings; having been born,

¹ *Eight Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008) *Taittirīya* III.1.1 – III.4.1, p390 – 399

they are sustained by knowledge, and they move towards and merge in knowledge. Having known that, he again approached his father Varuna again and made the (formal) request.

Bhrgu: O revered sir, teach me *Brahman*.

Varuna: Crave to know well through concentration, concentration is *Brahman*.

Bhrgu practiced concentration. He, having practiced concentration – knew Bliss as *Brahman*. For from bliss, indeed all these beings originate; having been born, they are sustained by Bliss, they move towards and merge into Bliss.

Moreover, a visible result is being vouchsafed for him: *annavān* has to be taken in the sense of one who is possessed of plenty of food, since knowledge would get no credit if the term meant simply possession of food as such, for that is a patent fact in the case of everybody. Similarly *annādah* (derived in the sense of an eater of food), means that he is blest with good digestion. *Mahān bhavati*, he becomes great. In what does the greatness consist? The answer is *prajayā*, in sons etc. *paśubhih*, in cows, horses etc.; *brahmavarācasena*, in the luster resulting from the control of external and internal organs, knowledge etc. He becomes *mahān*, the great; *kirtyā*, through fame due to a virtuous life.

So, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* moves from lower reality of food or *anna* through *prāna* – the vital air, *mana* – the mind, and *vijāñāna* – the intelligence to the highest reality of *ānanda* – the supreme bliss in enumerating the Ultimate reality of this existence.

Now in the same *Upaniṣad*, human being has been described as a combination of five sheaths each consisting of one of these elements. It reads as follows;

“All beings that rest on the earth are born verily from food. Besides they live on food, and at the end they get merged in food. Food was verily born before all creatures; therefore it is called the medicine for all. Those who worship food as *Brahman* acquire all the food. Food was verily born before all creatures; therefore it is called

the medicine for all. Creatures are born of food; being they grow by food. Since it is eaten and it eats the creatures, therefore it is called food.”²

As compared with this self made of the essence of food, as said before, there is another inner self, which is made of air. By that this one is filled. That (self) which is this, is also verily of the human form. Its human form takes after the human form that (earlier one). Of this *prāna* is indeed the head, *vyāna* is the right side, *apāna* is the left side, space is the self the earth is the tail that stabilizes.

The senses act by following the vital force in the mouth; all human beings and animals that are there act similarly; since on the vital force depends the life of all creatures, therefore it is called the life of all. Those who worship the vital force as *Brahman* attain the full span of life. Since on the vital force depends the life of all. The next verse reads as follows –

Of the preceding (physical) one, this one, indeed, is the embodied self. As compared with the vital body there is another internal self constituted by the mind. By that one is this one filled up That self which is this, is also of a human shape. The human shape of this (mental body) takes after the human shape of that (vital body). Of that (mental body), the *Yajur-mantras* are the head. The *Rg-mantras* are the right side, the *Sāma-mantras* are the left side, the *Brāhman* portion is the self (trunk), the mantras seen by *Atharvāngiras* are the stabilizing tail. The next verse reads –

“One is not subjected to fear at any time if one knows the bliss that is *Brahman*, failing to reach which (*Brahman*, as conditioned by the mind), words along with the mind turn back.”³

Of that preceding (vital) one, this (mental) one is verily the embodied self. As compared with this mental body, there is another internal self constituted by valid knowledge. By that one is this one filled up. This one, as aforesaid, has verily a human shape. It is humanly shaped in accordance with the human shape of the earlier

²*Eight Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008), *Tattirīya* II.2.1, p324

³ *Ibid. Tattirīya* II.4.1, p334

one. Of him, faith is verily the head; righteousness is the right side; truth is the left side; concentration is the self (trunk), (the principle called) *mahat* is the stabilizing tail. The next verse reads as follows –

“Knowledge actualizes a sacrifice, and it executes the duties as well. All gods meditate on the first born *Brahmā*, conditioned by knowledge. If one knows the knowledge – *Brahman*, and if one does not err about it, one abandons all sins in the body and fully enjoys all enjoyable things.”⁴

Of that preceding (mental) one, this (cognitive) one is verily the embodied self. As compared with this cognitive body, there is another internal self constituted by bliss. By that one is this one filled up. This one, as aforesaid, has verily a human shape. It is humanly shaped in accordance with the human shape of the earlier one. Of him, joy is verily the head; enjoyment is the right side; hilarity is the left side; bliss is the self (trunk), *Brahman* is the tail that stabilizes.

Thus in these verses we find that *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* not only moves from lower reality of food to the highest reality of bliss in describing the Ultimate reality of the Universe but also describes every human being as a combination of ‘sheaths’ made of these elements respectively. The ‘being’ of a man is split into five distinct layers.

If self is taken in this five – fold form, it indicates some kind of pluralism with profound unity. This is a dualism not in the sense in which *Viśiṣṭādvaitva* or *Dvaita Vedānta* describes souls and their separateness from *Brahman* but as a deviation from *Advaitins* One, homogenous, all – pervading and non – dual self. The rest of the bodies exist within the physical body itself. It obviously indicates a limitation of the self in terms of space. Some kind of plurality of the selves, in alignment with *Dvaita*, can also be read as self is limited to the body and there are many human bodies in the world. But this notion five – fold self is not entertained by *Advaitins*. They think that this theory of self comprising of five – sheaths is ‘built upon ignorance’.

⁴ *Eight Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Sankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008), *Taittirīya* II.5.1, p336

Advaitins did not reject the 'kośas' as such but enumerated them as having mere ideal existence. According to them, we have to discriminate the five different *kośas* in thought (*viveka*) and move beyond the physical body, beyond the vital energy, beyond the mind, the intellect and even beyond the bliss – layer to find our true Self.

This of course can be seen as an implication of the discussion that proceeds between Bhṛgu and Varuna in the succeeding chapter of the *Upaniṣad*. We can clearly see that the ultimate reality or *Brahman* has 'not' been identified with the body, the vital energy, the mind or the intellect. They do not represent the ultimate substratum of existence. So, probably 'sheaths' constituting of these elements cannot be called 'sheaths' of *Ātman* – the ultimate.

But the *Upaniṣad* is not clear as to whether it identifies the Ultimate with the Bliss – layer since the dialogue does not give any conclusive remark as to whether Varuna was satisfied with the answer or not. It is only told this piece of knowledge shall be forever mysteriously known as the *Bhārgavi Vāruni Vidyā* and that this is 'exalted in the highest heaven' meaning thereby that it is honored as among the best of knowledge.

Advaitins waver, however, in deciding as to whether we should identify the *Brahman* with the bliss – layer or whether we should penetrate beyond it to find *Brahman*. While commenting on *Taittirīya* verse II.2, he writes, "*Brahman* which is the inmost of all the selves beginning from the physical sheath and ending with the blissful one - as the indwelling Self, by following a process of elimination the five sheaths just as rice is extracted from grain called *kodrava* which has many husks."⁵ But while commenting *Taittirīya* verse III.6 he writes, "*sā, eśā*, this then is; the *vidyā*, knowledge; (which was) *bhārgavi*, realized by Bhṛgu; and *vāruni*, imparted by varuna; commencing from the self constituted by food, *pratiṣṭhitā*, culminates; in the supreme, non-dual bliss that is lodged *parame vyoman*, in the cavity that is the supreme space within the heart. Anybody else, too who realizes the bliss that is *Brahman* by entering through this very process and through alone as his aid – that

⁵ *Eight Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008), *Taittirīya* II.2.1p326



man, too, in consequence of his knowledge culminating thus gets established in the bliss that is the supreme *Brahman*; that is to say, he becomes *Brahman* itself"⁶.

The Metaphysical status of *Ātman* as Being in the *Upaniṣads*:

The metaphysical doctrine forms the most interesting of all the discourses on *Ātman* as 'Being' in the *Upaniṣad*. The metaphysical status of the *Ātman* has been described as *Sat- Ātman- Ānanda* literally meaning Existence- Consciousness- Bliss Absolute. This implies *Ātman* is the all pervading reality, it is full of knowledge and is the source of infinite joy. The first *śloka* of *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* says, "Om, all this whatever moves on the earth, is enveloped by the Supreme Being. Protect yourself through that detachment. Do not covet anybody's wealth"⁷. Thus *Ātman* is limited neither by space or by time. True nature of every being is therefore blissful.

Till now we have seen the ontological and metaphysical expositions of the *Ātman* by the *Upaniṣads*, with reference to some of the selected passages. But the problem is that, when all the major *Upaniṣads* are taken together, we do not find a clear picture of the self emerging out of the very texts of the *Upaniṣads*. We find, in ontological and metaphysical description of the self, both dualistic and monistic passages in them. There are many passages extending support to the dualistic position of Madhva maintaining entire disparateness of the individual and the Universal soul. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says "In this world there are two souls which taste the fruit of action, both of which are lodged in the recess of human heart, and which are as different from each other as light and shade."⁸

Mundaka Upaniṣad further adds, "There are two birds, companions and friends, both sitting on the same tree, of which one partakes, of sweet fruit of the tree, while the other without eating merely looks on."⁹ The noteworthy in the passage is – how can we regard the Universal Self as enjoying the fruit of action? The enjoyment of the

⁶ Ibid. *Taittirīya* III.6.1 p399

⁷ *Eight Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008), *Īśa*1, p4

⁸ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Kaṭha*, I.3.1, p150

⁹ Ibid., *Mundaka* III.1.1, p151

fruit of action could be predicted only about the individual self and not about the Universal Self which must be regarded as above such enjoyment. Hence, it was probable, that *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* relieved the Universal Self of the burden of enjoyment of the fruits of such action, and laid the fact of enjoyment at the door of the individual soul. In any case it is worthwhile noting that the individual self is in the above passage spoken of as being entirely distinct from the Universal Self.

Then again when they speak about the existence of a Supreme Being, who is the creator, the preserver and the destroyer of the universe, who exists as a personal being and as over lord of all the souls who are his servants, they have ample justification in the passages like the one from *Śvetāśvatara* which tells us that, “There is a single God, who is hidden in all beings, who pervades all and who is the inner Soul of all souls.”¹⁰ The same *Upaniṣad* further reads, “Beyond this *Puruṣa* 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 cranny of the universe”¹¹

The last passage from *Śvetāśvatara* reads, “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.”¹² Such a theory of the sovereignty of the Supreme Being over organic as well as inorganic nature brings in its train a realistic theory of creation which tells us that “... Crave to know well that from which all these beings take birth, that by which they live after being born, that toward which they move and into which they merge. That is Brahman.”¹³ All inorganic nature was created by Him, “... From that Brahman indeed, which is the self, was produced space. From space emerged air. From air was born fire. From fire was created water. From water sprang up earth. From earth were born the herbs. From the herb was produced food. From food was born man”¹⁴

¹⁰ Ibid., *Śvetāśvatara* VI.2, p151

¹¹ Ibid., *Śvetāśvatara*, III.9, p151

¹² Ibid., III.3, p151

¹³ *Eight Upaniṣads, with the Commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008), *Tattirīya*, III.1.1 p391

¹⁴ Ibid., II.1.1, p304

This kind of passage which seems to extend support to the realistic account of the creation is really an obstacle to those who try to make creation merely an appearance or illusion. It is true that Śaṅkara tries to explain the ablative implied in 'yatovā' or 'tasmādva' as being *Adhiṣṭhāna – pañcami*, Rāmānuja trying to explain it as merely *Upādāna – pañcami*, while Madhva explains it truly as *Nimitta – pañcami*. This is as much as to say that while according to Śaṅkara the *Ātman* or the Ultimate Reality stands behind the Universe as the support or the substratum of the all creation which merely appears on it. According to Rāmānuja, *Ātman* is the material cause of the universe as gold of gold – ornaments or earth of earthen – ware in quite a realistic manner, while according to Madhva, the *Ātman* or the Supreme Soul is the creator of the universe or the instrumental cause of its unfoldment.

Regarding the immortality of the Soul, many passages seem to extend support to dualistic theories. A passage from *Chhāndogya* tells us that the worshipper is lifted up to the region of the deity whom he worshipped in life. It goes like, "He who thus knows Rājana (Sāma) as fully established on gods, attains the sphere of these very gods."¹⁵ This supports the dualistic doctrine that absolution consists not in being merged in the Absolute, nor even being assimilated to Him, but in coming near his presence and participating in His glory so that the devotee may be lifted, according to the requirements of the doctrine of *kramamukti*, along with God whom he has worshipped, to the state of highest absolution at the end of time.

Rāmānuja comes very close to Madhva in maintaining the utter disperateness of the individual soul and *Brahman*. They seem to agree on issues like the reality of this creation and the doctrine of immortality. But Rāmānuja differs from Madhva in regarding the Absolute to be the nature of triune – a sort of philosophical tripod composed of nature, individual soul and *Brahman*. As regards the relation of individual self and *Brahman*, he disagrees with Madhva in agrees maintaining a qualitative monism but shakes hands with him in retaining a numerical pluralism.

For this doctrine of threefold unity, Rāmānuja finds ample justification in the passage from the *Śvetāśvatara* which tells us that there are, "Three ultimate existences, all of

¹⁵ *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), II.20.2,p134

them eternal and all together constituting the Absolute, namely, the powerless unknowing soul, the powerful knowing Brahman, and the eternal *prakṛti*, which exists for the enjoyment of the individual, and from which he receives recompense for his works.”¹⁶

And yet again that “Man need to know only 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”¹⁷

Thus we see that Absolute of Rāmānuja consists of *Ātman* (soul), *Aśit* (nature) and *Ātman*. Rāmānuja's Philosophy and we find support to it coming from the *Upaniṣadic* texts. Rāmānuja's descriptions of *Ātman's* relation to *aśit* or nature seems to find some support from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. The *Upaniṣad* reads, "In fire, in the intermundia, 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 *prāna*, 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, the immortal. He is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought, the understood understander; 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 understander; He is thy soul, the inner controller, the immortal. Everything besides them is naught"¹⁸

So, Supreme Being is the *Antaryāmin* i.e. all-knower of the universe. He lives inside and governs the Universe from within. This doctrine of the *Antaryāmin*, which is advanced in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in the conversation between Uddālaka Āruni and Yajñavalkya supports the fundamental position of Rāmānuja's philosophy, when he calls *Ātman* the soul of *aśit*. ‘What is the thread by which thus world and the other world and all the things therein are held together?’ and ‘Who is the controller of thread of this world and other world and all the things therein?’ are the two celebrated questions which are discussed.

¹⁶ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968), *Śvetāśvatara*, 1.9, p153

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, *Śvetāśvatara* I.12, p153

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, III.7, p154

Yājñavalkya answered the first question by saying that Air might be regarded as the thread by which this world and the other world and all other things therein are held together. The second question was answered by saying *Brahman* is the pervade of that ether "That, O Gārgi, which is above heaven and below the earth, which is this heaven and earth and as well as between them, and which they say was, is and will be, is pervaded by the unmanifested ether alone"¹⁹ In this way Yājñavalkya declares the Principle within, the inner controller of this universe as the all- pervading *Ātman*.

Tattirīya also comes up with its own passage extending support to Rāmānuja. It reads "...That (*Brahman*) having created that, entered into that very thing. And having entered there, it became the formed and the formless, the defined and the undefined, the sustaining and the non – sustaining, the sentient and the insentient, the true and the untrue. Truth became all this that there is. They call that (*Brahman*) Truth"²⁰ This quote also adds to that The Supreme Being is in all things whatsoever, even in apparent contradictories. The whole of *acit* (nature) is not only a creation of the Supreme but also his garment. It is filled and inspired by Him who is it's inner controller and Soul.

Rāmānuja's position on the relation of the *cit* (individual souls) and *Ātman* (The Supreme Being) also finds support from the *Upaniṣads*, in the same way as we have seen regarding the relation of *acit* and *Ātman*.

We are told in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* by the help of a simile which is oft repeated in the *Upaniṣad* that "This Self, already mentioned, is the ruler of all beings, and the king of all beings. Just as all the spokes are fixed in the nave and the felloe of a chariot wheel, so are all being, all gods, all worlds, all organs and all these individual selves are fixed in this Self."²¹

¹⁹ *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr.Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata:Advaita Ashrama, 2009),III.8.7,p359

²⁰ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009),*Taittirīya* II.6.1, p344

²¹ *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr.Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata:Advaita Ashrama, 2009) II.5.15 p272

In another passage, the same *Upaniṣad* tells us, by a change of metaphor, that “As a spider moves along the thread (it produces), and as from a fire tiny sparks fly in all directions, so from this Self emanates all organs, all worlds, all gods and all beings. Its secret name (*Upaniṣad*) is ‘the Truth of truth.’ The vital force is truth and it is the Truth of that”²² In these passages we are told how *Brahman* may be regarded as the Soul of souls and we are also unmistakably told that the Supreme soul is the Real of the reals.

This is corroborated by another passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* which tells us that Supreme 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.”²³ Both the moving and the stationary are thus the forms of Supreme; this is much as to say, that Supreme 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 governor.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, extending support to Rāmānuja says, “When the seer sees the *Puruṣa* – the golden – hued, creator, lord, and the source of inferior Brahman – there the illumined one completely shakes of both merit and demerit, becomes taintless, and attains absolute equality”²⁴ While to Madhva, beatitude consists in being lifted up to the region of the deity and coming to his presence, to Rāmānuja it consists in divine assimilation and in being like him though different from him.

The *Upaniṣads*, of course, contain passages which support the monistic theory of Śaṅkara. The fundamental platform of Śaṅkarite Philosophy is that the universe is One: that there is no difference within it, or without it. From death to death does he go, says *Kāthopaniṣad*, who sees difference in this world; non-difference can be perceived only by the highly trained intellect. It reads like, “What is indeed here is

²² Ibid. II.1.20 p202

²³ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II.3.1-6, p155

²⁴ *Eight Upaniṣads, with the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Muṇḍaka* III.1.3 p141

there; what is there is here likewise. He who sees as though there is difference here, goes from death to death”²⁵

Brahman is alike throughout its structure, and the knowledge of any part of it is the knowledge of the whole. *Chhândogyâ Upaniṣad* reads, “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 a 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”²⁶

The same *Upaniṣad* further reads, “...This is *Brahman*. After departing from here (this body), I shall become identified with this (*Brahman*). He who has this belief truly, and has no doubt, (He will attain Brahmanhood). This is what Śāṅḍilya says in the days of yore. Śāṅḍilya said this”²⁷ The *Bṛhadâraṇyaka* says, “...While he who worships another god thinking, ‘He is one and I am another’, does not know. He is like an animal to the gods”²⁸ and finally the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* teaches the identity of the soul, pent up in the recess of the human heart with the supreme person, and identifies both with the Universe. It goes like, “The *Puruṣa* is alone is all this – (comprising) *Karma* and Knowledge. He who knows this supreme, immortal *Brahman*, existing in the heart destroys here the knot of ignorance, O good – looking one.”²⁹ These passages are verily a crux to the *advaitic* interpreters of the *Upaniṣads*. In one passage of *Bṛhadâraṇyaka*, during one conversation with Maitreyi, Yājñavalkya says, “All this brâhmanhood, all these Kṣtriyahood, all these worlds, all these *devas*, all these beings, in fact all that exists is *Ātman*. 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

²⁵ Ibid., Vol.1, *Kaṭha*, II.1.10, p190

²⁶ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Chhândogyâ* VI.1.2-7 p157

²⁷ *Chhândogyâ Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarâcârya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), III.14.4 p214

²⁸ *The Bṛhadâraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarâcârya*, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), tr. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), I.4.10 p100

²⁹ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarâcârya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, II. 1.10 p120

the drum, the sound become grasped; just as when a conch- shell is being blown, one is unable to grasp the external sound, but by grasping the conch- shell or the blower of the conch-shell, the sound become 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 player of the lute, the sound becomes grasped"³⁰ Similarly in case of the knowledge of the external world, if one is not able to grasp the external world as it is in itself, by grasping the mind or by grasping the Atman, the external world becomes grasped. This later statement is, of course, implied and not explicitly expressed.

In another passage of the same *Upaniṣad*, Yājñavalkya tells Maitreyi that *Ātman* is the only knower and that it could not be known by anyone except itself. The passage goes like -

"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 *Ātman* 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?"³¹

This passage seems to have some kind of a monistic import extending support to Absolutism.

Again, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* describes Absolute as " neither gross nor fine, neither short nor long, nether glowing red (like fire) nor adhesive (like water). It is neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor space, unattached, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without voice, without mind, without radiance, without breath, without a mouth, without measure, having no within and no without. It eats nothing and no one eats it"³² and to this *Kaṭha* adds that *Brahman* is " sound-

³⁰ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, II.4.6-9, p198-199

³¹ Ibid., *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, II,4.14, p201

³² Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, III.8.8,p 232

less, touch-less, colourless, undiminishing, and also tasteless, eternal, odourless, without beginning and without end, distinct from *Mahat*, and ever constant."³³

Muṇḍaka further says that *Brahman* is "Unpointable, ungraspable, without family and without caste, without eye and without ear, without hands and without feet, eternal, all-pervading and omnipresent, extremely subtle, imperishable, and the source of all-beings"³⁴

These passages seem to go towards the famous '*neti neti*' of the advaitins.

