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Upanisadic Literature

UNIT- 1 UPANISADIC LITERATURE

UNIT- 2 UPANISADIC LITERATURE

UNIT- 3 UPANISADIC LITERATURE

UNIT- 4 UPANISADIC LITERATURE



MASK PROGRAMME

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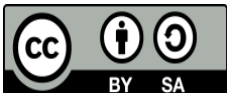
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UPANISADIC LITERATURE NITS-I-IV

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UNITS-I-IV

1.1: Introduction to Upanisadic Literature: Inquisitiveness is an inherent human instinct. It is very difficult to say as to when such an impulse arose in the human mind. Possibly, evolution of the human beings was behind this impulse. The urge to know about the surrounding objects, the world around, to learn about their genesis and growth might have created a desire in the human mind to develop this special character. Whereas an animal is satiated by the fulfilment of its biological desires, a human being, on the other hand, looks for the realization of his intellectual and spiritual requirements. From day one, man had developed a desire to discover the mystery behind the creation. Ancient seers had unfolded that enigma through their divine insight and supernatural intelligence. That laid the foundation of the philosophical speculations of the Upanisadic literature.

If the Vedas are the foundation of knowledge ranging from the empirical to the spiritual and transcendental, the Upanisad-s, their concluding component, are the culmination of that all-inclusive knowledge. Significantly, they are the end and goal of the Vedas, in a single word

Vedanta. They tell us about the ultimate reality in this transient world as also of the greatest good in human life that are *summum bonum* of Vedic knowledge. Curiously, their echoes are heard in the ancient philosophy of Plato. And they had their world-wide impact, eg. On philosophers like Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard and writers like Emerson and Eliot.

Among the three prominent texts that establish the basic tenets of Vedic philosophy, traditionally known as the *prasthanatrayi*, the *Upanisad-s*, the *Srimadbhagavadgita* and the *Brahmasutra*, *Upanisad-s* are the first and foremost ones. The last two owe much of their philosophical views to the *Upanisad-s*. They are not only the foundation source of the later Indian theistic philosophical trends, they also serve as the source for the atheistic philosophies like the Jaina, Bauddha and Carvaka. The best gift that India has given to the world is the knowledge about the self (*atmavidya*) which has been established by the *Upanisad-s*. Therefore, the famous German Indologist, Paul Deussen, is of the view that “ We are unable to look into the future, we do not know what revelations and discoveries are in store for the restlessly inquiring human spirit; but one thing we may assert with confidence, - whatever new and unwonted path the philosophy of future may strike out, this principle will remain permanently unshaken and from it no deviation can possibly take place.”(*The Philosophy of the Upanisads*).

1.2 UPANISADIC LITERATURE: DEFINITION, DATE OF COMPOSITION, SALIENT FEATURES AND SIGNIFICANCE:

1.2.1: **Definition:** A wonderful example of word formation in Sanskrit, the title *Upanisad* signifies all that these works stand for. The term *Upanisad* has been derived from the root *Sad* coupled with the two prefixes *upa* and *ni*. The root *sad* denotes three meanings: 1. *Visarana*-to destroy; 2. *gati*-to attain or know and *avasadana*- to loosen. The word is also derived from the verb root *sad* meaning ‘to be seated’, joined with the prefixes *upa* implying proximity (*samipyā*) and *ni* implying keenness/completeness (*niscaya/nihsesa*).

Etymologically, the word *Upanisad* implies sitting close together (with the preceptor). In this light, Paul Deussen considers it as ‘a confidential secret meeting’, whereas Hooritz describes it as ‘a forest gathering, disciples sitting near their teacher engaged in religious discussion’. Semantically considered, the two prefixes highlight the nature and extent of the process of teaching-learning under-taken. Accordingly, the *Upanisad*-s are the endless pursuit of mystic Truth-*rahasya-vidya*. *Chhandogya Upanisad* (III.5.1) refers to its secret nature as *guhyadesa*, *Katha Upanisad*(1.3.17) as *paramaguhyas* and *Svetasvatara* (5.6) as *tad veda guhyopanisatsu gudham*. The final and all-over meaning of the term *Upanisad* is *Brahmavidya* (cf. *Mundakopanisad*: I.1). *Upanisad*-s deal with the knowledge of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, that by way of ensuring the pursuer’s oneness with it allays or destroys his worldly bondage along with the illusion or *maya* and thereby helps him attain liberation. It is further argued that *Upanisad* being *Brahmavidya* destroys *avidya*, the root-cause of all worldly activities (*visarana*), helps a man attain the Brahman (*gati*) and loosens the sorrows like undergoing birth and death (*avasadana*).

According to Sankara, the *Upanisad*-s were so named because they “destroy” inborn ignorance, or because they “conduct” to Brahman. Apart from these interpretations, justifiable neither on grounds of philology nor of fact, the word *Upanisad* is usually explained by Indian writers by *rahasyam* (i.e. secret). Thus, it is said, for example, in *Nrsimhottaratapiniya*(*khandas*-8) four times in succession *iti rahasyam*, instead of the earlier usual form *iti upanisad*(as is found e.g. *Taittiriyaopanisad*-2 and 3). In older passages also, where mention is made of *Upanisad* texts, such expressions are used as *guhya adesah*, *paramam guhyam*, *vedaguhyas-upanisatsu gudham*, *guhyatamam*.

