

**Block 3**

**UPANISHADIC  
PHILOSOPHY: CORE  
THEMES-II**

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Block

# 3

## UPANISHADIC PHILOSOPHY CORE THEMES-II

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### UNIT 10

**Īśa Upaniṣads**

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### UNIT 11

**Kaṭha Upaniṣad**

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## Block Introduction

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The word *Upaniṣad* literally means “sitting down near” and implies studying with a spiritual teacher. The *Upaniṣads* presented are drawn from the principal *Upaniṣads*, these *Upaniṣads* are not to be seen as uniform books but are connected to the *Veda* in which they occur. The Upanishadic 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. revealed scripture, from which knowledge of Brahman is obtained.

**Unit 10** is the Īśa Upaniṣad; it discusses the teachings of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* which belongs to the earlier or Vedic group of Indian Scriptures. The main problem discussed in it is the question of reconciling human life and activity with the non-dual stance of the Vedāntins. It neither supports extreme illusionism nor anti-pragmatism, but tries to reconcile the uncompromising extremes.

**Unit 11** is the Kaṭha Upaniṣad which addresses questions relating to the end of human life. “What happens when one dies? Is there anything left over to survive after one dies? What remains after all living? What is the meaning of *dharma* and *adharma*, knowledge and ignorance, life and death?” The answers ultimately help one understand the meaning of that which is ultimate, all-pervasive and supreme. These questions are answered in a very simple manner, as a conversation between Yama and a young boy, Naciketā.

**Unit 12** is the Chāndogya Upaniṣad explains the philosophical significance of the teachings of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Since this is one of the earliest *Upaniṣads*, a lot of discussions on its liturgical aspects can be found. This *Upaniṣad* uses analogies to explain the identity of Ātman. Through this unit, you shall also understand how this *Upaniṣad* establishes the identity of Ātman and Brahman, and also provides teachings on cosmology and evolution of life.

**Unit 13** highlights the teachings of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is generally recognized as the most important of the *Upaniṣads*, it forms a part of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*Brāhmaṇa* of One hundred parts). It illustrates the all-embracing, absolute, self-luminous and blissful reality of Brahman recognized as Ātman. According to Ādi Śaṅkara the *Upaniṣad* is the greatest; for it contains all the three ways of learning—*Upadeśa*, *Upapatti* and *Upāsanā*. *Upadeśa* as it teaches the true nature of the mystic experience of the Brahman-Ātman; *Upapatti*, as it provides logical explanation and *Upāsanā* as it the *Upaniṣad* explains how to understand the Supreme Being by meditation and self realization. The *Upaniṣad* is also widely known for its philosophical statements.



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## UNIT 10 ĪŚĀ UPANIṢAD\*

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### Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 An Overview
- 10.3 Reflection on the Core Issues/Concepts
- 10.4 Philosophical Response
- 10.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.6 Key Words
- 10.7 Further Readings and References
- 10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit, you are expected to know the essential contents of the *Upaniṣad* such as:

- the meaning of the term ‘*upaniṣad*’ (and also ‘*Īśāvāsya*’) and its place in Indian Philosophy.
- the significance and approach of *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*.
- the theme of the Creation and the Created.
- the power of discrimination (*viveka*).
- *vidyā* (knowledge) and *avidyā* (nescience).
- the meaning of *vairāgya* (renunciation), *karma* (action), and *upāsanā*
- the fusion of *vairāgya*, *karma*, and *upāsanā*.
- the importance of Self-knowledge
- the idea of holism represented by the symbol AUM (ॐ) and *Pūrṇa* as the way of seeking the Truth/ Ultimate Reality.

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### 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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The word ‘*Upaniṣad*’ means ‘to sit near’ a guru which destroys the ignorance of the pupil. There are 108 acknowledged *Upaniṣads*, out of which ten are very important because *Śaṅkarācārya* (780 A.D.) wrote his commentary on them. *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is the second shortest of the principal *Upaniṣads* containing eighteen verses, and it is found in Śukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā. It is also called *Īśa Upaniṣad*. However, the word ‘*Īśāvāsya*’ literally means ‘pervaded by the inner controller’, and it tries to encapsulate the idea of the immanence of *Īśāna* (God as the inner controller) of the world.

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\*Mr. Ajay Jaiswal, Doctoral Research Scholar, Centre for Philosophy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Moreover, the *Upaniṣad* also guides us to engage in selfless action with a view of holistic development. The *Upaniṣad* is so profound that scholars have famously said that even if all the Vedic literature is lost, with the help of *Īśāvāsya* entire wisdom can be regained. Some scholars have also tried to establish the correlation between the eighteen verses of this *Upaniṣad* and the eighteen chapters of *Bhagavadgīta*. In this unit, we shall discuss the central idea of those eighteen verses.

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## **10.2 AN OVERVIEW**

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*Īśāvāsya* contains the essence of all the *Upaniṣads*. However, unlike other major *Upaniṣads*, it opens abruptly without any philosophical background story and setting. However, a deeper look at the general setting of the *Upaniṣads* reveals that the Upanishadic contents aim to answer the most fundamental questions of the Existence. Similarly, *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* also aims to deal with the problem of the Ultimate Reality and to provide an answer in terms of the unity of Ātman and Brahman. In its invocation mantra, *Īśāvāsya* declares the truth regarding the Universe and human's place in it in a holistic way. The whole is described as 'Pūrṇa'. Its symbol is AUM. Furthermore, it also envisions parts as non-different from Pūrṇa just as a drop is not different from the ocean. The term '*darśana*' is often interpreted as the vision – a holistic and unified vision of the whole universe. 'Pūrṇa' indicates this idea of holistic knowledge.

*Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is also unique and special in its description of God and the Universe (the Creator and the Created). Many philosophical traditions consider the Creator and the Created to be separate just like a watchmaker is different from the watch. However, the Upanishadic idea is that the Creator is not different from the Creation. He is transcendent as well as immanent in the world.

Also, it is important to address here how the *Upaniṣad*, keeping this fundamental insight of the Creator and the Created, approaches the path of action along with renunciation. To establish this path, different *Upaniṣads* follow different approaches. For example, *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* mentions the doctrine of the five sheaths (*pañca kośa*); *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* mentions the doctrine of the three bodies (*śarīra traya*), and so on. But this *Upaniṣad* declares the Truth directly. It directly renders the vision of the Lord as the immanent and transcendent cause of the Universe and based on this ontological understanding it provides a reconciliation of the way of renunciation (*vairāgya*) with action (*karma*) and devotion (*Upāsana*).

### **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 terms '*upaniṣad*'?

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2. State briefly the meaning of 'Īśāvāsyā' in order to understand the nature of Reality.

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### 10.3 REFLECTION ON THE CORE ISSUES/ CONCEPTS

From the very outset, *Īśa Upaniṣad* gives a direct understanding about the universe and the ethics that ensues from this understanding. The core ideas of the *Upaniṣad* can be understood in the following headings:

#### A. Lord and the World

As we noted above, the first verse of *Īśāvāsyā* describes the relationship that exists between the Creator and the Created as the unique approach of understanding the Universe in its totality (Pūrṇa) and engages ourselves in self-less action.

īśāvāsyamidamsarvaṃ yatkiñca jagatyām jagat |  
tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā ḡrdhaḥ kasyasviddhanam ||

*Īśa Upaniṣad* (Verse 1)

There are following four dominant notions regarding the relationship between the Creator and the Created:

1. Deism – A Deity Created the universe set it to its basic functioning but is no longer involved in the function of the Creation. There is no divine intervention in the functioning of the Universe.
2. Theism – A Deity Created the universe, set it to functioning, and is actively involved in the sustenance and destruction of the Universe.
3. Pantheism – A Deity or the Ultimate Principle is the inner essence of the entire universe.
4. Panentheism – A Deity is the inner essence of the entire cosmos, and That (Deity) is transcendental also.

The Upanishadic idea of Creation goes beyond these four notions (although it is akin to panentheism). Instead of Creation, more appropriately, the Universe is a manifestation of one non-dual principle- Īśavara, Brhman, or Ātman which is not only immanent but also transcendent and indescribable. This fusion of the Creator and the Creation tends to answer the age-old question of metaphysics, i.e., is the universe changing or permanent? Is it Being or Becoming? Is it Real or unreal? The answer is that it is both- real as well as unreal- a blend of Being and becoming. It occupies jagat (the movable) and the *Īśa* too (the immovable controller). Vedānta says that Brahman has five aspects- Sat (Existence), Cit (Consciousness), *Ānanda*; and *nāma* (name) and *rūpa* (form). The first three

represent the Real (Being) aspect of Brahman; and the last two represent the becoming or changing aspect of Brahman. However, the latter is merely a projection. The jagat is neither *sat* nor *asat*. It is only the phenomenal appearance of the Real Brahman. The appearance (nāma and rūpa) of jagat changes but the inner essence (the Lord) remains the same. *Saccidānanda* is the substratum of the entire being. Just like different waves may have different names and forms yet the inner essence of all the waves (as the formula of water) remains the same.

### **B. *Vidyā* and *Avidyā* (the Metaphysical Knowledge and Nescience) –**

*Vidyā* and *avidyā* literally mean knowledge and ignorance respectively. However, it has many other related connotations and here it would be appropriate to understand the ontological meaning of these terms. *Avidyā* or *ajñana* means not having Self-realization or incorrect ontological understanding of Self and the world. This ignorance has two sides- the concealment (*āvaraṇa*) and the projection (*vikṣepa*). As *āvaraṇa*, *Avidyā* conceals our true nature as Pure Self. On the other hand, *Avidyā* as *vikṣepa* projects many pseudo identifications and the related false worldviews. This ignorance associated with *Jīva* (individual ego) is *anadi* (i.e., without any beginning). However, it is *śānt*, i.e., it can be ended; and the right antidote for ignorance can only be Knowledge, i.e., *vidyā*. The substance of *vidyā* is best illustrated by Vedānta Mahāvākyas such as *tat tvam asi*, i.e., Thou are That.