It has been customary among commentators of *Upaniṣud* to regard the variegated philosophical texts as constituting one systematic whole. Thus they have tried to interpret all these texts and have attempted to press all the *Upaniṣadic* texts into the service of the particular dogma they uphold. We, but in the above discussion, have seen that these texts extend partial support to all of them. Thus all these views seem to be one-sided, incapable of giving a complete picture of the *Upaniṣadic* thought.

So the part that remains is to see if any such unity really exists in these texts. To find if there is any essential picture of the self, underlying all these views, will be the next aim of any further discussion. Thus the issue that I would like to take up is - In the midst of all the metaphysical conflicts, we come across in the *Upaniṣads*, what is the core *Upaniṣadic* teaching? Shall our minds be only tossed on the wave of philosophical conflicts, or can we have a ballast which will give the necessary poise to our philosophical speculation? Shall our minds be only tossed in the mire of metaphysical conflicts of Pluralism, Qualified Monism and Monism as we find them in the *Upaniṣads*. Is there any, at the basis of these various attempts, at the solution of the central metaphysical problem, one fundamental conception, which will enable us to string together the variegated philosophical speculations of the *Upaniṣads* this needs to be seen.

³³ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Kaṭha*, 1.3.15, p176

³⁴ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Muṇḍaka*, I.1.6, p 160

The Psychological status of *Ātman* as Being in the *Upaniṣads* :

The word Psychology literally means, 'study of the soul'. Psyche, means 'breath', 'spirit', or 'soul' and logia (λογία) refers to 'study' or 'research' of . The Latin word psychologia was first used by the Croatian humanist and Latinist Marko Marulić in his book, *Psichologia de ratione animae humanae* in the late 15th century or early 16th century³⁵. The earliest known reference to the word psychology in English was by Steven Blankaart in 1693 in *The Physical Dictionary* which refers to 'Anatomy, which treats of the Body, and Psychology, which treats of the Soul'³⁶.

The study of psychology in philosophical context dates back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, China, India, and Persia. Historians point to the writings of ancient Greek philosophers, such as Thales, Plato, and Aristotle (especially in his *De Anima* treatise), as the first significant body of work in the West to be rich in psychological thought.

In this section, I will make an attempt to see how the *Upaniṣadic* philosophers reached the idea of Ultimate Reality by psychological method. For this purpose, we need to look at the very famous parable in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which unmistakably tells us how we must arrive at the conception of the Self-conscious Being within us as constituting the Ultimate Reality. In a very subtle analysis of the psychological states, through which a man's soul passes, the author of that *Upaniṣad* brings out how the Ultimate Reality must not be mistaken with bodily consciousness; how it must not be confused with the dream – consciousness; how it transcends even the deep – sleep – consciousness; how finally it is pure Self – consciousness which is beyond all bodily and mental limitations.

As the parable³⁷ goes – Once upon a time, both gods and demons were anxious to learn the nature of Ultimate Reality, and they therefore went in pursuit of it to Prajāpati. Prajāpati had maintained that "That entity which is free from sin, free from old age free from death and grief, free from hunger and thirst which desires nothing

³⁵ <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/psychology> retrieved on Dec1, 2010

³⁶ Ibid, retrieved on Dec3, 2010

³⁷ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Chhāndogya* VIII.7-12, p196

and imagines nothing, must be regarded as the Ultimate Self.”The gods and demons were anxious to know what this Self was. So the gods send Indra and demons Virocana as their emissaries to learn the final truth from Prajapati. They dwelt there as pupils at first for a period of thirty two years, which condition was necessary before a master could impart Ultimate knowledge to their disciples. Then Prajapati asked them what it was that had brought them there. Indra and Virocana told him that they had come to him in order that they might know the nature of the self.

Now Prajapati would not immediately tell them the final truth. He tried to delude them by saying that the self was nothing more than the image that we see in the eye, in water or on a mirror. It was this he said, which must be regarded as the immortal and fearless *Brahman*. Indra and Virocana became complacent in the belief that they had understood the nature of the Self.

They bedecked themselves by putting on excellent cloths and ornaments, cleaned themselves, looked into a water pan, and imagined they had visualized the Ultimate Self, and went altogether composed in mind. Virocana told the demons that he had been in possession of the Ultimate secret, namely, that the so called Self was no other than the image that one sees in the eye, in a mirror or in a pan of water, thus identifying the self with the mere image of the body.

The *Upanisad* tells us how there are certain set of people who take this as final gospel, which it calls the gospel of the *asuras*. There must be a slight reference to those, who, like the later Charvākas, maintained that self was nothing more than the mere consciousness of body. Indra, however, unlike Virocana, bethought himself that Prajapati must not have given him the final answer in the matters of knowledge of Ultimate reality. There was this difficulty that pressed itself before him. “It is true” he said, “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?” He thought that there was this great difficulty in the teaching that had been imparted to him by Prajapati. So, he went back to Prajapati to request him once more to tell him what Ultimate reality was.

Prajāpati advised him to practice penance once more for thirty two years, and, when Indra had performed that penance, Prajāpati supplied him with another piece of knowledge. He said, "The true Self is he who moves about happy in dreams. He is the immortal, the fearless Brahman." In fact Prajāpati told him that dream consciousness must be regarded as identical with the Self. This seemed to please Indra and he went back; but before he reached the gods he saw again that there was another difficulty in the information that had been imparted to him by Prajāpati. He asked himself, "Do we not feel, as if we are struck or chased in our dreams? Do we not experience, 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?" So he went back to Prajāpati again, and told him that the knowledge which he had imparted to him could not be final, inasmuch as the dream consciousness seemed to him to be affected with feelings of pain and fear. The true Self could experience neither pain nor fear.

Prajāpati saw that Indra was a pupil worthy to know better things, and so he asked him once more to practice penance for another thirty two years, at the end of which time he imparted him another piece of knowledge which was yet not the highest knowledge, namely, when he said, that the true Self must be regarded as identical with the deep – sleep consciousness in which there is perfect repose and perfect rest. Indra was satisfied with the answer which Prajāpati had given and returned.

But before he reached the gods, he again saw that the real self could not be identified even with deep – sleep consciousness for the simple reason that in deep – sleep we are conscious neither of our own selves nor of objects. In fact, in deep – sleep we are only as if we were only logs of wood. There is neither consciousness of self nor consciousness of the objective world. Feeling this great difficulty in the teaching that had been imparted to him by Prajāpati, he went back again and told him that he could not be satisfied with the knowledge which had been imparted to him, namely that the Ultimate self was to be found in the consciousness of deep – sleep . For, he said, in that state there was neither self – consciousness nor any consciousness of the objective world; and it seemed as if the soul was entirely annihilated in that state. This could not be regarded, said Indra, as the final wisdom.

Prajāpati now saw that Indra by his shrewd insight had made himself worthy of receiving the highest knowledge. So he asked Indra once more, and this time finally, to practice penance for five years again. Indra practiced penance for five years, thus completing the round of penance for a hundred and one years.

At the end of that period, he went in all humility to Prajāpati, and implored him to give him an insight into the final knowledge. Prajāpati said, “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 this 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 this serene being, namely, 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”.

There is here an indication of the true nature of the 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 – that must be regarded as the final reality. The final reality therefore, according to *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* is reached in that theoretic, ecstatic, self – spectacular state in which the Self is conscious of nothing but itself.

There is a great meaning that runs through this parable. By an analysis of the different states of consciousness, the philosopher of the *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* points out that the bodily consciousness must not be mistaken for final reality, nor the consciousness in dream, nor that in deep sleep. The soul is of the nature of pure deep consciousness. The soul is of the nature of pure Self – consciousness.

Those who mistake the ultimate Self as identical with bodily consciousness are materialists. Those who identify it with the consciousness in the dream state rise a little higher no doubt but then that state is also not perfect. Those, on the other hand, who regard the self as identical with deep – sleep consciousness also misunderstood its nature, because there is, in that state, no consciousness either of the objective world or of the Self. The true Self could only be the Self – conscious Being, shining

in his native light, thinking of nothing but his own thought. *Upaniṣads* calls this state – *Turīya*.

Another example is found in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* where there is a discussion between king Janaka and Yājñavalkya where he discusses the Psychological method of knowing the Soul. Janaka approached Yājñavalkya with the expositions of some other sages. He tells Yājñavalkya that according to Jitvan Śailini speech is the Ultimate Reality. Yājñavalkya replied that this is only a partial truth. Then king Janaka says that Udaṅka Śaulbāyana had said to him that breath was the Ultimate Reality. This also was rejected by Yājñavalkya as partial Truth. Then he said that 'eye' is the final reality as told to him by Varku Vārṣni. Yājñavalkya said that even this was not the final reality. Then the king went onto say how Gardābhi vipita Bhāradvāja had told him that the ear was the final reality; how Satyakāma Jābāla had said that the mind was the final reality; how Vidagdha Śākalya had told him that the heart was the final reality; - all of which were rejected by Yājñavalkya as a partial truth.

In this exposition, where many opinions coming from different philosophers as regards various physiological and psychological categories have been rejected as the Ultimate constituent of not with the accidental adjuncts, with which the Self might be clothed.

The *Kena Upaniṣad* enumerates the same point in a different way. The *Upaniṣad* reads, "That which speech is unable to give out, but that which itself gives out speech, know that to be The Ultimate Reality, not 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 to perceive the ear, that which the breath is not able to breathe, but that by which breath itself is breathed, know that to be the final reality."³⁸

³⁸ Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968) *Kena*, 1.2-8, p193

In a nutshell, *Upaniṣads* reject the known psychological states of *jāgrata* i. e. waking, *śvapna* i.e. dream and *susupti* i.e. deep sleep states as final states of Being and goes onto describe a fourth state called *turiya* as the Final one.

Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad takes up the four states of consciousness in detail. The *āgama prakarana* reads, “All this is surely *Brahman*. This self is *Brahman*. The Self such as it is, is possessed of four quarters”³⁹ Then it goes onto explain the states one by one.

“The first quarter is *Vaiśvānara* whose sphere (of action) is the waking state, whose consciousness relates to the external things”⁴⁰. This is our mundane plane of existence that we assume to be the most real. Here consciousness is directed mainly towards external things. We become both actor and enjoyer or sufferer.

“*Taijasa* is the second quarter whose sphere (of activity) is the dream state whose consciousness internal, who is possessed of seven limbs and nineteen mouths and who enjoys the subtle objects”⁴¹ Śaṅkara opines “The consciousness of the waking state though it is only a state of mental vibrations, is associated with many means, and it appears to be engrossed in external objects, and thus it leaves in the mind the corresponding impressions. Under the impulsion of ignorance, desire and (past) action, that mind thus possessed of the impressions like a piece of painted canvas, makes its appearance (in the dream state) just as in the waking state but without any external means.”⁴²

Deep sleep is the state where there is no dream. This state is devoid of any desire. This is called *Prājña* who has deep sleep in his sphere. Here everything within the person becomes undifferentiated. He becomes the mass of mere consciousness and abounds in bliss.

But going beyond all these three, *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad* talks about a fourth state called *Turiya*. It reads as follows, “They consider the fourth to be that which is not conscious of the internal world, nor conscious of the external world, nor conscious of both the

³⁹ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Māṇḍukya Āgama2*, p175

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3, p176

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 4, p180

⁴² *Ibid.*, Śaṅkaras commentary on *Māṇḍukya 4*, p180

worlds, nor a mass of consciousness, nor consciousness, nor unconscious which is unseen, beyond empirical dealings, beyond the grasp (of the organs of action), uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable; whose valid proof consists in the single belief in the Self; in which all phenomena cease; which is unchanging, auspicious and non – dual. That is the self and that is to be known.”⁴³

The first two states are not true experiences of reality and truth because of their dualistic natures of subject and object, self and not-self, ego and non-ego. In the third state, dreamless sleep, one is not conscious of external or internal objects; however, that does not mean consciousness is not present there. It is like saying 'I don't see anything in darkness'. The recognition that I don't see anything is what I 'see'. So also in dreamless sleep, one is not conscious of anything and the very fact that this statement is true proves the existence of consciousness during deep sleep.

In the waking consciousness there is a sense of 'I' (self identity) and awareness of thoughts. In the sleep or dream state there is no or little sense of 'I' but there are thoughts and awareness of thoughts. In the deep sleep state there is no awareness of thoughts or 'I'. In *Turīya* there is awareness of the undifferentiated 'I' but there are no thoughts. This is what makes it unique from the other three states. *Upaniṣadic* seers maintain that the unchanging non- dual One is the ordainer – the Lord in the matter of eradicating all sorrows. The effulgent *Turīya* is held to be the all- pervasive source of all objects.

The whole debate of metaphysics between different commentators of *Upaniṣads* leaves us only in utter confusion. I have already discussed, in detail, the positions of Madhva, Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara and the partial supports that they get from *Upaniṣads*. Though six radical interpretations of Vedānta have been accepted in Indian Philosophy, we can categorize them to Theistic and Absolutistic. Śaṅkara is the only champion of Absolutism and Rāmānuja can be taken up as the representative of the theistic schools.

⁴³*Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Māṇḍūkya* 7, p200

In brief, their debate can be summarized in few points. First of all, following Bādarāyana, both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja reject theories which explain the world either as a product of the material elements which by themselves combine together to form the objects or as a transformation of an unconscious nature that spontaneously evolve all objects. Both agree that unconscious cause cannot produce the world.

Śaṅkara accepts the *Brahman* or the Final Reality as One without second. That is *nirguṇa* or devoid of any quality in the final sense. Then the world cannot be understood as a product of two kinds of independent reality such as matter and God, one of which is the material and, the other the efficient cause which creates the world out of the first. Both take their stand on *Upaniṣadic* view that 'All is Brahman' (*Sarva khalu idam Brahma*), and matter and mind are not absolute independent realities but grounded in the same *Brahman*.

This *Brahman*, reflected in or conditioned by *māyā* is called *Īśvara* or God. *Īśvara* is *Brahman* associated with its potency (*śakti*) *māyā* or *mūlavidyā*. *Īśvara* is the personal aspect of impersonal *Brahman*. This is the how Śaṅkara distinguishes God from Absolute, following the *Upaniṣads*. *Īśvara* is also known as *Apara Brahma* or Lower *Brahman* as contrasted with unconditioned *Brahman* which is called *Para Brahma* or Higher *Brahman*. Therefore any attempt to grasp *Brahman* through the categories of our intellect, ends up grasping only *Īśvara*. Even the words 'unconditioned *Brahman*' refers only to 'conditioned *Īśvara*, for the moment we speak of *Brahman*, he ceases to be *Brahman* and becomes *Īśvara*. He pervades the world, but is not exhausted in it. He, being both immanent and transcendent, is also beyond it. *Īśvara* is *Sat – Īt – Ānanda* or Existence – knowledge – Bliss absolute.

Ātman is another term denoting the Ultimate. There is no difference between *Ātman* and *Brahman*. It is the supreme Self that stands self revealed as the background of all affirmations and denials. Looking from the subjective stand, the *Brahman* is called *Ātman*.

For Rāmānuja *Brahman* is *saguṇa* and he identifies that Absolute with Lord *Viṣṇu*. For him God or Absolute lives in *Vaikunṭha* with his consort Laxmi. Madhva and other *Vaiṣṇava* Vedāntins have also taken almost the same position. In his *Ācintya*

Bhedābheda, Śrī Caitanya puts the Ultimate only as *saguna*. He identifies it with Sri Kṛṣṇa. Vallabhācārya also talks of Sri Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate. Thus the first radical difference is that one accept *Brahman* as *saguna* and other as *nirguna*.

There are three kinds of *bhedas* or differences accepted in Indian philosophy. The first one is called *vijātiya bheda*. It is the difference between two objects of two different classes. For example the difference between a cow and a horse is called *vijātiya bheda*. The next one is called *sajātiya bheda*. It is the difference between two objects of the same class. Thus the difference between one cow and the other cow is called *sajātiya bheda*. The final kind of difference is called *svagata bheda*. It is the difference between the different parts of the same object. For example, the difference between the tail and the leg of the same cow is called *svagata bheda*. Now according to Rāmānuja, though there is no *sajātiya or vijātiya bheda* in *Brahman*, there is *svagata bheda* in it.

For Śaṅkara, *Brahman* can be understood only in negative terms called 'neti - neti' or 'not this, not this'. When *Brahman* appears as *Īśvara*, He is understood as *Sat – Āt – Ānanda* or Existence – Knowledge – Bliss Absolute. These are not the qualities of *Brahman* but the very nature of its Being. But for Rāmānuja, the ultimate is *saguna* or qualified. His qualities like knowledge power and mercy etc. are eternal, infinite, numberless, unlimited, undefiled and matchless. He appears in five different forms for His devotees, but in none of them He is *nirguna*, as advocated by Śaṅkara.

But for Rāmānuja, *Brahman* is God and he is not a formless identity but an individual, a person who is always qualified by matter and soul which forms His body. All individual souls are spiritual substances which are pervaded by God and form His body. The Absolute is an organic unity, an identity which is qualified by diversity. It is the concrete whole (*viśiṣṭa*) which consists of the interrelated and inter – dependent subordinates elements which are called *viśeṣanas* and the immanent and the controlling spirit which is called *viśeṣya*. Unity means realization of being a vital member of this organic whole.

Thus Rāmānuja recognizes three things as ultimately real – *açit* (matter), *çit* (souls) and God (*Īśvara*). Though all are equally real, the first two are absolutely dependent

on God. Though they are substances in themselves, yet in relation to God, they become his attribute. They are the body of God who is their soul. The relation between the soul and the body is that of inner inseparability – *aprthakasiddhi*. It is like the relation between a substance and its attributes, between parts and whole and may be between one substance and another. It is an inner inseparable, vital and organic relation. Matter and soul are called attributes of God. They are the controlled, the supported, the parts and the accessory means, while God is their substance, controller, support, the whole and the principal end. They are eternal with God but they are not external to Him. Now *Brahman* is devoid of *sajātiya* and *vijātiya bheda* but *svagata bheda* exists in Him, as his organic body is made of real and diverse elements like matter and soul.

God is both material and instrumental cause of the world. He is the immanent as well as transcendent ground of the world. He is immanent in the world as its inner controller and yet in his essence He transcends the world. His is a perfect personality. He is full of all good qualities – Existence, Knowledge, Bliss; Truth, Goodness, Beauty, Lustre, Love and Power.

Rāmānuja's concept of the Ultimate Reality identifies itself with God. God can be understood both as cause and effect. During the state of dissolution, God remains as the cause with subtle matter and unembodied soul forming His body. The whole universe lies latent in Him. During the state of creation the subtle matter becomes gross and the unembodied souls (except the *nitya* and *mukta* souls) becomes embodied according to their karmas. In this effect – state the universe becomes manifest. The former state is called the causal state, while the latter is the effect – state of *Brahman*. Just as in the case of an ordinary individual, the soul does not undergo any change though the body might go through many changes and mutations, God does not go through any suffering though the individual souls might go.

The next major point of difference is regarding the nature of liberation. According to Śāṅkara, the liberated soul becomes one with *Brahman* or rather the individual soul discovers itself to be nothing but Brahman. But Rāmānuja maintains that liberated souls do not become one with Him. But remains in His proximity in *Vaikunṭha*. They

enjoy bliss of Divine Company of Lord. After dissolution, when there is a new cycle of creation, they do not become a subject of birth.

Rāmānuja contends that the liberated souls become qualitatively alike with Lord but they remain separate even in the final position. So there is a qualitative monism but quantitative pluralism. But for Śaṅkara, there is both qualitative and quantitative monism in the final position.

Śaṅkara believes that the only way to attain this liberation is knowledge. *Karma* and *Bhakti* are subsidiary. They may help us in urging us to know reality and they may prepare us for that knowledge by purifying our mind, but ultimately it is knowledge alone which, by destroying ignorance, the root cause of this world, can enable us to be one with the Absolute.

But Rāmānuja maintains that liberation can be obtained only by *bhakti* i. e. devotion and worship and not by mere knowledge. Even illusion does not vanish by a mere knowledge of them. He says that for example the illusion of a jaundiced person does not vanish merely a knowledge of it's falsity, but by taking medicine which removes the excessive bile. If mere knowledge of the Unity – texts leads to liberation, then Śaṅkara himself would have obtained it and he would have been merged in *Brahman* and would not have explained his teachings to his disciples.

The final and one of the most important points of difference is that, according to Śaṅkara, this liberation or *mukti* can be attained in this very life only. He calls it *jivana – mukti*. One need not die or give – up his body in order to attain the highest. But the *jivan – mukta* does not acquire further *karma* and thereby gets out of the cycle of rebirth. His body lies, says *śruti*, like a slough cast off by a snake lies on an ant hill. Just as a potters wheel goes on revolving for sometime even after the push is withdrawn, similarly the body may continue to exist even after the knowledge has dawned, though all attachment with the body is cut – off.