1.2.2. Date of Composition: According to the orthodox Indian view, as an integral part of the Vedas, the *Upanisad*-s are accepted as of non-personal (*apauruseya*) origin. However, as verbal formulations they have their date of composition that is ascribed to the concluding phase of

Vedic period. Traditional scholars on the basis of internal evidence define this period to be pre-Budhhistic era or, precisely speaking 600 B.C., which by no means is correct. According to the archaeologists and culture historians the *Upanisad-s* belong to the later half of the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation. After the urban phase of that civilisation collapsed under the pressure of ecological imbalance caused by earthquakes and floods by about 1900 B.C. its rural phase continued unchanged for centuries until 1300 B.C. its rural phase continued unchanged for centuries till 1300 B.C. and by and by got merged into newly rising Gangetic valley civilisation. All through that period there existed alongside the lost river Sarasvati many peaceful hamlets with occasional hermitages in their sylvan settings far off, where the sages and seers led their secluded life deeply engrossed in meditation. The *Upanisad-s* are the expressions of their mystic experiences. Now, if the Vedic period ended by 1300 B.C., according to this revised calculation the *Upanisad-s*, at least the earliest ones, must have been composed by then (*Sanskrit: The Language and Learning*, Trilochan Misra, Delhi, 2015). It may not be out of place to mention here that in some cases the *Upanisad-s* constitute a part and parcel of *Samhita* texts, as in case of the *Isopanisad* which is the fortieth chapter of the Madhyandina recension of the *Yajurveda Samhita*, which testifies the supposition that the earliest *Upanisad-s* were composed well before 1300 B.C.

1.2.3. Salient features and Significance: The edifice of the *Upanisad-s* is erected on the integral vision and viewpoint of the Vedic seers. With a view to discovering the fundamental secret behind the creation, they raised several questions, such as:

*kim karanam brahma kutah sma jata
jivama kena kvaca sampratistha /
adhisthitah kena sukhetaresu
varttamahe brahmavido vyavastham* //(
Svetasvataropanisad:1.1)

They had an intense desire to comprehend the secret behind the external world. The extensiveness and diversity of the outer world had created several questions in their mind. This curiosity was not limited to the outer world alone. Another dimension of experience had propelled them ponder over the inner universe. In reality, this inner curiosity is the foundation of the Upanisadic search and contemplation. Not only had the extensiveness of the outer world, but also the depth the inner one over powered the Vedic seers. Who am I? -- Was the most important of this self- questioning. The purpose behind this self-questioning was to discover as to whether there exists any higher reality/ knowledge than mental process and sensual experiences like seeing, hearing, touching, thinking etc.

Some times the *Upanisad-s* are viewed as texts of ideological revolt against ritualistic formalism of the *Brahmana* texts. Of course, there are in some *Upanisad-s* stray instances of scathing satire on priesthood (Chandogya: 1.12.5). The fact that deserves to be noted here that where as the pre-Upanisadic Vedic knowledge laid emphasis on action (*bahiryajna*), *Upanisad-s* laid stress on knowledge (*antaryajna*) and this evolution was a natural process. The *Upanisad-s* are a unique form of text in subject and exposition. Self-realisation is the foundation of Upanisadic knowledge. Search for the soul is not a philosophical quest. Upanisadic knowledge cannot be confined to the realm of philosophy of the east or west. When philosophical thoughts are generally dependant on ideas, *Upanisad-s* are built on speculation and reasoning. The cognition of the external objects is sensual and that of the soul is beyond the perception of the sense organs. In other words, that is recognitive (*pratyabhijnanatmaka*). That is why, *Upanisad-s* are presented as discussions on the revealed experiences of the seers and sages regarding the determining questions pertaining to the Ultimate Reality, such as: What is Brahman, the Cause (*Karana Brahma*)? Wherefrom are we generated? By what do we live? On what are we established? (*Svetasvaropanisad: 1.1*). These eternal questions were pursued by the seers with *pariprasna* (questions upon questions), and solved in their transcendental consciousness (*samadhi*). They pursued them to pacify



their perplexed souls, far less to develop a system. And, there is a remarkable distinction. Whereas the ultimate substance sought for by the western philosophers partakes of the nature of matter, the ultimate reality envisioned by the Indian seers is non-material, absolute and infinite. Designated as Brahman, it is conceived of in the nature of truth (*Sat*), Consciousness (*Cit*) and Bliss (*Ananda*), and considered as the unitary world-ground). It may be noted in this connection that all Upanisadic visions deal with the three categories, i.e. Brahman, Jiva and Jagat forming the world-view thereby.

In addition to the aforesaid uniqueness of theme, the *Upanisad*-s have their uniqueness of form. Designated as discussions with the disciples, they are presented in a style that is simple, natural and conversational. Illustrated with appropriate stories and befitting dialogues, the exposition is incomparable. The language is the language of simile, metaphor, symbol and myth – all skilfully woven to enrobe the metaphysical and spiritual truths earnestly sought for.