The *Upaniṣad* attaches immense importance to this knowledge of Self (*ātma vidyā*). Every other knowledge arises and perishes and has only instrumental value. Self-knowledge has intrinsic value and is capable of setting human beings free from all the sufferings. The seeking of Self-knowledge is called *mumukṣa* in Vedānta and not having *mumukṣa* means those people what this *Upaniṣad* calls *ātma hanaḥ janāḥ*, i.e., those who commit suicide (spiritual). The *Upaniṣad* says metaphorically that they enter into the realm of dark species where there is grave suffering.

asurya nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ |

tāmste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ ||

*Īśa Upaniṣad* (Verse 3)

### **C. *Viveka* and *Vairāgya* (Wisdom and Renunciation)-**

The above ontological understanding or the discrimination between Real and Unreal is called *viveka*. It is to discriminate between *vidyā* and *avidyā*. *Vairāgya* (renunciation) is the byproduct of this understanding. The second line of the first verse indicates at this notion of *Vairāgya*. *Viveka* and *Vairāgya* constitute the foundation of *sādhana chatuṣṭaya*. Here, the *Upaniṣad* is not suggesting a forced renunciation. It is a merely a product of the understanding that what we think as Real (the name and form) is unreal and there is no point in holding to the transient entities. It is *nivṛtasya nivṛtti* and *prāptasya prāpti*, i.e., it is renouncing which is already renounced and can never belong to us, and it is acquiring or remembering what we already have (our true nature as *Saccidānanda*). Hence, *viveka* is that faculty of mind which discriminates between Real and unreal and so that *Vairāgya* is born with a mindset which pursues the Real and relinquishes

the unreal. The first verse suggests that one must be contented with what one has got, what belongs to others should not disturb his tranquility of mind. Therefore, the injunction – *mā grdha-* do not greed as everything is transient and nothing can really belong to anybody. Everything in jagat is a mere projection.

#### D. Dharma (Duties and the Way of Action) –

When one attains the right knowledge (viveka) and Vairāgya (renunciation) the immediate question may arise- what a person should do? Should he renounce the world and go into forests or seclusion? Or should he be in society and feed on it like a parasite? No. The *Upaniṣad* is not teaching escapism or karma *sanyāsa-* that the actions altogether should be rejected or established rules should be flouted. *Bhagavadgīta* also says one cannot live even for a second without performing action and its mystery is exceptionally profound. And when one is bound to do actions, then he must choose the right actions. The actions should not be merely based on desires but in accordance with reason and intuition. The intuition here implies not only one's own intuition but the entire wisdom of the ancient Ṛṣis who formulated the system of *puruṣārtha-* the four duties of human beings. Kama (desires) and *artha* (wealth) can be pursued, but they should be restrained by the law of Dharma. This way of practicing *kama* and *artha* leads to liberation (mokṣa) which is the *parama puruṣārtha* (the final goal) of life. Dharma can be of two types-

##### 1. *Sādhāraṇa Dharma* (General Duties)

These are simple universal moral codes of conduct, e.g., non-stealing, non-violence, truthfulness, non-possessiveness, self-control, inner and outer purity (śauca), etc.

##### 2. *Viśeṣa Dharma* (Special Duties)

They are not applicable to all but to the specialized people. *Viśeṣa dharma* includes *varṇa dharma* (viz. Brāhmin, kṣatriya, vaiśya, and śūdra); and *āśrama dharma* (the four stages of life as brahmacharya, vānaprastha, grhastha, and sanyāsa).

Adhering to the above metaphysical wisdom and the code of conduct, *Īśa Upaniṣad* commands that one should strive to live for hundred years. The cycle of karma and rebirth is extremely complex yet when one performs his duties in the above way (the niṣkāma way), he is not bound by the karmas. He is set free and full of rejoice.

kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣet satam samāḥ  
evaṃ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare...

*Īśa Upaniṣad* (Verse 2)

#### E. *Upāsanā* (The Way of Devotion) –

Along with the samyaka (right) understanding of ontology, renunciation, and action, the *Upaniṣad* also reveals the secret of devotion (*Upāsanā*). The term *Upāsanā* may have had many connotations concerning rituals and worshiping, but the core of *Upāsanā* is the vision of unity or oneness of Īśvara everywhere. Only this knowledge of immanence and transcendence of Īśvara paves the way

for the true renunciation. *Upāsanā* also covers performing one's duties with the sense of serving Īśvara or for the welfare of all sentient and non-sentient Creation. Hence, karma and dharma should be grounded in this *Upāsanā* of the Lord.

Some aspirants think the Creation (kārya Brahma) to be separate from the Īśvara (kāraṇa Brahma) and worship only one of these aspects. It is a grave misunderstanding to consider them ontologically different and thus engage in particularistic worship or *Upāsanā*. The *Upaniṣad* describes, with the help of the metaphor of the realm of great darkness, that the worshippers of both the kinds fall into it.

andhaṃ tamaḥ praviśanti ye'sambhūtimupāsate |

tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyā ratāḥ ||

*Īśa Upaniṣad* (Verse 12)

Thus the core of *Upāsanā* is to have bhagvada dṛṣṭi, i.e., the vision of the Lord everywhere- not only in His Creation but also in actions performed out of the respect of duty and for the welfare of sentient beings. However, there lurks the final danger in the path of a seeker that he may engage in such prescribed actions yet be full of ahaṅkāra (ego) although of sātāvika (spiritual) type. The *Upaniṣad* warns us against the idea of cultivating ego while performing any duty. The ultimate renunciation is nothing but the renunciation of the ego of the doership. This realization is best practiced with a desire of total surrender. Therefore, *Upaniṣad* in its last few verses surrenders and prays to the Almighty with the symbol of the light of the Sun. However, in all this *karma*, *Vairāgya*, and *Upāsanā*, the vision of the oneness of the Lord is grasped with full rigor. The *Upaniṣad* prays to the Lord to bestow upon such supreme realization.

hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham |

tattvam pūṣannapāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye ||

*Īśa Upaniṣad* (Verse 15)

pūṣannekarṣe yamasūrya prājāpatya vyūha raśmīn samūha |

tejo yatte rūpaṃ kalyāṇatamaṃ tatte paśyāmi yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi ||

*Īśa Upaniṣad* (Verse 16)

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## 10.4 PHILOSOPHICAL RESPONSE

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*Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* has had tremendous ramifications in all thoughts of Indian Philosophy. It represents the essence of Vedic knowledge. Although there are many unresolved issues regarding the structure, contents of verse, and various Vedāntic interpretations of the *Upaniṣad* yet its overwhelming significance cannot be denied. There are other *Upaniṣads* which rely on various background settings, stories, dialogues, some methodology such as *avasthātraya*, *pañcakośa*, *śarīra-traya*, etc. but *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* declares the truth about the Universe directly and encapsulates the entire Vedic ethics in a nutshell. The injunction is straightforward, i.e., the path of renunciation where there is a fusion of action and devotion. Its invocation mantra also synoptically pictures the entire cosmos

in its totality (as Purna). It is because of this reason perhaps, thinkers like M.K. Gandhi said-

“If all the *Upaniṣads* and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the *Īśopaniṣad* were left in the memory of the Hindus, Hinduism would live forever.”

Paul Deussen has also recognized how beautifully this *Upaniṣad* has reconciled its metaphysics with the Vedic ethics. Swami Chinmayananda also said in his commentary-

“The very first stanza of this matchless *Upaniṣad* is in itself a miniature philosophical textbook. Besides being comprehensive in its enunciation of Truth, it provides a vivid exposition of the technique of realising the Truth in a language unparalleled in philosophical beauty and literary perfection. Its mantras are the briefest exposition on philosophy and each one is an exercise in contemplation.”

Many Indian sages have also correlated the eighteen verses of *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* with the eighteen chapters of Bhagavadgita. The reason might be that both the texts synoptically present the philosophy of *Upaniṣads*. Like Bhagavadgita, we find in *Īśāvāsya*, a unique blend of jñāna, karma, and *Upāsanā*. This holistic knowledge holds tremendous potency, and it paves the way for the ultimate realization, i.e., Mokṣa.

### 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. Comment on the Upanishadic notion of *vidyā* and *Avidyā*.

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2. Write a note on the significance of 'AUM'.

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## 10.5 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, we can derive the following philosophical points from our discussion above pertaining to *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*-

1. The idea of holism is immanent there (in the invocation mantra itself), the

view that the mere study of parts cannot yield a complete knowledge of the universe. For a profound comprehension, the analysis of its micro and macro aspects is vital. The universe must be understood in its totality.

2. Metaphysically, there are two realms of Existence, the material, efficient, and the final cause of the world (as the Lord) and the Creation itself. However, it is more like a manifestation rather than Creation where there is oneness of everything.
3. Epistemologically, the knowledge of duality and false ego constitute *Avidyā*. The right ontological understanding is called *vidyā*. Also, *vidyā* paves the way for ethical and aesthetic fulfillment of life.
4. As a methodological approach (*sādhana*), the meditation on the totality of Cosmos is required. Renunciation is the by-product of the discrimination (*viveka*) between Real and unreal. Finally, this renunciation must fuse with *dharma* and *Upāsana*.
5. Axiologically, the realization of *Ātman* or Self holds the supreme value as Truth, Beauty, and Goodness; everything else entails suffering. Only *Ātman* or *Īśvara* becomes capable of rendering everlasting peace. Not engaging in the pursuit of Self-knowledge is termed as spiritual suicide.
6. Finally, the transcendental state of *Īśvara* and *Ātman* or the entire universe is essentially ineffable (*anirvacanīya*). It becomes a subject of direct realization, not of verbal exegesis. One must surrender to the Ultimate Lord and seek blessings for Self-realization.

