

Block

# 2

## **UPANISHADIC PHILOSOPHY CORE THEMES-I**

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## Block Introduction

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The *Upaniṣads* are Hindu scriptures that constitute the core teachings of *Vedānta*. The term *upanishad* literally means “sitting down near” and implies studying with a spiritual teacher. This block provides an introduction to the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, and also delves into one of their core teachings which is the attainment of *Mokṣa*. This block discusses three extremely important *Upaniṣads* — the *Praśna Upaniṣad*, the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* and the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. All *Upaniṣads* are parts of a *Veda* and are not independent books. An *Upaniṣadic* teaching is often presented in the context of a particular *Vedic hymn* or ritual. In the *Vedānta traditions*, the *Upaniṣads* are referred to as the *Śruti prasthāna* i.e. the revealed scripture from which knowledge of Brahman is obtained.

**Unit 5** is on “Introduction to the Philosophy of Upaniṣads”. In this unit you will understand the general tenor of the *Upaniṣads*. You are expected to recognize the difference between the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads* not only in content but also in spirit. This unit shall also help you to observe the various philosophical and cosmological issues which have found a place in the *Upaniṣads*. Through this unit you shall understand that Upanishadic philosophy is not merely an intellectual endeavour, but is also a guiding factor of human life.

**Unit 6** is on “Different Approaches to Mokṣa”. In this unit you shall understand how the concept of *Mokṣa* frames the ethical basis for all Upanishadic philosophy. Almost all schools in Indian philosophy are teleological in nature, which means that they are oriented towards some goal. The teleology of Upanishadic philosophy is oriented towards *Mokṣa* or liberation. The goal of liberation helps us understand that life is ultimately a chain of births and deaths and one requires moving beyond it. Thus, the concept of *Karma* becomes important. Alongside the study of the ways of achieving *Mokṣa* which are primarily through *jñāna* (knowledge), *karma* (action), *bhakti* (devotion) and *rāja yoga*.

**Unit 7** “Prašna Upaniṣad” is the teachings from the *Praśna Upaniṣad* and has evolved from the *Atharva Veda*. As the name *Praśna* implies, this *Upaniṣad* is an *Upaniṣad* of questions. There are six chapters within the *Upaniṣad*, which comprises the questions asked by a group of six inquiring students on the various aspects of reality. The questions that they asked are related to the: origin of the created beings; the constituents of the human personality; the origin and the nature of the *Prāna*; the psychological aspects of the human personality; the result of meditation on the word *AUM*; the metaphysical principle in humans.

**Unit 8** is the “Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,” it deals with the distinction between *parā Vidyā* (higher knowledge) and *aparā Vidyā* (lower knowledge). The term “Muṇḍaka” means shaven head: the teaching of the *Upaniṣad* shaves (liberates) a student from ignorance. The *Upaniṣad* has three chapters, each being divided into two sections. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* contains about sixty verses. The first chapter deals with the greatness of the teaching and the tradition of the teaching in the first section. And the second section elaborates on the *aparā Vidyā*, lower knowledge of the ritual, mundane and secular activities. The second chapter is concerned about establishing Brahman as the cause of the universe. The third chapter speaks of ways and means of attaining the self knowledge and the benefit of such knowledge for liberation.

**Unit 9** is the “Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad,” the main teaching of this *Upaniṣad* is that consciousness present in us is one and the same in all circumstances. The different states of consciousness are experienced in the states of waking, dreaming, deep sleep and illumined consciousness. The aspect that is common to these states is that of the Self. The reflective analysis of the mystical syllable “aum” which stands as a symbol of religious and philosophical significance—is one of the most remarkable aspects of this *Upaniṣad*.



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## UNIT 5 INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF UPANIṢADS\*

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### Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Scope of the subject
- 5.3 Meaning of the *Upaniṣads*
- 5.4 Philosophical methods in *Upaniṣads*
- 5.5 Central Ideas of *Upaniṣads*
- 5.6 *Ātman* and *Brahman*
- 5.7 *Mokṣa*
- 5.8 Let us sum up
- 5.9 Key Words
- 5.10 Further readings and references
- 5.11 Answers to check your progress

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit presents an overarching view of the *Upaniṣads*. It outlines the central Upanishadic (*Aupaniṣadik*) concepts and foregrounds their philosophical significance. Learner will be able to understand after reading this unit,

- Purpose of Upanishadic Tradition,
- Various philosophical methods employed in the *Upaniṣads* to establish upanishadic philosophical thesis.
- Concept of *Ātmān*, *Brahman* and *Mokṣa*.

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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The *Upaniṣads* are a collection of texts philosophical in nature, written around 900-300 BCE, a period when Indian society started questioning the traditional Vedic ritualistic order. These texts are marked by an inward turn, a decisive shift in understanding the religious life not in terms of rites and sacrifices but fundamentally as a spiritual quest.

The *Upaniṣads* are considered to be a part of the Vedic literature which comprises *Rig (Ṛk)*, *Sāma*, *Yajur (Yajuh)* and *Atharvaveda*. Each of these *Vedas* in turn has a *Samhitā*, a *Brāhmaṇa* and a *Sūtra*. The *Brāhmaṇa* is then further divided by the exponents of Vedānta into three orders. Their contents are part closely connected with one another, viz. - *Vidhi*, *Arthavāda*, and *Vedānta* or *Upaniṣads*. The *Upaniṣads* thus belong to the Vedic corpus. Since they occur in the end as

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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*. According to philosopher S. Radhakrishnan, Indian tradition mentions one hundred and eight *Upaniṣads* based on a list enumerated in the *Muktikā Upaniṣad*, of which the 108th is *Muktikā* itself. Sukumar Azhikode states that more than 200 *Upaniṣads* have been traced and gives a reference about 1180 *Upaniṣads*, but states that most of the later *Upaniṣads* are imitations. Although there are over 200 *Upaniṣads*, only 14 are considered to be the most important. They are: *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chāndogya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Kauṣītaki*, *Mahānārāyaṇa* and the *Maitri*. These texts provide the basic source for all major philosophical themes in Indian thought. In general they remain neutral among competing interpretations and they attempt to integrate most of the opposing views regarding philosophical and spiritual matters. The *Upaniṣads* form a part of '*Śruti*' literature. *Śruti* means 'heard'. Thus it can be said that the *Upaniṣads* were not written by humans but were revealed to the seers (by gods). None of the *Upaniṣads* are identified with any particular author. Each *Upaniṣad* is traditionally associated with one *Veda* or the other. For example, *Aitareya upaniṣad* belongs to *Rig Veda*, *Taittiriya* to *Yajur Veda*, *Chāndogya* to *Sāma Veda* and *Praśna* to *Atharva Veda*.

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## **5.2 SCOPE OF THE SUBJECT**

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The whole Indian tradition from the Ṛg vedic period to the recent philosophical tradition represents one significant fact about the Upanishadic literature; that *Upaniṣads* are product of highest human intellect or thinking in the field of philosophical speculation. Its uniqueness lies in its holistic approach to the problem of Ultimate Reality or understanding nature as well as the practical solution to the age old problem of sorrow and suffering. The present day relevance, encompassing all aspects of human development whether it is scientific or spiritual, has shown its universality of ideas.

*Upaniṣads* represent teachings of the sages who experienced the Reality or Truth, i.e. became Reality itself (*Brahma vid brahmaiva bhavati*- the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman. The purpose of the *Upaniṣads* is not mere intellectual satisfaction, but a practical solution to the ultimate problems of life. It seems that the concept of liberation, the fourth *puruṣārtha* or the ultimate goal of life, has been established in its fullest form in the *Upaniṣadic* thought. Consequently, *Upaniṣads* move one step ahead from the *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* of the Vedic goals of life. In fact, *Upaniṣads* bring the concept of *Mokṣa* as the supreme purpose of all inquiries of life. Since, all phenomena are transient in nature, worldly life ultimately leads to suffering and cycle to rebirth. Therefore, human beings are always in search of a way to end suffering completely and to reach a state of immortality. This, according to the *Upaniṣads*, can be achieved when we know the true nature of our Self (*Ātmān*). This theoretical aspect of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* deals with the following three issues-

1. The Self or essence of human- *Ātman*
2. The Self or essence of the world- *Brahman*
3. The relation between *Ātman* and *Brahman*

However, in Indian tradition, theory and practice go hand in hand. People do not do philosophy, rather live in philosophy. Ramaṇ Maharṣi, Swami Dayananda, Swāmi Vivekānanda, Gāndhi, etc. are such people who realized the truth and showed the true meaning and purpose of human life to the society. This practical side is the realization of the highest truth to fulfil the highest purpose of life and *Upaniṣads* present the most practical philosophy of self-realization. As per *Upaniṣadic* philosophy, there is the pure-consciousness as the ultimate essence of human being which is called as *Ātmān* and it is identical with the essence of the world which is called as Brahman. In the practical realization of this truth, one needs to go through a proper methodological as well as experiential approach, which can be framed within a formal epistemological study and it can be said as epistemology of self-realization.

**Check Your Progress I**

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Write a short note on the historical background of the *Upaniṣads*.

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2. What is the relevance of *Upaniṣads* in our life?

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3. What are the central teachings of the *Upaniṣads*?

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**5.3 MEANING OF THE UPANIṢADS**

There is a great diversity concerning the meaning of the word “*Upaniṣad*”. The word *Upaniṣad* has been put forward by German Indologist Paul Deussen. *Upaniṣad* occurs with three distinct meanings-

- (1) Sacred word,
- (2) Sacred Text,

(3) Sacred Import.

The word “*Upaniṣad*” is derived by adding *upa* (near) and *ni* (with certainty) as prefix and as a suffix to the root, *sad* (to sit) meaning to split up (destroy), go (reach, attain), or loosen. Therefore, word *Upaniṣad* is denoted as the knowledge of the knowable entity presented in the book that is going to be explained. The *Upaniṣad* itself was understood in terms of ‘knowledge’ by virtue of its association with the significance. This means that sitting down a disciple near his/her teacher in a devoted manner is not just a matter of physical posture but is essentially about receiving instructions about the highest reality that loosens all doubts and destroys all ignorance of the disciple. In fact, the seekers of emancipation, who have detached themselves from the worldly objects and desires and who can contemplate on this knowledge with stability and firmness, attain this knowledge.

As discussed earlier, there are four *Vedas* and each *Veda* has four sections-*Samhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣads*. While *Samhitā* contains hymns praising gods and goddesses, the *Brāhmaṇas* deal with the sacrificial rites. The *Āraṇyaka* exposition consists of the meditative practices. The *Upaniṣads* are philosophical treatises discussing the fundamental problem of existence and its purpose and the nature of reality. The transition from the *Samhitā* 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-Sūkta* with thousands of heads, eyes, and feet can be read as an all-pervading conscious principle which is in some way witness to everything.

All the Upanisadic teachings revolve around the self or *Ātman*. The term “*Ātman*” or “*Self*” used in the *Upaniṣads* means both the universal self or Brahman and the individual self or *Ātman*. There is one absolute reality that is Brahman and all the other individuals in this world are a reflection of the one supreme Brahman. Individuals resolve themselves in the universal absolute so long as the world of manifestation is functioning. There is no mixing up of the fruits of action, as the different individual selves are kept distinct by their association with the intellect, the senses, and the ego. The soul represents an idea of the divine mind, and the different souls are the members of the supreme. The soul draws its idea of perfection from the divine creator who has given its existence. There is no reference of any object to the consciousness and bliss of the self. *JivĀtman* or the individual self means the infinite self, conditioned by the body, the senses, and the mind.

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## **5.4 PHILOSOPHICAL METHODS IN UPANIṢADS**

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*Upaniṣads* are marked by a dialogical method. Each of the concepts it analyzes is framed within a dialogue characterized by questions and answers, narratives and episodes, similes, metaphors, illustrations, and so on. As stated in the following lines there are several dialogues. The dialogue between father Uddālaka and son Śvetaketu in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, the dialogue between Satyakāma and his mother Jabala in *Chāndogya*, *PRājapati* and his sons in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, Yama and Naciketā in *Kaṭha*, Nārada and Sanatkumāra in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* are some of the classical examples of how the dialogical

method is used in developing philosophical concepts. A dialogue is a process of conversation, argumentation, and mutual supplementation of ideas between two individuals. The method demands that the opponent should be allowed to speak and express his view regarding the same subject matter. Thus a dialogue is possible only when both the speakers

- (a) Speak and Listen to each other
- (b) Aim at truth,
- (c) Understand each other's language
- (d) Understand each other's way of thinking and
- (e) Do not live in two worlds whose contents totally differ.

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, dialogical methods can be seen in two ways - first, as a mode of argumentation to bring out contradiction in the views of the other party. Secondly, it resolves, dissolves or sublates the contradictions at a higher level. For example in the dialogue between Uddālaka and Nachiketā, 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 *pāramārthika* level. In short, there is always a need to overcome and sublimate the contradiction either in terms of higher ideas or by recognizing the superiority of the leading philosopher. The other method is story. A story makes us understand the concepts very clearly and the purpose of the story is to convey the moral implications of that concept. There is a famous story of Gods and demons narrated in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.

**Check Your Progress II**

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. How many sections do the *Vedas* have? What are they? Explain each of them.

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2. What is the philosophical method of the *Upaniṣads*?

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## 5.5 CENTRAL IDEAS OF UPANIṢADS

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The *Upaniṣads* contain discussions on the genesis of the world, the ontology of the self and the body, the spirit and matter, the meaning of true knowledge, the character of the world, bondage and liberation, and so on. While some of the verses are in the form of Mantras or chants, the *Upaniṣads* also include anecdotes, dialogues between teacher and pupil, between father and son, between supernatural characters and human beings and between animals and human beings. Most of the dialogues are centred on the distinction between the real and unreal, sacred and profane, the true and the false.

Even though the *Upaniṣads* do not offer a single comprehensive system of thought, they do develop some basic general principles. Some of these principles are *saṃsāra*, *karma*, *dharma* and *Mokṣa*. These principles form a metaphysical scheme that was shared with varying adjustments made by most Indian religions and philosophers. The concept of *saṃsāra* is reincarnation, the idea that after we die our soul will be reborn again in another body; perhaps in an animal, perhaps as a human, perhaps as a god, but always in a regular cycle of deaths and resurrections. Another concept is *Karma*, which literally means “action,” the idea that all actions have consequences, good or bad. *Karma* determines the conditions of the next life, just as our life is conditioned by our previous *Karma*. There is no judgment or forgiveness, simply an impersonal, natural and eternal law operating in the universe. Those who do good will be reborn in better conditions while those who are evil will be reborn in worse conditions. *Dharma* means “right behaviour” or “duty”, the idea that we all have a social obligation which is to be fulfilled. Each member of a specific caste has a particular set of responsibilities, a *dharma*. For example, among the Kṣatriyas (the warrior caste), it was considered a sin to die in bed; dying in the battlefield was the highest honor they could aim for. In other words, *dharma* encouraged people of different social groups to perform their duties the best they could. *Mokṣa* means “liberation” or emancipation. The eternal cycle of deaths and resurrection can be seen as a pointless repetition with no ultimate goal attached to it. Seeking permanent peace or freedom from suffering seems impossible, for eventually we will be reborn in worse circumstances. *Mokṣa* is the liberation from this never-ending cycle of reincarnation, a way to escape this repetition.

*Upaniṣads* discuss Ultimate Reality as an object of inquiry and the process through which it can be realized. When we go through the *Upaniṣads*, we get a division of the entire knowledge domain into two as *parā* and *aparā* where *parā vidyā* is the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality and *aparā vidyā* is the knowledge of this phenomenal world. This same distinction is seen in the *Kaṭhaopanishad* as *sreyas* and *preyas* in a different manner and also as *vidyā* and *avidyā*. *Svetasvatara Upaniṣad*, making the distinction of *vidyā* and *avidyā*, says that *vidyā* is that which is *amṛta* and *avidyā* is that which is *kṣara* or impermanent. This division of knowledge is related to the doctrine of accepting the distinction of realities of experience as higher and lower where *parā* is related to the higher and *aparā* is related to the lower. The two levels, in which these two kinds of wisdom of knowledge reside and in which the explanations take place, are called *pāramārthika* “the absolutely real level” and *vyavahārika* “the practical level.” In this way, we get two layers of reality as transcendental and empirical so to say as Brahman and the phenomenal world.