Apart from the spiritual import, the *Upanisad*-s also throw light on a wholesome approach to life. There is an interesting episode in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* in this regard. Once the gods, humans and demons approached their father-cum-teacher Prajapati to instruct them about their proper conduct. In answer, Prajapati signalled to them all with a single monosyllabic sound “*da*”. The three classes each understood the import as per requirements, *damyata* (be controller), *datta* (give to others) and *dayadhvam* (be compassionate), qualities of conduct prescribed for each respectively.

The Ultimate Reality: Brahman/Atman: The Ultimate reality accepted in Indian philosophy is designated as Brahman and alternatively Atman. We owe the two terms with the underlying concept to the *Upanisad*-s. Brahman (neuter) is a metaphysical entity all-encompassing and all-pervading- smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest (*Kathopanisad*: 1.2.20). According to Samkara (*Tattiriya Bhasya*: II.1), the term stands for the largest extension (*brhattamatvad brahma*). Even

thigh the notion is there in the *Rgveda* under the name Purusa, the *Upanisad*-s have given it the name, formulated the concept and standardised the same as a term for the Supreme Reality. So the Brahman is called “*Aupanisada Purusa*”. The *Upanisad*-s have also established the alternative term Atman (Self) for Brahman. Derived from the root *at* (*satatya gamane*), the term etymologically signifies what keeps on going for ever.

Brahman/Atman is the ultimate reality that constitutes soul and substratum of the universe and extends still beyond. It is all pervasive and all expansive, infinite, transcendent and absolute. In defining it, the *Upanisad*-s have taken recourse to two principal modes of discourse- the mode of negative prediction as well as the positive one of contemplation. The language of negative prediction is in response to the infinitude of Brahman that cannot be expressed in finite terms. So, it is described in terms of negation: not this, not this (*neti neti: Brhadaranyakopanisad*-2.3.6; 4.4.22). “Brahman is neither thick nor thin, neither long nor short, neither dry nor moist, neither shadow nor darkness, neither air nor space”, says *Brhadaranyaka*. The other mode, that of contemplation delineates the variety of experiences acquired during the various stages of contemplation and meditation.

It is a fact that all the thoughts of the *Upanisad*-s move around the two fundamental ideas, i.e the Brahman and the Atman. As a rule these terms are employed synonymously. Where a difference reveals itself, Brahman appears as the older and less intelligible expression, Atman as the later and more significant. Brahman as the unknown that needs to be explained , Atman as the known through which the other unknown finds its explanation; Brahman as the first principle so far as it is comprehended in the universe, Atman so far as it is known in the inner self of man. The difference between Brahman and Atman emerges most clearly when they appear side by side with one another in brief sayings. The passage from the *Brhadaranyakopanisad* (4.4.5) may serve as example in this regard: *sa va ayam atma brahma*(truly the Brahman is this Atman). Thus, to surmise, the Brahman is the cosmical principle of the universe and the

atman is the psychical. That is to say- the Brahman, the power which presents itself to us materialised in all existing things, which creates, sustains, preserves, and receives back into itself again all worlds, this eternal infinite divine power is identical with the atman, with that which, after stripping off everything external, we discover in ourselves as our real most essential being, our individual self, the soul. This identity of the Brahman and the atman, of God and the soul, is the fundamental thought of the entire doctrine of the *Upanisad*-s. It is briefly stated by the “great saying” *tat tvam asi*, “that art thou” (*Chandogyopanisad*: 6.8.7f); and *aham brahmasmi*, “I am Brahman” (*Brhadaranyakopanisad*: 1.4.10). It is pertinent to mention here that three more theories, namely *prana*, *avagamana* and *karma* have sprouted from the Brahman-Atman concept of the *Upanisad*-s. The theory of Prana / Atman revolves around the fact that Atman is absolute, indivisible and beyond the orbit of death. The entire universe is positioned in the Atman. On the other hand, as per the *Brahma-siddhanta*, the Brahman is divided into two types, the qualitative and the unqualitative (*saguna and nirguna*). Accordingly, it has two forms, both visible and the invisible (*murta and amurta*). The Brahman (Ultimate soul) is the *paramatman* and this *paramatman* having come under the influence of *avidya* becomes subjected to the conditions that a Jiva (individual soul) experiences. It experiences pain and pleasure and comes under the realm of birth and death as per the deeds in his previous birth. Of these three theories, the most significant is the *avagamana siddhanta* or the doctrine of transmigration. What becomes of men after death? This question leads us to that doctrine that is most original and influential. Mankind, according to Sankara, is like a plant. Like this it springs up, develops, and returns finally to the earth.