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## 10.6 KEY WORDS

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<b>Ātman</b>	: The immanent and transcendental state of Consciousness. It is at par with the Lord or Nirguṇa Brahman. It is represented by the amatra (silence) at the end of AUM.
<b>AUM</b>	: The mystical symbol of wholeness or <i>Ātman</i> ; and also the supreme object of meditation. It is the symbol of Purna.
<b>Avidyā</b>	: It is the metaphysical nescience of not-knowing oneself and projecting differing egos with false worldviews.
<b>Mahāvākya</b>	: The mahāvākyas are the four great sayings of <i>Upaniṣads</i> of supreme importance in Vedānta philosophy. They are: 1- <i>prajñānam brahma</i> : <i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i> , 3.3. 2- <i>aham brahmāsmi</i> : <i>Bṛhadaranyaka Upaniṣad</i> , 1.4.10. 3- <i>tat tvam asi</i> : <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> , 6.8.7. 4- <i>ayam ātmā brahma</i> : <i>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad</i> , 2.
<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

saguṇa Brahman. It is also known as Kāraṇa Brahman.

- Pañca Kośa** : The five sheaths of human personality, as explained in Taittirīya and other *Upaniṣads*. They are, namely, annamaya, prāṇamaya, manomaya, vijñānamaya, and ānandamaya kośa.
- Principal Upaniṣads** : These are also called mukhya *Upaniṣads*, widely studied in Vedānta philosophy. Śaṅkarācārya wrote commentaries on them. Generally, they are ten in numbers, namely- *Īśā (IsUp)*, *Yajurveda*, *Kena (KeUp)*, *Sāmaveda*, *Kaṭha (KaUp)*, *Yajurveda*, *Praśna (PrUp)*, *Atharvaveda*, *Muṇḍaka (MuUp)*, *Atharvaveda*, *Māṇḍūkya (MaUp)*, *Atharvaveda*, *Taittirīya (TaiUp)*, *Yajurveda*, *Aitareya (AiUp)*, *Ṛgveda*, *Chāndogya (ChhUp)*, *Sāmaveda*, and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka (BrUp)*, *Yajurveda*.
- Puruṣārtha** : It means the virtues or duties of human beings. They are four- dharma (duty), artha (wealth), kama (pleasures), and Mokṣa (liberation).
- Śarīra Traya** : The three bodies of human beings explained in *Upaniṣads*, namely, sthūla, sukṣma, and kāraṇa śarīra representing gross, subtle, and causal levels respectively.
- Vedānta** : It represents the teaching based on prasthantraya, the three great sources (texts), namely, *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad Gīta*, and *Brahmasūtra*.
- Vidyā** : It is the knowledge of Self or Ātman.
- Viveka** : It is a faculty of mind that discriminates between Real and unreal.

## 10.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## **10.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. The term *Upaniṣad* is derived from the three Sanskrit root words- ‘upa’, ‘ni’, and ‘shad’, which literally means ‘to sit near’. In an Upanishadic setting, a disciple (śiṣya) sits near his master (guru). This symbolizes respect for the teacher. Through this setting the darkness of ignorance is dispelled away just by the light of Knowledge of the great statements about Ātman and Brahman. *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad* also serves the same purpose. The teachings based on *Upaniṣads* (also along with *Bhagavad Gīta* and *Brahmasutra*) are also called Vedānta. It is best encapsulated in Mahāvākyas which denote the oneness of the Self, the world, and the Lord.
2. The term *Īśāvāsyā* literally means - pervaded by the Lord or the inner controller of the Universe. It sheds light on how *Upaniṣads* understood the Creation. Precisely it shows how the world is a manifestation of the Lord who is within and without both. He is immanent as well as transcendent. The Lord is Real as the Existence, Consciousness, and Bliss while He alone is projected as the unreal jagat which is constituted of nāma (name) and rūpa (form). The realization of the oneness of a universal Lord is hinted by the title –*Īśāvāsyā*. It also conveys the idea of Pūrṇa, i.e., everything that ‘Is’ is essentially God.

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

1. In Upanishadic parlance, the notion of *vidyā* and *Avidyā* is of supreme importance. *Avidyā* means, not knowing the reality about oneself, the world, and the Lord. It is to have a misidentification of ego, a perverted worldview, and the notion of the Lord as distant from oneself and the world. This ignorance as duality can only be removed by the jñāna or *vidyā*, i.e., the Self-realization where the universal Lord resides in its core. It is by virtue of this viveka and jñāna that one can truly renounce that which is unreal and is merely the projection of the Self. This renunciation is effortless as the by-product of *vidyā*. It also paves the way of performing one’s duties (dharma) as niṣkāma karma. The oneness also becomes the cornerstone of the way of devotion. Hence, in Vedānta, the root of all suffering is *Avidyā* while the real antidote is *vidyā*.
2. According to *Upaniṣads*, whatever is Real is realizable also. The Ultimate is not merely a logical hypothesis. Although the linguistic expression of the Ultimate Reality is almost impossible, yet, it does not mean that it can never be realized. There are several methods of its realization, and meditation on AUM is one of the most effective methods. AUM is the symbol of entire Reality. In the invocation mantra of *Īśāvāsyā Upaniṣad*, the AUM is described as Pūrṇa. A denotes jāgrat, U denotes svapna, M denotes suṣupti, and the silence at the end denotes Turīya, Ātman, or Brahman. It synoptically captures the entire notion of wholeness (sarva). Meditation over

its syllable has unique and profound advantages. AUM or Pūrṇa denotes Creator also and the Creation as well at all levels. Furthermore, not only in *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* but also in the entire Vedic tradition and other religions AUM became the symbol of auspiciousness and the object of the highest veneration. It can be synoptically presented as-

## Īśa Upaniṣad

A	Jāgrat
U	Svapna
M	Suṣupti
Silence	Turīya



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## UNIT 11 KATHA UPANIṢAD\*

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### Structure

- 11.0 Objective
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Story of Naciketā
- 11.3 Nature of the Self
- 11.4 Realization of the Self
- 11.5 Means of Realisation
- 11.6 Individual Self and Cosmic Self
- 11.7 Results of Realisation
- 11.8 *Jīvan-Mukti*: Realization while Living
- 11.9 *Videha-Mukti*
- 11.10 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.11 Key Words
- 11.12 Further Readings and References
- 11.13 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 11.0 OBJECTIVES

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*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is the very popular *Upaniṣad*. It is the most beautiful *Upaniṣad* that answers the basic questions of the end of human life. By the end of this unit, you are expected to know:

- the question of the meaning of life and death
- the question of immortality
- the question of the meaning of *dharma* and *adharma*,
- the question of knowledge and ignorance
- the question of the ultimate cause of the world

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### 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* belongs to *Kriṣṇa Yajurveda*. It is acclaimed as the clearest and the most popular one for its brevity and perfect enunciation for the mystical truths about life. Basic questions of life and death, meaning of various things in life are dealt in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*. It contains a more unified exposition of Vedānta than any other single *Upaniṣad*. Its brilliance is heightened by the two characters of its dialogue, namely, old Yama, the teacher, and young *Naciketās*, the student. The *Upaniṣad* is structured as dialogue between Yama, the teacher and *Naciketā*, a serious, honest and motivated student. The student is portrayed

as one who has an understanding of the eternal and ephemeral in full measure. He is presented as a young son of *Vajasrava* and of 12 years old. This boy is very devoted to his father and society. He has a strong desire and quest for Self- knowledge. When he meets Yama he is granted three boons. The little boy asked for firstly, pacification of his father, secondly a fire ritual to gain *swarga*, heaven, thirdly, knowledge of the Self. *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* contains one hundred and twenty verses divided into two chapters. Each of the chapters has three sections, called *vallīs*.

## 11.2 STORY OF NACIKETĀ

*Vājaśrava*, father of Naciketā, performs a sacrifice to merit certain rewards. At the end of the performance of *visvajīt* sacrifice, he distributes gifts of old and feeble cows to the pious people as *dakṣinā*. In such a one-day sacrifice the performer is expected to give all his possessions as a gift to the priests who participate in the sacrifice. Young boy Naciketā is greatly disturbed by the act of his father and comes forward to offer himself as a gift to the priest. Knowing that his father has promised to give up all his possessions, Naciketā asked him, “Dear father, to whom thou will give me”? At the utterance of these words, father is filled with great sorrow. But to keep up his father’s words, Naciketā bows to him and walks away into the abode of Yama. There he waits for Yama for three days and nights without a morsel of food to eat or a drop of water to drink. On his return Yama is greatly distressed at the plight of the young boy and is pleased with the stern attitude of the boy. He offers the boy three wishes. Even though young in age, Naciketā is full of wisdom.

The first wish that he asked is regarding his father that he be free from anxiety, anger and be granted calmness in mind.