But Ramanuja does not accept this. According to him, the attainment of the Ultimate is not possible during this life – time. The attainment of *Vaikuntha*, which for him is

the Ultimate, can be attained only after death. He calls it *Videha – mukti* or liberation with the shedding of the body. This is a brief comparison of these two masters.

Apart from that, regarding the nature of the relieved soul, Śāṅkara maintains that the relieved soul becomes one with the Ultimate Reality or *Brahman*. In other words, we can say that in his scheme, the individual self rediscovers itself to be nothing but *Brahman*. For Śāṅkara, *jiva* is a product of *avidyā*. *Brahman* when reflected in *avidyā* is called *jiva*. When this *avidyā* is removed through right knowledge, *jiva* realizes himself as *Brahman*. He maintains that the whole idea of *Jiva, Jagat and Īśvara* is unreal in the final sense. *Brahman* alone is real and He alone is.

Now this is a kind of parallelism which seems to have no conclusion. But when we closely examine the text of the *Upaniṣads*, we find that Śāṅkara is probably the best interpreter of the texts. This is primarily because if we want to accommodate all the aspects of the self, Rāmānuja somehow seems to be incomplete.

First of all though at various places, *Upaniṣads* put the Ultimate as *saguṇa*, at places it is *nirguṇa* as well. Rāmānuja and for that matter all the *Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins* have confined themselves to *saguṇa* aspect only. When asked about the *Upaniṣadic* description of *nirguṇa*, Rāmānuja says that it only means that *Brahman* is devoid of all bad qualities⁴⁴. But in Śāṅkara's philosophy we find that he has accommodated both the concept of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*. He has accepted that *saguṇa* aspect of *Brahman*, in the form of *Īśvara* is possible as a reflection of itself in *māyā*. Both are there and both are real in their own realm.

Then regarding the dualism of *Ātman*, Śāṅkara does not reject dualism at the *vyavahārika* level. The *Brahman* and *jiva* are obviously different in the phenomenal sense. But they are ultimately One. *Upaniṣads* talk about both of them. *Upaniṣadic* passages are not only dualistic but also monistic. Only Śāṅkara seems to have taken both the points clearly and coherently. The oneness is an aspect discussed in the *Upaniṣads* which *Vaiṣṇavas* haven't touched at all.

⁴⁴ Sharma, C. D., *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), p345

Vaiṣṇavas have identified the ultimate reality with *Viṣṇu*. They refer to Śvetāśvatara *Upaniṣad*, time and again, for the support of the dualistic theory they propagate. I have already mentioned the position of Śvetāśvatara in describing the Ultimate. It talks about three ultimate principles to be known ultimately. But the noteworthy point here remains is that this *Upaniṣad* finally identifies the Ultimate with *Shiva*. In many *ślokas* we find a mention of that identification. The *Upaniṣad* reads as, “Truly Rudra is one, there is no place for a second, who rules all these worlds with his ruling powers. He stands opposite creatures. He, the protector, after creating all worlds, withdraws them at the end of time.”⁴⁵ And further adds “He who is the source and origin of the gods, the ruler of all, *Rudra* the great seer, who of old gave birth to the golden germ, may He endow us with clear understanding”⁴⁶ Many have therefore tried to depict this *Upaniṣad* as a *Śaivite Upaniṣad*.

This creates great problem for *Vaiṣṇavas*. It does not seem that one of those *Upaniṣad* which they greatly rely on to justify their theory does not identify the real with the Vedic God *Viṣṇu* but with another God *Śiva*. This can be also read as an implication that the names given to the Ultimate by the *Upaniṣads* are symbolic since there are many names of Gods used in various places and everywhere that Vedic or Purānic God has been given the Supreme status. The idea of identifying the supreme with *Viṣṇu* is purely an element taken from *Bhāgavat Purāna* and from the *Upaniṣads* stand it looks like identification of the Supreme with its symbol.

Vaiṣṇavas have not talked about any possibility of knowing the Supreme before death. But *Upaniṣads* do not take this exclusive stand. There are many passages in *Upaniṣads* which talk about possibility of Supreme knowledge before death. Sri Ram Sarma Acharya translates one of the verses of *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* as,

“*Jo trinachiket vidya ke jnata is agni ke in tino svarupo ko jankar nachiket agni ka chayan karte hey, ve sharir tyag ke purva hi mrityu ke pasho ko katkar swarg lok ka*

⁴⁵ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), III.2, p725

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*,III.6, p726

anand prapt karte hai”⁴⁷ meaning that the *śloka* talks about attainment of heaven before death of the physical body.

This *śloka* seems to show a fusion of horizons. Heaven, which Śaṅkara will not probably use to describe the Ultimate, and attainment of the same before death which Rāmānuja will not accept, come together in order to fuse to different philosophical positions.

One need not give up his body in order to attain the Supreme knowledge. The final release, of course, comes with the shedding of the body which Śaṅkara does not reject as such. As I mentioned earlier, he treats the body of a *jivan – mukta* as a slough cast off by a snake on an ant hill. This remains so long as the whole *karma*, related to the body, is not exhausted. Once the body falls, the Ultimate is attained.

This gives us an impression that Śaṅkara has given the best interpretation of the *Upaniṣad*. But that is not the perfect truth. Throughout his writings Śaṅkara kept on insisting that *Jñāna* is the only way to the Ultimate. *Karma* and *bhakti* are subsidiary ways and can act only as a support. But a careful study of the *Upaniṣads* reveal that they are not devoid of *bhakti* or *karma*. The *Īśa Upaniṣad* Reads as –

“By doing *karma*, indeed, one should wish to live here for a hundred years. For a man such as you (who wants to live thus), there is no way other than this, whereby *karma* may not cling to you”⁴⁸ and in a different *śloka* says –

“The face of the Truth (Brahman in the solar orb) is concealed by a golden vessel. Do thou, O Sun, open it so as to be seen by me who am by nature Truthful (or, am the performer of rightful duties)”⁴⁹.

Here we can see the presence of *bhakti* and how *karma* has been depicted as the only means to get rid of the *karmabandhana*. Thus one can say that Śaṅkara’s monistic

⁴⁷ 108 *Upaniṣad (Sara Hindi Bhāvārtha Sahit) Jñānakhand, edit. Sriram Sarma Acharya, (Haridwar: Brahmavarchas Prakashan, 2005), Kāṭha I.1.17, p54*

⁴⁸ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), Īśa 2, p6*

⁴⁹ *Ibid, Īśa 15, p14*

way of looking at the *Ātman* and accommodation of dualistic theories as secondary is probably the most exhaustive way of describing the nature of *Ātman* as described in the *Upaniṣads*. But his theory is acceptable only with certain modifications.

To bring this chapter to an end we can say that the Ontological, Metaphysical and Psychological doctrines of the *Ātman* is discussed in the major *Upaniṣads*. *Tattirīya Upaniṣad* dives into comprehensive aspects of the self. The ontological aspect describes the Self in terms of five sheaths. Then the self is understood as Absolute Existence, Consciousness and Bliss or *Sat – Īit – Ānanda* in its metaphysical enumeration. The *Māndukya Upaniṣad* talks about the psychological states and goes onto describe the self as something beyond all the ordinarily known states of consciousness. The Self abides in a state called *Turīya* which transcends the states of waking, dream and deep – sleep. I have highlighted how various *Upaniṣadic* description of the Self enters into various streams of *vedāntic* interpretations. These passages partly extend their support to all the schools of Vedānta. They do not seem to confine themselves to any one of the schools exclusively. But a careful study of the *Upaniṣadic* passages reveal that Saṅkara's monistic theory, with certain modifications, gives the most accurate picture of *Upaniṣadic Ātman*.

Chapter Two

The Doctrine of *Ātman* as Epistemological Subject in the *Upaniṣads*

In this chapter I shall take up the epistemological aspects of the *Ātman*. Etymologically this word comes from two words viz. episteme which means knowledge and logos meaning principles. Thus epistemology literally means the 'theory of knowledge'.¹ The introduction of this term is attributed to the Scottish philosopher J. F. Ferrier (Institute of Metaphysics, 1854) who divided philosophy into Ontology and Epistemology.

Philosophy, in general, aims at knowing the reality. Reality, in Indian context, has been described in various terms such as *satya*, *vāstava*, *yathārtha*, *paramārtha*, *puruṣārtha* etc. In the process of knowledge, the object of knowledge or the knowable is called *prameya*. The knowing subject is termed as *pramāta*. *Pramāna* is the means of gaining proper knowledge and *pramiti* is the knowledge gained in this way.

The knowledge of reality, according to *Upaniṣads*, has been divided into two categories. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* very extensively deals with this issue. The *Upaniṣad* reads as follows –

“Śaunaka, well known as a great householder, having approached Angiras duely,
Śaunaka: O adorable sir, (which is that thing), which having been known, all this becomes known?

Angiras: There are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired – *parā* (higher) and *aparā* (lower); that is what as tradition runs, the knower of the import of the Vedas say. Of these, the *aparā* comprises the *Rg Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, the science of pronunciation etc., the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, metre and astrology. Then there is *parā* by which is attained that imperishable. (By *parā*) the wise realize everywhere that which cannot be perceived and grasped, which is without source, features, eyes and ears, which has neither hands nor feet, which is eternal, multiformed and all – pervasive, extremely subtle, and undiminishing, and which is

¹ *Dictionary of Philosophy*, Ed. I Frolov (Moscow: Progress publishers, 1984), p128

the source of all.”² The *Upaniṣad* is finally talking about the knowledge which leads to liberation or *mokṣa*.

Pramānas* (The sources of knowledge) in the *Upaniṣads

Pramāna means the sources of valid knowledge. *Upaniṣads*, as a whole, use six sources of such valid knowledge viz. perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), Comparison (*upamāna*), testimony (*śabda*), non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*) and implication (*arthāpatti*). Although all these different *pramānas* are there in Indian thought as a whole and schools like Mimāmsa and Vedānta have accepted all the *pramānas*, we do not find any *Upaniṣad* using all of them. So, here we shall focus on the meaning of these classical *pramānas*, their use in the *Upaniṣads* along with their treatment in different Indian schools.

The first and foremost of these *pramānas* is perception or *pratyakṣa*. This *pramāna* is accepted by all the schools of Indian Philosophy. Even the Chārvakas, who do not have anything common with other schools, accept this, in agreement with other schools, as a valid source of knowledge. For them, of course, this is the only source of knowledge. This can be called as the single point of agreement among all the nine schools of Indian philosophy in their whole metaphysical, epistemological and ethical discourse.

In Western Philosophy, the problem of perception as a source of knowledge has not been properly discussed. The reason probably is this – We generally believe, that what is given in perception must be true. Ordinarily no man questions the truth of what he perceives by his senses. So it is thought that it is unnecessary, if not ridiculous, to examine the validity of Perception, or to determine the conditions of Perceptions as a source of valid knowledge. Indian thinkers are more critical than dogmatic in this respect. They make a thorough examination of perception in almost the same way as western epistemologists discuss the problem of Inference or *anumāna*.

² *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I.1.3 – I.1.6, p77- 82

In Logic, Perception is to be regarded as a form of true cognition. Taking it in this sense, some *Naiyāikas* maintain “Perception is the knowledge which arises from the contact of a sense with its object and which is determinate, unnameable and non – erratic”.³ The perception of the table before me is due to the contact of my eyes with the table, and I am definite that the object is a table. The perception of a distant figure as either a man or a post is a doubtful and indefinite cognition, and, therefore not a true perception. Similarly the perception of a snake in a piece of rope is definite but false; and so it is different from valid perception.

The definition of Perception as a cognition due to the stimulation of our sense organs by the perceived object is generally accepted by many systems of philosophy – both Indian and Western. Some *Naiyāikas* along with the *Vedāntins* and few others, however, reject it on the ground that there may be perception without sense – object contact. Mental states like the feeling of pleasure and pain are directly cognised or perceived without the help of any sense – organ. This shows that sense – object is not common to, and cannot, therefore be, a defining character of perception.

This argument led Chārvāka to accept the existence of consciousness as a phenomenon – beyond sense – object contact. They accept the knowledge of the different states of mind as a part of perceptual knowledge and admit the existence of consciousness as a by – product of matter that is of the human body. Further, they go forward to describe consciousness as a product of human body as red colour comes out of betel – nut and lime when chewed properly⁴. Thus the hard – core materialist camp of Indian Philosophy also accept that perception is not simply sense – object contact but something more than that.

What, however, is really common to, and distinctive of, all perceptions is a feeling of directness or immediacy of the knowledge given by them. We are said to perceive an object, if and when we know it directly, i.e. without taking the help of previous knowledge or any reasoning process (*Jñāna – kāraṇa*).

³ *Nyāya Sūtras of Gautama*, tr.S. C. Vidyabhusana, (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2009) I.1.4, p3

⁴ Sharma, C. D., *A Critical survey of Indian Philosophy*, (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass), p44

If at midday, I turn my eyes overhead, I see the sun directly, and not by means of any process of inference or reasoning. There is neither any necessity nor any time for me to think or reason before the perception of sun arises in my mind. So some Indian logicians propose to define perception as immediate cognition (*Sākṣat – Pratiti*), although they admit that perception is in almost all cases conditioned by sense – object contact⁵.

In *Upaniṣads*, at various places, perception has been used as a valid *pramāna*. For example, in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* *anna* or food has been accepted as the first expression of *Brahman*. The *Upaniṣad* reads as follows –

“He realized food as *Brahman*. For it is verily say from food that all these things take birth, on food they subsist after being born, and they move towards and merge into food.”⁶ This implies that perception is used here since *Annamaya kośa* or food layer is given to our sense organs.

Again, in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, a discourse on the ultimate reality, between King Janaka and Yājñavalkya reads as follows – “ ‘Let me hear what any one (of your teachers) may have told you’. ‘Barku Vārṣṇa told me that the eye verily is Brahman. As one who has a mother, father, teacher should say, so did that Vārṣṇa say that the eye verily is Brahman, for what can one have who cannot see?’ ‘But did he tell you the abode and the support?’ ‘He did not tell me’. ‘This Brahman is only one – footed, your majesty’. ‘Verily, Yājñavalkya do tell us.’ ‘The eye verily is its abode and space its support, verily one should worship it as Truth.’ ‘What is the nature of Truth Yājñavalkya?’ ‘The eye itself your majesty’ said he (Yājñavalkya). ‘Verily your majesty, when they say to a man who sees with his eyes, “Have you seen?” and he answers, “I have seen”: that is the Truth; verily your majesty the eye is the highest *Brahman*. The eye does not desert him, who knowing thus worships it as such. All being approach him. Having become a god, he goes even go to the gods. Janaka (King) of Videha said, ‘I shall give you a thousand cows with a bull as large as an

⁵ Mishra Keshava, *Tarkabhāṣā*, (Poona: Oriental Books, 1924) p5

⁶ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, III.1.2, p394

elephant' Yājñavalkya said, 'My father taught that one should not accept (gifts) without having instructed'"⁷

As we read in the later discourse, eyes have not been accepted as the Ultimate Reality, but here we can clearly see that it has been accepted as a source of valid relative knowledge.

Then we find that, at various places, *Upaniṣads* talk about the five basic elements viz. air, water, fire etc. *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* reads as follows –

"Air, verily, is the absorbent; for when a fire goes out, it goes into the air. When the sun sets, it goes into the air, and when the moon sets, it goes into the air."⁸ And adds–

"When water dries up, it goes into the air. For air, indeed, absorbs them all. This with regards to the divinities."⁹ Then further expounds –

"Now with reference to the self: Breath, indeed, is the absorbent. When one sleeps, speech just goes into breath; sight goes into breath; hearing goes into breath, the mind goes into breath. For breath, indeed, absorbs all this."¹⁰ And finally goes to say –

"These two, verily, are the two absorbents, air among the gods, breath among the breaths."¹¹

These elements and breath are given only to our perception. Thus we can clearly see the use of *pratyakṣa* as a source of knowledge.

Perception is accepted by Jainas but they don't call it absolutely immediate. They classify knowledge into immediate (*aparokṣa*) and mediate (*pārokṣa*). They include perception in the mediate category since it presupposes activity of thoughts. It is

⁷ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV.1.4, p 249

⁸ *Ibid.*, *Chhāndogya*, 4.3.2, p 404

⁹ *Ibid.*, IV.3.3, p 404

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, IV.3.4, p 405

¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV.3.5, p 405

admitted as separate from inference but is included in *Mati* which is the category of mediate knowledge.

Sāṅkhya – Yoga also accepts *Pratyakṣa*¹² as a valid *pramāna* and divides it into two parts called *Savikalpaka* (determinate) and *Nirvikalpaka* (indeterminate). *Nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* is the perception where we do not recognise the given object properly but acquire only the sense – data. This perception can't be articulated in language. Just as babies and dumb persons cannot express their experience in words, so we cannot experience this indeterminate perception of objects to the other people by means of words and sentences. *Savikalpaka* is one in which sense – data is synthesized by mind and judgements like 'This is a pen' is formulated. So, it is called *vivečana* or a judgement of the object. It is the determinate cognition of an object as a particular kind of thing having certain qualities and standing in certain relation to the other things. This kind of perception of an object is expressed in the form of a subject – predicate proposition.

Mimāṃsa describes perception as the synthesis of the two stages enumerated above. Though at the first stage the objects are not known explicitly, all that we know about them at the second stage is implicitly known even at the first. In understanding the object at the second stage, the mind only interprets, in the light of past experience, what is given at first, it does not ascribe to any imaginary predicate. For if we did not perceive at first a man, a white one etc. how we could later judge like 'This is a white man' and that it was not a cow and not black. Hence it must be admitted that perception, in spite of containing an element of interpretation, is not necessarily imaginary or illusory as some Bauddhas and Vedāntins hold.

According to them, neither it is true that what we are immediately aware of, before the mind interprets, is a purely unique particular (*Svalakṣaṇa*) without any distinguishing class character, as those Bauddhas hold; or is pure existence without any differentiating property, as those Vedāntins say. The diverse objects of the world with their different characteristics are given to the mind at the very first moment when we become aware of them.

¹² Kṛṣṇa Īśvara, *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, tr. Swami Virupākshananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 2008) śloka 4-6, p12-25

However the most exhaustive treatment on Perception is given by the Nyāya School. Gautama defines perception as ‘That knowledge which arises from the contact of a sense with its object and which is determinate, unnameable and non – erratic.’¹³ This definition of perception excludes divine and *Yogic* perceptions which are not generated by intercourse of sense – organs with the objects. Hence Vishwanatha has defined perception as ‘direct or immediate cognition which is not derived through the instrumentality of any other cognition’. This definition includes ordinary as well as extraordinary perception. Thus Nyāya entertains three extraordinary forms of perception viz. *Sāmānyalakṣana*, *Jñānalakṣana* and *Yogaja*, apart from the ordinary ones.

Sāmānyalakṣana perception is the perception of the Universals. According to Nyāya Universals are a distinct class of reals. They inhere in the particulars which belong to different classes. Ordinarily we perceive only the particulars and not the Universals. We perceive particular cows but not the universal. We perceive particular cow and not any ‘universal cow’. Hence the Nyāya maintains that universals are perceived extraordinarily. Whenever we perceive a particular cow, we first perceive the ‘universal cowness’ inhering in it.

The second kind of extraordinary perception is called *Jñānalakṣana* perception. It is the complicated perception through association. Sometimes different sensations become associated and form one integrated perception. Here an object is not directly presented to a sense – organ, but is revived in memory through the past cognition of it and is perceived through representation.

For example I look at a blooming rose from a distance and say, ‘I see a fragrant rose’. But how can fragrance be seen? It can only be smelt. Fragrance can be perceived by sense – organs of smell and not by sense – organs of vision which can perceive only colour. Here visual perception of the rose revives in memory the idea of fragrance by association, which was perceived in the past through the nose. The perception of the fragrant rose, through the eye, therefore is called *Jñānalakṣana*.

¹³ *Nyāya Sūtras of Gautama*, tr.S. C. Vidyabhusana(New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal,2009)I.1.4, p16

Third kind of extraordinary perception is called *Yogaja* perception. This is the intuitive or immediate perception of all objects, past, present and future, possessed by yogis through the power of meditation. It is like the *kevalajñāna* of the Jainas, the *Bodhi* of the Buddhists, the *kaivalya* of the Sāṅkhya – Yōga and the *aparokṣanubhuti* of the Vedāntins. It is intuitive, supra – sensous and supra – relational.

Buddhism also accepts Perception as a valid source and defines it in ordinary way. But in schools like SvatantraVijñānavāda, perception acquires modified definitions. For the Svatantra – Vijñānavādins external objects do not exist outside of thought. Dinnaga, therefore defines perception as devoid of all thought – denominations, names, universals etc¹⁴.