Not entirely, however. But as the seed of the plant survives, so also at death the works of a man remain as a seed which, sown afresh in the realm of ignorance, gives rise to a new existence in exact correspondence with his character. Each life with all its actions and sufferings is on the one hand the inevitable consequence of the actions of a former birth, and conditions on the other hand by the actions committed in it the next succeeding life. This conviction begets not only a real consolation in the

sufferings of existence, which are universally seen to be self-inflicted , but is also a powerful incentive to habitual right conduct, and the instances from Indian epic and dramatic poetry are numerous in which a sufferer propounds the question ,What crime must I have committed in a former birth? And adds immediately the reflection, I will sin no more to bring upon myself grievous sufferings in a future existence. This presupposes the theory of transmigration. Accordingly, it is believed that the Jivatma or the individual soul being of immortal nature never gets destroyed and transmigrates to another body at the time of death.

The *Upanisad*-s speak of two levels of knowledge, *Para* or the higher and the *Apara* or the lower. The latter consists of the four Vedas, Phonetics, Rituals, Grammar, Etymology, Metrics and Astrology. The higher knowledge is that by knowing which everything is apprehended, in other words the Undecaying One or Brahman. In the attainment of ordinary knowledge there are two exclusive factors, the knower and the known, *i.e.*, the subject and the object. In the ultimate knowledge or *Paravidya*, the knower is self-absorbed in the known. There remains no exclusiveness: *Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati (Mundakopanisad: II.2.5)*.

The scope of the *Upanisad*-s is the knowledge of Brahman/Atman and its inter-relationship to Jiva and Jagat. Liberation of the knower from the bondage

of this world is the objective or goal aimed at. Brahman being infinite, it is difficult to describe Its relationship with the Jiva and Jagat that are finite. The seers advocated a theory for the purpose, that of superimposition (*adhyaropa*) . As the common man in a fit of illusion superimposes the snake on a coil of rope which disappears on close observation, so is the phenomenal world superimposed on the Ultimate reality, Brahman. The world is but apparent acting like a cover or *avarana*.The seers make use of another term *Maya*, an adjunct of Brahman assumed for the purpose of creation.

The Number of the Upanisad-s: There is no unanimity of opinion among the scholars with regard to the exact number of *Upanisad-s*. According to the *Mundakopanisad*, the number of *Upanisad-s* is 108, out of which 10 *Upanisad-s* belong to the *Rgveda*, 19 to the *Sukla-Yajurveda*, 12 to the *Krsna-Yajurveda*, 16 to the *Samaveda* and 31 to the *Atharvaveda*. Sankara has written his commentary on the following ten *Upanisad-s* and they are believed to be ancient and authentic in nature. The *Muktikopanisad* enumerates their name in the following verse:

*isa kena katha prasna munda mandukya tittirih /
aitareyam ca chhandogyam brhadaranyakam dasa //*

In addition, the *Kausitaki*, *Maitrayaniya* and *Svetasvataropanisad* are also admittedly of ancient origin, as Sankara mentions their names in his *Brahmasutarbhasya*, though he has not written his commentary on these two ancient *Upanisad-s*. In this way, these thirteen *Upanisad-s* are admitted to be ancient ones which propound the Advaitic theory. Besides, there are sectarian *Upanisad-s* advocating the Vaisnava, Saiva, Sakta and Yoga doctrines. Deussen divides the *Upanisad-s* into the following four levels:

- A) Ancient prosaic *Upanisad-s* whose prose resembles with that of the *Brahmana* texts, which are short and simple in style-1. *Brahdaranyaka*, 2. *Chhandogya*, 3. *Taittiriya*, 4. *Aitareya*, 5. *Kausitaki* and 6. *Kenaopanisad*.
- B) Ancient poetic *Upanisad-s* whose poetry resembles with that of the ancient and simple Vedic poetry -1. *Katha*, 2. *Isa*, 3. *Svetasvatara* and 4. *Mahanarayana*.
- C) Later prosaic *Upanisad-s*-1. *Prasna*, 2. *Maitrayaniya* and 3. *Mandukya Upanisad*.
- D) Atharvanic *Upanisad-s* in which Yogic, Vaisnavite, Saivite, and Saktaita *Upanisad-s* are included.



Subject matter of individual Upanishad-s

1. Isopanisad: The fortieth chapter of the *Madhyandina* recension of the *Yajurveda* is known as *Isopanisad*. It derives its name from the very first line of the first verse of the text “*isavasyam idam sarvam*”. Brahman in the form of knowledge (*jnanaparaka-Brahman*) has been determined in this *Upanisad*. In addition to the description of the form of the Brahman, the concept of *vidya* and *avidya* has also been discussed in this text. The significance of action from the view point of knowledge is another important point of discussion in it. It believes in *niskama-karma* abdicating the principle of *karma-sannyasa*.

2. Kenopanisad: As in the case with *Isopanisad*, *Kenopanisad* also derives its name from the very first line of the first word of the first line of this *Upanisad* “*kenesitam*”. This *Upanisad* is divided into four *khanda*-s. In the first *khanda*, the difference between upasya-Brahma and Nirguna-Brahma has been dealt with. The form of the Brahman has been discussed in the second *khanda*. In the third and fourth *khanda*-s the superiority of the Brahman has been established through the Uma-Haimavati episode. The pride and arrogance of the deities have been seen demolished by the Brahman in this episode. It has been emphatically told in this *Upanisad* that the Brahman cannot be comprehended by sense organs.