As for the second wish, he asked to enlighten him about the sacrifices that lead one to heaven and free people from hunger, thirst, fear and sorrow. Yama readily grants this boon with further instructions. He explains how sacrificial fire becomes the source of the world. To which Naciketā gives all the details and procedures of this sacrifice without any fault. Pleased with the shrewdness, power of memory and performance of the boy, Yama grants, “henceforth, this sacrificial fire would be known by your name.” And it is granted that whoever kindles that fire thrice, would become united with the three lords and attains liberation.

The third wish Naciketā asks for is to enlighten him as to what happens to a person after his death. He asks, “There is a doubt about a person after death. Some say he exists and others say he does not.” Yama asserts that even great ones have this doubt and the answer to this question being highly complicated and very subtle is very difficult to comprehend. By saying this Yama tried to dissuade the boy from entertaining such a query and asked him to ask for any other material boon like wealth, gold, horses, elephants, land and so on. Naciketā remains unmoved and uncompromising in getting answers to the question. He did not want any other material gifts from the Lord except the mysterious knowledge about after life. Knowing the temporary nature of worldly gains he insists on receiving eternal knowledge. Greatly impressed by Naciketā as beyond all pleasures and aspirations of the material world, Lord Yama starts the instruction on knowledge of the eternal. Ignorance and Knowledge are wide

apart as they lead to different goals. To know the truth one follows the path of knowledge which is explained well by the teachings of *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*.

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### 11.3 NATURE OF THE SELF

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The nature of the Self is that it is unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient and not destroyed. There is no birth and death for the tranquil Self. It is all pervading, far, near and everywhere. It is joyful as well as joyless. It is bodiless and all pervading. It is smaller than the smallest; at the same time it is greater than the greatest. The *puruṣa* is the subtlest. It is subtler than sensory objects, senses, mind, intellect and even *mahat*, the manifested *Hiraṇyagarbha* and the unmanifested *avyakta*. Self is hidden in all things. The Self is soundless, formless, imperishable, tasteless, odourless, eternal, constant, all pervading, subtlest, omniscient and omnipotent. Its light is greater than that of the Sun, Moon, Stars, lightning and fire. It is not seen but by its light everything shines. No mortal beings ever live by just life breath alone. One lives by the self over which the whole existence is dependent on. It is the Brahman that sustains everything and becomes the source of all. He is compared to the tree whose roots are above in the sky and the branches below. Every possible thing in all the worlds rest in it. Over which none can transcend. “Under his command, even the creator comes out vibrating within as the life-force. He is the one dispenser of the universal law of nature, and a great terror like a raised thunderbolt.” The power of the Self controls the fire, sun, air and even death. All the forces and gods discharge their respective duties by the order of the Self. The Puruṣa, the self is greater than everything else. He is the truth which everyone wants to know. He alone is the Sun, the air in the sky and fire on the sacrificial altar and the soma- juice at sacrifices. Yet His form is not within the field of vision. None is able to perceive with naked eye.

The self is consciousness. It is not the property of the body as matter is intrinsically insentient in nature. The self is also not a product of the body as unconscious matter can never produce something conscious. It is not a part of the body too as it pervades all over the body. The self is a separate and independent entity different from the body in which it resides. It is the entity that pervades the entire body and makes it alive and vibrant. Every part of the body is dependent on it for their existence. While they are dependent on the Self, it is not dependent on them for its reality. It is not limited by the boundaries of the body. It alone survives even after the decay of the body.

#### 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. Explain the three boons asked by Naciketā.

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## 11.4 REALIZATION OF THE SELF

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Only a person who has realized the Self can impart the knowledge of Self. Yama calls, “O man! Arise, awake and realize that truth.” The path to know the self is very difficult like a sharp edge of a razor. Hard indeed is such a path to tread. The difficulty lies in the discrimination of what is self and the non-self. What is in the manifest world is there in the unmanifest Brahman. An ordinary man fails to realize this truth and sees the world as different from Brahman. The sense organs by nature are external in nature. Eventually one who identifies with the body and the sense organs try only to understand and know the sense objects and the externals alone. They rejoice in the sense-objects and never get the vision of the self. These persons are like immature children in their thoughts and their pursuit. Only few wise men that are desirous of immortality turn their attention internally and have the quest of self-knowledge and self-realization.

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## 11.5 MEANS OF REALIZATION

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Knowledge of the Self cannot be obtained only through logical arguments. Knowledge is more than logical reasoning. It cannot be known by scriptural knowledge or by mere human intelligence. It is possible only by internal realization and experience. Anyone with an unrestrained mind becomes only impure and gets immersed in material pleasures. The senses are to be controlled by the mind and the mind is controlled by the self. Only that person who lives without any worldly desires becomes immortal. Realization is through concentration of mind and locating the Self in the innermost being of oneself. This self is the subtlest and is seated in the heart of all. The realization is very hard for everyone but the wise achieve it. One who is free from desires is able to see the Self and becomes free from any grief. As all longings disappear, the Self is attained. When all five senses are at rest together with the mind and the intellect becomes inactive, then one attains the highest state. One abandons joy and grief of the transient world. After knowing and grasping the Truth, one attains the subtle Self and rejoices. Knowledge of the self liberates everyone. The unintelligent goes after material objects and outward pleasures, falls prey to the cycle of death and life. The wise attain immortality by knowing the Self. Naciketā questions Yama on the truth about the status of the Self after death. Yama says that some souls re- enter the womb to have a body. Those who are not liberated would get another birth. Some other unenlightened souls would get plants as their body. Determining factor for such rebirth is the karma.

Syllable AUM is the goal of all teachings of the *Vedas* and the austere activities. This is the ultimate one which becomes the final objective of all penance. AUM is both empirical and absolute Brahman. Whoever knows the identity of the syllable AUM and the Self, Brahman, attains all that one desires. He would get beyond the realms of ignorance and knowledge, the cause and the effect and the rest.

This knowledge is obtained not by reasoning, thought, intuition or intellect, but only by entering into one’s own heart. Looking within oneself and understanding the subtlest subject make liberation possible. Distinguishing what is not self from what is self, especially the body is very necessary for self realization. As one separates the stalk from a reed, one should do so for separating self from

the body. Yoga can be acquired as well as lost owing to one's own effort and skill. The art of yoga is a firm control of senses by the mind. A yogi becomes free from the wandering of the mind.

As the self reveals itself not to all, it is not attainable by all. It cannot be attained by a mere study of the scriptures and intellect. It is seen and experienced by the seekers of truth with their concentrated and pure mind. Those who have not refrained from bad conduct and those with unrestrained minds and those of non meditative persons cannot get the glimpse of Self.

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## **11.6 INDIVIDUAL SELF AND COSMIC SELF**

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In the world of the spiritual realm, being is understood in two ways, individual self and the cosmic self. The cosmic self enters the intelligence and consciousness of the created beings and resides in the cavity of the heart. It enlivens the lives of all living beings. As Individual self it enjoys at the same time the results of the good and the bad actions of the human being. The self is omniscient which is never born or dead. It is not also created one. In decaying of the body, the self does not suffer. Self is the one that neither killed nor is it killed. Like air which pervades the whole world and assumes different forms according to the container it is filled in, the self abides in the hearts of all beings that appear to be different. The self is both transcendent and immanent. In its absolute state it is transcendental and it is immanent it is prevalent. There is no place, where Brahman is not. He is here within, without and everywhere.

The eternal Brahman resides in the city of eleven gates. The gates are described as follows: seven in the head, one in the navel, the two lower ones and one at the top of the head. Self presides over the physical body. An interesting analogy is made. The body is compared to a chariot which endlessly travels on the path of life. The soul is the master of the chariot in which the intellect acts as the charioteer, the mind as the bridle, sense organs as horses and the external objects as roads. The Self remains the enjoyer. If someone has an unrestrained mind and ignorance his sense organs become uncontrollable like unbridled horses. Controlled mind takes the chariot in the right path. With an impure mind one finds it difficult to attain the goal.

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## **11.7 RESULTS OF REALIZATION**

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At the realization one does not grieve as ignorance is got rid off by meditation upon the self. The realized self does not grieve because he experiences the Self as the self-same and all pervading. It dwells in the hearts of all without any physical attachment and is without any name or form. The wise realizes then truth that the self is distinct from the sense organs. They are only the product of the five basic elements of nature. Their existence and fields of activities are limited and changing. The self is entirely different from them as unlimited and unchanging. By beholding the self as "this is that" one fears not. Having been liberated, one becomes absolutely free from the web of births and deaths. At the purification of the mind when the self is realized, there is an end to the dualistic and pluralistic outer external world experiences that are limited, finite and binding. The people of awakening worship the omniscient fire in the fire stick. The fire is very self all-pervading. Like a fetus well preserved inside, the fire is well lodged unseen in the stick. It is perceived only by the

realized persons. One who knows this truth realizes the Ātman as the sustainer of life and the lord of the past and the future. Thus what looks as unknown and unknowable for some becomes knowable by the intellect. The intellect which is able to cognize light taste, smell, sound, touch etc drives its knowing capability only the Self. There is nothing unknowable to this omniscient Supreme Being itself. The self of the realized remains pure like pure water poured on to pure water remains pure forever. The one who is able to understand and knows the Self becomes immortal. The person who perceives this truth and realizes that experience attains the state of Brahman even while living. He becomes a jīvan mukta.