The Vaiśeṣika maintains that an object qualified by five real predicables – generality, particularity, relation, quality and action – is given in perception which has two moments, the first moment consisting of pure sensation and the second moment consisting of determination. Dinnāga condemns these five predicables to mere fictions of the intellect. The only object of perception is the unique momentary thing – in – itself shorn of all relations. Dharmakīrti introduces the adjective ‘non – illusive’ in the definition of perception because he thinks it necessary to exclude the sense – illusions like the perception of double – moon as distinguished from the illusion of thought. He therefore defines perception as devoid of all thought determinations and illusions.

The second source of knowledge is *Anumāna* or Inference. This is accepted by all schools viz. Sāṅkhya – Yōga, Nyāya – Vaiśeṣika, Mimāṃsa and Vedānta except Chārvakas. *Anumāna* etymologically comes from the two words *anu* i. e. after and *māna* i.e. knowledge. Thus *anumāna* literally means a cognition or knowledge which follows some other knowledge. This can be simply explained as, when we see smoke coming from a hill – top, we conclude ‘The hill is fiery, because it smokes and whatever smokes is fiery’.

In this example, we pass from perception of smoke in the hill to the knowledge of the existence of fire in it on the ground of the previous knowledge of the universal

¹⁴ Sharma, C.D., *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas), p131

relation between smoke and fire. Thus we see that inference is the process of reasoning in which we pass from the apprehension of some mark (*linga*) to that of something else, by virtue of a relation of invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) between the two. As Dr. B. N. Seal puts it, “*Anumāna* (Inference) is the process of ascertaining, not by perception or direct observation, but through instrumentality, or medium of a mark, that a thing possesses a certain character.”¹⁵

From the definition of inference it will appear that an inference must have as its constituents three terms and at least three propositions. In inference we arrive at the knowledge of some character of a thing through the knowledge of some mark and that of its universal relation to the inferred character. Thus in the above inference of fire, we know the unperceived fire in the hill through the perception of smoke in it and the knowledge of an invariable relation between the two.

Now, in this inference, the hill is the *pakṣa* (minor term), since it is the subject under consideration, in the course of inferential reasoning. Fire is the *sādhya* (major term), as that is something which we want to prove or establish in relation to the hill by means of this inference. Smoke is the *linga* (middle term), as it is the mark or sign which indicates the presence of fire. It is also called *hetu* or *sādhana*, i.e. the reason or ground of Inference. Thus corresponding to the minor, major and middle term of the syllogism, inference, in Indian contains three terms viz. *pakṣa*, *sādhya* and *hetu*.

The *pakṣa* is the subject with which we are concerned in any inference. The *sādhya* is the object which we want to know in relation to the *pakṣa* or the inferable character of the *pakṣa*. The *hetu* is the reason for our relating the *sādhya* to the *pakṣa*. It is the ground of our knowledge of the *sādhya* as related to the *pakṣa*.

In order of the events which take place when a certain thinker is inferring, the first step in the inference is the apprehension of the *hetu* (smoke) in the *pakṣa* (hill), the second, recollection of the universal relation between *hetu* and *sādhya* (smoke and fire), and the last is the cognition of the *sādhya*(fire) as related to *pakṣa*.

¹⁵ Seal, B. N., *The Positive Science of Ancient Hindus*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1915), p250

We find repeated use of this *pramāna* in *Upaniṣads*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* reads –

“At that time, this (universe) was undifferentiated. It became differentiated by name and form (so that it is said) he has such a name, such a shape. Therefore even today this (Universe) is differentiated by name and shape (so that it is said) he has such a name, such a shape. He(the self) entered in here even to the tips of the nails, as a razor is (hidden) in the razor – case, or as fire in the fire – source. Him, they see not for (as seen) he is incomplete, when breathing he is called the vital force, when speaking voice, when seeing the eye, when hearing the ear, when thinking the mind. These are merely the names of his acts. He who meditates on one or another of them (aspects), he does not know for he is incomplete, with one or another of theses (characteristics). The self is to be meditated upon for in it all these become one. The self is the foot – trace of all this, for by it one knows all this, just as one can find again by foot – prints (what was lost). He who knows this finds name and praise.”¹⁶

Again the *Kena Upaniṣad* begins with a question like – “Willed by whom does the directed mind go towards its object? Being directed by whom does the vital force that precedes all, proceed (towards its duty)? By whom is the speech willed that people utter? Who is the effulgent being who directs the eyes and the ears?”¹⁷ Here it can be seen that the pupil has used *anumāna* to infer that there must be a principle behind the functions of the senses, the vital force, the mind and the speech as they are not self – subsisting (as in a dead body they don’t work). Thus he has put his query forward to know that principle.

In *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* we find that the existence of Ether has been accepted as the carrier of sound. It reads as follows –

“Ether (or space), verily, is greater than fire. For in the ether exists both sun and moon, lightning, stars and fire. Through ether one calls, through ether one hears, through ether one answers. In ether one enjoys himself and in ether one does not

¹⁶ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, I.4.7,p 166

¹⁷ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009),*Kena*,I.1, p40

enjoy himself. In space one is born and unto space one is born. Meditate on ether."¹⁸ Here inference is used to indicate the medium of sound – movement as ether. In fact, Charvāka does not accept ether as a basic element, since the presence of ether cannot be perceived but has to be inferred. Thus we can very clearly read the use of *anumāna* as a means to acquire knowledge in *Upaniṣads*.

Now Chārvākas have rejected this *pramāna* based on two grounds. Firstly, since we cannot verify all the individual cases of smoke and fire, we cannot assert *vyāpti* or any kind of invariable relation between them. For Chārvākas, to come to that position we should not only be able to verify all the past cases, but also the present ones and all the future instances. Because when we make any general statement, i.e. claim any universal proposition; e.g. when we claim, 'All men are mortal', we not only talk about the past and present cases but also extend mortality to all future instances.

Secondly they say that the whole argument of Inference falls into *petitio principii* or becomes an argument in circle, because the conclusion of deduction is implicitly entertained as a premise of induction, which in turn is accepted as the basis of deduction. Thus the whole argument boils down to a circular argument. This problem has been nullified by pointing to Chārvākas generalisation of perception as 'All perceptions are right', since the same logical problem arises in this Universal proposition.

Nyāya, the school of Indian philosophy which is primarily concerned with logic and epistemology, has dealt with inference very exhaustively. In Nyāya epistemology the presence of middle term in the minor term is called *pakṣadharmatā*. The invariable association of the middle term with the major term is called *vyāpti*. The knowledge of *pakṣadharmatā* as qualified by *vyāpti* is called *parāmarśa*. And inference is defined as knowledge arising through *parāmarśa*, i.e. the knowledge of the presence of the major in the minor through the middle which resides in the minor and is invariably associated with the major.

¹⁸ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953), *Chāndogya*, VII.12.1, p479

This inference is expressed in the form of five propositions, called *avayavas* or members. These are *Pratijñā*, *Hetu*, *Udāharana*, *Upanaya* and *Nigamana*¹⁹. This can be put as,

1. Ram is mortal (*Pratijñā*)
2. Because he is a man (*Hetu*)
3. All men are mortal, e.g. Socrates, Plato, Kant etc. (*Udāharana*);
4. Ram is also a man (*Upanaya*)
5. Therefore he is mortal (*Nigamana*)

The *pratijñā* is the first proposition, which asserts something. The *hetu* is the second proposition which states the reason for this assertion. The *udāharana* is the universal proposition, showing the connection between the reason and the asserted fact, as supported by known instances. *Upanaya* is the application of the universal proposition to the present case. *Nigamana* is the conclusion which follows from the preceding propositions.

Inferences are divided into *svārtha* and *parārtha* depending upon its purpose, into *purvavat*, *śeṣavat* and *sāmānyatodṛṣṭa* depending upon the movement and into three more sections viz. *kevalanvayi*, *kevalvyatireki* and *anvayavyatireki* depending upon its structure.

Thus all other schools accept inference as a valid means of knowledge. But the detailed treatment of this *pramāna* differs from school to school. In Jaina Epistemology, inference has been included under the sub – category of *Mati* which comes under mediate knowledge.

In Buddhism, Svatantra – Vijñānavada accepts inseparable connection or *vyāpti* as the nerve of inference. In inference, an object is cognized through its ‘mark’ or a valid ‘middle term’ which has three²⁰ characteristics – (1) It is present in the probandum (*anumeya*), (2) It is also present in that which is like the probandum, (3) It is not present in that which is not like the probandum. Inference for another is a syllogism.

¹⁹ Mishra Keshava, *Tarkabhāṣā*, (Poona: Oriental Books, 1924) p548-49

²⁰ Sharma, C.D., *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass) p131

The Nyāya syllogism has five members: 1. Thesis, 2. Reason, 3. Example with inseparable connection 4. Application and 5. Conclusion. Vijñānavada reject thesis, reason and conclusion and retain only two – 1. Example with inseparable connection or the general rule and 2. Application which includes reason and conclusion.

Sāṅkhya – Yoga also accept inference as a valid means of knowledge. With regard to the classification of inference, the Sāṅkhya adopts the Nyāya view, although in a slightly different form. Inference is first divided into two kinds, viz. *vita* and *avita*. It is called *vita* when it is based on a universal affirmative proposition and *avita* when based on universal negative. All the three forms of inference viz. *Purvavat*, *Śeṣavat* and *Samanyatodrsta* is analogous to the Nyāya division.

The Mimāṃsa account of inference also generally agrees with that of the Nyāya. But there are certain minor differences also e.g. Mimāṃsakas recognise only three members of a syllogism, either first three or last three, thus bringing the Indian syllogism in conformity with the Aristotelian scheme.

Upamāna is the third source of knowledge accepted by *Upaniṣads*. The knowledge gained by this means is called *upamiti*. It is the knowledge derived through comparison and roughly corresponds to analogy. It has been defined as the knowledge of the relation between a word and its denotations. It is produced by the knowledge of resemblance or similarity.

For example, a man, who has never seen a *gavaya* or a wild cow and doesn't know what it is, is told by a person that a *gavaya* is an animal like a cow, subsequently comes across a wild cow in a forest and recognises it as the wild cow; the knowledge for him comes through *Upamāna* or comparison.

He has heard the word '*gavaya*' and has been told that it is like a cow and now he himself sees the object denoted by the word *gavaya* and recognises it to be so. Hence *upamāna* is just the knowledge of the relation between a name and the object denoted by that name. It is produced by the knowledge of similarity because a man recognises a wild cow as *gavaya* then perceives its similarity to the cow and remembers the description that 'a *gavaya* is an animal like cow'.

The subtle difference between *anumāna* and *upamāna* can be very well read here. In *anumāna* we move from the known to the unknown through our own knowledge of invariable concomitance. The universal knowledge comes through our practical experience. But in *upamāna* we do not have any direct knowledge of the unknown, we move only from the theoretical vague idea to the practical object of knowledge. Though there are differences among schools regarding the exact definition of *upamana*, especially between Nyāya and Mimāmsa, this roughly corresponds to analogy. And we find the use of analogy in many *Upaniṣads*.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad reads as follows –

“Arise, awake, having attained thy boons, understand (them). Sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to cross, difficult to tread is the path (so) sages declare.”²¹ Here we can see the use of the analogy of razor to explain the nature of the path to be followed by a knowledge – seeker.

Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad says,

“This, verily, is his form which is free from craving, free from evils, free from fear. As a man when in the embrace of his beloved wife knows nothing without or within, so the person when in the embrace of the intelligent self knows nothing without or within. That, verily is his form in which his desire is fulfilled, in which the self is his desire, in which he is without desire, free from any sorrow.”²² Here we can see the use of a lay – man’s experience to denote a subtle experience of self – knowledge.

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad reads as –

“As oil in the sesame seeds, as butter in cream, as water in riverbeds, as fire in the friction sticks, so is the self seized in one’s own soul if one looks from Him with truthfulness and austerity.”²³ And adds –

“The Self which pervades all things as butter is contained in milk, which is the root of self – knowledge and austerity, that is the *Brahman*, the highest mystic doctrine. That

²¹ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953) *Kaṭha*, 1.3.14, p628

²² *Ibid.*, *Bṛhadāranyaka*, IV.3.21, p 262

²³ *Ibid.*, *Śvetāśvatara*, I.15, p718

is the highest mystic doctrine”²⁴ These are some of the examples where we find the use of *upamāna* in *Upaniṣads*.

This source is not recognised by many schools. The Buddhists reduce *upamāna* to perception and Testimony, since we move from someone’s word to its knowledge by the verification of perception. The Sāṅkhya and the Vaiśeṣika reduce it to inference. The Jainas reduce it to recognition or *pratyabhijñā*.

Mimāṃsakas description of *upamāna* takes a little different course. They point out that the knowledge of the relation between a word and the object denoted by that word is derived by verbal authority (e.g. by the words of the person who tells that a wild cow is similar to a cow) and not by comparison. It is known through the recollection of what was learnt from the verbal authority of the person. And the knowledge of the wild cow itself is due to the perception and not comparison.

Hence comparison, according to Mimāṃsa, apprehends the similarity of the remembered cow to the perceived wild cow. It is the cow as possessing similarity with the wild cow that is known by comparison. A person need not be told by anybody that a wild cow is similar to a cow. Any person who has seen a cow and happens to see a wild cow himself remembers the cow as similar to the wild cow he is perceiving. This knowledge of similarity is comparison. It is distinguished from inference because the *vyāpti* or invariable concomitance is not needed here.

The fourth *Upaniṣadic pramāna* i. e. *śabda* or testimony is accepted by Bauddhas, Jainas, Sāṅkhya – Yoga, Nyāya – Vaiśeṣika, Mimāṃsa and Vedānta. It is rejected only by Ārvākas. Literally *śabda* means verbal knowledge. It is the knowledge of the objects derived from the words or sentences. All verbal knowledge is not however valid. Hence *śabda* is defined as valid verbal testimony. It consists in the assertion of trustworthy person. A verbal statement is valid when it comes from a person who knows the truth and speaks the truth about anything for the guidance of other persons.

But it is a matter of common observation that a sentence or statement is not by itself sufficient to give us any knowledge of things. Nor again does the mere perception of

²⁴ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953) *Śvetāśvatara*, I.16, p718

the words of a sentence lead to any knowledge about objects. It is only when one perceives the words and understands their meaning that he acquires any knowledge from a verbal statement.

Hence while the validity of verbal knowledge depends on its being based on statement of a trustworthy person, its possibility depends upon understanding of the meaning of that statement. Hence *śabda* or testimony, as a source of valid knowledge, consists in understanding the meaning of the statement of a trustworthy person.

In *Kena Upaniṣad*, while describing the nature of consciousness, the teacher resorts to *śabda pramāna*. It reads as follows –

“The eye does not go there, nor speech, nor mind. We do not know (*Brahman* to be such and such); hence we are not aware of any process of instructing about it”²⁵ and immediately after that says – “‘That Brahman is surely different from the known; and again it is above the unknown’ – such was (the utterance) we heard from the ancient (teachers) who explained it to us.”²⁶ On this *śloka* Dr. Radhakrishnan writes, “It is above the known and the unknown, but it is not unknowable. Verse 6 says, *tad eva brahma tvam viddhi*, ‘that, verily is Brahman, know thou’ implies that the *Brahman* is not beyond our apprehension. The writer suggests that this teaching has been transmitted by tradition. We cannot know it by logic. *Brahma caitanyam ācāryopadeśa paramparayaivādhigantavyam, na tarkataḥ* (Śaṅkara).”²⁷

Again in *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, regarding the knowledge of Vedānta, we find –

“By the power of austerity and the grace of God, the wise *Śvetāśvatara* in proper manner spoke about *Brahman*, the supreme, the pure, to the advanced ascetics, what is pleasing to the company of seers.”²⁸ Then it adds, “The highest mystery in the Vedānta which has been declared in a former age should not be given to the one whose passions are not subdued nor again to one who is not a son or a pupil.”²⁹ And

²⁵ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Kena*, I.3, p48

²⁶ *Ibid. Kena*, I.4, p49

²⁷ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣad*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953) *Kena*, I.4, p582

²⁸ *Ibid.*, *Śvetāśvatara*, 6.21, p749

²⁹ *Ibid.*, VI.22, p 749

finally says, “These subjects which have been declared shine forth to the high – souled one who has the highest devotion for God and for his spiritual teacher as for God. Yea they shine forth to the high – souled one.”³⁰

The *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* reads as follows –

“As from a lighted fire laid with damp fuel, various (clouds of) smoke issue forth, even so, my dear, the *R̥g Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sāma Veda*, the *Atharvangirasa*, history, ancient lore, science, *Upaniṣads*, verses, aphorisms, explanations and commentaries. From this indeed all these breathed forth.”³¹ This adds some divinity to the *Vedas*.

These examples indicate that *śabda* has been accepted as a valid source of knowledge in the *Upaniṣads*. The words of the *Vedas* and that some of the masters have been entertained as authority.

According to Nyāya, testimony is of two kinds – *vaidika* and *laukika*. The *vaidika* testimony is perfect and infallible because the *Vedas* are spoken by God. Secular testimony, being the words of human beings who are liable to error, is not infallible. Only the words of trustworthy persons who always speak the truth are valid others are not. A word is a potent symbol which signifies an object and a sentence is a collection of words. But a sentence in order to be intelligible must conform to certain conditions. These conditions are four – *ākankṣa*, *yogyatā*, *sannidhi* and *tātparya*.

The first is mutual implication or expectancy. The words of a sentence are interrelated and stand in need of one another in order to express a complete sense. A mere aggregate of unrelated words will not make a logical sentence. It will be sheer nonsense, e.g. ‘cow horse man elephant’.

The second condition is that the words should possess fitness to convey the sense and should not contradict the meaning. ‘water the plants with fire’ is a contradictory sentence.

³⁰ Ibid., VI.23, p 750

³¹ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), *Brhadāranyaka*, II.4.10, p199

The third condition is the close proximity of the words to one another. The words must be spoken in quick succession without long intervals. If the words 'bring', 'a', 'cow', are uttered at long intervals they would not make a logical sentence.

The fourth condition is the intention of the speaker if the words are ambiguous. For example, the word '*saindhava*' means 'salt' as well as a 'horse'. Now if a man who is taking his food asks another to bring '*saindhava*' the later should not bring a horse.

Śabda, as a *pramāna*, has got the greatest importance in Mimāmsa. For them, it is the knowledge of supra – sensible objects which is produced by the comprehension of the meaning of words. Kumāriḷa divides testimony into *pauruṣeya* (personal) and *apauruṣeya* (impersonal). The former is the testimony of the trustworthy persons (*āptavākya*). The latter is the testimony of the Vedas (*vedavākya*). It is valid in itself, it has intrinsic validity. To uphold the eternality and the authorlessness of the *veda*, the Mimāmsakas put forward the theory that words and meanings as well as their relation are all natural and eternal.

The fifth *Upanisadic pramāna viz. arthāpatti* or implication is accepted only by Mimāmsa and Vedānta. Prabhākara and Kumāriḷa both, unlike the *Naiyāikas*, admit *arthāpatti* as an independent means of valid knowledge. It is presumption or postulation or implication. It is the assumption of an unperceived fact in order to reconcile two apparently inconsistent perceived facts. If someone is fat and he does not eat during daytime, we presume that he eats during night, otherwise the inconsistency of being fat and not eating during day cannot be explained.

Chhāndogya Upaniṣad reads as follows –

“This is my self within the heart, smaller than a grain smaller than a grain of rice, than a barley corn, than a mustard seed, than a grain of millet or the kernel of a grain of a millet. This is myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds.”³² And in order to reconcile these contradictory positions postulates, in the same *Upaniṣad* as follows –

³² Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), *Chhāndogya*, III.14.3, p391

“Verily, this whole world is Brahman, from which he comes forth, without which he will be dissolved and which he breaths. Tranquil, one should meditate on it. Now verily, a person consists of purpose. According to the purpose a person has in this world, so does he become on departing hence. So let him frame for himself a purpose.”³³

Then again in *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*, regarding the Ultimate, we find –

“It moves and It moves not; It is far and it is near, It is within all this and It is also outside all this”³⁴ and to reconcile these contradictories, we find in the beginning itself–

“(Know that) all this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation; do not covet what belongs to others.”³⁵

In this way, we can read the use of *arthāpatti* at various places in the major *Upaniṣads*.

The Naiyāikas reduce the presumption to inference. The Mimāmsakas regard it as an independent *pramāna*. Prabhākara holds that the element of doubt distinguishes presumption from inference. In presumption there must be a doubt regarding the truth of the two perceived facts which doubt is removed by presumption, while in inference there is no such doubt. Kumārila believes that doubt is not the basis of presumption. This basis is the mutual inconsistency of the two perceived facts. This inconsistency is removed by presumption. In inference there is no such inconsistency.

Prabhākara and Kumārila both agree in holding that in presumption there is no middle term at all which is the basis of inference. Neither of the two perceived and apparently inconsistent facts can separately serve as middle term. Both the facts combined appear to be middle term. But then this combination already includes the conclusion, while a valid middle term should not include the conclusion. Hence presumption is different

³³ Ibid., *Chhāndogya*, III.14.1, p391

³⁴ Ibid., *Īśa*, V, p571

³⁵ Ibid., *Īśa*, I, p 567

from inference. But Naiyāikas point out that presumption is disjunctive reasoning which might be reduced to categorical form also. If a fat person say Ram, does not eat during day than the fact of his eating during night is inferred thus :

Fat Ram eats either during day or night,
Fat Ram does not eat during day,
Therefore fat Ram eats during night.