3. Kathopanisad: This *Upanisad* belonging to the *Katha* recension of the *Black Yajurveda* is divided into two chapters and six *valli*-s. The story of Nacikatas getting *Atma-vidya* from Yama is the main subject matter of this *Upanisad*. Naciketa’s father seer Vajasravas conducts the *Visvajit* sacrifice. At the end of the sacrifice he gives old cows as gifts. Naciketa was quite perturbed to see this action of his father. So he asked his father as to whom he should donate him (Naciketas). When he repeatedly put this question, a disgusted Vajasravas told that he would donate him to Yama, the Lord of Death. Thereafter, Naciketa proceeds to the abode of Yama. On his arrival, he learnt that Yama was not present and therefore, Naciketa had to wait for three days. On the fourth day when Yama

returned home, he was quite worried to know that Naciketa, a guest had been waiting for him without food and drink. At the same time, he was glad to know that Naciketa had come to his residence having obeyed the orders of his father. Since Naciketa had waited for three days, Yama requested him to ask for three boons. As the first boon, Naciketa requested Yama to grant that his father's anger should be soothed; he would recognise and receive him on his return. In the second boon, Naciketa requested Yama to reveal him the *agnividya*, the means to attain the heaven. Yama granted these two boons with all contentment. However, as the third boon, Naciketa prayed Yama to disclose him the secret of death. Yama was quite perturbed to listen to such a request. He tried to distract Naciketa from this question by offering many a material for worldly enjoyment. But all his efforts ended in vain. Having been convinced of the steadiness, love for truth and commitment towards attaining the heavenly knowledge, he finally disclosed the secret behind death to Naciketa. With view to knowing that Ultimate reality, one should have complete control over his sense organs. One can have *atmadarsana* only through taking recourse to Yoga.

4. *Prasnopanisad*: This *Upanisad* belongs to the *Paippalada* recension of the *Atharvaveda*. Because of the fact that the preceptor has given appropriate reply to the questions (*prasna*) of the disciple, this *Upanisad* is known as *Prasnopanisad*. Six disciples, such as, Sukesha, Satyakama, Saundaryayani, Bhargava, Asvalayana and Kavandhi, inquisitive about the knowledge of the Brahman, reach the hermitage of seer Pippalada. Under the pretext of the reply to the six questions of the disciples, Pippalada imparts the knowledge about the Brahman to them. Those six questions are: 1. who is the origin of the *praja-s*?, 2. How many deities hold the them, who illuminates them and who is the best among them?, 3. The genesis of *prana*, its entry into body and transmigration, 4. The question regarding *svapna*(dream) and *jagarana*(awakening), 5. Question regarding *Omkara*, and 6. The question on the *sodasakala-purusa*(the Ultimate Purusa having sixteen digits). At the end, the undecaying Brahman has been established as the regulator of the Universe.

5. Mundakopanisad: This Atharvanic *Upanisad* is divided into three *mundaka*-s. Each *mundaka* is further sub-divided into two *khandas*-s. Brahma imparts the knowledge about the Brahman to his son Atharva in this *Upanisad*. Later on, Atharva transmits this knowledge to Angira, Angira to Bharadvaja and Bharadvaja to Angiras. Seer Saunaka had got this knowledge from Angira. The imperfection and limitation of *karmakanda* (ritual actions) have been discussed in this *Upanisad*:

*plava hy ete adrdha yajnarupaastadasoktam avaram yesu karma /
etac chreyo ye'bhinandanti mudha jara mrtyunante pur evapi yanti //*
(*Mundakopanisad*: 1.2.7)

It is told therein that though the human being attains heaven through ritual action, his soul enters the human body once again. It becomes subject to old age and death. Since ritual action is like a weak boat, it cannot take the human being to the other end of the worldly ocean. The germ of the concept of dualism of later Indian philosophy is seen in this *Upanishad*:

*dva suparna sayuja sakaya samana vrksam parisavajate /
tayor anyah pippalam svadvatty anasnan anyo abhicakasiti //*
(*Mundakopanisad*: 3.1.1)

The word Vedanta is seen used for the first time in this *Upanisad*. The all pervasiveness of the Brahman has been explained here with nice examples.

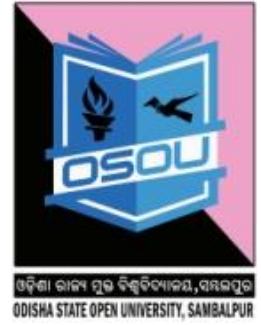
*agnir murdha caksusi candrasurya
disah srotra vagvivrtas ca vedah /
vayuh prano hridayam visvam asya
padbhyam prthvi hy esa sarvabhutantaratma //*
(*Mundakopanisad*: 2.1.4)

The Brahman has Agni as his head, the sun and the Moon as his eyes and the directions as his ears. The Vedas have originated from His words. The

air is his *prana* (vital force) and the universe is his heart. The world has been created from his feet. He is the inner soul of everybody. The knower of the Brahman merges with It at the end. Eternal sayings like *satyam eva jayate*, *nayam atma balahinena labhyah* etc. are found in this *Upanisad*.