## 5.6 ĀTMAN AND BRAHMAN

What is the true nature of existence and more particularly what is the true nature of our own being has been given intensive treatment in *Upaniṣads*. The same reality is called from the objective side as ‘Brahman’ and from the subjective side as ‘Ātman’. What is *Ātman*? It is the subject, which persists throughout the changes, the common factor in the states of waking, dream, sleep, death, rebirth, and final deliverance. The *Upaniṣads* tell us that the core of our own being is not the body, or the mind, but *Ātman* or self. *Ātman* is the core of all creatures, their innermost essence. It can only be perceived by direct experience through meditation. It is when we are at the deepest level of our existence. *Upaniṣads* present *Ātman* as an ontological being, an epistemological subject, a moral being, a psychological being and so on. The term “*Ātman*” used in the *Upaniṣads* means both the universal self or Brahman and the individual self. An individual self is described as a combination of five layers. The first one is *annamaya koṣa* or the food layer. This represents our physical body. *Prāṇamaya koṣa* is the second layer, which signifies the sheath of vital energy. Vital energy finds its grossest expression in our breath. The third layer is the *manomaya koṣa* signifying our mind. It acts as the source of our will, emotions, and imaginations. The fourth layer is the *vijñānamaya koṣa* which is the seat of our intelligence. And the last ontological layer is *ānandamaya koṣa* representing the blissful aspect of being or existence. All these put together form the structure of the self.

There is one absolute reality that is *Brahman* and all the other individuals in this world are a reflection of the one supreme *Brahman*. Individuals resolve themselves in the universal absolute so long as the world of manifestation is functioning. There is no mixing up of the fruits of action, as the different individual selves are kept distinct by their association with the intellect, the senses, and the ego. The soul represents an idea of the divine mind, and the different souls are the members of the supreme. The soul draws its idea of perfection from the divine creator who has given its existence. There is no reference of any object to the consciousness and bliss of the self. *Jivātman* or the individual self means the infinite self, conditioned by the body, the senses and the mind. *Upaniṣads* admits that the self is one but it is manifested in many forms of individual self. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, it is said “the illimitable Brahman is derived from this limitative counterfeit, its limitations through which it manifests as God, and man and animal and plant and so forth. It is through this union from before all time with this inexplicable illusion, that the one and only self is present in every creature, as one and the same ether is present in many water jars, as one and the same Sun is mirrored on countless sheets of water. It is through this union that the one and only one self permeates and animates the world.” There is one absolute reality that is Brahman and all other individuals in this world are reflections of the one supreme Brahman. Brahman is the one underlying substance of the universe, the unchanging “Absolute Being,” the intangible essence of the entire existence. The undying and unchanging seed creates and sustains everything. It is beyond all description and intellectual understanding. Individuals resolve themselves in the universal absolute so long as the world of manifestation is functioning. There is no mixing up of the fruits of action, as the different individual selves are kept distinct by their association

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with the intellect, the senses and the ego. The soul represents an idea of the divine mind, and the different souls are the members of the supreme. They describe the plurality of individual self. The self is said to be free from all contact and thus proves it to have Brahman for itself.

One of the great insights of the *Upaniṣads* is that *Ātman* and *Brahman* are made of the same substance. When a person achieves *Mokṣa* or liberation, *Ātman* returns to *Brahman*, to the source, like a drop of water returning to the ocean. The *Upaniṣads* claim that it is an illusion that we are all separāte: with this realization we can be freed from ego, from reincarnation and from the suffering we experience during our existence. *Mokṣa*, in a sense, means to be reabsorbed into Brahman, into the great World Soul. It is said that this great unborn self, undecaying, undying, immortal fearless is indeed *Brahman*. Thus the relation between self, body and senses is given by the same *Upaniṣad*. Nature and relation between *Ātman* and *Brahman* can be expounded on the basis of five Mahāvākyas.

1. *Prajñāṁ Brahma* “Consciousness is Brahman” (*Aitareya Upaniṣad*).
2. *Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi* “I am Brahman” (*Bṛhdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*).
3. *Tat Tvam asi* “That thou art” (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*).
4. *Ayam Ātmā Brahma* “This Ātman is Brahman” (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, *Bṛhadārnyaka Upaniṣad*).
5. *Sarvaṁ Khalu idaṁ Brahma* “Everything is Brahman” (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*).

**Check Your Progress III**

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What are the important principles of *Upaniṣads*?

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2. What are the two divisions of knowledge in *Upaniṣads*?

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3. What is the intensive treatment of the *Upaniṣads*?

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## 5.7 MOKṢA

*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 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. 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 other than the self as dearer, he will lose what he holds dear, he would very likely do so. One should meditate on self alone as dear. He who meditates on self alone as dear, what he holds dear, verily, will not perish.” 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 *Chāndogya 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.” Thus *Upaniṣads* maintain that self- knowledge is the only source of freedom in the true sense. Vedic rituals, which have been emphasised by *Mīmāṃsā* School also does not lead to 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.” This verse can be understood as if a person comes to know the true nature of his/her 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.

How is *Mokṣa* achieved? There are many ways, according to the *Upaniṣads*, to attain *Mokṣa*: meditation, introspection, knowledge/realization- that behind all forms and veils the subjective and objective are one that we are all part of the Whole. The *Upaniṣads* agree on the idea that men are naturally ignorant about the ultimate identity between the individual self or *Ātman*, the self within, and *Brahman*. One of the goals of meditation is to achieve this identification with *Brahman*, and abandon the ignorance that arises from the identification with the illusory or quasi-illusory nature of the sensory world. It is due to ignorance the self gets separated from the supreme self, the ocean and due to the limiting adjuncts - body, senses, mind, transformation, birth, death, name form, action, thought. But when these differences are destroyed, the self becomes non-dual,

there is only one great being, cause of everything. The elements of body, name, and form end in *Brahman* by means of knowledge of the truth. By attaining this identity there is no particular consciousness. When there is duality then one smells something, one sees something, one speaks something, one thinks something, one knows something; the consciousness in that case is marked by the subject pole and the object pole. When there is complete identity, when the duality and ignorance is destroyed by knowledge then all the means of seeing, hearing, and thinking is no more there. This is the state of complete unity or oneness and no duality.

*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* says “*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati*”, which means he who knows that highest *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*. However, before entering the path of liberation one has to acquire the eligibility or competency. *Kāthopaniṣad* says, “Everyone cannot be competent to study the sacred knowledge of the Supreme Self. He who has not refrained from doing sinful acts, who has not restrained his senses, who has no single-pointed mind, who has no tranquil mind, cannot have knowledge of the Brahman.” Knowledge consists in *Śravaṇa*, i.e., listening about the nature of individual soul and the supreme self from the learned teachers, *Manana*, i.e., reflecting on those truths and *Nididhyāsana*, i.e., intense meditation on the self.

#### **Check Your Progress IV**

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is the ultimate content of the *Upaniṣads*?

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### **5.8 LET US SUM UP**

Human nature is basically divine, but the problem is that he is not aware of his divinity. He is not aware that ego or empirical self is a part of the *Brahman* and it wants to go back to its original source. *Brahman* is all bliss full, 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 objects makes him perfectly happy. Thus all vices can be understood as a form of ignorance in *Upaniṣads*. 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 non-dual 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 human being. 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 Cārvakas 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 wanders 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 Human being. The *Upaniṣads* maintain that *Ātman* is *Sat- Cit- Ānanda*; means 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 human being makes one aware of his eternality and probably makes him feel the most secure. The lifelong wonder for happiness ends with this realization. *Upaniṣads* provide a blueprint to get rid of this painful existence. Knowledge of *Brahman* ends this painful existence. Thus this knowledge is supreme and its supremacy is revealed to us by the *Upaniṣads*.

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## 5.9 KEY WORDS

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**Ātman** : *Ātman* is a *Sanskrit* word that means inner self or soul. *Ātman* is part of the universal *Brahman*, with which it can commune or even fuse. So fundamental was the *Ātman* deemed to be identified with *Brahman*.

**Brahman** : *Brahman* is a *Vedic Sanskrit* word, and it is conceptualized in Hinduism, states Paul Deussen, as the “creative principle which lies realized in the whole world”. *Brahman* is a key concept found in the *Vedas*, and it is extensively discussed in the early *Upaniṣads*.

**Mokṣa** : *Mokṣa*, also called *vimokṣa*, *vimukti* and *mukti*, is a term in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism which refers to various forms of emancipation, enlightenment, liberation, and release. In its soteriological and eschatological senses, it refers to freedom from *saṃsāra*, the cycle of death and rebirth.

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## 5.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## **5.11 Answers to Check your Progress**

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### **Answers to check progress I**

1. The *Upaniṣads* are a collection of texts philosophical in nature written around 900-300 BCE, a period when Indian society started questioning the traditional Vedic ritualistic order. 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-siras*', the crown of the *Veda*.
2. Upanishadic literature is the product of highest human intellect or thinking in the field of philosophical speculation. Its uniqueness lies in its holistic approach to the problem of Ultimate Reality or understanding nature as well as the practical solution to the age old problem of sorrow and suffering. The present day relevance, encompassing all aspects of human development whether it is scientific or spiritual, has shown its universality of ideas.

*Upaniṣads* represent teachings of the sages who experienced the Reality or Truth, i.e. became Reality (*Brahma vid brahmaiva bhavati*- the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman. The purpose of the *Upaniṣads* is not mere intellectual satisfaction, but a practical solution to the ultimate problems of life and it seems that the concept of liberation, the fourth *puruṣārtha* or the ultimate goal of life as determined in the Indian tradition, has been established in its fullest form in the Upanishadic thought. Moving one step ahead from the *dharma, artha, kāma* of the Vedic goals of life; *Upaniṣads* bring the concept of *Mokṣa* as the supreme purpose of all inquiries of life.

3. There are two aspects of Upanishadic teachings. One is the theoretical aspect and the other is the practical aspect. The theoretical aspect of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* deals with the following three issues-

1. The Self or essence of man- *Ātman*

2. The Self or essence of the world- *Brahman*
3. The relation between *Ātman* and *Brahman*

### Answers to check progress II

1. Each *Veda* has four sections- *Samhitā*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣads*. While *Samhitā* contains hymns praising gods and goddesses, the *Brāhmaṇas* deal with the sacrificial rites. The *Āraṇyaka* exposition consists of the meditative practices. The *Upaniṣads* are philosophical treatises discussing the fundamental problem of existence and its purpose and the nature of reality. The transition from the *Samhitā* 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.
2. *Upaniṣads* are marked by a dialogical method. Each of the concepts it analyzes is framed within a dialogue characterized by questions and answers, narratives and episodes, similes, metaphors, illustrations, and so on. The dialogue between father Uddālaka and son Śvetaketu in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, the dialogue between Satyakama and his mother Jabala in *Chaandogya*, *PRājapati* and his sons in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, Yama and Naciketa in *Kaṭha*, Nārada and Sanatkumara in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* are some of the classical examples of how the dialogical method is used in developing philosophical concepts. Again, dialogical method can be seen in two ways - first, as a mode of argumentation to bring out contradiction in the views of the other party. Secondly, it resolves, dissolves or sublates the contradictions at a higher level. For example in the dialogue between Uddālaka and Nachiketā, we find that it begins with the empirical experiences, the *vyavahārika* satā. In order to resolve contradictions at the *vyavahārika* level, we go to the *pāramārthika* level. In short, there is always a need to overcome and sublimate the contradiction either in terms of higher ideas or by recognizing the superiority of the leading philosopher. The other method is story. A story makes us understand the concepts very clearly and the purpose of the story is to convey the moral implications of that concept.

### Answers to check progress III

1. The *Upaniṣads* contain discussions on the genesis of the world, the ontology of the self and the body, the spirit and matter, the meaning of true knowledge, the character of the world, bondage and liberation, and so on. While some of the verses are in the form of Mantras or chants, the *Upaniṣads* also include anecdotes, dialogues between teacher and pupil, between father and son, between supernatural characters and human beings and between animals and human beings. Some of these principles are *samsāra*, *karma*, *dharma* and *Mokṣa*. These principles form a metaphysical scheme that was shared with varying adjustments made by most Indian religions and philosophers. The concept of *samsāra* is reincarnation, the idea that after we die our soul will be reborn again in another body; perhaps in an animal, perhaps as a human, perhaps as a god, but always in a regular cycle of deaths and resurrections.

Another concept is *Karma*, which literally means “action,” the idea that all actions have consequences, good or bad. *Karma* determines the conditions

of the next life, just as our life is conditioned by our previous *Karma*. There is no judgment or forgiveness, simply an impersonal, natural and eternal law operating in the universe. Those who do good will be reborn in better conditions while those who are evil will be reborn in worse conditions. Dharma means “right behaviour” or “duty”, the idea that we all have a social obligation which is to be fulfilled. Each member of a specific caste has a particular set of responsibilities, a dharma. For example, among the *Kshatriyas* (the warrior caste), it was considered a sin to die in bed; dying in the battlefield was the highest honor they could aim for. In other words, dharma encouraged people of different social groups to perform their duties the best they could. *Mokṣa* means “liberation” or emancipation. The eternal cycle of deaths and resurrection can be seen as a pointless repetition with no ultimate goal attached to it. Seeking permanent peace or freedom from suffering seems impossible, for eventually we will be reborn in worse circumstances. *Mokṣa* is the liberation from this never-ending cycle of reincarnation, a way to escape this repetition.

2. This division of knowledge is related to the doctrine of accepting the distinction of realities of experience as higher and lower where *parā* is related to the higher and *aparā* is related to the lower. The two levels, in which these two kinds of wisdom of knowledge reside and in which the explanations take place, are called *pāramārthika* “the absolutely real level” and *vyavahārika* “the practical level.”
3. An intensive treatment in *Upaniṣads* about understanding the true nature of our own being has been given an intensive treatment in *Upaniṣads*. The same reality is called from the objective side as ‘Brahman’ and from the subjective side as ‘Ātman’. What is *Ātman*? It is the subject, which persists throughout the changes, the common factor in the states of waking, dream, sleep, death, rebirth, and final deliverance. The *Upaniṣads* tell us that the core of our own being is not the body, or the mind, but *Ātman* or self. *Ātman* is the core of all creatures, their innermost essence. It can only be perceived by direct experience through meditation. It is when we are at the deepest level of our existence. *Upaniṣads* present *Ātman* as an ontological being, an epistemological subject, a moral being, a psychological being and so on. The term “*Ātman*” used in the *Upaniṣads* means both the universal self or Brahman and the individual self. There is one absolute reality that is *Brahman* and all the other individuals in this world are a reflection of the one supreme *Brahman*. Individuals resolve themselves in the universal absolute so long as the world of manifestation is functioning. There is no mixing up of the fruits of action, as the different individual selves are kept distinct by their association with the intellect, the senses, and the ego. The soul represents an idea of the divine mind, and the different souls are the members of the supreme.

*Jīvātman* or the individual self means the infinite self, conditioned by the body, the senses and the mind. *Upaniṣads* admits that the self is one but it is manifested in many forms of individual self. Brahman is the one underlying substance of the universe, the unchanging “Absolute Being,” the intangible essence of the entire existence. The undying and unchanging seed creates and sustains everything. It is beyond all description and intellectual

understanding. Individuals resolve themselves in the universal absolute so long as the world of manifestation is functioning. One of the great insights of the *Upaniṣads* is that *Ātman* and *Brahman* are made of the same substance. When a person achieves *Mokṣa* or liberation, *Ātman* returns to Brahman, to the source, like a drop of water returning to the ocean. The *Upaniṣads* claim that it is an illusion that we are all separate: with this realization we can be freed from ego, from reincarnation and from the suffering we experience during our existence. *Mokṣa*, in a sense, means to be reabsorbed into Brahman, into the great World Soul.