This may be reduced to a categorical form thus:

All fat persons who do not eat during day are persons who eat during night,
Ram is a fat person who does not eat during day,
Therefore Ram is a fat person who eats during night.

The last *Upaniṣadic pramāna* is non – cognition or non – apprehension. Kumāṛila admits it as the sixth independent source of valid knowledge. The Naiyāika and Prabhākara reject it.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* reads as follows –

“He said: ‘That, O Gārgi, the knower of *Brahman*, call the imperishable. It is neither gross nor fine, It is neither short nor long, It is neither glowing red (like fire) nor adhesive (like water), It is neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor space, unattached, without taste, without smell, without eyes, without ears, without voice, without mind, without radiance, without breath, without a mouth, without measure, having no within and no without. It eats nothing and no one eats it”³⁶ Here we can see that *Brahman* is described only in terms of non – cognition within the realm of sense – data.

Looking for the famous Vedāntic ‘*Neti Neti*’, in the same *Upaniṣad* we find –

“ ‘Of him the eastern direction is the eastern breaths, the southern direction is the southern breaths, the western direction is the western breaths, the upper direction is the upper breaths, the lower direction is the lower breaths, all the quarters are all the breaths. But the self is ‘not this, not this.’ He is incomprehensible for he is never comprehended. He is undestructible for he cannot be destroyed. He is unattached for

³⁶Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* III.8.8, p232

he doesn't attach himself. He is unfettered, he doesn't suffer, he is not injured. Verily Janaka you have reached (the state of) fearlessness,' thus said Yājñavalkya. Janaka (King) of Videha said: 'May fearlessness come unto you, Yājñavalkya, to you, venerable Sir, who makes you to know (the state of) fearlessness. Salutations to you. Here are the people of Videha, here am I (at your service).'³⁷

Thus we can see how *Upaniṣads* have used *anupalbdhi* to indicate the real nature of the Ultimate. 'Neti Neti' is a way of non – cognition to describe the indescribable.

The Naiyāikas, like Kumārila admits negation as an independent ontological category, but he unlike Kumārila, does not believe in non – apprehension as an independent means of knowledge to know negation.

According to him, negation is known either by perception or by inference according to the correlate (*pratiyogi*) of negation is a subject of perception or of inference. The same sense – organ which perceives any object perceives it's non – existence also and the same inference which infers the existence of any object infers it's non – existence also. Thus according to the Naiyāika, though negation is a separate category, non – apprehension as a separate *pramāna* is not required as its means. He reduces non – apprehension either to perception or to inference.

Prabhākara does not admit negation itself as an independent category and hence has no need to accept non – cognition as its means. Prabhākara agrees with the Naiyāikas, against Kumārila rejecting non – apprehension as a separate *pramāna*. But he differs from the Naiyāika in as much as he rejects negation itself as a separate category. To him, negation can be represented as a positive entity. There is no non – existence over and above existence. Existence may be perceived either in itself or as related to something else. The apprehension of bare existence, of the locus in itself is wrongly called non – existence. Thus the so called 'non – existence of the jar on the ground' is nothing but the apprehension of the bare ground itself. The so called 'non – existence of the jar before its production' is nothing but the clay itself.

³⁷ Ibid., IV.2.4, p254

Kumārila, siding with the Naiyāika, refutes Prabhākaras views and maintains that non – existence or negation exists as a separate category and is different from bare existence or locus itself. Negation is not mere nothing. When we the bare ground, we perceive neither the jar nor its non – existence. Hence the perception of the bare ground is separate from the non – existence and non – cognition of the jar. Kumārila also refutes the Naiyāika view that non – apprehension may be reduced to perception or inference.

Negation cannot be perceived, for there is no sense – object – contact. Negation cannot be inferred, for the invariable concomitance is not known here. Negation cannot be known by testimony, for there is no verbal cognition here. Nor can it be known from comparison or presumption. Hence negation which is an independent category is known by an independent *pramāna* called non – apprehension.

In this way each of the classical schools of Indian thought has accepted one or the other *pramāna* described in the *Upaniṣads* and have constructed their own Epistemology. When Ārvāka has accepted only one of them, Vedānta has accepted all of them as valid and independent. Now the description of self-differs from school to school depending upon their epistemology. Because the metaphysics of any school by and large depends upon their epistemology.

Now coming back to *Upaniṣadic* texts, we see that as far as the methodological approach is concerned, *Upaniṣadic* sages have used a variety of methods to build their system of thought. In this section, we shall throw some light on the various methods used by them since different methods have been resorted to by them at different times according to the necessities of discussion.

In the first place, we must note the enigmatic method which occurs from time to time in the *upaniṣads*. The *Īśa Upaniṣad* reads –

“Into blinding darkness enter those who worship ignorance and those who delight in knowledge enter into still greater darkness”³⁸

³⁸Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Īśa*, IX, p573

When the philosophers of the *Īśavāśya Upaniṣad* introduces the *vidyā* and *avidyā*, and the *sambhuti* and *asambhuti* triplets, he was also taking recourse to the same method pointing to a synthesis of opposites underlying the apparent contradictions involved in the formulations of the two riddles. The best illustration of enigmatic method is found in *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, where we are told that reality is like a great circumscribing felly, whose tyres are the three *gunas* whose ends are the sixteen *kalās*, whose spokes are the fifty *bhāvas* or conditions of Samkhya philosophy, whose counter – spokes are the ten senses and their ten objects, whose six sets of eights are the eights such as the *dhātus*, the *devas*, the eight – fold *prakṛti* 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 amoral, and finally which causes the single infatuation of the ignorance of Self on account of the two causes, namely, good and bad works³⁹. This is one of the best examples of how they have used enigmatic method.

Then there is the aphoristic method, as employed in the *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad*, which is the pattern of the later sutra literature of the various systems of philosophy. This method has the advantage of compressing all the materials of thought in short pregnant sentences, while leaving the commentator to scratch his head as best he may on interpretation of them. It is for this reason probably that the same Vedānta – sutras, for example came to be interpreted in such different fashion by the various commentators on them. To translate from the *Maṇḍukya*, we are told how “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 *Ātman* is *Brahman*. This *Ātman* is four – footed. The first foot is *Viaśvanara*, who enjoys gross things.... in the state of wakefulness. The second foot is *Taijasa*, who enjoys exquisite things.... in the state of dream. The third is the *prāñja*, who enjoys bliss.... In the state of deep sleep.... The fourth is the *Atman*,....who is alone, without a second, calm, holy and tranquil”⁴⁰ This passage has been verily the basis upon which all the later systems of Vedāntic philosophy have come to be built.

³⁹Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968), *Śvetāśvatara*, I.4 p24

⁴⁰Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Māṇḍukya*, I.1-5, p695-697

The third is what we may call mythical method which is resorted to very often in the *Upaniṣads*. This method is adopted in the first place for the purpose of conveying a moral lesson. As for example in the *Kena Upaniṣad*, where the parable⁴¹ of Indra and the Damsel is introduced to convey the lesson of humility, to show in other words that nobody can attain Brahman unless he is humble at heart.

Then again we have analogical method, which is to be found employed in many places by *Upaniṣads*. When, for example, sage Yājñavalkya introduces the analogy of drums, the conch or the lute in order to explain the process of the apprehension of the self. Another analogy comes from the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, of the rivers that flow into the ocean and become merged in it serving to show the non – difference of the individual soul from the Universal Soul. We have the analogical method which tries to envisage by images what cannot be explained by the rigour of logic.

Then sixthly we have the dialectic method which is the stock – in – trade of the *Upaniṣadic* argument, and could be seen employed at every stage of the development of *Upaniṣadic* philosophy. The dialogue occasionally takes the form of a severe disputation as at the symposium in king Janaka's court.

As contrasted with the dialectic method, we also have what we call the synthetic method in *Upaniṣads* as well. Here an attempt is made to synthesize various ideas. For example, Aśvapatikaikeya tries to synthesize six cosmological philosophers in *Chhāndogya*, Pippalada tries to synthesize six psycho – metaphysical questions propounded to him by six seers in the *Praśnopaniṣad* or finally Yājñavalkya attempts it out of the six metaphysical standpoints suggested to him by king Janaka in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*.

As against the dialectical and synthetic method, we have what we may call monologic method also in *Upaniṣads*. The *Upaniṣadic* discourse often becomes soliloquy when philosophers try to answer questions by others. For example even though Yama, in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, was unwilling to impart wisdom to Naćiketa, when once he

⁴¹ Ibid, *Kena*, III.1- 4.4, p587-591

began to speak, he spoke in a philosophical monologue which absolutely overhit the bounds of the original question.

We have next, the Ad – hoc or temporising method which is also a noticeable feature of the *Upaniṣadic* philosophizing. Very often the philosophers are absolutely pertinent, and never illuminate on any topic except the one which is immediately before them, and teach according to the capacity of the learner. In the celebrated Indra – Virocana myth⁴² their preceptor Prajāpati tells them the secret not all at once, but only when either of them has prepared himself for receiving the wisdom to be imparted. It thus happens that Virocana is perfectly satisfied with the first answer of Prajāpati, but Indra is not, and presses his matter again and again for the solution of his difficulties, Prajāpati disclosing the secret of his philosophy only finally. This is an excellent example of the Ad – hoc method employed by the *Upaniṣadic* sages.

Finally we have regressive method which takes the form of many successive questions, every new question carrying us behind the answer to the previous question. Thus it was that when Janaka asked Yājñavalkya what was the light of man, Yājñavalkya said it was the Sun. Janaka went behind answer after answer carrying Yājñavalkya from the sun to the moon, from the moon to the fire, from the fire.....to the *Ātman*, which exists behind them all as the light – in – itself.⁴³

Thus we have a variety of methods employed in *Upaniṣads* in order to build its epistemology and subsequently its metaphysics.

The *Mahāvākyas* : The Epistemology of Self – Consciousness :

The focal point of whole *Upaniṣadic* discourse is the knowledge of the self and therefore all the *Mahāvākyas* or great teachings (literally great sentences) are all about *Ātman*. They are as follows:

⁴² Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953) *Chhāndogya* VIII.7-12, p501-509

⁴³ *ibid.*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. IV.3 p754

1. *Prajñānam Brahma* “Consciousness is *Brahman*”⁴⁴
2. *Aham Brahmāsmi* “I am *Brahman*”⁴⁵
3. *Tattvamasi* “Thou art that”⁴⁶
4. *Ayam Ātma Brahma* “This *Ātman* is *Brahman*”⁴⁷
5. *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahma* “Everything is *Brahman*”⁴⁸

The *Mahāvākyas*, in brief, are different paths of realization of the Absolute. The statement *Prajñānam Brahma* directs the seeker to meditate on the *śitsvarupa* (Pure consciousness form of *Brahman*), leading to the merger of that individual consciousness in the Universal and the attainment of *mukti* (Liberation from the worldly bondage) and the state of Supreme Bliss (*Paramānanda*). *Aham Brahmāsmi* is an endeavour to make the pupil engage in deep meditation to realize the Absolute. In the *Tattvamasi*, the teacher is trying to make his pupil realize that his innate being is a part of the Absolute. *Ayam Ātma Brahma* also accomplishes the same thing. We have already discussed all the *pramānas* available in the *Upaniṣads* in detail. Here we shall try to see which epistemological mean is available to know the self whose knowledge has been claimed and articulated in the *mahāvākyas*.

The question can be simply put as: if self – consciousness is the final reality, how would it be possible for us to realise it? Can bare intellect or the known *pramānas* suffice to give us a vision of this final reality, or is there any other process beyond the reach of intelligence which has the power of taking us within the portal of pure Self – consciousness?

Now, Epistemologically, we are told in the various passages of the *Upaniṣads*, it would not be possible for us to know the self in the technical meaning of the word ‘knowledge’. The known *pramānas*, which we have discussed in the first section, are not applicable in acquiring self – knowledge.

⁴⁴ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.2*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009) *Aitreya Upaniṣad*, III. 1.3 p66

7. *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), I.4.10 p100

⁴⁶ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, VI.8.7 p468

⁴⁷ *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Madhavananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), II.5.19, p280

⁴⁸ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, III.14.1, p208

The *Ātman*, say the *Upaniṣadic* philosophers, is unknowable in its essential nature. “Whence words returns along with the mind, not attaining it, he who knows the bliss of *Brahman* fears not at any time”⁴⁹ says *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. “There the eyes goes not, speech goes not, nor the mind, we know not, we understand not how one can teach this”⁵⁰ says the *Kena Upaniṣad*.

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, in a similar vein, says, “He who cannot even be heard of by many, whom many, even hearing do not know, wondrous is he who can teach (Him) and skilful is he who finds (Him) and wondrous is he who knows, even when instructed by the wise”⁵¹. We see in all these passages how the *Ātman* is to be regarded as unknowable in its essential nature.

There is, however, another side to the unknowability of the *Ātman*. The *Ātman* is unknowable because he is the eternal subject who knows. How could the eternal knower, ask the *Upaniṣad* at various places, be an object of knowledge? “The *Ātman* is the Great Being”, says the *Śvetāśvata Upaniṣad*, “Who knows all that is knowable; who can know him who himself knows?”

In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, in various passages, we are put in possession of bold speculation of the philosopher Yājñavalkya. That by whom everything is known, how could he himself be known? It goes like, “He who dwells in the semen is other than the semen, whom the semen does not know, whose body the semen is, who controls the semen from within that is your self, the inner controller, the immortal. He is never seen but is the seer, He is never heard but is the hearer, He is never perceived but is the perceiver, He is never seen thought but is the thinker. There is no other seer but He, There is no other hearer but He, There is no other perceiver but He, There is no other thinker but He. He is your self, the inner controller, the immortal. Everything else is of evil”⁵².

⁴⁹ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953) *Taittirīya*, II.4.1, p545

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, *Kena*, I.3, p581

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, *Kaṭha*, I.2.7, p610

⁵² *Ibid.*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, III.7.23, p230

We thus see that the question of the unknowability of *Ātman* has another aspect also, namely that He is unknowable because He is the eternal subject of knowledge and cannot be an object of knowledge to another beside him.

But this raises another fundamental question. Granted that the self is the eternal knower of objects, granted also that there is no other knower of him, would it be possible for the knower to know himself? This very subtle question was asked Yājñavalkya in another passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and here again we see the brilliant light which the sage Yājñavalkya throws on the problem. It is possible, he says 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 the philosophy of Yājñavalkya, nothing is possible, if self – consciousness is not possible. Self – consciousness is the ultimate fact of existence.

We see here how boldly Yājñavalkya regards both introspection and self – consciousness as the verities of experience. Introspection is the 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 supreme power of dichotomising himself. The empirical conditions of knowledge are inapplicable to the self. The self can divide himself into the knower and the known.

According to Yājñavalkya self – consciousness is possible, and it is not only possible but alone real. As the dialogue goes between Janaka and Yājñavalkya

Janaka : What is the light of man?

Yājñavalkya: Sun is the light of man. It is on account of the sun that man is able to sit and to move about, to go forth for work and to return.

Janaka: When the Sun has set, O Yājñavalkya, What is the light of man?

Yājñavalkya: Moon is the light of man, having the moon for light, man could sit and move about, do his work and return

Janaka: When both the sun and moon have set, what is the light of man?

Yājñavalkya: Fire indeed is man's light, having fire for his light man could sit and move about, do his work and return

Janaka: When the sun has set, when the moon has set, and when the fire is extinguished, What is the light of man?

Yājñavalkya: Now, verily, you are pressing me to the deepest question. When the sun has set and when the moon has set, and when the fire is extinguished, the Self alone is his light

Yājñavalkya is here clearly positing the act of pure self – contemplation in which the Self is most mysteriously both the subject and the object of knowledge.

Intimations of Self – knowledge

The first problem arises with the idea of the absence of the Self. Some sceptics believe that there is nothing like self or no such principle exists in us. As David Hume puts it,

“For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and can never observe anything but perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long I am insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate, after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated, nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect non – entity. If anyone, upon serious and unprejudiced reflection, thinks he has a different notion of himself, I must confess I can reason no longer with him. All I can allow him is, that he may be the right as well as I, and that we are essentially different in this particular. He may, perhaps perceive something simple and continued, which he calls himself; though I am certain there is no such principle in me”⁵³

If this is the case, the problem is why should we think of being moral? If the agent is just a flow, why should we think of values at all? Here Vedanta has to give an answer.

⁵³ Hume, D, *A treatise of human nature*, (London: William Collins sons & co. 1975), p301-302

Drg – Drśya- Viveka, one of the *prakarana* treatises of *Vedānta* reads –
Rupam Drśyam loćanam Drka tat drśyam drktu mānasam.
*Drśya dhibṛtaya sakṣihi drigeba na tu drshyate*⁵⁴

Meaning that when world is seen, eyes are the seer. When eyes are seen, mind is the seer. When mind is seen, witness is the seer. But there is no seer of this witness.

This can be further interpreted as – if a condition C1 changes to C2, an agent A1 who is present in C1 will be able to read the change if he is present in both C1 and C2. If with the change in the condition the agent also changes, let us say, from A1 to A2, he won't be able to read the change. The concept of change will vanish if everything in a system changes. There should be a constant to read the change. Therefore a perfect new – comer to a place never raises the question of change. It is only the old visitors who talk about change.

Therefore any sceptic who says that there is nothing constant in him, since he perceives his body and mind only as changing phenomena, makes a mistake. By simply saying that he is able to perceive changes, he implicitly admits that he himself is not changing. To say that the seer also might change does not carry any meaning in this i.e. the first person perspective since that change would be known again only if there is a constant or witness to note it.

So *Vedānta* refutes the sceptic position of 'no – self' and establishes the presence of a constant principle which becomes the basis of morality and its agency.

From the above discussion, since self is not an object but subject of knowledge, it is very clear that mere intellect would be lame to enable us to realise pure Self – consciousness. Thus pure Self – consciousness cannot be known but can be realised. It is not an object of knowledge but rather a subject of self – realization. And this pure self – consciousness could only be reached in a state of mystic realisation.

⁵⁴ Ācārya, Śaṅkara, *Drg – Drśya – Viveka* tr. Swami Nikhilananda, (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1931),p1

Upaniṣads afford a practical lesson for the realisation of *Ātman*. They are not content with merely constructing an intellectual explanation of Reality, but suggest means for practical attainment of it. There is the same gulf between expression of an experience and enjoyment of it, as there is between knowledge and being. Nevertheless mystic experience had itself to be suggested and communicated in a concealed fashion. It is thus that we find in the various *Upaniṣads* mystical intimations of the realisation of the Self, which are hidden like jewels beneath an intellectual exterior, and which he alone who has the eye for them can discern to be of immeasurable value.

Given the limitations of the *pramānas* like perception, inference etc. for gaining the knowledge of the self, *Upaniṣadic* seer's draw a distinction between *aparā vidyā* and *parā vidyā* i. e. between lower and higher knowledge.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* tells there are two kinds of knowledge to be known, one – the higher and other – the lower knowledge. Of these, the lower knowledge is the knowledge of the vedas, of grammar, of etymology, of metre, of the science of the heavens; while the higher knowledge is that by which alone the imperishable being is reached.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Muṇḍaka*, 1.1.4-5, p359-363

Chapter Three

Ethical aspects of *Ātman*:

The Doctrine of *Ātman* as the Locus of the *Puruṣarthas* and *Āśramas*

In this chapter, I am going to deal with the Ethical aspect of *Ātman* as discussed in the *Upaniṣads*. *Upaniṣads* do not talk only about the transcendent; it incorporates worldly life extensively into its discussions. The *Īśa Upaniṣad* reads –

“By doing *karma*, indeed, one should wish to live here for a hundred years. For a man such as you (who wants to live thus), there is no way other than this, whereby *karma* may not cling to you.”¹

Therefore, four values have been described in the *Upaniṣads* which are called *Puruṣarthas* or literally the meaning of being a person. In order, they are put as *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Mokṣa*. They have been further divided into two classes. *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma* have been clubbed and are together called *Abhyudaya*. The other value *Mokṣa* is called *Niḥśreyasa*, signifying fulfilment. Thus they expound a two – tier value system. I shall see how the major *Upaniṣads* relate the concept of self with the value – system they propagate.

Dharma, *artha* and *kāma* together is called *Trivarga* also. We find an emphasis on these values in the Pre – Buddhist *Upaniṣads* like *Īśa*, *Chāndogya*, *Kaṭha* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. The importance of *Mokṣa* can be read mainly in the post Buddhist *Upaniṣads*. We can read clear Buddhist influence in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.