6. *Mandukyopanisad*: This Atharvanic *Upanisad*, though the shortest is the extremely vital from the subject matter point of view. It comprises seventeen *mandukya*-s or sentences. The oneness between the Atman and Brahman is told in the second mantra of this *Upanisad*. The Atman is omniscient, lord of all and the cause behind the entire universe. All creatures originate from it and are finally absorbed in it. Knowledge of the atman is possible through *omkara*. The entire universe has been created from the *pranava* i.e. *omkara*. The past, present and the future are his forms. Human beings have four stages: *jagrata*, *svapna*, *susupti* and *turiya*. Similarly, Soul is also of four types: Vaisvanara, Taijasa, Prajna and Siva and has four quarters, namely, *jagaritasthana*, *svapnasthana*, *susuptisthana* and *sarvaprancopasthana*. Gaudapada has written his *karika* on the *Mandukyopanisad*.

7. *Taittiriopanisad*: This *Upanisad* belonging to the Taittiriya recension of the Black *Yajurveda* constitutes the seventh, eighth and ninth *khanda* of the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*. It comprises three *prapathaka*-s. The first *prapathaka* has twelve, the second has nine and the third has ten *anuvaka*-s. The *prapathaka*-s are also known as *valli*-s. The seventh *prapathaka* of the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* is otherwise known as *Samhitopanisad* or Siksavalli. Similarly, the eighth and ninth *prapathaka*-s of the *Aranyaka* are named as *Varuni-Upanisad* and known as Brahmanandavalli and Bhrguvalli respectively. In the Siksavalli, the etymology of the terms *bhuh*, *bhuvah* and *svah* has been given. In addition, discussion on alphabets, accents etc. is also found. The determination of the form of the Brahman and the counsel of the preceptor to the disciple is discussed too. In the eleventh *anuvaka* of the first *valli* of this *Upanisad* one comes across the advice of the preceptor to the disciple in the following form: *satyam vada / dharmam cara / svadhyayan ma pramada /... dharman na pramaditavyam / devapitr-karyabhyam na pramaditvatvam*



/ *matrdevo bhava* / *pitridevo bhava* / *acaryadevo bhava* / *atithidevo bhava*
//

8. Aitareyopanisad: The portion from the fourth chapter to the sixth chapter of the second *Aranyaka* of the *Aitareya Aranyaka* is known as *Aitareya Upanisad*. This Rgvedic *Upanisad* has three *adhyaya*-s. In the first *adhyaya*, there are two *khandas* in which is discussed the creation of the universe in an excellent manner. Similarly, it has been convincingly established there that the human body is the appropriate place for the Purusa to reside. Initially, there was nothing except the Atman. The entire universe has been created out of the desire of the Atman and all other things have been created gradually. The different steps of the human life are discussed in the second chapter. It is told there that when the Jiva enters the womb of the mother, it is its first birth; when it comes out, it is its second birth, and when it departs the body during old age after having given the domestic responsibilities to the sons and daughters, it is its third birth. The deities enter into different limbs of the human being to reside there. The Ultimate Reality, the Paramatman penetrate into the head of the human being and gets the status of Jiva there.

In the third chapter of this *Upanisad* we come across a discussion regarding the Atman. A question has been raised there as to the sense organs like the eyes, ears etc. are Atman or inner self. In answer it has been told that Prajnana is the leader of the deities like Brahma, Indra etc., the five basic elements (*pancabhuta*), creatures like *udbhidaja*, *svedaja*, *andaja*, *jarayuja*, the movables and the immovables. The entire universe is established in the Prajnana. Therefore, that Prajnana which is different than the inner senses, outer senses, their activities, without any limiting adjunct is the Brahman. Seers like Vamadeva had attained immortality by knowing that Prajnana.

9. Chandogyopanisad: This Samavedic *Upanisad* is divided into eight chapters. The last three chapters of this *Upanisad* is highly significant from the spiritual knowledge point of view. In the first and second chapters there is a detailed exposition of *Om*kara, *Udgitha* and *Saman*.

Sarcastic comments on the individuals resorting to sacrificial performances and chanting of the *Saman* to attain material prosperity are seen in the second chapter. In the third chapter we come across discussion on Gayatri, Madhunadi and *amrtopasana*. It is told here that Krsna, had forgotten hunger and thirst after having listened to the religious sermon from the seer Ghora Angirasa. The famous Advaitic sentence “*sarvam khalvidam brahma*” finds a mention in this chapter. At the end, the birth of the Sun from the egg has been discussed here. The Satyakama-Jabali episode is narrated in the fourth chapter. In that episode it is told that Satyakama had got the *brahmajnana* through the action of the nature. In the fifth chapter, we come across the discussion on the philosophical tenets of Pravahana Jaibali and the *srstitattva* (discussion on creation) of Kekaya Asvapati. The advice of Uddalaka Aruni to Svetaketu is seen in the sixth chapter. Svetaketu was the son of Uddalaka Aruni. One day Aruni told his son that it was not the tradition in his lineage to remain as a Brahmin without studying the Vedas. Therefore, Svetaketu should proceed to the house of a teacher for that purpose. On the express order of the father, Svetaketu went to the house of his teacher and stayed there for twenty-four years. Having studied the Vedas along with their ancillaries, he returned home. However, he began to estimate himself as a very wise man so far as Vedic knowledge is concerned.