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## 11.8 JĪVAN-MUKTI: REALIZATION WHILE LIVING

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Benefit of knowledge of the Self is presented in two forms in *Upaniṣads*. One is the benefit that can be obtained in this life itself while the other is the benefit after death. *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* speaks of both the benefits namely, Jīvan mukti and videha mukti. More than the benefits after death, like freedom from the cycle of birth and death and immortality, benefits obtained while living in the body itself draw one's attention for authentic meaningful living as human beings here on earth. Jīvan mukti is the benefit of knowledge enjoyed mostly at the mental level in different ways. A sense of fulfillment in life is the first fruit of realization. The realized person is free from limitation and belongs to all. There is no sense of isolation or rejection as there is a realization of all-pervading Self within oneself. Secondly, one becomes independent mentally and emotionally. Nothing affects him emotionally in case of accumulation or deprivation of things, of relation or departure of people. The realized one is not dependent on external factors like wealth, status, persons, power, authority, glory, respect etc. Thirdly, the benefit of realization is the emotional balance or stability as a capacity to face anything in life. Whenever there is an emotional fluctuation nothing affects the Self.

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## 11.9 VIDEHA-MUKTI

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While Jīvan mukti is liberation while living, videha mukti is freedom after death. *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* clearly states about what happens to a person who is still in ignorance. After death these unrealized persons would drop only the body. Death becomes only a separation of the self with the physical body which is made out of five elements. To these five elements the body returns back. The other two bodies namely the subtle and causal bodies continue to exist for an ajñānī, ignorant person. The subtle body seeks for another physical body to continue the journey.

Rebirth occurs in another body. Law of karma is operative in the rebirth process. As in every body the self experiences good and bad and acquires merits and demerits. These merits and demerits determine the rebirth to enjoy both bad and good fruits of previous birth. In ignorant persons, there remains lots of unfructified puṇya-pāpas which compels the subtle and causal bodies to look for another physical body for their fulfillment. In contrast to this process, in the life of a realized person, there is no fresh puṇya-pāpa that is kept in store for the next birth. At death of a liberated person, three bodies merge into the total

universe. There is nothing surviving as an individual for ajñānī. Since there is no jīva as a principle of individuality, freedom from the cycle of birth and death becomes possible. At death, a realized person attains videha mukti as a freedom from *punarjanma*.

**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 necessity of Self-realization?

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2. Discuss the means to self realization.

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3. Illustrate the benefits of Knowledge of the Self.

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**11.10 LET US SUM UP**

Each *Upaniṣad* generally takes up the responsibility of caring for the spiritual welfare of the individual. In turn they are expected to render their service to groups that for the society and the nation. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* has been acclaimed as the most popular one as per the structure in the form of a dialogue between Naciketā and Yama. The *Upaniṣad* tells the story of Naciketā, the son of Vājaśrava, who learns the teachings imparted by Yama. Starting with the story, the *Upaniṣad* unfolds the profound philosophical truths. It reveals the truths of this world and the other world that is beyond human comprehension. The distinction of Self from mind and body is clearly made in the *Upaniṣad*. Desire, anger, hatred, fear all belong to the mind. Similarly hunger and thirst pertain to the body. None of these belong to the Self. Objective view on the things without identifying them with the Self, makes one realize the imperishable Self. The self is not just mind and body. Even while living, one cannot treat them as oneself. The self alone will shine when there is complete eradication of the desires and consciousness of the body.

For such persons there is no death. Death is only for the body and not for the self. The goal of life is set in the words of God of Death. Liberation is the final goal of one's life. When one achieves liberation he is freed of death, rebirth and all the sorrows of existence. Those who practice austerity, control of mind and sense, spiritual discipline reach the realm of Brahman. Right step on the path of mediation and self realization is to merge the power of speech in the mind and the mind in the intellect and the intellect in the great self. Liberation means freedom from rebirth. Knowledge of Self makes such a release possible. This knowledge comes from realizing the true nature of Self. He is a smokeless flame. It is ever consciousness. The metaphor of an uprooted tree with the roots towards the sky is given to explain that heaven is the root of all life. The self is the source of all. It sustains everything and gives life to all that is dependent on it. It is independent even though it resides in the cavity of the hearts of all. All things and beings receive their support and strength from the Self. When prāṇa goes out, Self alone remains. Even after the decay of the physical body, the unchanging Self survives.

Realization of the nature of the Self comes not from mere learning or scriptural scholarship. It is not dependent on intellect or intuition. The realization is the anubhava, experiential. Realization is not something of new discovery. It is just becoming aware of what is already present. Due to ignorance self is not recognized or known. The hidden self beneath everything is to be realized. The unrealized would face the cycle of birth and death continuously. Anyone who thinks that he is an intelligent and enlightened person would surely go through the cycle of birth and death again and again. Meditating upon the self one gets rid of ignorance. Anyone who lives in the world without the awareness of the body is called Jīvan mukta. When all desires that dwell in the heart are destroyed and ignorance is dispelled, and then you become immortal. The *Upaniṣad* declares that anyone who is aware of the Self is a liberated person in whom there is no death. He becomes Immortal.

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### 11.11 KEY WORDS

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- Metaphor** : Metaphor (from Latin metaphoria) is language that directly connects seemingly unrelated subjects. It is a figure of speech that connects two or more things. More generally, a metaphor describes a first subject as being or equal to a second object in some way.
- Rebirth** : Rebirth refers to reincarnation, belief that some essential part of a living being survives death to be reborn in a new body.

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## **11.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. When Naciketā meets Lord Yama he is granted three boons. The little boy asked for firstly, pacification of his father, secondly a fire ritual to gain swarga, heaven, thirdly, knowledge of the Self.
2. The nature of the Self is that it is unborn, eternal, everlasting, ancient and not destroyed. There is no birth and death for the intelligent Self. It is all pervading, far, near and everywhere. It is joyful as well as joyless. It is bodiless and all pervading. It is smaller than the smallest; at the same time it is greater than the greatest. The puruṣa is the subtlest. It is subtler than sensory objects, senses, mind, intellect and even mahat, the manifested Hiraṇyagarbha and the unmanifested avyakta. Self is hidden in all things. The Self is soundless, formless, imperishable, tasteless, odourless, eternal, constant, all pervading, subtlest, omniscient and omnipotent. Its light is greater than that of the Sun, Moon, Stars, lightning and fire.

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

1. Only a person who has realized the Self can impart the knowledge of Self. The difficulty lies in the discrimination of what is self and the non-self. Brahman. Only few wise men that are desirous of immortality turn their attention internally and have the quest of self-knowledge and self-realization.

2. Knowledge of the Self cannot be obtained only through logical arguments. Knowledge is more than logical reasoning. It cannot be known by scriptural knowledge or by mere human intelligence. It is possible only by internal realization and experience. One who restrains from bad conduct. Anyone with an unrestrained mind becomes only impure and gets immersed in material pleasures. The senses are to be controlled by the mind and the mind is controlled by the self. Only that person who lives without any worldly desires becomes immortal. Realization is through concentration of mind and locating the Self in the innermost being of oneself.
3. At the realization one does not grieve as ignorance is got rid off by meditation upon the self. The realized self does not grieve because he experiences the Self as the self-same and all pervading. It dwells in the hearts of all without any physical attachment and is without any name or form. The wise realizes then truth that the self is distinct from the sense organs. They are only the product of the five basic elements of nature. Their existence and fields of activities are limited and changing. The self is entirely different from them as unlimited and unchanging. By beholding the self as “this is that” one fears not. Having been liberated, one becomes absolutely free from the web of births and deaths.



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## UNIT 12 CHĀNDOGYA UPANIṢAD\*

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### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 The Ways of Knowing Brahman
- 12.3 The Philosophical Implications of Tajjalāniti
- 12.4 The Potential Nature of the Universe
- 12.5 Return to the Nature of Brahman
- 12.6 Uddālaka's Refutation of the *Vedic Sūktas*; his Cosmology
- 12.7 The Meaning of Swapti and its Relation to Dream State
- 12.8 The Bonds of Sat
- 12.9 Ātman and the Source of the Universe, i.e., Brahman
- 12.10 The Supreme Knowledge (*Bhūmā Vidyā*)
- 12.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.12 Key Words
- 12.13 Further Readings and References
- 12.14 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit you will get to know in detail:

- the philosophical significance of the Chāndogyopaniṣad
- a lot of discussion on liturgical aspects
- the establishing of the identity of Brahman and Ātman
- the *Upaniṣad* as the earliest work on cosmology and the evolution of life.
- this work as the first ever attempt to introduce quantitative analysis in addition to qualitative analysis
- the nature of Ātman in several ways as presented by this *Upaniṣad*.

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### 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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This *Upaniṣad* belongs to *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāmaveda*. It consists of eight chapters with each chapter divided into several sections. First five chapters, excluding fourteenth section of the third chapter which includes *Śāṇḍilya Vidyā*, are devoted to the superiority and effects of various forms of 'Upāsanās' and 'Homās'. *Upāsanās* and Homās constitute rituals. The prominence enjoyed by these forms of rituals clearly indicate that (sections numbering around one

\*Dr. M. R. Nandan, Department of Philosophy, Govt. College for Women, Mandya.

hundred and ten are devoted to the description of these forms) the chapters and sections dealing with this aspect must have been appended to the *Upaniṣad*. Even though the *Upaniṣad* denounced all forms of rituals, they did not lose the ground instantaneously. The statement ‘*ahimsan sarvāni bhūtāni anyatra tīrthebhyaḥ*’ means that elsewhere non-violence is a virtue, but during the performance of

Yajña animal sacrifice is mandatory. Even in those sections, which are devoted to glorifying rituals, there is no homogeneity because these sections were appended to the *Chāndogya* at different times. So the *Upaniṣad* which is available to us in the present form contains extraneous matter in a large quantity. This *Upaniṣad* not only describes in detail various rituals, it also contains glorification of various aspects of the *Sāmaveda*. For example, the very beginning of the *Upaniṣad* is marked by hailing the importance of ‘Udgītha’ (this *Veda* is designed mainly to uphold the importance of Udgītha) which stretches to several sections followed by the descriptions of Prastava, Pratihara, Stobha and so on. Salutations to ‘Soma’ occupy nearly the whole of the second chapter. While there is diversity in this part of the *Upaniṣad*, the *Upaniṣad* proper is restricted to a discussion of Ātman and Brahman. One possible reason for glorifying the non philosophical part is the emphasis upon the concept of Mokṣa. In those days people might have thought that ‘brahma sāṅskāra’ was possible only through rituals in conjunction with knowledge.