Abhyudaya

Dharma

Dharma has been treated very exhaustively in *Upaniṣads*. According to Linguists, the word *dharma* has been derived from Proto – Indo – Iranian root ‘*dhar*’, which means to fasten, to support, to hold, in turn reflecting Proto – Indo – European root *d^her*

¹Eight *Upaniṣads*, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Īśa* 2, p6

meaning to hold, which in Sanskrit is reflected as \sqrt{dhr} . Etymologically it is related to avestan \sqrt{dar} or old Persian \sqrt{dar} meaning ‘to hold or have’².

In *Rg Veda*, the word appears as *Dharman* with a range of meaning encompassing ‘something established or firm’ figuratively pointing to a sustainer or supporter and semantically indicating something like the Greek ‘Ethos’ meaning fixed decree, status or law. In classical Sanskrit the noun becomes thematic – *dharma*.³

In general, the term *dharma* refers to the natural property of any given object. *Dharma* of something is that which makes it what it is. For example, the natural property of fire is to burn. If something looks like fire but does not burn anything, it cannot be called as fire. Similarly the natural property of sugar is sweetness. If some sugar – crystal like objects do not taste sweet, we won’t call them sugar. Thus *dharma* is the intrinsic property of something.

The second idea of *dharma* is that of duty or propriety. It evolves from the concept of a divinely instituted natural order of things discussed in the ancient Indian religious and Philosophical texts. *Dharma* precisely points to a way of life which is in conformity with that order.

Rg Veda calls this order *Rta*. *Rta* literally means ‘the course of things’. The conception might have been originally suggested by the regularity of the Sun, Moon and stars, the alternation of day and night, and of seasons. Everything that is ordered in the world has *Rta* for its principle. The shifting series of the world are like the varying expressions of the constant *Rta*. The tendency towards the mystic conception of an unchanging Reality shows its first sign here. The real is the unchanging law.

After the emergence of *Rta* as a cosmic order, it is identified with the settled will of a Supreme principle. But gods have not been depicted as the originator of this order. Varuna who was first the keeper of the physical order becomes the custodian of the moral order, *Rtasya gopa* and the punisher of sin. The prayer to the god is in many cases for keeping us in the right path. As the *Rg Veda* reads –

² <http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharma>, retrieved on May23, 2011

³ *Ibid.*, retrieved on May23, 2011

O Indra, lead us on the path of *Rta*, on the right path over all evils.

Similar kind of a thing can be seen in *Bṛahadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, when it gives a description of the order of the Universe. It reads as –

“Verily at the command of that imperishable, the sun and the moon stand in their respective positions. At the command of that imperishable, O Gārgi, heaven and earth stand in their respective position. At the command of that imperishable, O Gārgi, what are called moments, hours, days and nights, half – months, months, seasons, years stand in their respective positions. At the command of that imperishable, O Gārgi, some rivers flow to the east from the white (snowy) mountains, others to the west in whatever direction each flows. By the command of that imperishable, man praise those who give, the gods are desirous of the sacrificer and the fathers are desirous of the *darvī* offering.”⁴ And adds –

“Verily, that imperishable, O Gārgi is unseen but is the seer, is unheard but is the hearer, unthought but is the thinker, unknown but is the knower. There is no other seer but this, there is no other hearer but this, there is no other thinker but this, there is no other knower but this. By this imperishable, O Gārgi, is space woven like warp and woof”⁵

Thus we see that the idea of a cosmic order is not only present in the *samhitās* but also in the *Upaniṣads*. *Dharma* which produces justice, social harmony and human happiness require that the human beings discern and live in a manner appropriate to the requirements of that order. The power that lies behind nature and keeps everything in balance becomes a natural forerunner of *Dharma*. The idea of *Rta* laid the cornerstone of *dharma*’s implicit attribution to the principle pervading the existence.

What is the practical meaning of living in tune with the cosmic order? In this regard, *Bṛahadāraṇyaka upaniṣad* goes onto identify *Dharma* with truth. *Rta* is the

⁴ Radhakrishnan, S., *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, III.8.9, p232

⁵ *Ibid*, III.8.11, p233

underlying truth of the phenomenal universe. And if *Dharma* is living in conformity with the *Rta*, it prescribes a truthful life. The *Upaniṣad* reads as –

“Yet he did not flourish. He created further an excellent form, *dharma*. This is the power of *Kṣatriya* class, viz. *dharma*. Therefore there is nothing higher than *dharma*. So a weak man hopes (to defeat) a strong man by means of *dharma* as one does through a king. Verily that which is *dharma* is truth. Therefore they say of a man who speaks the truth, he speaks *dharma* or of a man who speaks *dharma* that he speaks the truth. Verily both these are the same”⁶ So simply speaking, in *Upaniṣadic* terms, *dharma* refers to a truthful and honest way of living. If *dharma* means living according to certain universal principles, truthfulness is the foremost of them. All other virtues come as essential supplements to this virtue of truthfulness.

This is reflected in another passage from *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. The *Upaniṣad* reads as–
“The knower of Brahman attains the highest. Here is a verse uttering that very fact: Brahman is Truth, Knowledge and Infinite. He who knows that Brahman as existing in the intellect which is lodged in the supreme space in the heart, enjoys, in identification with all – knowing Brahman, all desirable things simultaneously. From that Brahman indeed, which is the Self, was produced space. From space emerged air. From air was born fire. From fire was created water. From water sprang up earth. From earth were born the herbs. From herbs was produced food. From food was born man. That man. Such as he is, is surely a product of the essence of food. Of him this indeed, is the head; this is the southern (right) side; this is the northern (left) side; this is the self; this is the stabilizing tail”⁷

Here we can see that *satyam* or truth is included in the essence of the Supreme. And therefore, in the discourse of *dharma*, truthfulness acquires the highest status.

We find, therefore, in the same *Upaniṣad*, a passage where truthfulness is primarily instructed by a teacher to his outgoing student along with a prescription for the righteous way of life. It reads as –

⁶ Ibid, I.4.14, p171.

⁷ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śankarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II.1.1, p304

“Having taught the Vedas, the preceptor imparts this post instruction to the students : Speak the truth. Practice righteousness. Make no mistake about study. Having offered the desirable wealth to the teacher, do not cut off the line of progeny. There should be no inadvertence about truth. There should be no deviation from the righteous activity. There should be no mistake about protection of yourself. Do not neglect the propitious activities. Do not be careless about learning and teaching”⁸

The instruction to follow the path of truthfulness is explicit, since all other virtues like control of the mind and control of the senses turns indispensable to practice the discipline of truthfulness. Thus *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says, “Truth alone wins, and not untruth. By truth is laid the path called devayāna, by which the desireless seers ascend to where exists the supreme treasure attainable through truth”⁹

Therefore, the next meaning of *dharma* is associated with *ācāra*, *vyavahāra* and *prāyaścīta* i.e. with a person’s conduct and his or her dealings with the world, with truthfulness as its locus. *Prāyaścīta* stands for a sense of repentance for the mistakes we commit knowingly or unknowingly. This requires cultivation of right virtues and eradication of the negative tendencies. Thus *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* points to a set of five cardinal sins which one should avoid in order to live a righteous life. It reads as – Again in the *Chhāndogya*, we meet with a different list of virtues. We read “Then those are his austerity, charity, sincerity, non – injury, speaking of truth – they are his *dakṣiṇas*.”¹⁰ This means that *Ātman* (self – knowledge), which is the cause of liberation, cannot be attained by a life of perpetual defects and drawbacks. One needs to fight all the evil tendencies existing within and without. As *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* puts it –

“This self cannot be attained by one without strength nor through austerity without an aim. But he who strives by these means, if he is a knower, this self of his enters the abode of *Brahman*.”¹¹

⁸ Ibid., *Taittīriya*, I.11.1, p 283

⁹ Ibid., Vol.2, *Muṇḍaka* III.1.6 p146

¹⁰ *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad with the commentary of Śankarācārya*, tr. Swami Gambhirananda, III.17.4 p229

¹¹ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), *Muṇḍaka*, III.2.4, p690,

But, as already said, *dharmā* is not only elimination of negative but also inculcation of the positive. Therefore there are many *Upaniṣadic* passages which prescribe sets of qualities in order to live a *dhārmic* life. This is illustrated by a parable found in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It goes as –

“Once upon a time the gods, men and demons all went to their common father, Prajāpati and asked him to communicate to them the knowledge that he possessed. To gods Prajāpati communicated the syllable *Da*. And having asked them whether they had understood what he had said to them, received the answer that they had understood that they were asked to practice self – control (*Dāmyata*), upon which Prajāpati expressed satisfaction. To the man he also communicated the syllable *Da*, and after having asked them whether they had understood what he had said to them, received the answer that they had understood that they should practice Charity (*Datta*), upon which Prajāpati said that he was satisfied. To the demons likewise, Prajāpati communicated the syllable *Da*, and having asked them whether they had understood what he had said to them, received the answer that they had understood that they should practice compassion (*Dayādhvam*), upon which Prajāpati expressed satisfaction again”¹² Thus the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* points to self – control, charity and compassion as the three principal cardinal virtues. In a nutshell, *dharmā* in *Upaniṣads*, in one sense can be seen as practice of certain virtues and abstinence from certain prohibited practices.

There is, in the *Upaniṣadic* context, one more dimension of *dharmā* which corresponds to one’s duty according to his or her station in life. This duty is related to ones *varna* (caste) and *aśrama* (stage in life). The former is called *varnadharma* and the latter *aśramadharmā*.

Varna refers to one’s caste. Here caste stands for in – born natural tendencies. Scriptures discuss four castes – *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śudra*. Although the idea of *varna* emerges from the *Vedas* and it’s exhaustive treatment is found in other Philosophy texts, *upaniṣads* also have discussed the issue. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* reads as –

¹² Ranade, R. D. *A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*, (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, V.2.1-3 p225

“So these (four orders were created) the *brāhmana*, the *kṣatriya*, the *vaiśya* and the *śudra*. Among the gods that Brahma existed as Fire, among men are *brāhmana*, as a *kṣatriya* by means of the (divine) *kṣatriya*, as a *vaiśya* by means of the (divine) *vaiśya*, as a *śudra* by means of the (divine) *śudra*.”¹³

This is primarily a division of labour. The section of people, in whom *sattva* is dominant, is called *brāhmana*. They are supposed to perform all the rituals, study the *vedas* and practice austerities. *Kṣatriya* are *rajas* dominated people. Their job is defence. They are supposed to protect others and the whole nation. *Vaiśya* is assigned the part of business. They are merchant people and are engaged in market. *Śudras*, the fourth and last category, are those who serve the community and the society.

In the beginning, these classes were not birth – based. There were flexibilities among them. But now it has grown to be a rigid and birth – based system. This can be understood from the story¹⁴ of Satyakāma Jābāla found in *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*. It goes like –

Once upon a time, Satyakāma Jābāla addressed his mother Jābāla,

Satyakāma: Mother, I desire to live the life of a student of sacred knowledge. Of what family am I?

Jābāla: I do not know, my child, of what family you are. In my youth, when I went about a great deal as a maid servant I got you. So I do not know of what family you are. However, I am Jābāla by name and you are Satyakāma by name. So you may speak of yourself as Satyakāma Jābāla.

Then he went to Gautama the son of Haridrumat and said,

Satyakāma: I wish to become a student of sacred knowledge. May I become your pupil, venerable sir.

Gautama: Of what family are you my dear?

Satyakāma: I do not know this, sir, of what family I am. I asked my mother, she answered me, “In my youth, when I went about a great deal as a maid servant I got

¹³ Ibid., *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 1.4.16, p171

¹⁴ Radhakrishnan, S., *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), *Chāndogya*, IV.4.1-5, p406-407

you. So I do not know of what family you are. I am Jābāla by name and you are Satyakāma by name.” So I am Satyakāma Jābāla sir.

Gautama: None but a *brāhmana* could thus explain. Bring the fuel my dear, I will receive you, as a pupil. Thou hast not departed from the truth.

Again *Āśrama* refers to the stages of life. There are four *āśrama* viz. *Brahmaçarya*, *Grhastha*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sānnyasa*.

Brahmaçarya encompasses first twenty five years of one’s life. Here one is supposed to lead the life of a *brahmaçari* or celibate. Chief duty in this period is to study and serve ones teacher. One depends on begging or food in this period. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* reads as –

“There are three branches of duty, sacrifice, study and almsgiving – Austerity indeed is the first. The second is the pursuit of sacred wisdom, dwelling in the house of the teacher. Absolutely controlling his body in the house of the teacher, is the third. All these attains to the world of the virtuous. He who stands firm in *Brahman* attains life eternal.”¹⁵

The second stage *grhastha* means married life. Here one is supposed to earn wealth and enjoy worldly life. He is supposed to bring happiness to family life through material wealth.

Vānaprastha, the third stage, implies a semi – retired life. Here one should withdraw from worldly life and start preparing for a perfect life of detachment.

The final stage is called *Sannyāsa*, where one is expected to give up the world perfectly and become a full – time spiritual aspirant. Attainment of perfect knowledge should be the sole aim at this stage.

Now we can see very clearly that each individual will have his own set of duties to be performed corresponding to his *varna* and *āśrama*. This is called *varnāśramadharmā*.

¹⁵ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), *Chhāndogya*, II.23.1, p374

Dharma, for a common man, thus boils down to a set of duties with respect to his station in life. There have been many controversies regarding the concept of *varna* in India. The story of Satyakāma Jābāla very clearly indicates *Upaniṣadic* stand on this issue. It indicates that in ancient India *varna* was a very flexible system. It was a division of labour and not that of labourers. The quality of a person implied his caste.

Thus we see that *dharma*, in *upaniṣadic* context means a variety of things. It sometime refers to conformity with a cosmic order, sometime a truthful way of life, sometime to cultivation of some values and at times to a set of duties. Whatever it might be, *Dharma* remains the most important of all *puruṣarthas* since it regulates both *artha* and *kāma* and paves the way to *mokṣa*. As a matter of fact, one cannot even think of *mokṣa* without *dharma*.

Artha

Artha is the second of the *puruṣarthas*. This Sanskrit term primarily stands for meaning and material wealth. *Artha* also refers to purpose, motive, cause, notion etc. Thus the second goal of human life is to earn material wealth. But earned material wealth does not become *artha* by itself. The wealth becomes *artha* only when it is earned through proper way and used for the right purposes through *dharma*. Then it becomes *artha* i. e. it becomes meaningful.

There has been a charge on Indian Philosophy of being escapist or ‘other worldly’ by nature. Those who label these charges probably are not aware of the scheme of *puruṣarthas* that Indian Philosophy propagates. The inclusion of *artha* signifies the due importance that Indian culture attaches to the worldly life. There have been discussions in the *upaniṣads*, in various forms, regarding *artha*. One of these can be traced to *Bhṛguvalli* chapter of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. It reads as¹⁶ –

“Bhṛgu, the son of Varuna, approached his father Varuna

Bhṛgu: Venerable Sir, teach me *Brahman*.

He explained to him thus: matter, life, sight, hearing, mind, speech and further said,

¹⁶Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Taittirīya*, III.1.1, P 553

Varuna: That verily from which these beings are born, that, by which, when born they live, that into which, when departing, they enter. That, seek to know. That is *Brahman*.

He performed austerity (of thought). Having performed austerity, he knew that matter (*anna*) is *Brahman*. For truly being here are born from matter (*anna*), when born, they live by matter(*anna*), and into matter (*anna*), when departing they enter.”

In the progress of this chapter, Varuna goes onto explain *prāna*, *mana*, *vijñāna* and finally *ānanda* as *Brahman*. But the most important point, from the angle of *Puruṣarthas*, to be noted in this chapter is that *anna* or matter has been accepted as the first expression of *Brahman*. The implication of this exposition is that our existence proceeds from material layer. It might end up in consciousness finally, but obviously doesn't begin from it. Therefore minimum material comfort is required even for those who aspire for the *parā vidyā* or higher knowledge. So *artha* or material wealth turns a minimum prerequisite to live a meaningful and purposeful life. As a matter of fact, *Upaniṣads* do not prescribe to earn only the minimum required but asks to earn as much as possible and multiply the earned wealth. The same *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* reads as –

“From food, verily, are produced whatsoever creatures dwell on the earth. Moreover, by food alone they live. And then also into it they pass at the end. Food verily is the eldest born of beings. Therefore is it called the healing herb of all. Verily those who worship *Brahman* as food obtain all food. For food, verily, is the eldest born of beings. Therefore is it called the healing herb of all. From food are beings born. When born they grow up by food. It is eaten and eats things therefore it is called food.

Verily, different from and within that which consists of the essence of food is the self that consists of life. By that this is filled. This verily has the form of a person. According to that one's personal form is this one with the form of a person; the inbreath is its head; the diffused breath the right side; the outbreath the left side; ether

the body, the earth the lower part, the foundation.”¹⁷ And further adds that one should not denigrate food. Let that be the resolve. Life is because of food. The body consumes food. Life is established in the body. The body is established in life. Thus food is established in food. He, who knows this, becomes established in that knowledge. And then he becomes full with food, with offspring, with cattle, with glory and with fame.

Thereby, it means that one should try to acquire as much wealth as possible in his life. In fact, during the second stage of life known as *gṛhasthāśrama*, earning wealth is a proper duty of the house holder. This wealth must be utilized for the happiness of the family and for the charitable work of the society. But this should be done standing within the four walls of *dharma*. And thereby it acquires meaning and becomes *artha*. And finally the same *Upaniṣad* asks to grow more food. It maintains that Earth is food. Space is food. Earth is established in space. Space is established in earth. Thus food is established in food. One who knows this, becomes established in that knowledge. And then he becomes full with food, with offspring, with cattle, with glory and with fame.

Here we see that the prescription is not only to increase material wealth but the idea of material wealth itself has been expanded in this verse. Thus *artha* does not only refer to money but also to children, cattle, glory, name and fame. It means an elevated social standing. In a nutshell, we can say that material wealth has been given due importance in *Upaniṣads* and thereby *artha* remains one of the most important goals of life in the *Upaniṣadic* scheme of thought.

Kāma

After *dharma* and *artha*, *kāma* comes as the third *puruṣārtha*. *Kāma* literally means desire. In the context of the *puruṣārtha*, it also means pleasure and includes pleasures of senses, mind, sex and aesthetic enjoyments of life. *Upaniṣads* have talked about this *puruṣārtha* at various places. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* reads as –

¹⁷Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), *Taittīriya*, II.2.1, p 543,

“The self – existent Lord destroyed the outgoing senses. Therefore one sees the outer thing and not the inner self. A rare discriminating man, desiring immortality, turns his eyes away and then sees the indwelling self”¹⁸

Here we can see that the senses are placed in such a way that they always move towards outer world. The mind of a common man is such that it seeks for pleasures outside. Vedic seers have taken this aspect into account and therefore have incorporated *kāma* also as one of the prime goals of life. Therefore *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* defines the mundane happiness of man as – “If one is healthy in body, wealthy, lord over others, lavishly provided with all human enjoyments, that is the highest bliss of man.”¹⁹

The *Upaniṣadic* seers happily agree with the idea that there must be enjoyment in life but condemn the view that there should be no regulative principle to set the sources and means of such enjoyment. The very first *śloka* of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* says –

“(Know that) all this, whatever moves in this moving world, is enveloped by God. Therefore find your enjoyment in renunciation (*Tena tyaktena bhunjitha*); do not covet what belongs to others.”²⁰

The line ‘*tena tyaktena bhunjitha*’ has been interpreted by many in many ways. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the line means that one should enjoy through *tyāga*²¹. Sri Aurobindo puts it as “By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy”²² (This is another widely accepted interpretation which means that one should enjoy that which is left by God). Śaṅkara says that the meaning of this line is “protect (yourself) through detachment.”²³ In brief, this *śloka* talks about enjoyment guarded by renunciation and thereby summarises the whole concept of *kāma* as discuss in the *Upaniṣads*.

¹⁸ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008), *Kaṭha*, II.1.1, p180

¹⁹ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV.3.33, p266

²⁰ *Ibid.*, *Īśa*, 1, p567

²¹ *Ibid.*, p567

²² Aurobindo, Sri, *The Upanishads* (Pondichery: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, 1981), *Īśa* 1, p19

²³ *Eight Upaniṣads, With the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya Vol.1*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda, (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2009), *Īśa* 1, p5

Upaniṣads don't condemn pleasure as such. But according to them, like *artha*, this *puruṣārtha* has also to be controlled by *dharma*. Enjoyment has to be earned properly and not without caring for the means as materialists like Chārvaka contends. According to *Upaniṣads*, *kāma* or enjoyment is an essential part of life but they don't maintain that it is the only goal of existence.