Seeing that attitude and intellectual arrogance of the son, Aruni asked Svetaketu: “Though you consider yourself as extraordinarily intelligent, have you ever made a quest about the entity by which the untold is told and the unknown is known. Clay is the material cause of all earthen materials; gold is the origin of all golden ornaments; so also iron is the genesis of all substances made of iron. All earthen materials like pot etc. and all golden ornaments like the ear ring etc. are merely the modification of clay and gold. Similar is the case with the empirical world which is nothing but the modification of the Ultimate Reality. Have you ever made any careful effort to learn about that reality?” Svetaketu replied that perhaps his preceptor did not have the knowledge about that and therefore Aruni should make some reflections on that point.

Aruni began to tell that in the beginning there was only one Truth. In the opinion of some others there was only one *asat* having no second to it. *Sat* has come out of that *asat*. Since the birth of *sat* from the *asat* is absolutely impossible, it is an undenying fact that in the beginning there was *sat* only. Thereafter, Aruni explained as to how *sat* created fire, fire created water and water created the material earth. With view to explaining such subtleties, many stories such as Narada-Sanatkkumara sambada, the Nyagrodha fruit, the saline water etc. have been told in this *Upanisad*. The famous *mahavakya* “*Tattvam asi*” finds a mention here.

10. *Brhadaranyakopanisad*: This ancient, significant and authentic *Upanisad* is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter discussion on the subtle form of *upasana*, the action of creation and the creator has been made. The second chapter discusses about the receiving of *Brahmavidya* by Gargya Balaki from Ajatasatru, the king of Kasi. The arrogant Brahmin Balaki began discourse on *Brahmajnana* before Ajatasatru. He gave varieties of explanations of Purusa. The explanation revolved around as to how the reflection of the Atman is seen in the Sun, sky, lightning, air, eyes, water, effulgence, body and sound. However, Ajatasatru was not satisfied in any such explanation. At the end, Balaki desired to have *Brahmajnana* from Ajatasatru. In a very simplified manner, king Ajatasatru explained that Brahman cannot be searched in the Purusa or Atman. Just as a spider creates the net by creating the thread from its own body, just as fire sparks are spread from the burning fire, the Atman is the creator of the five airs, deities and all creatures.

The Yajnavalkya-Maitreyi dialogue is seen in the second chapter of this *Upanisad*. Yajnavalkya had two wives- Maitreyi and Katyayani. Katyayani was very simple, but Maitreyi was a knower of the Brahman (*Brahmavadini*). Once Yajnavalkya decided to leave the domestic life and go for the life of a wanderer mendicant (*paribrajaka*). He called his wife Maitreyi and expressed his desire before her: “I want to divide all my wealth between you two.” In answer Maitreyi asked if she would get immortality by getting the entire world as her property. In reply, Yajnavalkya said no to her. You won’t get immortality by means of



wealth; you would simply get the status of a prosperous human being. None attains immortality through wealth.

Thereafter Maitreyi asked: “O Lord! If I do not get immortality through wealth, then what is the use of that affluence. Hence, you please tell me the way by which I shall attain immortality.” Being convinced of the sincerity of Maitreyi, Yajnavalkya explained the ways and means of obtaining that real knowledge. He told that everybody is beloved because of selfishness. Therefore, it is desirable that one should know the Atman (*atma va are drastavyah srotavyah mantavyah nidadhyasitavyah*). Maitreyi attained immortality by getting the divine knowledge from Yajnavalkya.

In the third chapter we come across the depth of knowledge of Yajnavalkya. Herein it is told that King Janaka had arranged an assembly of intellectuals. People from states like Kuru, Pancala etc. had come to attend that meeting. With a view to knowing as to who among them was the wisest, Janaka had kept one thousand cows with their horns covered with gold and declared that whosoever thought himself to be the most wise one might take the cows with him. All kept complete silence. At last, Janaka ordered his disciples to take the cows to his house. Thereafter, there was an intellectual debate between Janaka and the intellectuals assembled there. All were defeated by Janaka in the sastric discourse. Gargi had also a debate with Janaka, but she was also defeated.

In the fourth chapter, we come across a discussion between Janaka and Yajnavalkya concerning the Brahman. Philosophical deliberation on the Brahman, Prajapati and gayatri etc. is there in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter, the discourse of Uddalaka on Brahmanvidya to Aruni is seen. It is important to note here that, this *Upanisad* not only established the Advaitic view, it also discusses almost all concepts of knowledge including the basic tenets of Carvaka philosophy.