#### **Answers to check progress IV**

1. The ultimate content of *Upaniṣads* is the realization of *Mokṣa*. 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 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. Therefore, *Ātman* is the highest object of desire and love. There are many ways, according to the *Upaniṣads*, to attain *Mokṣa*: meditation, introspection, knowledge/realization- that behind all forms and veils the subjective and objective are one that we are all part of the Whole. The *Upaniṣads* agree on the idea that men are naturally ignorant about the ultimate identity between the individual self or *Ātman*, the self within, and Brahman. One of the goals of meditation is to achieve this identification with Brahman, and abandon the ignorance that arises from the identification with the illusory or quasi-illusory nature of the sensory world. It is due to ignorance the self gets separated from the supreme self, the ocean and due to the limiting adjuncts - body, senses, mind, transformation, birth, death, name form, action, thought.

But when these differences are destroyed, the self becomes non-dual, there is only one great being, cause of everything. The elements of body, name, and form end in Brahman by means of knowledge of the truth. By attaining this identity there is no particular consciousness. When there is duality then one smells something, one sees something, one speaks something, one thinks something, one knows something; the consciousness in that case is marked by the subject pole and the object pole. When there is complete identity, when the duality and ignorance is destroyed by knowledge then all the means of seeing, hearing, and thinking is no more there. This is the state of complete unity or oneness and no duality.

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## UNIT 6 DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO MOKṢA\*

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### Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 An Overview
- 6.3 Reflection on the Core Issues/Concepts
- 6.4 Philosophical Response
- 6.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.6 Key Words
- 6.7 Further Readings and References
- 6.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 6.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit, you are expected to know the essential concepts regarding *Mokṣa* and different approaches to it, such as:

- The meaning of the term ‘*Mokṣa*’ and its place in Indian Philosophy
- The teleological basis of *Mokṣa* in Indian Philosophy
- The Law of *Karma* and Rebirth
- Different views of Indian philosophical schools on *Mokṣa*
- The traditional ways of *Mokṣa*- *Jñāna*, *Karma*, *Bhakti*, and *Rāja Yoga*
- *Mokṣa* as the ethical basis of Indian Thought.
- *Samanvaya yoga*

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### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

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Indian philosophical tradition consists of two parallel streams, Vedic and non-Vedic, also known as *āstikas* and *nāstikas* system respectively. Although they disagree on many metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical issues, yet axiologically, all of them (except *Cārvāka*) aim at some idea of emancipation, liberation, or freedom. We can call it *Mokṣa*- the *Summum Bonum* or the Ultimate Good of human life as the final *Puruṣārtha* (the duties of human).

Etymologically, *Mokṣa* comes from the Sanskrit root ‘*muc*’ which means ‘to set free’. It appears in *Upaniṣads* in the form of ‘*mucyate*’ or ‘*vimuktaye*’. Freedom here can be understood in at least three different ways, which are complementary and supplementary to each other. Aesthetically, *Mokṣa* means freedom from suffering (*dukha*); epistemologically, it is freedom from transcendental ignorance (*avidyā*); and in the eschatological sense, it denotes

freedom from the cycle of the law of *Karma* and rebirth. In Indian philosophical parlance, there are other concepts also for *Mokṣa* (albeit slight variations) such as *vimukti (sadeha and videha)*, *mukti*, *apavarga*, *niḥśreyasa*, *parama gati*, *brahmānubhava*, *nirvāna*, *arhatva*, etc. Various philosophical schools have interpreted them differently and assigned various approaches to it. In this unit, our aim is to understand these interpretations and various approaches to *Mokṣa* along with its philosophical presuppositions.

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## **6.2 AN OVERVIEW**

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Indian philosophy has a soteriological basis. Each individual is impelled for actions with a purpose. Even fools do not engage in any action without any purpose. Hence, be it noble, ignoble, or even God, they all have some teleological aim. That ultimate aim is *sukha* or *ānanda*. Negatively, it denotes cessation of suffering. Now, *Cārvākas* held that only *sukha* is possible, i.e., transient pleasure and often mixed with pain. There is no possibility of everlasting pleasure or cessation of suffering until one is alive. However, other schools conceived this possibility. Brahmanic thought declared it to be *Mokṣa* where there is realization of Brahman. Brahman itself is of the nature of *sat chit and ānanda*, i.e., everlasting conscious bliss. Whereas Buddhist thought considers the Ultimate state to be as devoid of all suffering and ignorance. They termed this teleological goal as *Nirvana*.

Again, we can observe that Indian philosophical schools have a positive approach towards life. They might begin with pessimism, yet they ultimately end with a beatific ideal like *Mokṣa*. Even *Cārvāka*, the Indian materialist school, aims at deriving more and more pleasure out of life and that itself (*kāma*) is *Mokṣa* (the final aim) for them. However, they postulate no rebirth; hence they present an egoistic or individualistic hedonism- the view that aims at maximizing individual pleasures. Some Philosophical schools think that this kind of approach leaves morality in danger; hence, other Indian philosophical schools considered *Mokṣa* not as individual centric hedonism but as ultimate state or blissful experience, where there is a room for the law of *Karma* and subsequent morality. Nevertheless, *Mokṣa* enjoys the status of the final goal of human life, i.e., it serves as the teleological foundation of Indian ethics and philosophy. This teleology (i.e., final aim) of *Mokṣa* is universally acknowledged in Indian philosophy (except *Cārvāka*) either positively where there is presence of infinite bliss or negatively, the cessation of all suffering. Hence, spiritual teleology and blissful experience is the foundation of the concept of *Mokṣa*.

Another key presupposition of the concept of *Mokṣa* is the Law of *Karma*. Again, in an eschatological sense, *Mokṣa* means liberation from the cycle of rebirth and the law of *Karma*. It signifies total shredding of karmic impressions on an individual self. Further, the law of *Karma*, in a nutshell, implies the law of causation in the sphere of human conduct or morality. Good actions produce good results; and bad ones produce evil results. The *Karmas* are of three types-

1. *Sañchita Karma*- Actions which are stored and yet not fructified.
2. *Prārabdha Karma*- Past actions which have started giving their fruits.

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Themes-I**

3. Sañchiyamana *Karma*- Present actions which will have their fruits either immediately or in future.

These *Karmas* may produce ephemeral pleasures. But they are often mixed with pain and suffering. Again, there are three kinds of sufferings-

1. Ādhyatmika – physical and mental suffering generated by oneself.
2. Ādhibhautika – suffering given by other living beings.
3. Ādhidaivika – suffering given by natural forces, such as during an earthquake.

An individual is caught up in the chain of *Karmas* and rebirth and thus suffers extensively. All the schools of Indian philosophy, both *āstikas* and *nāstikas*, except *Cārvāka*, unanimously agreed on the idea of Law of *Karma* and rebirth as the source of human suffering and *Mokṣa* as the antidote to this suffering.

**Check Your Progress I**

**Note:**a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is *Mokṣa*?

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2. What is the philosophical background of the concept of *Mokṣa*?

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**6.3 Reflections on the Core Issues/Concepts**

Once we understand the teleological and blissful experiential basis of *Mokṣa*, the next important challenge a student of philosophy has to face is to comprehend the various interpretations of the concept of *Mokṣa* and its allied concepts given by Indian philosophical schools and then to frame a picture showing the major approaches to *Mokṣa*. In this section, we shall try to comprehend this core philosophical issue under the two broad headings- vedic and non-vedic approaches to define the concept of *Mokṣa* as follows-

**A) Vedic Approaches to define Mokṣa-**

*Vedas*, the eternal and divine source of Knowledge, come in four parts- Mantra, Brahman, Aranyaka, and *Upaniṣads*. Generally, it begins with naturalistic

hymns of prayer and culminates in the philosophical speculation of *Upaniṣads*. The concept of *Mokṣa* is also scattered in entire *Vedas*, however, it acquired its philosophical basis in *Upaniṣads* only. *Upaniṣads* are full of abstract esoteric principles and beyond the comprehension of laymen. Therefore, there are six upangas (limbs) of *Vedas* in the form of six Darśanas or Indian philosophical schools. They claim to present the best possible synoptic view of *Vedas* in their different contexts. Yet, all of them point towards the Vedic ideal of *Mokṣa*. Let us understand their views as follows-

### **Nyāya- Vaiśeṣika**

Sage Gautama's *Nyāya Sūtra*, the main text of Nyāya Darśana, termed the ideal of *Mokṣa* as *niḥśreyasa* and *apavarga*. The text claims in its first aphorism that the knowledge of sixteen categories (concepts) propounded by Nyāya can result in *niḥśreyasa*. Hence, the philosophical ignorance is the cause of bondage. From ignorance comes bad *Karma*, which in turn results in pain and rebirth. The reverse of this order with the help of right knowledge (*tattva Jñāna*) leads to *apavarga*.

Sage Kaṇāda's *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra*, the main text of Vaiśeṣika Darśana, also accepts *niḥśreyasa* as *Mokṣa* where there is a cessation of all suffering by virtue of right knowledge. Furthermore, Kaṇāda situated *niḥśreyasa* as the *Puruṣārtha* under the scheme of *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*. He calls it *dharma* which is defined as- that which leads to *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*. *Abhyudaya* is the material and social progress; and *niḥśreyasa* is the spiritual growth or *Mokṣa*. Here two points require mention. First is regarding the right order- as the vedic contention is that without proper material and social uplift it is useless to think about *Mokṣa*. Second is regarding the limitation- as one must not completely engage in material welfare, which may involve immoral means. Immoral or excessive material wealth will not lead to *niḥśreyasa*. Hence, both are complementary and supplementary to each other and they together constitute *Dharma*.

### **2. Sāṅkhya- Yoga**

*Sāṅkhya Sūtra* of Sage Kapila describes *Mokṣa* negatively as the permanent cessation of *trividha dukha* (*Ādhyatmika*, *Ādhibhautika*, *Ādhidaivika*). Other means have the potential to reduce suffering temporarily. It is only *Mokṣa* which can guarantee permanent freedom from the three types of sufferings. Again, the root cause of bondage is ignorance. Here, ignorance is explained as misapprehension, not being able to separate consciousness (*puruṣa*) from the unconscious principle (*prakṛiti*) of the Universe. When *Puruṣa* is discriminated from *Prakṛiti* in its entirety, *Mokṣa* is attained. Therefore, it is also called *Kaivalya* (being alone).

*Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali improves on the psychological aspect of attaining *Mokṣa*. Accordingly, it provides a method of training mind and body to attain tranquility and *Kaivalya*. *Yoga* describes five kinds of scattered mental states towards objects as *citta vṛitti*. When these *vṛitti* are controlled by the eightfold path of *yoga*, it leads to *Samadhi* or the supreme *yoga*. Hence, *yoga* is the cessation of mental modifications (*citta vṛitti*); and in its purified stages, *Kaivalya* is attained.

### **3. Mīmāṃsā**

The Mīmāṃsā School (founded by Mahariṣi Jaimini) did not recognize *Mokṣa* as an ultimate goal of life until the arrival of Kumāril. In fact, Mīmāṃsā focused on the ritualistic aspects of *Vedas* (mainly Mantras and Brāhmaṇa). *Jaimini Sūtra* stated that Vedic injunctions (yajña) are the hallmark of Dharma. Vedic rituals can guarantee the bliss of heavenly states which is regarded as *Mokṣa*.

### **4. Vedānta**

The term Vedānta has at least three interrelated interpretations. First, it denotes the teachings of *Upaniṣads* which come at the end (anta) of *Vedas*, therefore Vedānta. Second, *Upaniṣads* contain the essence of Vedic teachings, hence Vedānta. Third, in the climax *Upaniṣadic* teachings, there is an end (anta) of knowing (vid) hence Vedānta. The concept of *Mokṣa* has been widely debated between two Vedāntin namely; Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. Following is the essence of their views-

#### **Śaṅkara**

Śaṅkara propounded the theory of Advaita (non-duality) which, in a nutshell, states Ultimate Truth to be subject-object less state where there is unity of Ātmān and Brahman. His motto was - *Brahma satyam, jagat mithyā, jivo bramaiva napaṛh*, i.e., Brahman is the only real Being; the world is unreal (ephemeral) as it passes constantly into becoming; and at the Ultimate level there is no distinction between *jīva* and Brahman. This realization of unreality of individual ego (*jīva*) and its complete merging in the Absolute Brahman is the realization of *Mokṣa*. This (*mukti*) can happen within the body (*sadeha*) or after death (*videha*). The realization is ultimately a product of mystical knowledge (*Jñāna*) where there is dissolution of the knower and the known. Hence, the state of *Mokṣa* is devoid of any empirical attribute and distinctions. Positively, there can be only Sat Cit Ananda i.e., a mystical eternal state of bliss.

#### **Rāmānuja**

Rāmānuja and other thinkers like Madhva and Vallabha opined that the reality of the world and the distinction of Brahman and *jīva* have to be accepted in some form otherwise the question of bondage and liberation becomes futile. Rāmānuja, hence, propounded viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified non-duality) and his conception of *Mokṣa* is eternal companionship with the Lord Vishnu- the saḡuṇa form of Brahman. The complete Nirḡuṇa Brahman is philosophically unimaginable. Although there are different stages in *Mokṣa*, yet *jīva* does not become identical with Brahman or Viṣṇu. There essentially remains a gap between the two so that there is a possibility of eternal divine play.

### **B) Non-Vedic Approachs to define Mokṣa-**

The concept of *Mokṣa* has also been explained greatly even by non-vedic (*nāstikas*) schools of Indian philosophy. The view of Buddhism and Jainism can be synoptically presented as –

#### **1. Buddhism**

Buddhist philosophy can be encapsulated in the Four Noble Truths preached

by Buddha as follows-

- i) Dukkha- There is suffering in the world.
- ii) Dukkha Samudāya- There is a cause of suffering.
- iii) Dukkha Nirodha Mārga- There is a way for cessation of suffering (when the cause is removed).
- iv) Nirodha- There is a state devoid of all suffering- the state of Nirvana.

Contrary to a general allegation of pessimism against Buddhism, we can see that though Buddhism begins with pessimism yet it ends with the hope of Nirvana. The state of Nirvāna is negatively described as the cessation or extinction of all feelings. It is the complete dissolution of individual ātmā (*nairātmyavāda*). Although, Buddha did not render any positive descriptions regarding Nirvāna, as he remained silent; yet in the latter phases of Buddhism (especially in *Vijñānavada*) we find some positive descriptions also in terms of mystical Consciousness.

## 2. Jainism

The view of Jainism is that an individual ātman remains in suffering because of karmic bonds. The soul's intrinsic nature of infinite bliss (*ananta sukha*) is veiled by wrong knowledge and wrong conduct. Hence, *Mokṣa* is the state where all the *Karmas* are destroyed and the soul shines in its pristine purity. The state is also called *jinatva* or *arhatva*. Jaina texts have mentioned three-fold path of liberation as follows-

- i) *Samyaka Darśana*- Right View
- ii) *Samyaka Jñāna*- Right Knowledge
- iii) *Samyaka Caritra*- Right Conduct

### The Approaches to attain Mokṣa

According to the scriptures, generally there are four ways/approaches to attain *Mokṣa* as follows-

#### 1. Karma Marga

This is the path of right actions which unfolds the possibility of *Mokṣa* for any aspirant. Mīmāṃsakas were the staunch proponents of *Karma* mārga based on the Vedic injunctions (*yajña*). Apart from Mimamsakas, the path of right action acquired great significance in *Gīta*, Buddhist and Jainist thoughts also. For *Gīta*, right action means action without desire of its fruits (*Niṣkāma Karma*). Desire for fruits leads a person to bondage. Renunciation of desire for fruits leads to eternal peace, the *Mokṣa*. Therefore, *Gīta* asks a *Karmayogin* to be detached from the consequences of any performed action and ought to perform his/her duty for duty's sake.

#### 2. Bhakti Mārga

It is the path of devotion. It projects the Ultimate Reality as a benevolent and merciful God and surrenders to that Absolute principle with utmost love that

can guarantee *Mokṣa*. *Bhakti* mārṅa involves total surrender, selfless action, sense of service and worshipping God. Schools like Vaiṣṇavism are the pioneer of *Bhakti* mārṅa.

### **3. Jñāna Mārṅa**

It is the path of Knowledge. Knowledge here means the mystical knowledge of the union of individual self and the Absolute Self (*Aham Brahmāsmi*). Here, this particular knowledge becomes the instrumental cause of liberation. Śaṅkara and Sāṅkhya are the major proponents of *Jñāna Mārṅa*.