This can be understood in some passages about food from *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad*. There is a sense pleasure in having even our day – to – day food. Food is not meant only for the sake of filling our tummy up, but is also prepared in a way to make it enjoyable for our palate. As a matter of fact, the art of cooking tasty food has been cultivated in every society through the history of human growth. We all long for tasty food and that is natural human tendency. There is nothing wrong with the tendency and with the enjoyment of tasty food. But here *Chhāndogya* has to say something very important. The *Upaniṣad* reads as –

“Food when eaten becomes threefold; its coarsest portion becomes the faeces; its middle portion flesh and its subtlest portion mind.”²⁴ The next section exemplifies it as, “Of the curd, my dear, when churned, that which is subtle moves upward; it becomes butter.”²⁵ And adds, “In the same manner, my dear, of the food that is eaten that which is subtle moves upward; it becomes mind”²⁶ This passage gives us a very clear message. We shape ourselves through our diet, since food forms our mind and we are as our mind is. Therefore we must be careful about our eating habits. And apart from just looking to gratify our palate, we must be cautious about the kind of effect our food is going to leave in our being.

Similarly, *Upaniṣads* entertain a very catholic approach towards sexuality. Sex is one of the basic instincts of human beings. Like hunger, thirst and sleep, it is natural. And for the larger chunk of men and women, it is almost indispensable. The desire to have sexual intercourse is an inbuilt kind of a thing. Apart from that, for human beings, it is the means of procreation. So, the *Upaniṣadic* seers have very sensibly and respectfully dealt with this aspect of life. Like any other *kāma*, according to

²⁴ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1953) *Chāndogya*, VI.5.4, p453

²⁵ *Ibid*, VI.6.1, p454

²⁶ *Ibid*, VI.6.2, p454

Upanisads, this also must be enjoyed within the bounds of *dharma*. We can very clearly read that the sexual act has been compared with the process of sacrifice. This implies that sexual intercourse is like a sacred *yajña* for the *Upaniṣadic* seers. There is no condemnation but some kind of glorification of the act.

Next, apart from the sense – pleasures, *Upaniṣad* seems to permit intellectual pleasures as well. This is evident from the fact that some of the *Upaniṣadic* passages depict debates between the scholars. For example, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* reads as–

“Janaka (King) of Videha performed a sacrifice at which many presents (were offered to the priests). *Brāhmanas* of the *Kurus* and the *Pāñchālas* were gathered together there. In this Janaka of Videha arose a desire to know which of these *Brāhmanas* were the most learned in scripture. He enclosed (in a pen) a thousand cows. To the horns (of each cow) were fastened ten coins (of gold).”²⁷ This can be included in the category of *kāma* basically because these kinds exercise do not really lead to a lead us to any kind of realization of the true nature of the Self. But we derive a kind of pleasure, though temporarily only, from these discussions.

But *Upaniṣads* do not flinch from warning that one should not be complacent with this kind of information assuming it to be the highest knowledge or should not mistake this kind of intellectual luxury as the highest form of bliss. Thus *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* says –

“The one controller of many, inactive, who makes the one seed manifold. The wise who perceives Him as abiding in their self, to them belongs eternal happiness, not to others”²⁸ and by emphasizing on whom pure bliss ‘does not belong to’, makes it very clear that one should not confuse intellectual amusement with Divine Bliss. The only source of Divine bliss is the intuitive realization of the Self. To this *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* adds –

²⁷ Ibid., *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, III.1.1, p 211

²⁸ Ibid., *Śvetāśvatara*, VI.13, p746

“Whence words return along with the mind, not attaining it, he who knows that bliss of Brahman fears not at any time. This is indeed the embodied soul of the former (life). Verily different from and within that which consists of mind is the self consisting of understanding. By that this is filled. This, verily, has the form of a person. According to that one’s personal form is this one with the form of a person. Faith is its head; the right the right side; the true the left side; contemplation the body; the great one the lower part, the foundation.”²⁹

Since mind and speech can’t reach there, it really does not come in any intellectual discussion. Scriptures can act only as a guide map, the journey to *Brahman* is different from reading and debating over it. Thus, in a nutshell, we can say that *Upaniṣads* include *kāma* in the scheme of basic human values very comprehensively and permit enjoyment with the right kind of limits imposed by the principles of righteousness.

Niḥśreyasa – Mokṣa

The fourth *puruṣārtha*, *mokṣa*, has been discussed most extensively in the major *Upaniṣads*. *Mokṣa* comes from the root *muc* meaning ‘let loose or let go’. Thus *mokṣa* stands for release. This is release from the cycle of birth and death and a consequent cessation of the concomitant suffering. This can probably be treated as the most important of all *puruṣārthas* since liberation of the individual from the cycle of rebirth, according to *Upaniṣads*, is the ultimate purpose of existence.

There are various passages in *Upaniṣads* describing the nature of *mokṣa* and that of the liberated soul or the liberated individual. According to many passages, this liberation comes through the true knowledge of the Self. And therefore *Ātman* is the highest object of desire and love. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* reads as –

“The self is dearer than a son, is dearer than wealth, is dearer than everything else and is innermost. If one were to say to a person who speaks of anything else than the self as the dear, he will lose what he holds dear, he would very likely do so. One should

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Taittīriya*, II.4.1, p545

meditate on self alone as dear. He who meditates on self alone as dear, what he holds dear, verily, will not perish.”³⁰ This implies that whoever holds anything other than liberation as the final end will lose him in the whirlpool of the *samsāra* and one who aspires for liberation will not only lead a meaningful life but also enjoy the world. Again the *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* reads –

“As here on earth the world which is earned by work perishes, even so there the world which is earned by merit (derived from the performance of sacrifices) perishes. Those who depart hence without having found here the self and those real desires – for them in all worlds there is freedom”³¹ Thus *Upaniṣads* maintain that Self – knowledge is the only source of freedom in the true sense. Vedic rituals, which have been emphasised by *Mimāmsa* school also does not lead to the emancipation. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* puts it as –

“If one is able to perceive (Him) before the body falls away (One would be free from misery); if not he becomes fit for the embodiment in the created worlds”³² This verse can be understood as if a person comes to know the true nature of his self, no further rebirth takes place or in other words *mokṣa* is attained. So the realization of the divinity within is the gateway to the cessation of suffering since existence itself is synonymous with pain in final analysis. To this *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* adds –

“When man shall roll up space as if it were a piece of leather, then there will be an end of sorrow, apart from knowing God.”³³

This allegoric verse means that apart from gaining divine knowledge, there is no other way to come out of the cycle of rebirth since rolling up the space is impossible for any individual and birth in the world is nothing but pain. And further says – “When there is no darkness, then there is neither day nor night, neither being nor non – being, only the auspicious one alone. That is imperishable, the adorable light of *savitṛ* and the ancient wisdom proceeded from that”³⁴ Thereby meaning that the true knowledge of

³⁰ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 1.3.8, p 168

³¹ *Ibid.*, *Chhāndogya*, VIII.1.6, p 493

³² *Ibid.*, *Kaṭha*, II.3.4, p642

³³ *Ibid.*, *Śvetāśvatara*, VI.20, p748

³⁴ *Ibid.*, IV.18. p736

divinity leads one beyond everything and, of course, beyond the pair of pleasure and pain. And adds –

“In the vast *brahma* – wheel, which enlivens all things, in which all rest, the soul flutters about thinking that the self in him and the mover are different. Then when blessed by him, he gains life eternal”³⁵ Thus, immortality, that we all aspire for, comes in *mokṣa* which is gained by means of divine blessings.

And the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* further adds –

“The *brāhmaṇa* ignores one who knows him different from the Self. The *ksatriya* ignores one who knows him different from the Self. The worlds ignore one who knows him different from the Self. The gods ignore one who knows him different from the Self. The beings ignore one who knows him different from the Self. All ignore one who knows him different from the Self. This *brāhmaṇa*, this *ksatriya*, these worlds, these gods, these beings and this all are this Self.”³⁶ And therefore the realisation of the Self leads to the fulfilment of all desires. The same *Upaniṣad* reads, regarding the state of Self – realization as –

“This, verily, is his form which is free from craving, free from evil, free from fear. As a man when in the embrace of his beloved wife knows nothing without or within, so the person when in the embrace of intelligent self knows nothing without or within. That, verily, is his form in which his desire is fulfilled, in which the self is his desire, in which he is without desire, free from any sorrow.”³⁷ And adds, “If a person knows the Self as ‘I am this’, then wishing what, and for the desire of what should he suffer in the body?”³⁸ To this, *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* adds –

“Finally one should enter in to oneself and sing a praise meditating carefully on one’s desire. Quickly will be fulfilled for him the desire, desiring which he may sing the praise, yea, desiring which he may sing the praise.”³⁹ This implies that a liberated

³⁵ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953) *Śvetāśvatara* 1.6, p713

³⁶ *Ibid.*, *Brhadāranyaka*, II.4.6, p198,

³⁷ *Ibid.*, IV.3.21, p262

³⁸ *Ibid.*, IV.4.12, p276

³⁹ *Ibid.*, *Chāndogya*, I.3.12, p344

person has no desire left to be satisfied and thereby all his sufferings end in this life itself. To this *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* further adds –

“Whatever world a man of purified nature thinks of in his mind and whatever desires he desires, all these worlds and all these desires he attains. Therefore, let him who desires prosperity worship the knower of the self”⁴⁰ Since we all are looking for happiness, consciously or unconsciously, we all are looking for *Ātman*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* reads as –

“Then he said, ‘Verily not for the sake not of the husband is the husband dear but a husband is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of the wife is the wife dear but a wife is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of the sons are the sons dear but sons are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of the brahminhood is brahminhood dear but brahminhood is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of ksatriyahood is ksatriyahood dear but a ksatriyahood is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of worlds are the worlds dear but worlds are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of gods are the gods dear but gods are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of beings are the beings dear but beings are dear for the sake of the Self. Verily not for the sake of all is all dear but all is dear for the sake of the Self. Verily, O Maitreyi, it is the Self that should be seen, heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. Verily by the seeing of, by the hearing of, by the thinking of, by the understanding of the Self, all this is known”⁴¹ Therefore aspiration of *Mokṣa* is not simply important but is essential for meaningful living.

Regarding the nature of the liberated one, *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* says – “Just as (a ball of earth) striking against a solid rock is destroyed, so will one be destroyed who wishes evil to one who knows this, as also one who injures him, for he is a solid rock”⁴² meaning thereby that one who has attained *mokṣa* turns immune to worldly hostilities.

⁴⁰ Ibid., *Muṇḍaka*, III.1.10, p689

⁴¹ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1953) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, II.4.5, p197

⁴² Ibid., *Chhāndogya*, I.2.8, p341

The same *Upaniṣad* further reads as – “Verily, for him, who knows thus, this mystic doctrine of Brahṁā, the sun neither rises nor sets. For him it is day forever.”⁴³ This primarily implies that one who comes to know the Ultimate Reality discovers it as the eternally ever – present truth. He does not get any new knowledge but rather gets rid of his temporary ignorance.

Fulfilment of human life comes only with the attainment of *mokṣa*. The *Dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* trio does not lead to any end in itself. They grow meaningful only in the presence of the fourth *puruṣārtha*. But *Dharma* has a very important role to play in the attainment of ultimate freedom from the cycle of birth and death. *Mokṣa* cannot be attained by leading a life of weaknesses and errors.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad has very important remarks to make in this regard. It reads as – “This self within the body, of the nature of light and pure, is attainable by truth, by austerity, by right knowledge, by the constant practice of chastity. Him the ascetics with their imperfections done away, behold.”⁴⁴ We had discussed the principles of *Dharma*, while discussing the first *puruṣārtha*. Here we can see that *Dharma* turns a prerequisite to tread the path of *Mokṣa*. The practice of *Dharma* purifies the mind and the *Ātman* reveals itself once this purification is completed. The same *Upaniṣad* reads as –

“The subtle self can be known by thought in which the senses in five different forms have centred. The whole of men’s thought is pervaded by the senses. When it (thought) is purified, the self shines forth”⁴⁵ But the noteworthy point here is that *dharma* itself does not lead to the end. As *Muṇḍaka* puts it –

“He is not grasped by the eye, nor even by speech nor by other sense – organs, nor by austerity nor by work, but when one’s nature is purified by the light of knowledge then alone he, by meditation, sees Him who is without parts.”⁴⁶ It is only through subtle instrument of intuition that one grasps the Ultimate in meditation and not through gross exercises of the intellect. One needs to live a life of renunciation and

⁴³ Ibid., III.2.3, p386

⁴⁴ Ibid., *Muṇḍaka*, III.1.5, p687

⁴⁵ Ibid., III.1.9, p688

⁴⁶ Ibid., III.1.8, p688

childlike simplicity in order to attain higher knowledge. A dialogue⁴⁷ in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* goes like –

“Kahola Kauṣītakeya: Yājñavalkya explain to me the Brahman that is immediately present and directly perceived, that is the self in all things.

Yājñavalkya: This is your self which is in all things.

Kahola Kauṣītakeya: Which is within all things, Yājñavalkya?

Yājñavalkya: It is that which transcends hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death. The *Brahmanas*, having known that self, having overcome the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for the worlds for both these are but desires. Therefore let a *Brahmana*, after he has done with learning, desire to live as a child. When he has done (both) with the state of childhood and with learning, then he becomes a silent meditator. Having done with (both) the meditative and non – meditative states, then he becomes a *Brahmana* (a knower of *Brahman*).

Kahola Kauṣītakeya: How does the Brahmana behave?

Yājñavalkya: Howsoever he may behave, he is such indeed. Everything else is of evil. This dialogue explains the nature of the enlightened person. He not only takes the life of simplicity but starts regarding all other things as distraction and evil.

One grasps everything by grasping the Divine knowledge. This is very elaborately discussed in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It reads as –

“As when a drum is beaten, one is not able to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the drum or the beater of the drum the sound is grasped”⁴⁸ and adds –

“As when a conch is blown, one is not able to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the conch or the blower of the conch the sound is grasped”⁴⁹ and further says–

“As when a drum is beaten, one is not able to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the drum or the beater of the drum the sound is grasped.”⁵⁰ Similarly when

⁴⁷ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, III.5.1, p220

⁴⁸ Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1953), *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, II.4.7, p198

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, II.4.8, p199

the divine knowledge dawns the other sources of external knowledge turns insignificant. It is like when vast areas including villages and paddy fields get immersed in flood, the small sources of water gets mingled with it and, losing its own identity as a water source, becomes a part of the vast expanse of water. The *Upaniṣad* further says –

“As from a lighted fire laid with damp fuel, various (clouds of) smoke issue forth, even so my dear, the *Rg Veda*, the *Yajur Veda*, the *Sāma Veda*, *Atahrvangirasa*, history, ancient lore, sciences, *Upaniṣads*, verses, aphorism, explanations and commentaries. From this, indeed, are all these breathed forth”⁵¹

This gives us the picture of the nature of the Divine knowledge. The Divine is the source of all knowledge. It is the source of all creativity and wisdom. For a person, having firsthand experience of the Divine, all these become intelligible. Later we read–

“As the ocean is the one goal (uniting place) of all waters, as the skin is the one goal of all kinds of touch, as the nostrils are the one goal of all kinds of smells, as the tongue is the one goal of all tastes, as the eye is the one goal of all forms, as the ear is the one goal of all sounds, as the mind is the one goal of all determinations, as the heart is the one goal of all forms of knowledge, as the hands are the goal of all acts, as the organs of generation is the one goal of all kinds of enjoyments, as the excretory organ is the one goal of all evacuations, as the feet are the one goal of all movements, as the speech is the one goal of all *vedas*.”⁵² Similarly all the human activities are unconsciously directed towards that Divine which leads to light, to knowledge, to peace, to enlightenment, to rest, to *Mokṣa*.

These two concepts of *Abhyudaya* and *Nihśreyasa* summarize the whole concept *Upaniṣadic* ethics centred on the Self. The discourse, in essence, arises from the *Kaṭha Upaniṣadic* dialogue between Naçiketa and Yama. The dialogue talks about *preyas* and *śreyas*. *Śreyas* stands for the preferable, those which give permanent joy

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, II.4.9, p199

⁵¹ *Ibid*, II.4.10, p199

⁵² Radhakrishnan, S, *Principal Upaniṣads* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1953) *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II.4.11, p199

and *preyas* for the pleasurable, those which lead to temporary happiness. The dialogue goes as –

“The preferable is different indeed; and so indeed the pleasurable different. These two, serving divergent purposes, (as they do), bind man. Good befalls him who accept the preferable among these two. He who selects the pleasurable, falls from the true end”⁵³ and further adds –

“The preferable and the pleasurable approach man. The man of intelligence, having considered them, separates the two. The intelligent one selects the electable in preference to the delectable; the non – intelligent one selects the delectable for the sake of growth and protection (of the body etc.).”⁵⁴

The whole discourse of *dharma* is to shift human beings from *preyas* to *śreyas*. The attempt is to help man lead from lower to the greater kind of happiness. It is not simply an attitude of indifference towards the worldly life but a more comprehensive and holistic approach towards it. Within the concept of *Abhyudaya*, *kāma* and *artha* leads man to *preyas* when looked through the prism and practiced within the periphery of *dharma*. We need to train our mind to reject petty small pleasures just not for the sake of rejecting it but for attaining higher happiness.

But simply aspiring for higher happiness is not enough since any happiness coming within the frame of *Abhyudaya* is worldly and by nature is perishable. Thus we need to go beyond the pair of pleasure and pain which is called *Nihśreyas*. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says –

“The intelligent man gives up happiness and sorrow by developing concentration of mind on the Self and thereby meditating on the old Deity who is inscrutable, lodged inaccessibly, located in the intellect, and seated in the midst of misery.”⁵⁵

⁵³ *Eight Upanisads, Vol.1 with Commentary of Sankaracarya*, trans. Swami Gambhirananda (Kolkata: Advaita Ashram, 2008), *Kaṭha*, 1.2.1, p131

⁵⁴ *Ibid. Kaṭha*, 1.2.2, p132

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.2.12, p145

The intelligent man, knowing the limitation of *Śreyas* even aspires to go beyond. Now, the true knowledge of the Self leads one to *Mokṣa*. This is the state of fulfilment. Thus we may say that, in gist, the ethical discourse in the major *Upaniṣads* chalks out a plan to move from *preyas* to *śreyas* and finally ends up in *Nihśreyas* and since Self – knowledge leads to that state, Self becomes the locus of all *puruṣarthas*.

The problem of value is probably the most difficult of all the existing problems in the realm of Philosophy. This is because we can afford to neglect Metaphysics if we are not interested in the ultimate reality and are happy with our so called immediate reality. Epistemology also can be overlooked, in its great detail, if immediate knowledge of the objects of this world satisfies our quench for knowledge of knowledge. But we can't afford to neglect the problem of Ethics i.e. the problem of values since our life is full of choices. Our value – system decides all our choices. Apart from that, in order to run institutions of all kinds starting from family to the nation state we need to have a well – formed system of values. No one can afford to neglect the problem of values since it governs every step of our life. We decide our values taking them from various sources, from our family, culture, education etc.

The problem of value turns out to be very difficult due to the relativity factor involved with it. Every culture has its own value – system. So values change from place to place. Then from time to time also, values have changed in every culture. Therefore the biggest problem is to find an objective standard for morality.

Some philosophers have thought that though it is very difficult to find moral objectivity, there are some eternal values of any changing society. There are some values like truthfulness and integrity which are simply not relative to culture but go beyond the cultural boundaries. And therefore we need to cultivate those values. But this also does not give a solid foundation to any system of values since we can't accept a value just because it is practised in most of the societies in the world or simply since they have been practised for a prolonged period of time.

Some of the values like the food habit and clothing are bound to differ and vary from place to place since they depend mainly upon the geographical set – up and natural conditions. We cannot decide on objectivity of values just based on numbers. But can we think of a set of values which go beyond these limitations and can be

entertained based on some metaphysical foundation and not simply upon the number of societies that practise them or based on the period of time they have been practised? I have tried to examine this problem of values in the light of *Vedānta*. It appears that the epistemology of *Vedānta* and metaphysics propounded by it has important implications to this problem of values.

To read the implications of *Advaita Vedāntic* Metaphysics, in the realm of Ethics, we must understand *Advaita* in terms of the three layers of reality that they talk. Śaṅkaraçārya says that there are three kinds of *sattās* or realities as a whole – *Prātibhāsika*, *Vyavaharika* and *Paramārthika*.

Prātibhāsika is the layer of dreams, illusions and hallucinations. This layer appears to be unreal from the *Vyavaharika sattā* or the practical layer. None of us generally entertain that layer as real. But *Vedānta* maintains that *prātibhāsika* layer is not absolutely unreal. This is exemplified by the rope – snake illusion in *Advaita Vedānta*. When we sometime see a rope in dim light, we start entertaining it as a snake. But after a close examination, when we discover that there is no snake but only a rope, our behaviour changes. Yet we can't say that the snake was absolutely unreal since we had a 'real' kind of experience of the same. So is the case with the *Prātibhāsika* layer some kind of relative reality is there. Similarly only when dream experience comes to an end with awakening, we say that the dream was unreal. There is no scope of doubting dream during the experience of the same. Thus *Prātibhāsika* is unreal only from the *Vyavaharika* or some other plane.