11. Svetasvataropanisad: This *Upanisad* belonging to the Black Yajurveda is very simple and tender so far its language is concerned. It is divided into six parts. In the first chapter, there is a discussion on the means to perceive the Brahman and the concept of meditation. It is told

there that as one gets oil by pressing the sessamum, butter by churning curd and fire by making friction of wood, similarly one visualises the Paramatman in the Atman by means of truth and penance(*Svetasvatara*,chapter-1, *mantra*-s 15-16). Extensive description of Yoga is seen in the second chapter of this *Upanisad*. Saiva philosophy and Samkhya theories have been discussed between the third and fifth chapters. The discussion on significance of devotion to a teacher is there in the sixth chapter.

12. *Kausitakyupanisad*: This Rgvedic *Upanisad* is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, we come across the knowledge about the other world given by a ksatriya king, Citragargayani to Uddalaka Aruni concerning In the second and third chapters, there is discussion on different types of *upasana*, Mahaprana(Brahma), philosophical theories , the loving relationship between the father and the son and the knowledge about prana and prajna given by Divodasa, the king of Kasi. The knowledge about Brahavidya given by Ajatasatru to Balaki is discussed in the fourth chapter. From that discussion we come to know thatGargya balaki was a wise Brahmin. He had travelled countries like Usinara,Matsya, Kurupancala and Videha.One day he reached the city of the king of Kasi and told him to give sermon about Brahavidya. Having heard that the king told Balaki that he would donate one thousand cows to him for that knowledge. “ I had an impression till today that Janaka was the only knower of the Brahman and therefore all seekers of Brahman were going to him to get that knowledge” he told further. Thereafter, Balaki started giving a discourse on the Brahman. But, Ajatasatru refuted the proposition of Balaki and told that it was imperative to know the creator of the sky, sun, moon, lightening etc. (*ya etesam purusanam kartta ,yasya vaiat karmasa vai veditavya iti*).It is significant to mention here that the subtle psychological theories have been discussed in the *Kausitakyupanisad* along with spiritual knowledge.

13. *Maitrayani / Maitryupanisad*: This later *Upanisad* belonging to the Black *Yajurveda* is written in prose and consists of seven prapathaka-s.It is



based on Samkhya and Yoga philosophy. References to and quotations from other *Upanisad*-s are also found in this *Upanisad*.

1.5. Indian Philosophical tradition and Upanisadic texts:

At any rate, the *Upanisad*-s constitutes the world's earliest pronouncement in philosophy, earlier than the materialistic search for the first principle undertaken by the Ionic school of Greece, Thales, Anaximander and Anaxemenes, and still earlier than the characteristic philosophies of China, Confucianism and Taoism. Yet, strictly speaking, the *Upanisad*-s are no philosophy as such, but records of revelatory experiences that are inherently philosophical. Their authors recorded them to pacify the troubled souls of the inquisitive few, far less to build any system. Experienced by the many and over a considerable span of time, they have apparent heterogeneity, but are nevertheless a single whole. Their unity accrues to the singleness of vision and the common pursuit; diversity to the variety of the psychic stances in course of the inward journey undertaken.

The *Upanisad*-s are accepted as the first and foremost of the Foundation Trio (*prasthan trayi*) of our religious texts: first obviously for , it is the quintessence of Sruti ,i.e. the Vedas; foremost because while the second component *Brahmasutra* is, as per Samkara's image, a garland of Upanisadic aphorisms, the third is a musical version of the *Upanisad*-s(*gitopanisad*).

All systems of Indian philosophy except, of course, the Carvaka School owe their indebtedness to the *Upanisad*-s. From them Jainism derives its idealism and theory of karma; Buddhism, its concepts of idealism, absolutism and momentariness along with the doctrines of *karma*, that of ignorance as bondage and *Nirvana*. Samkhya gleans its doctrine of *Purusa* and *Prakrti* , the theory of *linga-sarira*, the concept of *guna*-s and inter-relationship of body, mind and soul from the *Upanisad*-s such as *Chandogya*, *Prasna*, *Katha* and *Svetasvatara*. Yoga borrows six of its eightfold scheme from *Svetasvatara* and *Katha*. Mimamsa looks upon Isa

for its doctrine of superiority of *karma* to *jnana*. As to the *Upanisad-s per se*, the truths embodied in them come together and constitute the system of Upanisadic philosophy that goes by the name Vedanta, the term signifying the end and goal of the Vedas. A system of total philosophy, for it covers all the three categories Brahman, Jiva and Jagat. It is not possible to assess the influence of the *Upanisad-s* on Indian thought, religion and culture. Suffice it to say that the concepts of Brahman, Atman and Isvara are the contributions of the *Upanisad-s*. The ethical aspect of Indian philosophy is a direct influence of the *Upanisad-s*. The Upanisadic ethics consists in appropriate renunciation, love for the desirable in preference to the desired and above all, the principle of live and let live. As every particular is an expression of Brahman, such a vision can only serve as a secure foundation of Neo-humanistic social order wherein all men and women live in loving fellowship not only with the humans, but also with the flora and fauna and the so-called inanimates.

1.6. MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of the Upanisadic literature in general.
2. Write an essay on the meaning, date of composition and salient features of the *Upanisad-s*.
3. Elucidate as to how Indian Philosophical tradition has been influenced by the Upanisadic ideas and thoughts.

1.7. FURTHER READINGS

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