### **4. Rāja Yoga**

It is the path of meditation, where the mind with its various modifications or fluctuations are controlled and finally merged in the Absolute state of Samādhi. *Yoga* philosophy's *aṣṭāṅga mārṅa* is a great compendium of the path of mediation. Apart from that we also find the immense importance of mediation for *Mokṣa* in Buddhism and Jainism. In the modern Indian era, it was reinterpreted by saints like Vivekananda and Ramaṅa Maharṣi.

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## **6.4 PHILOSOPHICAL RESPONSE**

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Philosophical challenges and responses to the concept of *Mokṣa* can be comprehended in three different ways. The first is regarding the possibility of *Mokṣa*. The general human predicament is that of suffering and grief mixed with transient pleasures; and it ends in death. The moot question is – is there any possibility of immortality with the complete cessation of suffering or positively with abundance of bliss? In other words, is there any possibility of *Mokṣa*? The Cārvākas' response is that there is no possibility of *Mokṣa*. Permanent cessation of suffering or permanent presence of bliss is an illusion. On the other hand, non-Cārvāka philosophers (vedic and non-vedic) both accepted the possibility of *Mokṣa* either negatively or positively.

The second problem is regarding the various interpretations and nature of *Mokṣa*. Unanimously, it has been grounded in the law of *Karma* and liberation from the cycle of rebirth. However, schools differ regarding the nature of *Mokṣa*, the role of God and terminologies used for *Mokṣa*.

Thirdly, it is a great challenge to comprehend the ways or approaches to attain *Mokṣa*. We have already noted the four general ways of approaching *Mokṣa*. Each of them emphasize on a particular aspect of human psychology. Yet, one is required to bring a synthesis of the various approaches. Such an approach can be termed as *Samanvaya yoga* which was advocated by *Bhagavad Gīta*. *Samanvaya Yoga* emphasizes that right knowledge, right action, and right devotion- they all are vital along with mindfulness to attain *Mokṣa*.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Summarize the various concepts of *Mokṣa* advocated in Vaidic Schools.

2. Write a short note on various approaches/ways of *Mokṣa*.

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## 6.5 LET US SUM UP

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To sum up, we can derive the following philosophical points from our discussion above of the concept and approaches to *Mokṣa*-

1. The idea of *Mokṣa* has a teleological and hedonist basis- as a hedonistic teleology human psychology is aimed to maximize happiness and minimize pain.
2. The moot question is – is there any possibility of *Mokṣa* i.e. permanent cessation of suffering or eternal presence of bliss? The response comes in two ways- *Cārvāka* denies the possibility of *Mokṣa* and non-*Cārvāka*s accept the possibility of such a state of *Mokṣa*.
3. There are many interpretations of the term *Mokṣa* along with shared terminologies such as *mukti*, *vimukti*, *kaivalya*, *nirvāna*, *arahatva*, etc. However, all of them describe *Mokṣa* either positively or negatively.
4. Finally, there are generally four ways or approaches of *Mokṣa*- *Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Jñāna*, and *Rāja yoga*. They all emphasize the vitality of various aspects (causes) of *Mokṣa*. Yet, many have considered all of them to be complementary and supplementary to each other, and hence present a synthesized approach to *Mokṣa*, i.e, *Samanvaya Yoga*.

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## 6.6 KEY WORDS

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<b>Abhyudaya</b>	: The worldly upliftment.
<b>Āstika</b>	: Believing in the authority of <i>Vedas</i> . Conversely, <i>nāstikas</i> do not believe in the authority of <i>Vedas</i> .
<b>Avidyā</b>	: The transcendental ignorance or the prime cause of bondage.
<b>Hedonism</b>	: The ethical view that aims at maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain.
<b>Mokṣa</b>	: The state of psychological, epistemological,

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and eschatological freedom from sufferings, the metaphysical ignorance, and the cycle of *Karma* and rebirth.

<b>Niḥśreyasa</b>	:	The final <i>Puruṣārtha</i> , i.e., <i>Mokṣa</i>
<b>Nirguṇa Brahman</b>	:	It denotes attributeless or formless aspects of Ultimate Reality. It can be contrasted with the creative aspect of Brahman which is saguna Brahman.
<b>Puruṣārtha</b>	:	The four aims of human life- <i>dharma</i> , <i>artha</i> , <i>kāma</i> , and <i>Mokṣa</i> .
<b>Sadeha Mukti</b>	:	The state of <i>Mokṣa</i> within the body Conversely, Videha Mukti denotes <i>Mokṣa</i> after death.
<b>Teleology</b>	:	The view that everything is driven by a final purpose.
<b>Vedānta</b>	:	It represents the teaching based on prasthantrayī, the three great sources (texts), namely, <i>Upaniṣads</i> , <i>Bhagvada Gīta</i> , and <i>Brahmasūtra</i> .

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## 6.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The term *Mokṣa* is derived from the root word- 'muc' or 'mucyate' which means to set free or liberate. It appears first in *Upaniṣads*, e.g., *sā vidyā yā vimuktaye* (knowledge is that which liberates). Epistemologically, it means freedom from ignorance; and eschatologically, it means the liberation from the cycle of birth and death and the law of *Karma*. In Indian philosophy, there are other similar terms denoting the state of *Mokṣa* such as *mukti*, *vimukti*, *apvarga*, *niḥśreyasa*, *nirvāṇa*, *paramānanda*, etc.
2. The concept of *Mokṣa* is grounded on teleology and the possibility of blissful experience or cessation of all kinds of pain. From the term teleology, we understand that everything is purpose (telos) driven. Further, one can ask what could be that one final purpose (final good)? The answers are given by Indian sages in terms of 'happiness' or 'blissful experience'. The moot question regarding *Mokṣa* is that is there any possibility of attaining eternal happiness (*ānanda*) or a permanent cessation of suffering? Indian philosophy philosophical schools (except *Cārvāka*) have positively responded to this question and thus, we have different concepts and approaches to the ideal of *Mokṣa*.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Vedic philosophical schools are known as *āstikas* systems. They are six in number- *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Yoga*, *Mīmāṃsā*, and *Vedānta*. They all conceive of a state similar to *Mokṣa*. For *Nyaya-Vaisheshika* it is embedded as the fourth and final *Puruṣārtha* (the goals of human life). For them, it depends on the right knowledge of certain metaphysical categories (*padārtha*). For *Sāṅkhya*, *Mokṣa* is the state of *Kaivalya*, i.e., the aloneness of *Puruṣa* (Consciousness) from *Prakṛiti* (non-consciousness) elements of the Universe. The Yogic approach to *Mokṣa* is also centered on the realization of *Puruṣa* as *Kaivalya*, but it follows a rigorous training of mind and body control along with strict moral constraints. For *Mīmāṃsakas*, *Mokṣa* is granted by *Dharma*, i.e., following the Vedic rituals. For them the attainment of *Svarga* through *yajña* should be the criterion of *Dharma*. For *Vedānta* philosophers like *Śaṅkara*, the absolute realization of non-duality of *Ātman* and *Brahman* is the state of *Mokṣa*. For theistic Vedantists, like *Rāmānuja*, devotion and selfless surrender to a *Saguṇa Brahman*

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(personified God) is the key to attain *Mokṣa*. Further, for them, *Mokṣa* is not the absolute merging of *jīva* with Brahman. There always remains a gap making room for beatific sensations with the Divine.

2. There are various approaches depicted by Indian philosophical schools. Generally, they can be classified in four categories. First is *Karma* marga, which says that right/moral actions play a crucial role in attaining *Mokṣa*. Further, *Gīta* also advocated the selfless performance of duties (*niṣkāma Karma*) to attain *Mokṣa*. Second is the *Bhakti* marga, which emphasizes the powerful role of divine grace (*kripa*) and help rendered by a personal God (e.g., Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa). This grace is attained when a bhakta completely surrenders (*prapatti*) to God. Thirdly, *Jñāna* marga, emphasizes on the role of Knowledge as the key factor in attaining *Mokṣa*. It is ignorance which is the cause of bondage; hence the right antidote can be Knowledge only. Śaṅkara and Sāṅkhya were the major proponents of *Jñāna* marga. Fourth is the path of mediation, i.e., *Rāja yoga*. It was meticulously articulated in *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali. It laid emphasis on the powers of a controlled mind (*citta vṛitti*). *Yoga* or *Samadhi* is defined as the cessation of mental modifications. In the higher stages of *Samadhi*, one can envision the state of *Mokṣa*.

All these approaches shed light on some unique aspects of attainment of *Mokṣa*. Yet, various texts and scholars have attempted to synthesize these approaches. *Bhagavad Gīta* is an excellent example of such a synthesis which beautifully depicts the role of *Karma*, *Jñāna* and *Bhakti* in any person's material and spiritual upliftment. This approach is called *samanvaya yoga*.

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## UNIT 7 PRAŚNA UPANIŞAD\*

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### Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 *Praśna Upaniṣad*: An Overview
- 7.3 First Praśna: Source of All Being
- 7.4 Second Praśna: Prāṇa: Sustainer of Beings
- 7.5 Third Praśna: Prāṇa and Human Body
- 7.6 Forth Praśna: Prāṇa and States of Consciousness
- 7.7 Fifth Praśna: Meditation on AUM
- 7.8 Sixth Praśna: Existence of Puruṣa
- 7.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.10 Key Words
- 7.11 Further Readings and References
- 7.12 Answer to Check Your Progress

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### 7.0 OBJECTIVES

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- This unit presents an overarching view of the *Praśna Upaniṣads*. It outlines the central concepts of *Praśna Upaniṣad* and foregrounds their philosophical significance. Learner will be able to understand after reading this unit,
- Cause of all beings as depicted in this *Upaniṣad*
- Various states of Consciousness as depicted in this *Upaniṣad*
- Nature of Puruṣa and the proof of existence of Puruṣa as depicted in this *Upaniṣad*.

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### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

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The *Upaniṣads* are mystical or spiritual contemplations of the *Vedas*, their putative end and essence, and thus known as Vedānta (“the end/culmination of the *Vedas*”). As a part of the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads* belong to śruti or revealed literature. They are said to be immemorial (sanātana; timeless). They are “breathed out” by god or envisioned by the seers, when they are in a state of inspiration. He who inspires them is god. Truth is impersonal, Apaurusheya and eternal. Inspiration is a joint activity of which man’s contemplation and god’s revelation are two sides. The *Upaniṣads* are philosophical and theological mystical treaties forming the third division of *Vedas*..

The word *Upaniṣad* is derived from upa (near) ni (down) and sad (to sit), i.e. sitting down near. Groups of learners sit near the teacher to learn from him the

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secret doctrines. Shri Śamkarācārya derives the word upanisad as a substantive from the root sad, meaning, “to loosen”, “to reach” or “to destroy” with upa and ni as prefixes means that. If this derivation is accepted, *Upaniṣad* means Brahm knowledge by which ignorance is loosened or removed. The treatises that deal with Brahm- Vidyā are called the *Upaniṣads* and so pass for the Vedānta. The different derivations together make out that they give us both spiritual vision and philosophical arguments.

There are two aspects of *Veda*. The first is called *Karma-kāṇḍa* (rituals) which incorporates ceremonial prayers and sacrificial rites. Mantras and Brahmanas both represent ritual aspects of the *Veda*. The second is called *Jñāna-kāṇḍa*. It belongs to the knowledge aspect of *Veda*- the theosophical portion of vedic revelation and this is presented through the *Upaniṣads*.

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## 7.2 PRAŚNA UPANIṢAD: AN OVERVIEW

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*Praśna Upaniṣad* belongs to the *Atharva Veda*. It is probably of Pippalāda śākhā, one of the most important śākhās of that *Veda*. This *Upaniṣad* had derived its name from the six questions that were asked to the Ṛṣi Pippalāda, by six learned Ṛṣis who approached Pippalāda to learn more about the spiritual science or Brahma Vidyā. Pippalāda is mentioned in the *Upaniṣad* as the name of the principal teacher. There are six chapters in this *Upaniṣad* and each begins with a question. In fact, it would be appropriate to call this *Upaniṣad* as the *Upaniṣad* of six questions. The six Rishis aspiring to know the truth approached Pippalāda, the great seer. The six were: Sukesha, Shaibya Satyakām, Gaṅgya descending from Sun, Kaushalya son of Aswala, Bhārgava of Vidarbha, and Kabandhī Kātyāyana. The questions that they asked are as follows: the first question refers to the origin of the created beings, the second to the constituent of the human personality, the third to the origin and the nature of the Prāṇa, the fourth to the psychological aspects of the human personality, the fifth to the result of meditation on the word AUM and the sixth is about the metaphysical principle in man. Like the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, it also takes the reader gradually from the gross to the subtle principles of life, revealing one by one all the folds of matter that enwrap the ātman. Moreover, in this *Upaniṣad* alone one can find the mentioning of the creation of being- originating from matter and spirit. This *Upaniṣad* removes various imposed layers that are imposed on ātman and attempts to find out the real nature of ātman. It defines the real nature of an individual self by identifying it with the supreme self. This identification of the individual self with the supreme self is possible by eradicating the imposed bodily identity. Let’s go into the context of questions and answers.

### Check your progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the meaning of the term ‘*Upaniṣad*’?

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.....  
.....

2. Why is it called 'Prašna Upaniṣad'?

### 7.3 FIRST PRAŚNA: SOURCE OF ALL BEING

The first question is asked by Kātyāyana Kabandhi to the sage Pippalāda that 'Sir, whence, verily, are creatures here born?' Or 'Lord, how were all these creatures created?' Then Pippalāda answered, "The lord of creation (Prajāpati), verily, was desirous of creatures. He performed austerity, he produced a pair, matter (*rayi*) and life (*prāṇa*), thinking that these two will make creatures for me in manifold ways." Here, Prāṇa is an element of sense or the power that gives motion and the Rayi is nature that is able to hold and provide several forms. All components of micro and macro nature are called Rayi. In the modern language this can be known as life energy and the matter. The combination or harmony of these two originates from the creation (*Sṛṣṭi*). These two elements give rise to each and everything in this universe. The discussion that followed is full of mysticism. It says that the creator created the sun and the moon; and male and female for procreation of living beings. The sun is identified with the life of creatures. The tangible source of breathing circulation is the sun on this earth. Being the light giver and motivator, the sun is in the garb of Prāṇa. The moon having lighted and motivated the light from the sun is the symbol of Rayi. He says, those who seek the soul (*ātman*) by austerity, chastity, faith and knowledge, they win the sun. That, verily, is the support of life breaths. That is the immortal, the fearless. That is the final goal. From that they do not return. It says that the devotees establish solidarity with the supreme soul by approaching their energy through persuasion of the sun, the source of motivating energy. Celibacy, austerity and obeisance etc are to be exercised in this process. It describes food as the eternal father because it provides energy and the ability to procreate. Food, verily is the lord of creation (Prajāpati), from which these creatures are born. Food is the direct source of creatures. Now, all those who practice this rule of Prajāpati, they indeed possess that Brahma-world. Who possess austerity (*tapas*) and chastity (Brahmacarya) in them the truth is established. To them only belongs stainless Brahma-world, in whom there is no crookedness and falsehood, not trickery (*māyā*).

### 7.4 SECOND PRAŚNA: PRĀṆA SUSTAINER OF BEINGS

In the second Praśna, the seeker is Bhārgava from Vidarbha. He asked a question about the number of powers that sustain a being and who, among these powers or factors, is the Supreme. The Bhārgava asked; "O Exalted one! How many gods maintain the created beings and which among them illuminates this body and who among them is most superior (to all others)?" It gives an insight about; how many gods support and nourish the living world. How many powers illuminate

this world? And the most importantly; who among them is the mightiest one?

Pippalāda answered to him that the powers that support and illumine the beings are ether, air, fire, water, earth, speech, mind, sight and hearing. All of them sustain and support the material world and the physical body. Life breath or prāṇa is supreme among them. Here Prāṇa is that living principle, the life energy which distinguishes living beings from the inanimate elements or non-living beings. Prāṇa is supreme because all the above elements become powerless when Prāṇa leaves them. They are no better than inanimate objects without Prāṇa. They just do not exist without the presence of Prāṇa. Prāṇa is the source of life in those elements. Indeed, the elements and other powers praised Prāṇa and said This one burns like fire; this one is the sun; this one is the rain; this one is the air; this one is the earth, matter, deity; he is what is and what is not and what is immortal”

“Of all the gods, though, they are the strongest and the fiercest. Thou are the truth, the reality and the eternal wisdom of rishis.”