Vyavaharika is the layer of our day – to – day mundane existence. Most of us entertain this to be 'the real' layer of existence. A common man never doubts the existence of the external world. We eat, drink, discuss philosophy and struggle for ethics only in this layer. Now *Advaita Vedānta* says that even this layer is also not the final. This layer is also relative and Unreal with respect to a final layer called *Pāramārthika*. *Pāramārthika* is Absolute in nature. Now in this layer everything is One. Brahman alone remains. There is no dualism of any kind in this layer. The most important point to note is that the perfect *Advaita*, which *Advaita Vedānta* has got its name from, exists only in this layer. There is dualism and in fact hardcore dualism in the other two layers.

Now it is very evident that in the *pāramārthika* plane, where everything and being becomes One, can be seen as the metaphysical foundation of all our basic values. According to this position, we all are finally connected to each other on the third plane of existence. I am one with the whole universe. Therefore when I try to cheat someone, say by telling a lie, I actually cheat myself. If *Karma* theory is applied here, which *Vedānta* very cordially accepts, the result of all my actions will definitely come back to me in the due course of time. Similarly when I help a needy person in the hours of distress, the perfect result will come to me since in helping him, actually I help myself. When I give love to someone, this is bound to come back to me, could be through a different channel or agent on the *Vyavahārika* plane, We can see a very solid metaphysical foundation of the essential values entertained, in global context, by different societies of the world.

Most of the religions of the world talk about the same set of values in different languages. The *Yama – Niyamas* of the Yoga in Hinduism and the *Pan̄ca mahābratas* of Jainism comprising of *satya*(truthfulness), *āsteya* (non – stealing), *ahimsa* (non – injury), *aparigraha* (non – possession) etc., the ten commandments of Christianity, The *Astāngika Mārga* of Buddhism like *Samyak Darśan*, *Samyak saṅkalpa* etc., the essentials of the five pillars of Islam like *zakāt*, *rozā* etc. do have all these values in common and we can see *Vedāntic* Oneness as the substratum of all these value – systems. Every essential human value has a justification in the *Advaitic* scheme of thought.

Upaniṣads also have a very great discourse to give about values. This is reflected in many passages in *Upaniṣads*. Here we can see that *satyam* or truth is included in the essence of the Supreme. And therefore, in the discourse of *dharma*, truthfulness acquires the highest status.

We find, therefore, in the same *Upaniṣad*, a passage where truthfulness is primarily instructed by a teacher to his outgoing student along with a prescription for the righteous way of life.

If we analyse all these prescribed values, we will see that they can all be justified in the oneness of the *Advaita Vedānta*. And within the four walls of *Dharma, Vedānta*

permits everyone to enjoy his life with *artha* i.e. material wealth and *kāma* or sensual pleasures.

Now the same plane of oneness can be used to justify military ethics also. Every religion has at some or the other point of time prescribed war as a means of protection. The philosophy of the *Bhagawat Geeta* and the Philosophy of *Zihad* in Islam can be sighted as two classical examples. At times, when an organ of our body degenerates due to some incurable disease, we chop that organ off in order to protect the rest of the body. Similarly, when some people become almost intolerable for humanity, they need to be eliminated for the protection of the larger interest of the society. So *Vedānta* and *Geetā* does not rule out capital punishment in spite of the oneness that it preaches.

Now since positive values have been described and justified in the *advaitic* scheme we need to look at the problem of negative values. If everything is pervaded by *Brahman*, if human nature is basically Divine, why do we come across so much of evil in this world. *Advaita Vedānta* can be explained in a very interesting way in this regard. For this, the *Shada ripus* or six negative qualities viz. *Kāma* or desire, *krodha* or anger, *lobha* or greed, *moha* or infatuation, *mada* or pride and *mātsarya* or jealousy can be taken up for examination. Traditionally these are thought as the genesis of all evils.

Human nature is basically divine, but the problem is that he is not aware of his divinity. Ego or empirical self is a part of the *Brahman* and it wants to go back to its original source. *Brahman* is all-blissfull, all- pervading and supreme consciousness. Therefore ego is all the time after happiness and wants to be Supreme in all respects. But instead of looking for this experience, turning inward, in the self, man looks for this experience in the world outside. He looks for happiness in the worldly objects and wants to grow big in his society. But none of the external object makes him perfectly happy.

Now, for instance, what is *lobha*? Ego looks for more and more to go back to the supreme state. Since he does not know how to reach there, he attempts to gain it by more and more worldly objects. With his experience of limited happiness with certain

objects, he suffers from the illusion that he would gain more and more happiness with more and more objects. In this process he fails to discriminate between right and wrong and his ignorance becomes his vice. The same thing can be said about all other vices. Since ego originates from supreme Brahman, the nature of Brahman gets reflected in ego. He is always busy in establishing his supremacy. And he can't accept if somebody surpasses him in any competition. When this feeling grows very strong, we call it *Mātsarya* or jealousy.

Thus all vices can be understood as a form of ignorance in *advaita*. When ignorance is removed man gains proper directions to put his efforts and gives up his vices. But even during his ignorance, he unconsciously looks for the supreme *advaitic* experience which will make him perfectly happy.

That's why *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* brings a distinction between *preyas* and *śreyas*. *Preyas* is the source of transitory and *Śreyas* is that of perpetual joy. One should go for the eternal and abandon the ephemeral. The way of evil is mistaking *preyas* as *śreyas*. That is just a result of confusion and to remove it one needs to learn *Vedānta* and look at its applied side. That is the whole of the value – discourse in the *Vedānta*. The final joy is in realizing oneness with the whole cosmos. That leads one to perfect fulfilment. But that has to be realized by means of practising some values and very interestingly all those values can be justified based on the oneness, which is the genesis of that fulfilment.

In this chapter, I have discussed the ethical aspect of the *Ātman* as discussed in the major *Upaniṣads*. The concepts of *Abhyūdaya* and *Niḥśreyasa* have been taken up in detail. In *Abhyūdaya*, I have covered *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma*, whereas in *Niḥśreyasa*, *Mokṣa* has been taken up. Various meanings of *Dharma* and the ideas of *Artha* and *Kama* as discussed within *Dharma* have been explored. *Mokṣa* has been taken up as the end of all, signifying fulfilment and the role of Self – knowledge in attaining the same has been enumerated. As a whole the meaning of all *puruṣarthas* have been discussed and the Self has been established as their locus.

Conclusion

The problem of self and the issues related with it is probably as old as the discipline of philosophy itself. In *Upaniṣadic* context, self, in the greater number of occasions, have been seen as a principle separate from the mind. *Upaniṣads* obviously maintain the distinction between mind and self. Thus we have two distinct words *manas* and *Ātman* for the both respectively.

But there is no unanimity, among commentators, regarding the nature of *Ātman* as described in the *Upaniṣad*. This has happened primarily due to various conflicting passages present in the texts of the *Upaniṣads*. In spite of these differences, there are certain basic points commonly accepted by all in describing the self as being. *Upaniṣads* expound three dimensions viz. ontological, metaphysical and psychological in its doctrine of self as being. *Upaniṣad* like *Taittirīya* have dived into the ontological aspect of it and *Chhāndogya* has talked about the Psychological aspect.

In its ontological exposition, self is described as a combination of five layers. The first one is *annamaya kośa* or the food layer. This represents our physical body. *Prāṇamaya kośa* is the second layer which signifies the sheath of the vital energy. Vital energy finds its grossest expression in our breath. The third layer is the *manomaya kośa* signifying our mind. It acts as the source of our will, emotions and imaginations. The fourth layer is the *vijñāmaya kośa* which is the seat of our intelligence. And the last ontological layer is *ānandamaya kośa* representing the blissful aspect of being or existence. All these put together form the structure of the self in the ontological sense.

In the metaphysical description, self in *Upaniṣads*, has been described in terms of three concepts. It is called *Sat – Ātman – Ānanda svarupa*. Thus it points to the nature of the self as Absolute Existence, Absolute consciousness and Absolute bliss. The self is eternal, imperishable and is the source of all bliss. Thus the attainment of true knowledge of the self reveals itself as the spring of perennial source of joy.

In the third i.e. the psychological dimension, it is depicted as the basis of three known states of mundane consciousness viz. waking, dream and deep sleep. *Ātman*, according to *Upaniṣads* is the substratum of all these. *Upaniṣads* call that state *Turīya* in which one goes beyond all these three states to realize the *Ātman* as the ultimate truth.

The debate between the Vedāntins seems to be inconclusive. But when we closely examine the text of the *Upaniṣads*, we find that Śaṅkara is probably the best interpreter of the texts. This is primarily because if we want to accommodate all the aspects of the self, Rāmānuja somehow seems to be incomplete.

First of all though at various places, *Upaniṣads* put the Ultimate as *saguṇa*, at places it is *nirguṇa* as well. Rāmānuja and for that matter all the *Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins* have confined themselves to *saguṇa* aspect only. But in Śaṅkara's philosophy we find that he has accommodated both the concept of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*. He has accepted that *saguṇa* aspect of *Brahman*, in the form of *Īśvara*, is possible as a reflection of itself in *māyā*. Both are there and both are real in their own realm.

Then regarding the dualism of *Ātman*, Śaṅkara, does not reject dualism at the *vyavahārika* level. *Upaniṣadic* passages are not only dualistic but also monistic. Only Śaṅkara seems to have taken both the points, dualism and Monism, clearly and coherently. The oneness is an aspect discussed in the *Upaniṣads* which *Vaiṣṇavas* haven't touched at all.

Vaiṣṇavas have identified the ultimate reality with *Viṣṇu*. They refer to *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, time and again, for the support of the dualistic theory they propagate. I have already mentioned the position of *Śvetāśvatara* in describing the Ultimate. It talks about three ultimate principles to be known ultimately. But the noteworthy point here remains is that this *Upaniṣad* finally identifies the Ultimate with *Śiva*. This creates great problem for *Vaiṣṇavas*. It does not seem that one of those *Upaniṣad* which they greatly rely on to justify their theory does not identify the real with the Vedic God *Viṣṇu* but with another God *Śiva*. This can be also read as an implication that the names given to the Ultimate by the *Upaniṣads* are symbolic since there are many names of Gods used in various places and everywhere that Vedic or Purānic

God has been given the Supreme status. The idea of identifying the supreme with *Viṣṇu* is purely an element taken from *Bhāgavat Purāna* and from the *Upaniṣads* stand it looks like identification of the Supreme with its symbol.

Vaiṣṇavas have not talked about any possibility of knowing the Supreme before death. But *Upaniṣads* do not take this exclusive stand. There are many passages in *Upaniṣads* which talk about possibility of Supreme knowledge before death. There are *ślokas* which seem to show a fusion of horizons even. In *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, Heaven, which Śāṅkara will not probably use to describe the Ultimate, and attainment of the same before death which Rāmānuja will not accept, come together in order to fuse two different philosophical positions.

One need not give up his body in order to attain the Supreme knowledge. The final release, of course, comes with the shedding of the body which Śāṅkara does not reject as such. As I mentioned earlier, he treats the body of a *jivan – mukta* as a slough cast off by a snake on an ant hill. This remains so long as the whole *karma*, related to the body, is not exhausted. Once the body falls, the Ultimate is attained.

This gives us an impression that Śāṅkara has given the best interpretation of the *Upaniṣad*. But that is not the perfect truth. Throughout his writings he kept on insisting that *Jñāna* is the only way to the Ultimate. *Karma* and *bhakti* are subsidiary ways and can act only as a support. But a careful study of the *Upaniṣads* reveal that they are neither devoid of *bhakti* or *karma* nor do they put them as subsidiaries to *jñāna*.

We can see the presence of *bhakti* and how *karma* has been depicted as the only means to get rid of the *karmabandhana* in the *Upaniṣads*. Thus one can say that Śāṅkara's monistic way of looking at the *Ātman* and accommodation of dualistic theories as secondary is probably the most exhaustive way of describing the nature of *Ātman* as described in the *Upaniṣads*. But his theory is acceptable only with certain modifications.

The next problem dealt in my work was epistemological and logical. First of all *Upaniṣads* refutes the sceptic position of ‘no – self’ and establishes the presence of a constant principle which becomes the basis of morality and its agency.

There are, as a whole, six *pramānas* in Indian Philosophy. In order, they can be put as – *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna*, *anupalabdhi* and *arthāpatti*. *Vedānta* accepts all these *pramānas* as valid but the problem that we had faced was – these *pramānas* are useful only in knowing the objective world. But the self is not any object of knowledge. It is the eternal subject or the ultimate knower. So the applicable epistemological category to know the self is not within these six.

From the discussion in the second chapter, it is very clear that mere intellect would be lame to enable us to realise pure Self – consciousness. Thus pure Self – consciousness cannot be known but can be realised. It is not an object of knowledge but rather a subject of self – realization. And this pure self – consciousness could only be reached in a state of mystic realisation.

Given the limitations of the *Pramānas* like perception, inference etc. for gaining the knowledge of the self, *Upaniṣadic* seer’s therefore draw a distinction between *Aparā Vidyā* and *Parā Vidyā* i.e. between lower and higher knowledge. The true nature is revealed by a different mechanism of intuitive self – realization. That altogether is a special epistemological category by itself which reveals the Self to itself. It is thus that we find in the various *Upaniṣads* mystical intimations of the realisation of the Self, which are hidden like jewels beneath an intellectual exterior, and which he alone who has the eye for them can discern to be of immeasurable value.

The last aspect which *Upaniṣads* reveal to us regarding self is ethical. *Upaniṣads* expound a two tier value – system of *Abhyudaya* and *Nihsreyasa*. The first comprising of *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and the last consisting of *Mokṣa*.

As discussed in the third chapter, *dharma*, having its genesis in *Ṛta*, stands for the principles of righteousness. There is, in the *Upaniṣadic* context, one more dimension of *Dharma* which corresponds to one’s duty according to his or her station in life. This duty is related to ones *varna* (caste) and *āśrama* (stage in life). The former is

called *varnadharma* and the latter *āśramadharmā*. *Varna* refers to one's caste. Here caste stands for in – born natural tendencies. Scriptures discuss four castes – *Brahman*, *Ksatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Śudra*. *Artha* is the second of the *puruṣarthas*. This Sanskrit term primarily stands for meaning and material wealth. Thus the second goal of human life is to earn material wealth. But earned material wealth does not become *artha* by itself. The wealth becomes *artha* only when it is earned through proper way and used for the right purposes.

Kāma stands for desire and enjoyment. In the context of the *Puruṣarthas*, it also means pleasure and includes pleasures of senses, mind, sex and aesthetic enjoyments of life. There has been a charge on Indian Philosophy of being escapist or 'other worldly' by nature. Those who label these charges probably are not aware of the scheme of *puruṣarthas* that Indian Philosophy propagates. The inclusion of *artha* and *kāma* signifies the due importance that Indian culture attaches to the worldly life.

The fourth *puruṣartha*, *mokṣa*, has been discussed most extensively in the major *Upaniṣads*. *Mokṣa* comes from the root *muc* meaning 'let loose or let go'. Thus *mokṣa* stands for release. This is release from the cycle of birth and death and a consequent cessation of the concomitant suffering. This can probably be treated as the most important of all *puruṣarthas* since liberation of the individual from the cycle of rebirth, according to *Upaniṣads*, is the ultimate purpose of existence.

Again these values have to be practiced in the four stages of life viz. *Brahmaçarya*, *Gr̥hastha*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa*. In the first stage i.e. in *brahmaçarya* the first value *Dharma* has to be practised. It will be followed by the practice of *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* in the subsequent two stages of *gr̥hastha* and *vānaprastha*. The last stage of *sannyāsa* will be centred on *dharma* and *mokṣa*.

Mokṣa – the fourth *puruṣartha* becomes the bottom line of all the *puruṣarthas* and *āśramas* because it signifies fulfilment and this sense of fulfilment is the driving force of all activities. Thereby the self becomes the locus of all *puruṣarthas* since it is only through self – knowledge one comes to get liberation. Therefore we find that the self is the subject of *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kāma*.

The problem of value turns out to be very difficult due to the relativity factor involved with it. Every culture has its own value – system. So values change from place to place. Then from time to time also, values have changed in every culture. Therefore the biggest problem is to find an objective standard for morality.

Since we saw that Śāṅkara's metaphysical scheme describes *Upaniṣadic* philosophy in the best possible way, this gives us a metaphysical foundation for our value – system. To read the implications of Śāṅkara's Metaphysics, in the realm of Ethics, we must understand *Advaita* in terms of the three layers of reality that they talk. Śāṅkaraċārya says that there are three kinds of *sattās* or realities as a whole – *Prātibhāsika*, *Vyāvaharika* and *Pāramārthika*.

When we look into these three, as I have discussed in the third chapter, it is very evident that in the *pāramārthika* plane, where everything and being becomes One, can be seen as the metaphysical foundation of all our basic values. According to this position, we all are finally connected to each other on the third plane of existence. I am one with the whole universe. Therefore when I try to cheat someone, say by telling a lie, I actually cheat myself. If *Karma* theory is applied here, which *Vedānta* very cordially accepts, the result of all my actions will definitely come back to me in the due course of time. Similarly when I help a needy person in the hours of distress, the perfect result will come to me since in helping him, actually I help myself. When I give love to someone, this is bound to come back to me, could be through a different channel or agent on the *Vyavahārika* plane, We can see a very solid metaphysical foundation of the essential values entertained, in global context, by different societies of the world.

Most of the religions of the world talk about the same set of values in different languages. The *Yama – Niyamas* of the Yoga in Hinduism and the *Panċa mahābratas* of Jainism comprising of *satya*(truthfulness), *āsteya* (non – stealing), *ahimsa* (non – injury), *aparigraha* (non – possession) etc., the ten commandments of Christianity, The *Astāṅgika Mārga* of Buddhism like *Samyak Darśan*, *Samyak sankalpa* etc., the essentials of the five pillars of Islam like *zakāt*, *rozā* etc. do have all these values in common and we can see *Vedāntic* Oneness as the substratum of all these value –

systems. Every essential human value has a justification in the *Advaitic* scheme of thought.

Upaniṣads also have a very great discourse to give about values. We find, therefore, in the same *Upaniṣad*, a passage where truthfulness is primarily instructed by a teacher to his outgoing student along with a prescription for the righteous way of life. If we analyse all these prescribed values, we will see that they can all be justified in the oneness of the *Advaita Vedānta*. And within the four walls of *Dharma, Vedānta* permits everyone to enjoy his life with *artha* i.e. material wealth and *kāma* or sensual pleasures.

Now the same plane of oneness can be used to justify military ethics also. Every needs war, at some or the other point of time, as a means of protection. At times, when an organ of our body degenerates due to some incurable disease, we chop that organ off in order to protect the rest of the body. Similarly, when some people become almost intolerable for humanity, they need to be eliminated for the protection of the larger interest of the society. So *Vedānta* and *Upaniṣads* do not rule out capital punishment in spite of the oneness that it preaches.

Now since positive values have been described and justified in the *advaitic* scheme we need to look at the problem of negative values. If everything is pervaded by *Brahman*, if human nature is basically Divine, why do we come across so much of evil in this world. We have seen that *Advaita Vedānta*, within its metaphysics, have a very logical explanation in this regard.

Human nature is basically divine, but the problem is that he is not aware of his divinity. Ego or empirical self is a part of the *Brahman* and it wants to go back to its original source. *Brahman* is all-blissfull, all- pervading and supreme consciousness. Therefore ego is all the time after happiness and wants to be Supreme in all respects. But instead of looking for this experience, turning inward, in the self, man looks for this experience in the world outside. He looks for happiness in the worldly objects and wants to grow big in his society. But none of the external object makes him perfectly happy.

Thus all vices can be understood as a form of ignorance in *Upaṣisads*. When ignorance is removed man gains proper directions to put his efforts and gives up his vices. But even during his ignorance, he unconsciously looks for the supreme *advaitic* experience which will make him perfectly happy.

Finally we may say that all the major *Upaniṣads* exhaust themselves in describing the true nature of the self. Ordinarily we all believe that there is a self in us or it would rather be contradictory to say that I do not exist. Even materialists like Chārvakas also have accepted the existence of the self; of course, as a by – product of matter. But we know ourselves to be very painful, limited and mortal beings. We look for happiness in the objects of the world outside. Every human being aimlessly wonders around seeking for happiness and satisfaction. We spend our entire life seeking for security and safety from all known and unknown dangers.

Here comes the great contribution of the *Upaniṣads* in understanding and revealing the true nature of the self. The *Upaniṣads* maintain that *Atman* is *Sat – Āt – Ānanda*, meaning thereby that it is the Existence – Knowledge – Bliss Absolute. Thus all that human beings are looking for in the outer world actually lies within. The realization of the true nature of the self makes one aware of his eternality and probably makes him feel the most secure. The lifelong wondering for happiness ends with this realization.

Existence in this world is synonymous with pain according to philosophers like Buddha. By that of course he does not deny that there is happiness in the world but all those pleasures are, according to him, fraught with pain. *Upaniṣads* provide a blueprint to get rid of this painful existence. Self – knowledge ends this painful existence. Thus this knowledge is supreme and its supremacy is revealed to us by the *Upaniṣads*.

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