Like any other *Upaniṣad*, the *Chāndogya* is also full of anecdotes of several fictitious persons. Even the philosophical part of the text is not free from this approach. Hence in our study of the *Upaniṣad*, we must first segregate philosophy from myth. In order to achieve this, we have to concentrate only on some sections of the last three chapters of the *Upaniṣad* and as an exception in this case, we shall consider the twelfth section of the third chapter of the *Upaniṣad*.

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## 12.2 THE WAY OF KNOWING BRAHMAN

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The particular section with which we are dealing presently is known as Gāyatrī brahma. This section regards vāk or speech as Gāyatrī and it is through Gāyatrī that Brahman can be understood. Brahma or Brahman is what manifests in speech. This may be the reason for regarding speech as the means of knowing Brahman. For our purpose, ‘Gāyatrī’ can be taken to mean a form of prayer. According to Yājñavalkya’s interpretation, there cannot be any positive description of Brahman. Since it is very difficult to understand Brahman with only negative interpretation, *Chāndogya* chooses an alternative method. There is no need to know what prayer consists of. The Mantras numbering seventh, eighth and ninth describe Brahman as Ākāśa. In this case Ākāśa can be taken to mean something like ether or space or some eternal substance, and all pervasive. These three mantras first identify Brahman with Ākāśa which is external to Puruṣa and far superior to prayer. It further says that the very same Ākāśa is also internal to Puruṣa. It points to two possibilities. One is that the very distinction of Ākāśa into external or internal itself is without foundation. The second possibility is that the internal self, which is Ātman, is the essence of the individual whereas the external Ākāśa is the essence of the external world.

When what is internal is identified with what is external, the individual self is identified with the external world. Hereby the equation of Brahman and Ātman is established. This is the main theme of the *Upaniṣads*.

In Ākāśa, which is internal to man there are actually two divisions, Ākāśa inside the body and Ākāśa inside the heart. It means that there are three strata of Ākāśa. According to one interpretation, these three strata of Ākāśa correspond to the first three states of mind, jāgrat (waking state), swapna (dream state) and suṣupti (deep sleep). While the first two states cause misery, the last one does not. Ākāśa is associated with these states and also the experience. This particular interpretation poses some difficulties. Waking state does not bring only miserable experiences. It also brings other experiences. There is no reason why they should be omitted. Secondly, if Ākāśa has three ‘prakāras’ or three kinds, then, we have to discern qualitative differences in which case it is difficult to accept that there is one Ākāśa only.

The seventh Mantra of the thirteenth section in the same chapter identifies Brahma with light. Again, light is both external and internal to Puruṣa just as Ākāśa is. The most unusual aspect of this mantra is that this light has to be experienced to know. It involves three sense organs, eyes, ears and skin. Obviously, the *Upaniṣad* must have meant that these three organs are not physical but some sort of metaphysical counterparts.

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### **12.3 THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TAJJALĀNITI**

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This section deals with a particular concept of Brahman known as saguṇa brahma which forms a part of Tajjalān. It means that there are attributes of Brahman and only through these attributes is it possible to explain Brahman. Tajjalān states that the world emerged from and much later it is reabsorbed by Brahman. So the physical world has both beginning and end. But Brahman, which is the source of the universe, has neither beginning nor end. If, for the time being, we ignore the idealistic theory which pervades the *Upaniṣads*, the description of Brahman correlates to the indestructibility of matter. Matter is not only indestructible, it cannot be created either. Physics speaks about the origin of the universe but not matter. Suppose we hypothesize the origin of matter. It results in posing, say, pre-matter. If matter has its origin in pre-matter, then we can further hypothesize the origin of pre-matter in pre-pre-matter. Obviously, it results in infinite regress. So we have to stop at some stage while we are doing science. The position of philosophy is no different from that of science. The selection of points from which we start may or may not be random. While the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* was skeptical of the origin of the universe, the *Upaniṣads* were definite. While going back in time, the *Upaniṣads* stopped at Brahman. The termination of search for the primitive source is not a random termination because the *Upaniṣads* maintain, not just believe that it is the source. The manner in which ‘Brahman’ is analyzed testifies to this comment.

The next Mantra mentions the attributes of Brahman. It is ‘manomaya’ (spiritual), prāṇa śarīra (consciousness), bhārūpa (bhā = light), satyasaṅkalpa (positive purpose), ākāśatma (form of Ākāśa), sarvakarma (maker of all), sarvakāma (flawless desire), sarvagandha (substratum of all pleasant odour), *sarvam idam*

*abhyatta* (enveloping all), *avākya* (silent), *anādara* (unenthusiastic). It must be noted that all attributes in one way or another have human touch. Brahman is *manomaya* because it is through Brahman that *manana* or reflection of what one has listened is possible. By considering Brahman as conscious, the *Upaniṣad* could bring in other attributes. In addition to consciousness, Brahman is regarded as light. Hence Brahman stands for knowledge and it is *para*, the highest. Since Brahman is characterized by positive purpose the results also are positive. Since it is the maker of all the positive results are the results of its actions. In spite of so

Many attributes with human touch Brahman remained *nirākāra* (formless) because it is *ākāśātma*. This one attribute is enough to accept the view that Brahman is impersonal. To say that Brahman is speechless is to admit that silence is supreme. It is not possible to discern the basis for regarding silence as supreme. But one *Upaniṣad*, which is now extinct, says, '*upashantoyam ātmā*' (for this statement, the available source is Śaṅkara's commentary on Vedānta Sutra.) It is remarkable that there is an equivalent Austrian adage which proclaims 'speech is silver; silence is golden.' Equally, it is paradoxical that Brahman should be characterized by silence while one of the supposed root meanings of Brahman itself is 'prayer that manifests itself in audible speech.' But, then, paradox is a paradox because there is no solution to it. 'Unenthusiastic' should be taken to mean, again, calm and composed. What is important is 'enveloping all'. It ought to be, if this particular attribute is quantified. In terms of quality cause and effect should remain the same. Similarly, in the case of quantity, cause should at least equal the effect because from 'less' it is impossible to derive 'more'. Second law of thermodynamics states that heat flows from higher end to lower end but not the other way round. If this law is extended to this particular attribute, then Brahman ought to be more than the universe. This attribute derives support from the *Puruṣa sūkta* also. It states, '*sabhūmim vishwatovṛttvā aṣṭatiṣṭasya dashāṅgulam*' which means 'after enveloping the universe the Puruṣa outstripped it by ten inches. This *Upaniṣad* replaced Puruṣa by Brahman and the result remains the same.

If we consider the etymological meaning of Brahman, which is equivalent to 'burst forth', then Brahman can be regarded as energy. The universe is pervaded by two types of energy; stellar energy and nuclear energy. While stellar energy is external, in one sense, in the same sense nuclear energy is internal. But the nature of energy remained the same. Now Brahman can be understood as equivalent to nuclear energy when it is regarded as subatomic and equivalent to stellar energy when it is regarded as transcending deep space. In the former state Brahman has to be understood as *Ātman*. If Brahman is regarded as a packet of energy, then the universe, before it was evolved, can be said to be latent in Brahman; a position very much similar to the Sāṅkhya. It is potential and when it evolves it becomes actual. If the third Mantra is understood in this spirit, then it becomes much simpler.

### Check Your Progress I

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

1. What do you mean by *Akāśa*?

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2. Could you mention some of the attributes of Brahman found in this *Upaniṣad*?

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## 12.4 THE POTENTIAL NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE

The nineteenth section of the third chapter begins with the Mantra according to which *Āditya* is *Brahman*. These two are equated because the sun is the principal means of knowing the external world. This Mantra says that in the beginning there was *asat* (non-being); and then it became *sat*. Later we will come to know that the *Upaniṣad* refutes this particular possibility. Evidently, the *Upaniṣad* could not have made a statement earlier only to deny it later. Therefore the first statement of the Mantra stands in need of clarification. One possible interpretation is that *Asat* is interpreted as *avyākṛt* (not expressed), i.e., potential. When the universe is in an unexpressed state, it is in its potential form. At that stage, *nāma rūpa bheda* (name and form distinction) does not exist. In this restricted sense only it can be regarded as *asat*. Then it became 'sat', i.e., name and form distinction appeared. The *Upaniṣad* is very clear about the origin of *Sat*. On this crucial point the *Upaniṣad* says so; '*asat eva idam agra āsīt tat sat āsīt tat samabhavat tat āṇḍam*' (this was earlier *asat*; that was *Sat*, it was born, it was egg). Evidently, the interpretation given above is not very helpful. The interpretation assumes that '*Asat*' means the absence of name and form differentiation whereas '*Sat*' means the presence of the same. However, what we can understand from the text is altogether different. Accordingly, the existence of *Sat* preceded differentiation in terms of name and form. The first and second Mantras very clearly state that after the *Sat* came into existence it became egg. Its gestation period was one year. Later, it hatched from which *Ṙṥthivī* (silver), *Dyu* (gold), etc. originated. The third Mantra suggests that *Āditya* originated from the egg. The formation of these bodies designates the differentiation in terms of name and form as far as the interpretation is concerned. Thus, this particular interpretation puts the cart in front of the horse.