“You are seated in the speech, sight, and the bodies of beings’ life, or Prāṇa, do not forsake us.” “Guard us as mothers guard their children. Give us good luck, beauty and wisdom.”

These dialogues between Prāṇa and the elements as quoted by Pippalāda emphasize that the life principle or the life energy is the most important thing without which the world will come to a standstill.

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## **7.5 THIRD PRAŚNA: PRĀṆA AND HUMAN BODY**

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The third Praśna is asked by Ṛṣi Koshalya, the son of Ashwala. He enquired: “Lord, whence is this life born? How comes it in this body or how stand by self division? By what departs, or how maintain the outward and the inward spiritual?” In a simple and straightforward way Rishi was inclined to ask these questions: How is Prāṇa born? How does it enter the body of the living beings? How does it distribute its power to the various limbs? How does it depart from the body? How does it maintain itself outside the body? How does it maintain inside?

Rishi Pippalāda said, however, these questions are difficult but given the student’s sincerity and past curiosities about Brahman, he replied; ātmāna esa prano jayate-Prana-born from the Self. Further, life (Prna) enters the body due to the actions of the mind. Now, according to him, just as a king directs his officers to look after designated regions, Prāṇa delegates various functions to subdivisions. Main breath is seated in the eyes, ears, nose and mouth. The medial breath (samana) is located in the middle of the body and the lower breath is located in the lower organs. The ātman is seated in the heart there are hundred and one nervous, and each nerve has a hundred branches and each branch has seventy-two thousand sub branches through which Prāṇa pulsates.

This description of the anatomy of the heart was given long before the Greek medical science could even think of the heart structure. This description of the cardiac structure and the various nāḍīs carrying blood back and forth are a remarkable example of the intuitive method of the Ṛṣis, a method that succeeds when science fails. While wrapping up his answer to the third question, Pippalāda

says: by understanding Prāṇa, its relation with the living organism and its ability to empower the body and its bond with the supreme power can help attain immortality. According to him, he who knows the origin, the dissemination, the abode, and the fivefold distribution in the world and has himself the knowledge of Prāṇa, he attains immortality.

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## 7.6 FOURTH PRAŚNA: PRĀṆA AND STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

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While, the first three Praśnas are about the relative, empirical manifested world and belong to the aparā vidyā, the fourth praśna deals with the transition from gross to the subtle world, Rayi to the Prāṇa, Matter to the Energy and aparā vidyā to the parā vidyā. This fourth question (further incorporates five questions within itself) was asked by the grandson of Sūrya, Gārgya. Gārgya enquired about the organ that goes to sleep, the organ that functions during sleep, experiencer of the dream, happiness and so on.

Pippalāda explains with an analogy of the sun's rays. He states that when the sun sets, the rays get merged in the source of energy (Sun). In the same way, during the somnolent stage the senses merge into the Supreme Being. Then, in a poetic sentence Pippalāda explains: as birds wing towards the resting tree as nightfall, likewise do all the senses wing towards the supreme power. It is the Supreme Being in which all the senses rest in the state of sleep.

Then, about sleep, Pippalāda says: during sleep, the mind seems to see in a dreamy state all that it has seen during wakefulness. It pictures all that it has seen during wakefulness. It pictures all that it has heard, all that is felt, the lands it has seen and not seen, all that it has known and unknown. In fact, it pictures the whole universe. This can be called the first attempt to interpret dreams in the history of psychology. Pippalāda continues with the esoteric teaching. He explains, “the five elements, ten senses, mind, ego, the manifest and the sense objects like touch, taste, sight, smell, and sound, intelligence and what all it understands, the heart and what it feels, light and what it lights, and all that sustains it. All these are regulated by the Supreme Being.” He explains the Supreme Being is the seer; it touches everything; it tastes everything; it feels everything; it is the actor; it is the knower; it does not perish. He, who understands this shadow-less, colourless, bodiless, shining, imperishable Supreme Being, knows everything. Such a man is immortal. At last, he says, “O fair Son that knows the imperishable into whom the understanding self departs, and all the Gods, and the life-breaths and the elements, he knows the universe....!” The above sentence means he who knows the imperishable Prāṇa and the elements, knows everything. He knows all that is worth knowing.

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## 7.7 FIFTH PRAŚNA: MEDITATION ON AUM

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The Satyakāma, son of Śibi, asked Pippalāda about the importance and result of meditating on the symbol of Om (Aum) till death. The Ṛṣi equated AUM with Brahma and answered, Oṃkāra is an imperishable word. It represents total Brahma. The wise man who meditates on the word, gains all the worlds. If a person meditates only on one letter, A, of the syllabi AUM, he attains great ethical progress. He experiences great bliss. He is escorted by the hymns of

the Rig *Veda*. By uttering two letters, AU, of the syllabi AUM one becomes exalted, graced by the hymns of Yajur *Veda* and goes to heaven. But he returns. But he who meditates on all the three letters (AUM) as a single entity goes to the highest realm of self-knowledge. He gets liberated from all suffering, sin and fears. He reaches to the world of Brahman. He conducts himself well in the material and spiritual actions. The same theme is found in the Māndukya *Upaniṣad* where the significance of the word OM is given importance.

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## **7.8 SIXTH PRAŚNA: EXISTENCE OF PURUṢA**

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The sage Sukeśa of the clan of Bharadvāja asked the teacher (Pippalāda) regarding the existence of the Puruṣa of sixteen parts. Pippalāda replied: “O fair son, even here is that Being, in the inner body of every creature, from which arise the sixteen parts.” The Supreme Being is inside the body of every creature. The creator had pondered when he created the world. He provided for something which would abide in the body when he is there and leave it when he is not there. Then, he created life breath, the air, light and water, earth, the senses, the mind, food, virility and vitality and everything came into being. Just as rivers that flow meet the ocean and merge into it and lose their identity, name and form (nāma-rūpa) likewise the individual being loses his identity in the universal spirit. The supreme spirit is like the nave of a wheel to which all the spokes are attached. Once, one knows about the Supreme Being then one merges into the Supreme Being. From Supreme Being everything is created. Further, it is the Supreme Being to which everything returns. That is the spirit which helps us to cross over from ignorance to knowledge. Ignorance is the wrong identification of our self with our body and knowledge is the identification of our self with the Supreme Being. The nature of this Supreme Being is the one whole without any parts. The multiple nature of an individual self is an ignorance and māyā. The multiple individual self when merged into the Supreme Being, it becomes one unity whole without any parts. The *Upaniṣad* ends up with a call, “Know the Self, the worthy one to be known. Beyond this Puruṣa, the supreme, there is no other thing.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What does it mean by Prāṇa?

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2. What does it mean by Identity?

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.....

## 7.9 LET US SUM UP

To conclude, the responses to the six questions which were given by the sage are about creation of universe and methodology of realization; prime supports of life and Prāṇa; origin and destination of mortal life etc. *Praśna Upaniṣad* begins with the question of creation or origin of the creatures of this universe both living and non living and ends with the notion of supreme within which liberation lies. It is Supreme Being with which one identifies one self. According to *Praśna Upaniṣad*, Prāṇa distinguishes the living being from the non-living being. The real nature of the Prāṇa is pure consciousness, self-shining, self proved and always the same. This nature of living being is initially there at the time of birth. It is the essential nature of being. It is searching life which is veiled by ignorance and which is always there. Here, the real nature of being is finding that is already there. Liberation lies in establishing identity with the Supreme Being. Here, after the establishment of identity of oneself with the Supreme Being, one merges into the Supreme Being and becomes Supreme Being. The Supreme Being is one without second and every being of this world merged within him after liberation.

## 7.10 KEY WORDS

<b>Jñāna-kāṇḍa</b>	:	The wisdom portion (discussing the nature of Soul, cause of the universe, <i>Mokṣa</i> etc) of the <i>Veda</i> .
<b>Brahma Vidyā</b>	:	(derived from the Sanskrit words brahma and Vidyā, is that branch of scriptural knowledge derived primarily through a study of the divine. The knowledge of the Brahman.
<b>Prāṇa</b>	:	To breath, to be alive
<b>Rayi</b>	:	Matter
<b>Māyā</b>	:	literally “illusion” or “magic”, it has multiple meanings in Indian Philosophy depending on the context.
<b>(AUM) OM</b>	:	It is a sacred sound and a spiritual symbol used in <i>Upaniṣads</i> , it signifies the essence of the ultimate reality, consciousness or Brahman.

## 7.11 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## **7.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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### **Answers to check your progress I**

1. In the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, the word Upaniṣad is used to mean sitting near. The word “*Upaniṣad*” is a combination of three words Upa- ni-sad, where upa means nearness, ni means leading to knowledge and the root sad has three meanings- to destroy, to reach or attain and to loosen. Secondly, *Upaniṣad* means the book that deals with the knowledge of Brahman. Some scholars explain the word *Upaniṣad* as upa (near), ni (down), sad (to sit) - sitting down near. Disciples, sitting near the teachers, acquired knowledge or discussed their doubts.
2. It is called *Praśna Upaniṣad* because the crux of the *Upaniṣad* is Praśna or question. The whole *Praśna Upaniṣad* is centered around six questions and their answers, which gives rise to such a name to this *Upaniṣad*. The questions are: how did life begin? What is a living being? What is the nature of man and how is it so? What establishes man? What is meditation and why meditate? And the last one is what is immortal in man?

### **Answers to check your progress II**

1. Prāṇa is a subtle aspect of the body. It has a visible aspect which is the air we breathe and an invisible aspect, which is the energy that flows in the body through various channels and sustains it. It is responsible for our vitality and dynamism (chaitanyam). Without Prāṇa beings cannot be alive. Prāṇa also connects the gross body (annamaya koṣa) with the mental body (manomaya koṣa). It is Prāṇa which gives motion in being. A being is called living because of the presence of Prāṇa, otherwise it is called non-living being.
2. The philosophical concept ‘identity’ concerns a relation, specifically, a relation that a person stands to itself or identical to itself. It is something by virtue of which a person is identified to be the same throughout his/her life. In *Praśna Upaniṣad*, all creatures of this universe are identified with the Supreme Being (Brahman). It is the identity of the individual selves and the supreme self. Identity is the recognition of everything in this universe, which lies at the core of Supreme Being. The distinction of name and form is resolved after identification with the Supreme Being.

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## UNIT 8 MUṆḌAKA UPANIṢAD\*

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### Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Philosophy of *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*
- 8.3 Aparā Vidyā – Lower Knowledge
- 8.4 Parā Vidyā - Knowledge of the Self
- 8.5 Brahman: Cause of the Universe
- 8.6 Theory of Causality
- 8.7 Brahman – Source of All
- 8.8 Nature of Brahman
- 8.9 Nature of Ātman
- 8.10 Identity of *Jīva* and Brahman
- 8.11 Realization of Brahman
- 8.12 Means of Realization
- 8.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.14 Key Words
- 8.15 Further Readings and References
- 8.16 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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The highest teachings of the *Upaniṣads* are treasury of wisdom. For a long period of time it has been transmitted from competent guru to deserving disciples. In other words it was given as a teaching only in the Śravaṇa system where the students heard from the teacher and retained the treasure of knowledge. This unit:

- Will bring the students to the sublime teachings of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*.
- The aspirant seeking wisdom will be benefited to deepen one's understanding of the reality.
- The Brahma Vidyā, or the science of the Absolute is the aim of the teaching of *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*.

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### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* has evolved from the Atharva *Veda*. It is a highly mystical *Upaniṣad*. The term '*Muṇḍaka*' means shaven head. The teaching of the

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\*Dr. John Peter, St. Antony's College, Kotagiri.

*Upaniṣad* shaves (liberates) the student from ignorance. The *Upaniṣad* has three chapters each being divided into two sections. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* contains about sixty verses. The first chapter deals with the greatness of the teaching and the tradition of the teaching in the first section. And the second section elaborates on the aparā Vidyā, lower knowledge of the ritual, mundane and secular activities.

The second chapter is concerned with establishing Brahman as the cause of the universe and cause and effect principle regarding *jīva* and jagat. The third chapter speaks of ways and means of attaining the knowledge of Self and Brahman and the instrumentality of such knowledge for liberation.

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## **8.2 PHILOSOPHY OF MUṆḌAKA UPANIṢAD**

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In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* Guru Angiras instructs the well known householder Śaunaka on “that knowledge on knowing which nothing remains to be known.” In *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* there is a systematic approach to the topic of knowledge of the Self through discrimination and dispassion. In *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* the knowledge of the Self is discussed elaborately and given a clear exposition. There is a clear distinction explained between higher knowledge of the Absolute and the lower knowledge of the empirical world. One can reach the Absolute only the higher knowledge, not by the lower knowledge of the world and rituals. The enquiry on the Self-Knowledge starts with the division of knowledge into parā and aparā vidyā. The details of aparā vidyā are treated elaborately well in the beginning.

The great lineage of gurūparamparā, master-disciple tradition down the ages, transmitted wisdom of self-enquiry. Brahman expounded the knowledge of the self. This was first taught to Atharva, his eldest son, a mānasa putra. From him the tradition of the guru-disciple starts. Atharva taught Angiras. He in turn taught Bharadwāja rishi who was known as satyavaha. Angiras Ṛṣi, the present teacher of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, learned from Satyavaha. He was approached by Shaunaka, who performed sacrifices and fed many people. He humbly places himself at the feet of the guru and asked, “O Master, please teach me about that one, by knowing which everything else is known.” The master explains that knowledge has two folds, Parā vidyā and aparā vidyā.

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## **8.3 APARĀ VIDYĀ – LOWER KNOWLEDGE**

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Aparā Vidyā is the first part of the four *Vedas*, namely, *Rk*, *Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva Vedas* along with their six limbs or vedāngas [shiksha (phonetics), chandhas (prosody), vyākaraṇa (grammar), nirukta (etymology), kalpa (rituals), jyotiṣa (astrology)]. Knowledge of them is meant to acquire material gains. All the knowledge of the world comes under aparā vidyā, the science of the materials. The *Karma kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas* gives mainly science of various physical and material disciplines. The upāsanā section of the *Vedas* deals with mental oriented activities, like meditation. Both these physical and mental activities and the knowledge attained by them and for them are dealt as aparā vidyā. The knowledge of them leads any individual into the material ephemeral world. Each ritual blesses the individual with the benefit it gives. According to the *Upaniṣadic* seers the sacrificial works and their fruits mentioned in the Vedic mantras are true, if they are performed with faith.

## Agnihotra Ritual

A ritual called *agnihotra* is very popular and practiced daily. It is said to be a very efficacious time-tested ritual. It is certain that a person who performs is sure to be blessed by desired results. The *Upaniṣad* provides the description of this ritual, along with the deviations and carelessness that are to be avoided. The purpose of this description is to explain the intricacies of the dos and don'ts of the ritual. Even the location and the direction of the sacrifice are given.

The homa kuṇḍa, the fireplace, is to be prepared in between the northern and southern direction. The performer is to be seated facing the east. The rituals are to be carried out on the first moon day (*amāvasyā*), full-moon day, and the month beginning with *chāturmāsya* rituals. The desired results are based on the meticulous performance. The non-performance of these rituals would not lead to the desired results. Oblations can be offered only into properly lit flames. This ritual is of two types, depending on the type of results desired. First type of rituals is performed with the desired results to be fulfilled during the life of the person. The rituals aiming at the attainment of higher worlds, like *swarga* that would be fulfilled only after death belong to the second type. The *agnihotra* ritual represents all other rituals, social services, charitable works and prayer and pilgrims. If they are performed with desires they would surely benefit the person.

### Result of Ritual Performance

By presenting details of ritual performances and their merits, the *Upaniṣad* shows people to realize the fleeting nature of the worldly and heavenly pleasures. The limited and short lived results are not infinite. Many interpretations of the *Upaniṣad* suggest that those who think of the men of rituals as wise and torchbearers are regarded as unwise. Men of rituals who consider themselves as wise are like blind men leading blind people. The same rituals can be performed without much desired results by those who desire not any worldly pleasures. They would be led to the brighter path, *śuklagati*, attainment of *Brahmaloka*, and eventually the Self knowledge and liberation. Without this focus in ritual activity, the performer stays only in the transient and ephemeral world. The explanation of the ritual knowledge and action which is termed as *aparā vidyā*, limited knowledge leads us to knowledge of higher realms, namely *parā vidyā*.

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## 8.4 PARĀ VIDYĀ - KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF

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*Parā Vidyā*, as the knowledge of the Self through which the immortal is known. The self is the source of all beings. It is eternal, all pervading yet subtle, imperishable, unseen and unknown. *Parā Vidyā* takes one towards Absolute by ensuring purity of mind. The experience of gaining and parting with material things is painful. The enjoyment obtained through them is very short and unreal. The fleeting pain and pleasure makes one aware of the drawbacks of *aparā vidyā*. A sincere seeker looks for something that is free from all limitations.

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## 8.5 BRAHMAN: CAUSE OF THE UNIVERSE

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The second chapter in the first section speaks of Brahman as the cause of the universe. The Relationship of Brahman with the world is regarded as the relationship of cause and effect. Brahman is regarded as both material and

intelligent cause of the world, *nimitta kāraṇa* or *upādāna kāraṇa*. The example of spiders and the web is given to establish Brahman as the material cause of the world. Other examples are gold and ornaments, clay and the pot, the ocean and the wave. The *Upaniṣad* brings in also an example of fire and the sparks to illustrate the one cause and many effects. The nature of the fire such as heat and the light are also found in the sparks. The non essential qualities like name and shape, color are different in fire and the sparks. Similarly, Brahman is the one cause for the many effects such as the world. The essential nature of the Brahman and the world are the same but the non essentials may differ. As the spark goes back to the fire itself and it cannot manifest itself without fire, so also the world cannot manifest itself without the Brahman and it finally goes back to the Brahman.

Again in explaining the cause-effect relationship, the *Upaniṣad* says that the effect is always dependent upon the cause and the cause is independent. For its substance, emergence, existence and the resolution, the effect is ever dependent on the cause. Whereas the cause is independent substance for itself and self subsistent, the effects have no substance but only form, name, function and modification. Explaining further, the causal relation of conscious Brahman and the inert world, the example of the human body and its inert hair and the nails is given. In the previous illustration of fire and spark it is established that the relation is like that of material to material. Here the relation is between the conscious principle and the inert principle.

Brahman is the one cause and the effects are many. For the effect there is no independent existence, it is *mithyā*. Brahman exists independently and is the intelligent cause. Brahman is present all the time, during origin, existence and destruction. Brahman is the intelligent cause of the world and the world is inert, matter. Brahman is consciousness and lends its 'is'-ness to all the effects of the world. World cannot be separated from Brahman as no ornament is separate from its substance gold.

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## **8.6 THEORY OF CAUSALITY**

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In explaining the relation between universe and Brahman, it is stated that the cause is always present in the effect. *Satkāryavāda*, is the theory of causality that believed in the pre-existence of the effect in the cause. Before the manifestation of the universe the need of and knowledge of it has been visualized by the Brahman. The name and the form of the universe already existed in the potential form in the Brahman. In vedāntic terminology there is no actual evolution or creation of the world, but only the manifestation of the Brahman as the world. The world is not a creation of new things. The world comes into being only as a projection of the potential form. Thus, the world comes into existence in four stages; first the five elements, space, air, fire water and earth are projected. In the second stage, ego and mind are brought forth. Thirdly, the five gross elements are made by unification of subtle elements in certain proportions. Finally, the gross bodies are manifest.

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## **8.7 BRAHMAN – SOURCE OF ALL**

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The ritual performance of sacrifices prescribed in all *Vedas* also originated from Brahman. The *Upaniṣad* says that everything that is connected to the *yajña*, the

ritual has come from Brahman alone, the diksha, a type of grass, worn by the performer for rituals, his wife, the sacrificial fire, the post to tie the sacrificial animal, sacrificial materials, the fees, dakṣiṇa, the cow, etc. Even the merits of the performance, namely various worlds and the enjoyment of the benefits are also from the Brahman alone. The *Upaniṣad* further gives an account of other virtues and various forms of beings, like heavenly beings, gods of various orders, the injunctions for performance, faith in the scriptures and teachers, grains used in sacrifice, life force, cattle, birds, penance and devotion, instruments used in sacrifices and the code of conduct, all are said to have come from the same Brahman. The objects and the sensual experiences of two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, a mouth and a tongue are the effect of the Brahman. The oceans, all the mountains, rivers of every kind and herbs, all proceed from Him.

To explain further that the Ultimate is the source of all beings, the *Upaniṣad* gives three analogies, namely the spider and the web; Earth and its produces; human body and the parts of it. As the material and the intelligent cause of the web is the spider, for the universe to be caused, the Immortal becomes both intelligent and material cause; nimitta and upādāna kāraṇa. The earth is the one cause which produces a variety of plants and trees. Human body which is considered to be living and conscious produces inert hair and nails. There is no pain experienced when these are cut. Inert, unconscious things can be caused by Conscious principle. As there are varieties of effects from the single cause, Brahman, the consciousness projects the inert material world. As in the case of the Spider Brahman is both the material and intelligent cause of the Universe.

The universe before its manifestation as a variety of things, have been existing in the potential form in the Brahman himself. It was like a seed form potentially before its being tree. The Brahman visualized the world as *tapas (tapa)*, the knowledge of what and how to create the world. The creation is manifested as a swelling of the seed. Before sprouting the seed swells meaning that it is going to manifest its potential. The manifestation of the subtle world takes place first. The subtle world is compared to the tiny sprout. The gross world is the visible universe with the five elements known as space, fire, air, water and earth along with all planets.

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## **8.8 NATURE OF BRAHMAN**

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Brahman is defined as the Omniscient Principle from both parā and aparā vidyā. Attribute of the Brahman is said to be self effulgent and distinctively different from all other things. Brahman is formless, unborn, all pervading, residing in the heart of the body, existing within and without, unborn, undying and immortal. The name and form and function of the things are the forms of Brahman and they are substance less. They are found in the seed form, just as the lump of the clay or gold having all the names and forms of different pots or ornaments, but in an unmanifested potential form. The whole universe is considered to be the body of Brahman. Both the universe and human body function as one unit at the level of existence. The *Jīvas*, animals, birds, and other living beings are born out of Ívara by different processes of evolution. It is great and the supporter of all. All creatures that move and breathe are grounded in Brahman. The gross and the subtle, form and formless, are only Brahman. Brahman is sat, existence and cit, knowledge. Sat-Cit is the supporter of all beings, as is mentioned in

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other *Upaniṣads* (and not specifically in the *Muṇḍaka*). Brahman is said to be the rays of light. All the worlds are founded on this immortal Brahman as His attributes. The *prāṇa* of the external speech and the mind are only the expressions of Brahman. The entire creation with heavens, earth, the intermediary worlds are all based upon Brahman. The internal worlds, the mind, the *prāṇa* and the senses are founded on Brahman.

The nature of the self is that it is free from all limitations and it is eternal. One who controls the mind and sense and has discriminative knowledge of what is real and unreal, would be able to have the knowledge of the Self. Anyone whose minds are impure and whose visions are of an objective nature cannot realize Brahman.

Consciousness is understood neither as part or product of the body nor as limited by the body. It is the one that survives even after the death of the body. But without the body consciousness is not seen. Everybody consists of the original and reflected consciousness and they are inseparable. The original consciousness is one pervading all things. The reflected consciousness is known as *ahaṁkāra* or body consciousness. It is as many as the number of bodies. It is also subject to modification from body to body and even in the same body. The two manifestations of consciousness are compared to two birds of the same species sitting on a tree. A bird sitting on the lower branch eats fruits that are sweet and bitter. The other bird seated on the upper branch is watching. The body consciousness, the *jīvātmā* is enjoying the fruits where as the witness consciousness, the *paramātmā* is watching. The tree is mind body complex; the fruits are results of various actions, giving pleasure and pain. (III.1.1-2).

**Check Your Progress I**

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a note on the various parts of *Vedas*.

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2. Write a note on the nature of Brahman.

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**8.9 NATURE OF ĀTMAN**

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Ātmā is understood as the witness principle. The ātmā is only one, though the thoughts are many. The consciousness that is Awareness handles the thoughts

single-handed. The thoughts are not awareness, though it is perceived in the presence of Awareness. Like the heart as the hub from where all nerves emerge and spread out over the whole body, the mind rests in the heart and in the mind thoughts arise as well awareness, which is witness to the ātmā. Ātmā is a silent witness of the three states of consciousness. The heart is the vital centre. Many faculties and attributes are centered in the heart.

The ātmā is like the leader giving its power to the mind and becomes the life of the body and guides the vital air and the body. Finally at the fall of this body, it enters into another gross

Through the eye of knowledge it is recognized as witness, consciousness, by the competent and a pure one. Just as the sense organs are able to recognize the objects in the constant presence of light, the mind depends on the light of another source, Awareness. Consciousness is the light of all lights that illumines all other lights. This light of consciousness is located in the mind. Brahman is that witness- consciousness. “The sun does not shine there, neither the moon nor the stars, nor the lightning and much less the fire. When It shines, everything shines after it. By it alone all the lights are illumined.”(II.2.10) similarly, the Ātmā illumines all, but not illumined by anything. The sense organs and mind cannot illumine the Ātmā, but the Ātmā illumines them all. The sense organs illumine external objects from borrowed light of Awareness-Consciousness, the Ātmā. “I, the Ātmā, am the conscious being and every other thing is not’ is the idea of the verse II.2.11.

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## 8.10 IDENTITY OF JĪVA AND BRAHMAN

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The *jīvātmā* is defined as the one and the same with paramātmā. The example of an arrow and bow is given to show the identity. The arrow is Jīvātmā and the target being the Brahman. The scriptures are compared to the bow. The teacher is the unity of the arrow with the bow and the target. The practice of *sādhana* is sharpening of the arrow, keeping it straight and pulling back the string to hit the target. Keeping the arrow straight on the bow is known as *arjavam* that is consistency in thoughts, speech and action. Pulling back of the string is like withdrawing inwardly. Sharpening of the arrow is to keep the intellect sharp through meditation. The focused attention on the target till the arrow is released is to become one with the target and keeping aside the erroneous notion of separation from Brahman. When the arrow becomes one with the mark, the person who aims at it has success. Similarly the aspirant who meditates on Brahman attains success or attains the fruits of meditation. Ātmā is said to be composed of both consciousness. When *jīva* wakes up to the higher consciousness there is freedom. The Brahman is both, *swarūpa lakṣaṇam* and *taṣastha lakṣaṇam*, original consciousness and witness consciousness. At the individual level it is a *śakṣī*, witness and at the world level it is Brahman.

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## 8.11 REALIZATION OF BRAHMAN

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The *Upaniṣad* invites its hearers to know Brahman to be the Self of all. There is no word other than Brahman. The teacher says, “This is Self-knowledge – the Ātmā and other words are to be discarded in the attempt to attain immortality, to cross the ocean of *samsāra*.” Goal of life is to know this Brahman. The Brahman is near and moving in the cave of the heart. Hearing, *śravanam*, reflection,

mananam, and contemplation, nididhyāsanam have been taught to realize the Brahman.

Creation is the glory of Brahman and it alone appears in creation, vibhūti. Brahman is discernible in the temple of the body, in the heart, as consciousness which is pure bliss and immortal. In this way the immortal Ātmā is seen and worshipped. The body is compared to a temple and the heart is the holy of holies, garbha gr̥ha, where Ātmā resides, which is the *jīvātmā* body. The ātmā is all pervading. The body is the reflecting medium where the ātmā shines forth more clearly. (II.2.8)

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## **8.12 MEANS OF REALIZATION**

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The disciplines are truthfulness, avoidance of speaking untruth, penance, tapas, sexual chastity, brahmacarya, proper enquiry through śāstra and gurū, samyak *Jñānam*. The enquiry of the self is fruitful only when the mind is free from impurities. The virtue of speaking the truth is given much importance. The famous phrase of *Satyameva jayate* is that truth alone triumphs. (III.1.2-6). Speaking the truth is absolutely necessary for liberation and attainment of brahmaloka, through the bright path, śukla gati. It is the basic tenet for meditation. The essence of this teaching is that without relative truth, the Absolute Truth, Brahman cannot be realized. Sharp intellect to cognize subtle elements is necessary. Nature of Ātmā is that it is infinite, limitless, self evident, inconceivable, most subtle farther, nearer and sat and cit. To know this subtle element of Ātmā, sharp intellect is needed.

What can reveal the Brahman and what cannot reveal it are narrated in the *Upaniṣad*. The eyes, words cannot reveal. Sense organs are not able to recognize the subtle element of Ātman. Tapas, rituals and other actions too cannot help in knowing Brahman. They may be useful in preparing the mind and sense organs towards purity and subtlety. Ātmā can be revealed only by the Śruti. To assimilate what is taught by scriptures the mind must be suitable and well prepared. The mind cleansed of desires and aversion and is well refined and tuned to subtlety alone can know the indivisible, pure and subtle Brahman. The subtle mind recognizes the subtle Brahman.

The Knower of the Self is glorified as he has recognized the Infinite Brahman as the substratum of the entire creation and knows that I am that Infinite Brahman. The jñānī worships Him without any desire for materialistic pleasures. And he attains immortality. The jñānī imparts spiritual knowledge to the aspirant systematically that leads to liberation. Self knowledge destroys rebirth and leads to liberation. Desire leads to action and the result of actions goes to character and that makes one obsessed with during the time of death that decides the next birth. A jñānī has no desire to be fulfilled and such desirelessness leads to liberation from rebirth.

The requirements to know and realize the Ātmā are the intense desire along with study of scriptures, intelligence and retention power. The thirst for final emancipation, the intense yearning and a burning desire for the object and prepared for any sacrifice to attain it. paramātmā reveals the knowledge only to the sincere seeker. Actually liberation is not a thing to be achieved as it is already there. The ignorance has to be dispelled to realize the very nature of

one is the Ātmā. The will power, alertness, austerity and determination and detachment are the fourfold qualification for realization.

The benefits of this knowledge of the Self is destruction of ignorance and clarity of the meaning of *Jīva* and jagat and Īśvara and finally the freedom from the clutches of *Karma*, pāpam and puṇyam, that result in the cycle of birth and death. The benefits of this knowledge are the freedom in two stages, jīvan mukti and videha mukti. The freedom while living in the body and freedom obtained at or after death. The process is in various stages. It starts with recognition of the fact that the spiritual goal is the ultimate, and getting detached and being tranquil, acquiring knowledge, understanding the identity and attaining *jīvan mukti*, continuing in the knowledge without slipping down. And finally merging with all pervading Brahman, The jīvan mukta has essentially the following nature, jñāna triptaḥ, satisfied with the knowledge, kriyātmānaḥ who has realized the ātmā, vītarāgaḥ, devoid of attachment, sarvaga, all pervading, dhīra, the wise.

To become a jñānī, purifying the mind with balance of mind and becoming a committed pursuer of knowledge. The merging of the individual soul into the total is compared to the fifteen parts of the moon. The causal and subtle body gets merged into one. The three types of *Karma*, sañcita, āgāmī and prārabdha are merged into Īśvara. The example of rivers merging into the ocean is given to explain this. Though different in names, forms and sizes, the rivers get merged and become only water in the ocean. So also the *jīvas*, though different in name and form are essentially one and the same when they merge into the One. An important note is that terms like “parmātmā, pāpa, videha-mukti are largely taken from other interpretations and are not originally given in the text.

### Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is the relation between *Jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā*?

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2. What are the preparations to *BrahmaVidyā*?