Apart from the *Asat-Sat* controversy, the origin of *Āditya* also poses a problem. If we suppose that *Āditya* is *Brahman*, how can it evolve from egg when egg is a successor to *Asat*? If, in accordance with *Brahma-PariṇāmaVāda*, cause and effect are treated as real, and effect is only a manifestation of cause, then,

it means that Brahman came out of itself. This is not a comfortable position. Evidently, it has to be treated as Asat only because there was no differentiation. But it is doubtful whether any *Upaniṣad* would ever concede this suggestion.

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## 12.5 RETURN TO THE NATURE OF BRAHMAN

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In the seventh chapter, fresh attempts are made to describe Brahman. After having said that Brahman is avāk (silent), now the *Upaniṣad* designates it as vāg brahma (vāk + brahma = vāgbrahma). Before doing so, Brahman was called nāma brahma. Not only Brahman is Naama, all *Vedas* are names. However, it is so only at an inferior level. In a phased manner, the *Upaniṣad* provides the supposed perfect description. Vak is said to be superior to name. The question is how can Vak be a better description of Brahman when, earlier, it was said that Brahman is silent. It is true that the description ‘Upaśantoyam Ātma’ applies to self. But there is no difference between Brahman and Ātman. So, whatever predicates are applicable to Ātman, are at the same time applicable to Brahman and vice versa. So, it shows that in its attempt to describe Saguṇa Brahman, the *Upaniṣad* is contradicting itself. Failure of affirmative description, perhaps, is not inherent in the concept. But it may be due to contributions from several thinkers at different times.

*Mano Brahman* is said to be superior to *Vāgbrahman*. But it is not clear why the *Upaniṣad* has identified Manas with Brahman twice. Only difference is that earlier the function of Manas was restricted to reflection only. But in the seventh chapter there is a shift in its function. Desire becomes the function of Manas. From Manas it passes on to will or determination (Sankalpa). In this manner, the *Upaniṣad* considers in all twelve predicates, the highest being ‘prāṇa’. It may be noted that Ākāśa is a repetition. Here, the status is decided based on the supposition of dependence, the principle on most of the occasions is dependence. First let us list various predicates in the order of their position. Determination is followed by chitta (to know), dhyāna (meditation), vijñāna (higher knowledge), bala (force or might), anna (food), ap (water), tejas (heat), smara (memory), aśa (desire) and prāṇa (life). However, it is not necessary to consider this chain in detail. It is sufficient to consider the end point of the chain. It is more than obvious that Prāṇa is the substratum of whatever was earlier mentioned. Accordingly, Brahman is life just as Ātman is. Life pervades the whole universe and it outstretches the same. This argument is close to the ancient Greek thought which considered the whole world as animated. By considering the world as animated by the Greek thought that they could solve the problem of change. And the *Upaniṣads* knowingly or unknowingly solved the problem of origin of life.

Finally, by regarding Brahman as Prāṇa, the *Upaniṣad* established the identity of Brahman and Ātman more effectively.

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## 12.6 UDDĀLAKA’S REFUTATION OF VEDIC SŪKTAS: HIS COSMOLOGY

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If we understand cosmology in the modern sense, then we can claim that Uddālaka’s theory is the first ever attempt to grapple with the problem of the origin and the structure of the Universe. It is interesting to note that all

preliminary approaches ended up in monism. In the western tradition also, philosophy began on monistic note only. The only difference is that ancient Greek philosophers, who are called if the physical world emerged from Brahman only to be reabsorbed later, then can we not conclude that the physical world is real? If so, how can Uddālaka be regarded as an idealist? It is very important to address this objection.

There are two distinct ways of analyzing the origin of the external world and life. They are quantitative and qualitative analyses. In any speculative science only the latter is possible. However, in this respect Uddālaka is an exception.

Uddālaka's arguments begin with his refutation of a sūkta from the Ṛgveda. The sūkta says: 'devānām purve uge asataha sat ajāyata' (before the (birth of) gods only Asat, i.e., non-existence was from which Sat, i.e., existence emerged). In addition to this Sūkta, the uncertainty of *Nāsadīya* Sūkta further strengthened Uddālaka's argument. The Sūkta says that 'na asat aseeno sat aseetta daneem' (Neither Sat nor Asat was). Uddālaka counters both these statements from the *Ṛk Veda*. He asks 'katham asataha sat jayeta' (how can 'Sat' come out of 'Asat'?). The absence of 'Sat' does not mean (according to the *Ṛgveda*) the presence of 'Asat'. To that extent the Sūkta is correct. When neither of them is present how can 'Tat Ekam' breathe? To wriggle out of this maze Uddālaka refutes both the Suktas. Before the formation of objects only 'Sat' was and nothing else. This is the meaning of '*ekamevādviīya*' (second to none). Brahman is this 'Sat'. How did the formation of objects or the birth of objects become possible? If we can assume that where there is spirit there is activity, then we can conclude that Brahman is the seat of activity because Brahman is spiritual. This activity manifests in Brahman in the form of production of this world. For the manifestation of activity no cause may be required. Uddālaka traces the path of production which is bound by sort of reasonableness, the 'one' became many, i.e., Brahman became many. First to be produced is Tejas, and from Tejas, Ap and from Ap, Anna (food or solid). Uddālaka explains this scheme in this manner. Water (sweat) is generated when there is heat (Tejas). So it means that water is born from Tejas. Uddālaka's explanation can be supplemented easily. Rainfall (water) is always preceded by heat (Tejas). If Uddālaka's theory can be regarded as scientific, it is not because of what he said but because why he said so. He provided 'evidence' to justify his theory. Surely, evidence need not be accepted. They can be shown to be inadequate or irrelevant. This possibility is sufficient to classify his theory as a scientific theory.

According to Uddālaka 'Tejas, Ap and Anna' are the elements. To this group the *Taittiriya* adds Vayu and Ākāśa. Once these elements are born the classification of name (nāma) and form (rūpa) takes place. When 'one' becomes many, each one becomes finite. What is finite has definite form. Name is necessary to distinguish one from the other. In this way, name and form determine this world. In the same part, the fourth Mantra states that all these three elements undergo the process of further division. So we have nine divisions together. These divisions apply to matters in gross state. Tejas does have other elements. But the proportion of other elements in Tejas is much less. The same explanation ought to hold good for other elements. It also means that these elements are not really elements. However, that apart the reference to proportion of elements at any given level, evidently, marks a revolutionary idea. Quantitative aspect

which distinguishes one element from another essentially belongs to science. Uddālaka also correlates colour to Tejas, white of Ap and black that of Pṛthivī. This correlation later gave rise to substance-attribute relation.

The next stage of triple division is very significant. It contains discussion of manas or mind. One Mantra asserts that the mind emerged from the subtle part of Anna, i.e., solid. It means that the mind is not qualitatively different from solid or matter. Mind is, perhaps, a microscopic or subatomic part of matter. There are two ways of interpreting the relation; any aspect of mind can be explained through matter. This method of explanation is accepted by epiphenomenalism; a theory in modern western philosophy. Not only mind, even Prāṇa has its origin in matter. 'Apam... pīya mānānām ya animā sa urdhvaha samudīśati sa pranobhavati, (When water is consumed, the subtle part of it rises upwards and becomes Prāṇa). So, not only Manas, even Prāṇa has its origin in the so-called matter. If this is the conclusion, then it runs counter to the general spirit of Indian Philosophy. To circumvent this situation, Uddālaka, perhaps, regards not only Brahman but also the off-shoot, viz., Tejas, Ap and Anna as gods, and gods in the *Upaniṣads* do not mean the same as gods in the *Vedas*. Here gods can be taken to mean 'Spiritual' as distinct from matter. If so, then whatever exists must be spiritual. Uddālaka chose this path. This is how 'sarvam khalvidam Brahma' can be understood.

Uddālaka demonstrates the composition of Manas and Prāṇa in an extraordinary way. Given the tenor of the *Upaniṣads* and also the age to which the *Upaniṣads* belonged, what Uddālaka did is, surely, extraordinary. Warder goes to the extent of calling it an experiment. According to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, Prajāpati is made up of sixteen aspects. Of them fifteen aspects constitute Manas and the remaining aspect Prāṇa. Manas has too many aspects because it is too complex. To drive home this point, Uddālaka asks his son to go on fast for fifteen days. As a result he goes into Amnesia. It shows that mind (after all, memory is a function of mind) depends upon matter. This is what Warder calls quantitative analysis only because there is obvious reference to ratio and composition, which cannot be understood without numbers.

Is there any difficulty in accepting that whatever exists is spiritual? If Manas and Prāṇa together have sixteen aspects then 'spirit' or Caitanya also must have sixteen aspects. How can, what is not physical, possess different aspects? Secondly, if Manas, Prāṇa, etc. are spiritual, are bone, flesh, etc., which have originated from Brahman also spiritual? This may or may not be the case. But Uddālaka is silent on this issue.

*Tat tvam asi* (that is you) occurs in Uddālaka's exposition on seven occasions. It means that you are the very same Ātman, which being the most subtle and true, is also the primal source of the universe. In other words, I should feel my identity with the universe. How is this achieved? Uddālaka gives two analogies; rivers flowing from different directions to merge in sea and production of honey. In this particular case we should discover the essential characteristic of Indian philosophy. This kind of realisation of being one with Ātman-Brahman, which transcends all reason and experience, is the essence of the *Chāndogya*. This is essentially a state of mind.