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## 8.13 LET US SUM UP

The teaching of the *Upaniṣad* focuses on fulfilling the human quest for knowledge of everything that is knowable. Anything that is namable and knowable. Whatever

is reality can be knowable. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* quenches the perennial search for knowledge. It says all the search for wisdom culminates and reaches its summit in attaining BrahmaVidyā. Among innumerable objectives of life, human beings are given an ultimate choice of knowing the reality, knowing which everything that can be known would be known.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* classifies all knowledge into parā and aparā, higher and lower. The aparā knowledge is described well as positive knowledge about the changeful many. All science, art, literature, politics, and economics all belong to this category. The knowledge of vedic rituals and all related to it belongs to aparā. It proclaims one's knowledge as parā. The knowledge by which the imperishable changeless reality of the one behind all is realized is parā. The *Upaniṣad* upholds the given merits of ritual practices and then turns the other side of them. Having explained the limitedness of aparā vidyā, the *Upaniṣad* goes to describe the nature of parā vidyā. A transition is said to be a transition from knowledge of the material to the spiritual and from the unreal to real.

Brahman is both material and intelligent cause of the world, nimitta kāraṇam or upādāna kāraṇam. Brahman is one and the world is many. As the essence of them is the same, the non-essentials like form and name are different. Also the world cannot manifest itself without the Brahman and it finally goes back to the Brahman. In the last chapter the identity between the jīvātmā and paramātmā are explained and the preparatory disciplines to realize the identity. And the benefits of such realization are spelt out as being *jīvan mukti* and *videha mukti*. Consciousness the witness is talked of with the ahamkara as the body consciousness. The *Upaniṣad* enumerates the identity of *Jīva* and Brahman as a single entity. The identity of Brahman and Ātmān is well defined in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*. Parāmātmā, the Brahman is without any impurity and it is without part and division. The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman. When the ignorance is removed, one realizes it. It is not one becoming another, but realizing what one is. It is like one is already Brahman but ignorant about it. Knowledge removes ignorance and realization is possible.

The *Upaniṣad* concludes saying that this teaching was given thousands of years ago by the teacher Angiras to Śaunaka Maharṣi. Though ancient, it is relevant and beneficial for all who seek the truth.

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## 8.14 KEY WORDS

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- Mithyā** : Mithya's root is 'Mith.' As given by Apte Sanskrit Online dictionary, Mith means to associate with; to unite; to hurt; to understand; to wrangle; to grasp.
- Śāstra** : Śāstra in Sanskrit means that which gives teaching, instruction or command. For instance, tarka śāstra is a science of dialectics, logic and reasoning, and art of debate that analyzes the nature and source of knowledge and its validity.

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## 8.15 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 8.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Aparā Vidyā is the first part of the four *Vedas*, namely, *R̥k*, *Yajur*, *Sāma* and *Atharva Vedas* along with their six limbs. Knowledge of them is meant to acquire material gains. All the knowledge of the world comes under aparā vidyā, the science of the materials. The *Karma kāṇḍa* of the *Vedas* gives mainly science of various physical and material disciplines. The upāsanā section of the *Vedas* deals with mental oriented activities, like meditation. Both these physical and mental activities and the knowledge attained by them and for them are dealt as aparā vidyā. The knowledge of them leads any individual into the material ephemeral world. Each ritual blesses the individual with the benefit it gives. According to the *Upaniṣadic* seers the sacrificial works and their fruits mentioned in the Vedic mantras are true, if they are performed with faith.
2. Brahman is defined as the Omniscient Principle from both parā and aparā vidyā. Attribute of the Brahman is said to be self effulgent and distinctively different from all other things. Brahman is formless, unborn, all pervading, residing in the heart of the body, existing within and without, unborn, undying and immortal. The name and form and function of the things are the forms of Brahman and they are substance less. They are found in the seed form, just as the lump of the clay or gold having all the names and forms of different pots or ornaments, but in an unmanifested potential form. The whole universe is considered to be the body of Brahman. Both the universe and human body function as one unit at the level of existence. The *Jīvas*, animals, birds, and other living beings are born out of Īśvara by different processes of evolution. It is great and the supporter of all. All creatures that move and breathe are grounded in Brahman. The gross and the subtle, form and formless, are only Brahman. Brahman is sat, existence and cit, knowledge. Sat-cit is the supporter of all beings. Brahman is said to be the rays of light. All the worlds are founded on this immortal Brahman as His attributes. The prāṇa of the external speech and the mind are only

the expressions of Brahman. The entire creation with heavens, earth, the intermediary worlds are all based upon Brahman. The internal worlds, the mind, the prāṇa and the senses are founded on Brahman.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. The jīvātmā is defined as the one and the same with paramātmā. The example of an arrow and bow is given to show the identity. The arrow is Jīvātmā and the target being the Brahman. The scriptures are compared to the bow. The teacher is the unity of the arrow with the bow and the target. The practice of sādhanā is sharpening of the arrow, keeping it straight and pulling back the string to hit the target. Keeping the arrow straight on the bow is known as arjavam, that is consistency in thoughts, speech and action. Pulling back of the string is like withdrawing inwardly. Sharpening of the arrow is to keep the intellect sharp through meditation and to keep the intellect sharp through mediation. The focused attention on the target till the arrow is released is to become one with the target and keeping aside the erroneous notion of separation from Brahman. When the arrow becomes one with the mark, the person who aims at it has success. Similarly the aspirant who meditates on Brahman attains success or attains the fruits of meditation. Ātmā is said to be composed of both consciousness. When jīva wakes up to the higher consciousness there is freedom. The Brahman is both swarūpa lakṣaṇam and taṣṭha lakṣaṇam, original consciousness and witness consciousness. At the individual level it is a sakshi, witness and at the world level it is Brahman.
2. The disciplines are truthfulness, avoidance of speaking untruth, penance, tapas, sexual chastity, brahmacharya, proper enquiry through śāstra and guru, *samyak Jñānam*. The enquiry of the self is fruitful only when the mind is free from impurities. The virtue of speaking the truth is given much importance. The famous phrase of Satyameva jayate is that truth alone triumphs. (III.1.2-6). Speaking the truth is absolutely necessary for liberation and attainment of brahmaloka, through the bright path, śukla gati. It is the basic tenet for meditation. The essence of this teaching is that without relative truth, the Absolute Truth, Brahman cannot be realized. Sharp intellect to cognize subtle elements is necessary. Nature of Ātmā is that it is infinite, limitless, self evident, inconceivable, most subtle farther, nearer and sat and cit. To know this subtle element of Ātmā, sharp intellect is needed.

What can reveal the Brahman and what cannot reveal it are narrated in the *Upaniṣad*. The eyes, words cannot reveal. Sense organs are not able to recognize the subtle element of Ātman. Tapas, rituals and other actions too cannot help in knowing Brahman. They may be useful in preparing the mind and sense organs towards purity and subtlety. Ātmā can be revealed only by the Śruti. To assimilate what is taught by scriptures the mind must be suitable and well prepared. The mind cleansed of desires and aversion and is well refined and tuned to subtlety alone can know the indivisible, pure and subtle Brahman. The subtle mind recognizes the subtle Brahman.

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## UNIT 9 MĀṆḌŪKYA UPANIṢAD\*

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### Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Exposition of AUM
- 9.3 Names and States of Consciousness
- 9.4 Waking State
- 9.5 Dream State
- 9.6 Deep Sleep State
- 9.7 *Turīya* – Fourth State
- 9.8 Realisation of Self
- 9.9 Characteristics of the Self
- 9.10 AUM and Self
- 9.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.12 Key Words
- 9.13 Further Readings and References
- 9.14 Answers to Check Your Progress.

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### 9.0 OBJECTIVES

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Consciousness present in human beings is one and the same in all circumstances. The differences in the state of consciousness are experienced in various contexts. The self is the experiencer in all states. By the end of this unit, you are expected to understand:

- the insights of *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* that gives the analysis of four modes of consciousness namely: waking, dream, deep sleep and transcendental.
- the reflective analysis of the mystical syllable ‘AUM,’ which stands as a symbol of religious and philosophical tradition of India

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### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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*Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* belongs to Atharva *Veda*. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* derives its name after the seer *Māṇḍūkya*. The story goes the following way: God Varuṇa assumes the form of a frog to reveal the importance of pranava or Omkara which is presented as the only name and symbol of the Absolute Brahman. *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* is the shortest of the principal *Upaniṣads*. It has only twelve verses. It contains the quintessence of the entire vedantic teaching. The language of this *Upaniṣad* is compact and concise, but rich in meaning. Gauḍapāda wrote his famous *Kārika*, commentary on this *Upaniṣad*. This is considered to be

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\*Dr. John Peter, St. Antony’s College, Kotagiri.

the first systematic exposition of Advaita Vedānta. Śaṅkara had also written a commentary both on the *Upaniṣad* and the commentary of Gauḍapāda.

Its analysis has the entire treatment on human consciousness in the three states of waking (jāgrat), dream (svapna) and deep sleep (suṣupti). By adopting a unique method of investigating these three states of human consciousness, the *Upaniṣad* asserts the nature of Reality. The self is one who experiences gross things, (vaiśvānara), subtle objects (taijasa) and the unmanifested objectivity (prajñā). *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* provides a symbol of AUM for meditation on the Reality that leads to the realization of the Supreme Reality. AUM is that mono-syllable word of all words. It comprises three sounds, A, U, M, having much more philosophical implications that are elaborated in the *Upaniṣad*. It proclaims one of the famous great sayings, mahāvākya, namely *ayamātmā brahma* (This self is Brahman).

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## **9.2 EXPOSITION OF AUM**

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The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* details the subtle meaning of AUM as a syllable that stands for the whole world. The akṣara AUM is given a meaning as “that which is imperishable or immortal.” The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* tries to strike an identical chord for the concepts of AUM, Brahman and Ātman, establishing that they are one and the same. The nature of AUM and the nature of nirguṇa Brahman and saguṇa Brahman are said to be the same. AUM is represented as the symbol of Brahman. It also stands for the manifested world of the past, the present and the future. AUM is the syllable considered to be all (*Akṣóaram idam sarvam*).

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## **9.3 NAMES AND STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

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The Self is presented in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* as having four names as *viśva*, *taijasa*, *prajñā* and *turīya* according to the states of consciousness it has for each moment. The names indicate the respective state of consciousness. The states are waking state, dream state, the state of deep sleep and the fourth, spiritual or transcendental consciousness. The *viśva* is the name given to the Self in the waking state where the Self has a waking state as its sphere of activity and cognizes the external objects. The second state of consciousness is the dream state. The Self is to act in the sphere of dream. It cognizes internal, mental objects and enjoys the subtle objects. The name given to the Self is *taijasa*. The *taijasa* is conscious of the internal and mental states. The third state of consciousness is the deep sleep and the experiencer is named as *prajñā*. Here the experiencer does not desire anything. It does not perceive anything of external objects or dream objects. It is said to be a mass of cognition, for the self is really a witness of its own state. Yet this state of consciousness is considered to be transitory in nature and so it is not the ultimate state. The fourth one is the transcendental consciousness state where the self is really itself and it is said to be *Turīya*.

The reason why the first letter of the word “self” is capitalized, is to explain that the Self that is the experiencer is an all pervasive Self and is beyond the usual self that we in daily life address ourselves through; yet the two on a transcendental level remain the same.

## 9.4 WAKING STATE (JĀGRATA)

The physical universe is bound by uniform laws. It presents itself to all people. The waking state is the normal condition of the natural man. Here anyone perceives the world as it is and there is no much reflection on it bound by the fetters of sense-perception and desire. The Self voluntarily acts in the waking state.

The *viśva* is the name given to the subject of the waking state. In the waking state, the Self cognizes the material, physical and external objects in this state of consciousness. The waking state is the first quarter of the self and this *vaiśvānara*, the subject of the state, has the waking state as the sphere of action. In this state, consciousness relates to things external and is possessed of seven limbs and nineteen mouths. The seven limbs are presented from the imagery of *Agnihotra* sacrifice where it is said, ‘Heaven is verily of that *vaiśvānara*-Self who is such; the sun is the eye, air is the vital force, space is the middle part, water is the bladder, and the earth indeed is the two feet. The *āhavāniya* fire has been imagined as his mouth. He that is possessed of these seven limbs is *saptāṅgaḥ*.’ The self is said to be possessed of nineteen mouths. They are five senses of perception and five organs of action, the five vital forces and mind, intellect, ego and mind-stuff. They are mouths in the sense of gates of experiences. Since through these aforesaid entrances *vaiśvānara*, enjoys gross objects he is called as the enjoyer of the gross. The enjoyment of gross things is in the waking state. The *vaiśvānara* directs its attention towards superficial objects of the physical and material world. The awareness is an outside- focused concentration towards the things other than oneself. The idea presented in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* regarding this is that consciousness appears as though related to outer objects, owing to ignorance. The darkness of ignorance leads us to sometimes identify the external objects as themselves.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a note on the four names of the self as described in this *Upaniṣad*.

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2. Write a note on waking state and *Vaiśvānara*.

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## 9.5 DREAM STATE (SVAPNA)

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The dream state is the condition of the self when the external senses and objects are not presented to it with their physical characters, but are available as mental images. The self is given a name, *taijasa*, the luminous one. The name is given as one who becomes the witness of the modes of cognition and appears only as a luminous thing.

It experiences mental states dependent on the predisposition and impressions left by the waking experience. The consciousness of the waking state is associated with many external means. And it is associated with these means and engrossed in external objects. As a result, it leaves in one's mind lots of impressions. It is like the impressions on the piece of painted canvas. It appears in the dream state just as in the waking state, but without any external means. The mind is internal in relation to the senses. The consciousness in dream takes the forms of the impression in the internal mind that is aware of internal objects. In this state the self fashions its own world of dreams. The dream objects that are experienced are internal, subtle and mental items. The duality of the knower and the known remains in the second state of consciousness too. In the dream state *taijasa* possesses a greater freedom as the self imagines a world of its own from the perceptions of external objects in the previous state of waking experience. The dream objects give delight to the self for sometimes. In this sense, the self is liberated from the empirical world. *Taijasa* is the second aspect where the sphere of activity is the dream state. The consciousness is internal that possesses seven limbs and nineteen mouths. The person enjoys subtle objects. The external *viśva* is dependent on material objects. He experiences the modes of gross cognition. In the second state of consciousness, namely the dream state, the awareness is experienced consisting of mere impressions that are subtle. Hence the enjoyment of them too becomes subtle. While the first state is the waking life of outward moving, external consciousness, the second state is the dream life of inward looking consciousness.

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## 9.6 DEEP SLEEP STATE (SUṢUPTI)

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The next state of consciousness is deep sleep. The Self is called *prajñā* whose sphere of activity is in deep sleep. The sleeper does not desire any enjoyable thing and does not see any dream. Deep sleep is the state of knowledge though the external and internal objects are cognized in abeyance. As in the darkness where there is no perception possible, in the deep sleep state there is no perception of both external and internal. In this state there is no desire, no thought is gained. All the impressions have become one and there remains only knowledge and bliss. This is the conceptual Self in the deep sleep state. The Self in the other two states are imaginative and perceptual ones. The deep sleep state is the doorway to the cognition of the two other states of consciousness, namely waking and dream. Deep sleep consists of the unawareness of Reality. Even in the other two states too there is unawareness of reality. There are the presence and absence of perceptible gross objects. Self in a deep sleep state which has unawareness of Reality is equally present in all the three states. It is distinguished from the earlier two states. In sleep there is no false perception of reality but only absence of desire. By this the other two states are differentiated from deep sleep.

The Self in deep sleep also is called as a mass of consciousness as it is characterized by the absence of discrimination. In this state everything becomes undifferentiated as everything appearing as a mass by becoming indistinguishable under darkness. The prajñā is full of joy. The abundance of joy is caused by the absence of the misery involved in the effort of the mind vibrating as the objects and their experience. Anyone who remains free from any effort, is considered to be happy and an experiencer of joy. This deep sleeper too has the joy that is enjoyed in this state. It consists in extreme freedom from effort. He abounds in bliss, who is surely an enjoyer of bliss and who is the doorway to the experience of the dream and waking states. He is not Bliss itself, but the enjoyer of bliss since the joy is not absolute.

In deep sleep the Self does not change or disappear. For after the deep sleep one is able to say that one slept soundly and was not aware of anything. The memory of deep sleep would not be possible if the Self has disappeared in deep sleep. The memory of sound sleep is recollected only because of the witnessing consciousness that remains unchanging in Deep Sleep. At the termination of deep sleep state, the self returns back to dream and waking states. In fact the Self remains unchanged in all states. Only the attributes are superimposed on to the self in these three states of consciousness. It is the same Self that subsists in the states of waking, dreaming, deep sleep and in the fourth. The deep sleep state is the one in which the consciousness enjoys peace and perceives neither external nor internal. Yet the deep sleep state is not the ultimate state, for it is transitory in character.

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## **9.7 TURĪYA – FOURTH STATE**

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The fourth state is termed as Turīya, as pure consciousness, transcendental, eternal and non dual. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* does not describe this state in a direct way with its positive qualities. The description of this state follows the negative method, known as *via negativa*. By explaining what is not the fourth, the knowledge of the fourth is known. Turīya is indicated not merely through positive description but by negation of attributes. Through negative methods something is positively established. Turīya is devoid of every characteristic that can be explained by the use of words possible. It is not describable through words. The fourth is to be that which is not conscious of the internal world, of external world, of both the worlds. It is not a mass of consciousness. It is not conscious, not unconscious. It is unseen, beyond empirical dealings, beyond the grasp of the organs of action, un-inferable, unthinkable, and indescribable. The valid proof consists in the single belief in the Self in which all phenomena cease. It is unchanging, auspicious, and non-dual. That is the Self and that is to be known.

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## **9.8 REALIZATION OF SELF**

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The knowledge of the fourth is attained by merging the other three states of consciousness. The Self is the one who is known in all the three states. It is free from all phenomenal relationships and remains in its absolute real aspect. The fourth one is different from those three that are conscious of the external and internal world. As the true nature of the rope is realized through the negation of the illusions of a snake, the very self, and subsisting in the three other states is

established as Turīya. Like the rope taken as a snake, the Self in the other states is imagined to be possessed of attributes like consciousness of the internal and external world. When the self is known with the valid knowledge arising from the negation of such attributes, there occurs the cession of the phenomenal world of misery. So there is no need to search for any other means of knowledge or any other science or discipline to arrive at the knowledge of the true Self. For the realization of the Turīya, the negation of false attributes of the Self in the other three states is needed. Elimination of the knowledge of the snake is the simultaneous occurrence of the knowledge of the rope. The discriminative knowledge of the rope and the snake is made possible merely by this elimination of the false knowledge. In the case of Turīya, the instrument of knowledge is nothing but a valid knowing arising from negation of false knowledge. The false knowledge of the nature of the Self is only superimposed on the Self in the other three states. The unwanted attributes are eliminated simultaneously with the removal of the distinctions as the knower, the known and the knowledge.

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## **9.9 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SELF**

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The three states of consciousness are nothing but different states of experience of the self, known as avasthā-trayam. In the waking state the experiencer functions through the physical body and the sense organs and experiences the external world. In contact with the external world there are two things happening for the self. One is the experience of the external world which is the gross universe; *sthūla prapañca*. Secondly the mind records and stores all the experiences in the form of impressions, *vāsanā*. In the *svapna avasthā*, when all functioning of the physical body and sense organs with their external world disappears, the experiencer leaves one's identification with the physical body. Without any transaction with the world outside, the self is transacting with the internal world. In this new world is encountered with its own sound, touch, sight, smell and so on. This dream world is a projected world born out of the activation of the past impression of the external world in the waking state. The world of dreamers is very much similar with that of the external world in the waking state. Only difference is that they are internally recreated with all its characters. The inner world is exactly as real as that of the external world. The projection is made out of previous impressions. Sometimes the activation is not total and complete. Only a few impressions get projected sometimes. The memory of the mind may be vague. In the deep sleep state, there is no external world due to the absence of the physical activities. Equally too there is no internal world due to non-functioning of the mind. Only involuntary actions like blood circulation, breathing and so on, take place.

In the absence of any conscious wilful functioning of the physical, there is total blankness without any experience of the external and internal world. The self relaxes without any strain and it gives lots of refreshing to the self. All these three states play an important role in functioning of the self. The waking state is predominant among others for the self is characterized mostly by the physical appearances and the external functioning. The dream world is determined by the impressions of the waking state.

Through elaborate discussion on states of consciousness the *Upaniṣad* explains the true nature and characteristic features of the self. Following are the attributes

given to self. The self is unseen (*adr̥ṣtam*), unperceived (*avyavahāryam*), beyond empirical dealings (*agrāhyam*), beyond the grasp of the organs of action (*alakṣanam*), without any logical ground of inference, uninferable (*acintyam*), unthinkable, indescribable (*avyapadeśyam*). The self is the one in whom all phenomena have ceased, (*prapañcopaśamam*). It is unchanging (*śāntam*), auspicious (*śivam*), and non-dual (*advaitam*). This conscious being is termed as the Lord of all, Omniscient. This one is the inner Director of all, source of all; this one is verily the place of origin and dissolution of all beings. As the Lord of all, of all diversity is inclusive of the heavenly world. This one again, in his state of immanence in all diversity, is the knower of all. This one is Omniscient, the inner controller. This becomes also the Director of all beings by entering inside. He gives birth to the universe together with its diversities and this one is established to be the Source of all. This is certainly the place of origin and dissolution of all beings.

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## 9. 10 AUM AND SELF

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The first verse of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* says that the letter AUM is all that is past, present and future and is beyond all three periods of time. All the objects are indicated by names and forms. The names of objects are non-different from the objects and from AUM. Brahman as the supreme is known through the relationship existing between name and its objects. The letter AUM is the same as the supreme as well as the inferior Brahman. A clear exposition is given, showing its proximity to Brahman by virtue of its being a means for attainment of Brahman. The past, present and the future is understood as that which is circumscribed by the three periods of time. All this is but AUM, in accordance with the reasons already advanced. Even whatever is there beyond the three periods of time is also the AUM. That which is inferable from its effects but not confined by time is the unmanifested and verily AUM. The word and the object signified are the same. This is given greater importance in the *Upaniṣad*. All through the *Upaniṣad* this idea is presented with an emphasis on the unity of the name and the thing nameable. All this is surely Brahman. This self is Brahman. The self is said to be possessing four quarters. That which is AUM is Brahman. The self, innermost self is divided into four parts.

The self is considered from the standpoint of the syllable. It is indeed AUM. AUM has three letters or quarters. They are a, u and m. The Self is equated with AUM. That syllable AUM while being divided into quarters, exists on letters as its basis. The quarters are ‘a, u, and m’. Vaiśvānara in the waking state is like the first letter, a. He who knows does verily attain all desirable things, and becomes foremost. With regard to these, specific relations are being established. Vaiśvānara with his sphere of activity as the waking state is identical with the self in the gross cosmic context. It is because of the pervasiveness both are said to be identical. The sound ‘a’ is pervaded all speech and sound. “The sound ‘a’ is indeed all speech.” (A. A. II. iii. 7:13). Similarly, by Vaiśvānara has pervaded the whole universe. And we said that the word and thing denoted by the word are the same.

Taijasa is the state of a dream. He who knows is, increases the current of knowledge and becomes equal to all. None is born in his line who is not a knower of Brahman. The Self in the state of dream as his sphere of activity is

the second letter, *ukarah*. The excellence is said to be in the Self and the second letter. As the letter u is better than a, Taijasa is better than viśva. And again because of the intermediate position enjoyed by u, between a and m. Taijasa is intermediate between Viśva and Prajñā. The self heightens, increases, the current of knowledge and becomes equal. Taijasa is inwardly conscious.

Prajñā with his sphere of activity in the sleep state is said to be 'm'. The measuring or absorption is said to be the equal aspect in both. Anyone who knows thus measures all this and he becomes the place of absorption. The analogy is brought in to give meaning to measuring. Barley is measured by the vessel called prastha, so are Viśva and Taijasa measured, because of their entry into and coming out of prajñā during dissolution and origination. Similarly too, at the end of the pronunciation of the syllable AUM and at the time of its fresh pronunciation, the letters a and u seem to enter into the last letter m, to come out again from it. Absorption is getting merged or united in. At the pronunciation of AUM, a and u, verily seem to get merged into the last letter m. Similarly viśva and taijasa merge into prajñā at the time of sleep. The result obtained by the man of knowledge is stated. He measures all this, that is to say, he knows the reality of the Universe. He becomes the place of absorption. The self in its state is the cause of the world. The mention of subsidiary results here is by way of praising the primary means.

The *Gauḍapāda Kārika* which is also a commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* states that the partless AUM is Turīya, beyond all conventional dealings, the limit of the negation of the phenomenal world, the auspicious, and the non-dual. Om is thus the self to be sure. He who knows thus enters the Self through his self. As a partless AUM, the fourth Turīya is merely the Absolute Self. It is beyond empirical relations because of the disappearance of names and nameables, that are but forms of speech and mind. It is the culmination of phenomenal existence which is the limit of the negation of the world. One, who knows the self to be equated with the letter OM, and to be auspicious, and non-dual, finally enters into his own Supreme Self through his own empirical self. The knower of Brahman is the one who has realized the highest truth. He has entered into the Self by burning away the third state of latency. And hence he is not born again, since Turīya does not have latency of creation. For when a snake superimposed on a rope has merged in the rope on the discrimination of the rope and the snake, it does not appear again to those discriminating people, just as before, from the impressions of the past persisting in the intellect. To those men of renunciation however, who are possessed of dull or average intellect, who still consider themselves aspirants, who tread the virtuous path, and who know the common feature of the letters and the quarters of AUM and the Self as presented before to them the syllable AUM, when mediated on in the proper way, becomes helpful for the realization of Brahman.

### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Describe the cognition pattern of deep sleep state.

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2. Explain the fourth state of consciousness.

3. How does the *Upaniṣad* identify the akṣaram 'AUM' and states of consciousness of Self?

## 9.11 LET US SUM UP

The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* briefly explains in its twelve verses the condensed thought. It describes the entire human experience of three states of waking, dream, and deep sleep. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* gives a deeper analysis of these states of consciousness. The self has three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleeping. In the wakeful state, the self is conscious of the common world of external gross objects. It enjoys the gross objects. The self is dependent on the body for the cognition of external objects. The second state of consciousness is that of dreaming. Here the self enjoys subtle things. The world fashioned for the dreamer is of the materials cognized in the waking experience. The self roams freely without the fetters of physical senses and body. The third state is the condition of deep sleep. In this state there are no dreams of objects and no desire for the objects.

The Self temporarily identifies with Brahman and enjoys bliss momentarily. In deep sleep the self is lifted above all desires and freed from external and internal objects. It is lost in objectless-knowing subject condition. The analysis of the fourth state of consciousness as transcendental is described in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* via negativa. The fourth state is presented as the basis of all other three states.

An exposition of the principle of AUM as consisting of three elements, a, u, m is presented here. These are correspondingly referred to the three states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The supreme Self as manifested in the world in its gross, subtle and causal forms is presented through the analysis of the term AUM and the three states of consciousness. The fourth state of consciousness is termed as transcendental conscious state which is presented as the all-inclusive and ultimately real Absolute. Meditation on the word, AUM is suggested, for

in recitation of AUM, there are four stages. There is a silence before ‘A’kara, ‘U’kara and ‘M’kara. There is an emphasis on the grasping of that silence which is Awareness. The witness is Ātmā, the Self. The *Upaniṣad* reveals the true nature of man, as Ātman. It proclaims that the infinite dimension of man as *ayam ātmā brahma* – this ātman, self of man is Brahman. The absolute of the fourth state of consciousness is the object of mystical union. The knowledge of it, as presented in *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* leads one to liberation.

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## 9.12 KEY WORDS

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<b>Self</b>	:	The self is the individual person, from his or her own perspective. To you, self is you. To someone else, self is that person.
<b>Dream</b>	:	Dreams are a series of images, sounds and feelings in narrative form that occur during sleep. Dreams typically last in the range of 5 to 45 minutes. The content and purpose of dreams are not fully understood, though they have been a topic of speculation and interest throughout recorded history.

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## 9.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 9.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The self is presented in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* as having four names as viśva, taijasa, prajñā and Turīya according to the states of consciousness it has for each moment. The physical universe is bound by uniform laws. It presents itself to all people. The waking state is the normal condition of the natural man. Here anyone perceives the world as it is and there is no much reflection about it. The dream state is the condition of the self when the external senses and objects are not presented to it with their physical

characters, but are available as mental images. The self is given a name, *tajasa*, the luminous one. The next state of consciousness is deep sleep. The self is called *prajñā* whose sphere of activity is in deep sleep. The sleeper does not desire any enjoyable thing and does not see any dream. Deep sleep is the state of knowledge though the external and internal objects are cognized in abeyance. The fourth state is termed as *Turīya*, as pure consciousness, transcendental, eternal and non dual.

2. The waking state is the normal condition of the natural man. Here anyone perceives the world as it is and there is no much reflection about it. Bound by the fetters of sense-perception and desire, the self acts in the waking state. The *viśva* is the name given to the subject of the waking state. It cognizes the material, physical and external objects in this state of consciousness. The waking state is the first quarter of the self and this *vaiśvānara*, the subject of the state, has the waking state as the sphere of action. In this state, consciousness relates to things external and is possessed of seven limbs and nineteen mouths. The seven limbs are presented from the imagery of Agnihotra sacrifice where it is said, 'Heaven is verily of that *vaiśvānara*-self who is such; the sun is the eye, air is the vital force, space is the middle part, water is the bladder, and the earth indeed is the two feet. The *āhavāniya* fire has been imagined as his mouth. He that is possessed of these seven limbs is *saptāṅgaḥ*.' The self is said to be possessed of nineteen mouths. They are five senses of perception and five organs of action, the five vital forces and mind, intellect, ego and mind-stuff. They are mouths in the sense of gates of experiences. Since through these aforesaid entrances *vaiśvānara*, enjoys gross objects he is called as the enjoyer of the gross. The enjoyment of gross things is in the waking state.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress II**

1. Deep sleep is the state of knowledge though the external and internal objects are cognized in abeyance. As in the darkness where there is no perception possible, in the deep sleep state there is no perception of both external and internal. In this state there is no desire, no thought is gained. All the impressions have become one and there remains only knowledge and bliss. This is the conceptual self in the deep sleep state. The self in the other two states are imaginative and perceptual ones. The deep sleep state is the doorway to the cognition of the two other states of consciousness, namely waking and dream. Deep sleep consists of the unawareness of Reality.
2. The fourth state is termed as *turīya*, as pure consciousness, transcendental, eternal and non dual. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* does not describe this state in a direct way with its positive qualities. The description of this state follows the negative method, known as *via negativa*. By explaining what is not the fourth, the knowledge of the fourth is known. *Turīya* is indicated not merely through positive description but by negation of attributes. Through negative methods something is positively established. *Turīya* is devoid of every characteristic that can be explained by the use of words possible. It is not describable through words. The fourth is to be that which is not conscious of the internal world, of external world, of both the worlds. It is not a mass of consciousness. It is not conscious, not unconscious. It is unseen, beyond empirical dealings, beyond the grasp of the organs of action, inferable,

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unthinkable, and indescribable. The valid proof consists in the single belief in the Self in which all phenomena cease. It is unchanging, auspicious, and non-dual. That is the Self and that is to be known.

3. The first verse of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* says that the letter AUM is all that is past, present and future and is beyond all three periods of time. All the objects are indicated by names and forms. The names of objects are non-different from the objects and from AUM. Brahman as the supreme is known through the relationship existing between name and its objects. The letter AUM is the same as the supreme as well as the inferior Brahman. A clear exposition is given, showing its proximity to Brahman by virtue of its being a means for attainment of Brahman. The past, present and the future is understood as that which is circumscribed by the three periods of time. All this is but AUM, in accordance with the reasons already advanced. Even whatever is there beyond the three periods of time is also the AUM. That which is inferable from its effects but not confined by time is the unmanifested and verily AUM. The word and the object signified are the same. This is given greater importance in the *Upaniṣad*. All through the *Upaniṣad* this idea is presented with an emphasis on the unity of the name and the thing nameable. All this is surely Brahman. This self is Brahman. The self is said to be possessing four quarters. That which is AUM is Brahman. The self, innermost self is divided into four parts.

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