A passing reference to the evolution of life is sufficient. Uddālaka considers

three classes only; Aṇḍaja (born from the egg), Jīvaja (born from the animal) and Udbhijja (plants). *Aitareya* adds one more; Swedaja (born from sweat). It is sufficient to remark that this kind of classification is the primitive form of taxonomy.

In the beginning of the sixth chapter, Uddālaka introduces an important issue. Effect is only name. But cause is fundamental. For example, chain is the effect. But gold, from which chain is made, is its material cause. Brahman is the material cause whereas the world is its effect. Goldsmith makes chains. So he is the efficient cause. Brahman is not only the material cause, but also he is the efficient cause because he (or it) has made this universe. This theory of causation, which is called Brahma Pariṇāma vāda, is the earliest theory of causation. Last element, which deserves to be mentioned, is his reference to generalization. If I can show the properties of any one object made from iron, then I can as well know the properties of all objects made from iron. This is an important topic in logic.

### **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 do you interpret the teaching of *Chāndogya* that in the beginning there was *asat* (nonbeing)?

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2. What is the meaning of *Tatvamsi* in Uddālaka's exposition?

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## **12.7 THE MEANING OF SWAPITI AND ITS RELATION TO DREAM STATE**

At the outset, two aspects should be made clear; one, the meaning of 'Swapiti' and the other, meaning of dream state. Uddālaka defines 'Swapiti' as the association of an individual with his true nature, i.e., Sat. The association of individuals with Sat becomes possible when Sat comes to be associated with Manas. Instead of Sat, we can also say self or Ātman. It means that at empirical level, all activities like, seeing, hearing, etc. owe their possibility to this association. Therefore the true nature of Sat is obliterated. This is what can be termed as bondage. Freedom from bondage consists in complete dissociation. In other words, Swapiti is realised when Sat is dissociated from Manas. The nature of Swapiti

is better understood when we understand the nature of ‘Suṣupti’! The *Upaniṣad* does not use this particular word. Instead, it uses another word ‘swapanāntam’ (end of dream state). The word Suṣupti is used by commentators. To understand the process of dissociation, it is necessary to refer to other states of Manas. In the waking state not only the nervous system is active, but also the individual is conscious of this activity. Hence waking state is characterized by conscious activity. In this state, the association with Manas is complete. In a dream state, consciousness is absent, but motor organs function. This is one difference between waking and dream states. Secondly, though motor organs function, there is a vast difference in degree. It means that the nervous system is active, but less active. Therefore even in a dream state, sat remains at empirical level. While one end of the dream state is marked by a waking state characterized by full-blooded association with the external world, the other end of the spectrum is characterized by the total withdrawal of sat from the external world. This is possible only in deep sleep. Deep sleep must have been used as an analogy by Uddālaka because deep sleep is only momentary. But when Sat is dissociated from the external world it is permanent. In this context sat is regarded as Ātman which is at the same time Brahman.

A simpler way of understanding Swapiti is to regard it as Swa-Rūpa (one’s own or true nature). When Sat regains its Swa-Rūpa, it goes beyond good and evil because good and evil are associated only with the external world. It shows that the bond, which connects Sat with Manas and through Manas the external world is not necessary but contingent. According to the *Upaniṣads*, the goal is to break this bond. Hence, whatever intellectual exercise that can be discerned in the *Upaniṣad* is propelled by this goal. Thus, the means is intellectual but the end is not. This, exactly, is the essential nature of the *Upaniṣads*.

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## 12.8 THE BONDS OF SAT

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In the previous section a reference was made to bondage and liberation from bondage. Hence it is necessary to know the nature of bondage in detail. Uddālaka recognizes six elements involved in bondage and so calls them ‘ṣaḍāyatana’ (six places). It is easy to trace the link. Manas is held captive by Prāṇa, Prāṇa by Anna, Anna by Ap and Ap by Tejas. Sat is connected through Manas in this manner with remaining elements. If Sat can break its link with Manas, then, naturally, the bondage collapses. Uddālaka clearly states how one element is bound by the other. This is quite illuminating. Food is necessary for life. Hence Prāṇa depends upon Anna. It is not sufficient if I eat food. It has to be converted to a liquid state and then mixes up with juice (rasa). Only then it is digested. Uddālaka is merely describing the metabolic process here. Water (*Ap*) is required to convert food into energy. Hence food depends upon water. The process of digestion is known as internal combustion. Directly or indirectly, internal combustion can be equated with Tejas or heat.

The bondage can be understood in this way also. Sat is the source of Tejas; Tejas is the source of *Ap* and so on. Everything else depends upon Sat but Sat itself does not depend upon anything else. This is the nature of bondage. Liberation from bondage does not really mean death. What happens after liberation is different from what happens after death. When Sat is liberated from bondage it is not affected by the external world because its link with Manas has snapped.

But this is only in one direction, i.e. Manas and Prāṇa continue to have relations with Sat for their existence. At the time of death one will merge in another; speech in Manas, Manas in Prāṇa, Prāṇa in Tejas and Tejas in Sat. And this Sat is pure or pure Being.

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## **12.9 ĀTMAN AND THE SOURCE OF THE UNIVERSE: BRAHMAN**

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Uddālaka defines the truth as the equation of ātman with the subtle essence of the world. To express this equation, Uddālaka uses what is known as ‘mahāvākya’ (cardinal statement); tat tvam asi (that thou art). Put in simple language it only means ‘That is you’. He uses analogies, when bees collect juice from different sources (here called trees), they are not preserved separately. The juices collected from different sources lose their identity when they merge in one place. But thereby they do not lose existence. Therefore identity and existence are not one and the same. In case of an individual, this awareness is lost; realisation consists not in maintaining identity but in identifying with Sat. Loss in one place is compensated by gain in another place.

Another analogy is the ‘river-sea’ analogy. When rivers enter the sea they become parts of the sea. It is impossible to differentiate water of one river from water of some other river. Rivers lose their identity only because they become identical with the sea. But (assuming that they are conscious), they are not aware of what they have lost and what they have gained.

Uddālaka uses several analogies in his long discourse. It is not necessary to mention all of them. The essence is that ignorance is the cause of seeing difference when there is none. Acquisition of knowledge is conditioned by three factors, proper guidance, ability and desire to learn. In the absence of any one of them the identity, which is under investigation cannot be realised. Acquisition of knowledge leads to liberation. Truth liberates whereas falsehood curtails freedom. Knowledge is knowing what truth is.

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## **12.10 THE SUPREME KNOWLEDGE (BHŪMĀ VIDYĀ)**

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Discussion of knowledge and truth takes us to the nature of supreme knowledge. Seventh chapter of the *Upaniṣad* begins with the assertion ‘one’ who knows, speaks the truth’ and ‘one who does not know, does not speak the truth’. How does one acquire knowledge? Act of knowing demands reflection and truth, reflection demands dedication and commitment. There are in truth, links to happiness. That which provides happiness is supreme knowledge. The Mantra says; “yo vai bhūmā tat sukham na alpe sukham asti”. It means happiness consists in achieving the highest or supreme. What is inferior does not bring in happiness. When we reach the peak there is nothing else to see, nor to hear, nor to know, where something else can be seen, etc. then, there is alpa (inferior). Obviously, this statement is the basis of reflection on Advaita. While what is inferior needs the support of something else, the ‘Supreme’ does not require any support because that itself is the base for all. This ‘Supreme’ is Ātman.

**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. Explain briefly the meaning of *Swapiti*

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**12.11 LET US SUM UP**

The *Chāndogya* is one of the earliest *Upaniṣads*. Hence there is a lot of discussion on Vedic rituals. This *Upaniṣad* forms a part of *Sāmaveda* tradition. Hence, the rituals mentioned here derive support mainly from *Sāmaveda*. *Upaniṣads* are against rituals because during transition time people still believed that the ritual is one of the means of knowing or realising Brahman. Gāyatrī is one Mantra through which Brahman can be known. There are three strata of Ākāśa; each correlated to three states of mind. Brahman also is equated with light. Tajjalān has very significant Philosophical implications. Cosmology has its roots in this principle. Uddālaka’s Cosmology is not only scientific but also it is in opposition to the Vedic account of the origin of the universe. Brahman is described in various ways, Prāṇa being regarded as the best description. Ātman is not only the source of the universe, but also the essence of man. Knowledge of one’s own self is the highest knowledge.

**12.12 KEY WORDS**

- Adage** : An adage is a short but memorable saying that holds some important fact of experience that is considered true by many people, or that has gained some credibility through its long use.
- Attribute** : An attribute is an abstraction of a characteristic of an entity or substance.
- Substance** : The word substance originates from Latin ‘substantia,’ literally meaning “standing under.” The word is a translation of the Greek philosophical term ‘ousia. It is the basic principle of an object without which the object would not exist, or what exists only by itself (causa sui).
- Thermodynamics** : Thermodynamics (from the Greek, therme =

“heat” and dynamis = “power”) is the study of the conversion of energy into work and heat and its relation to macroscopic variables such as temperature and pressure.

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### **12.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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#### **Answers to Check Your Progress I**

1. In Ākāśa, which is internal to humans, there are actually two divisions: Ākāśa inside the body and Ākāśa inside the heart. It means that there are three strata of Ākāśa. According to one interpretation, these three strata of Ākāśa correspond to the first three states of mind, jāgrat (waking state), swapna (dream state) and suṣṭi (deep sleep). While the first two states cause misery, the last one does not. Ākāśa is associated with these states and also the experience.
2. It is ‘manomaya’ (spiritual), prāṇa śarīra (consciousness), bhārūpa (bhā=light), satya saṅkalpa (positive purpose), Ākāśatma (form of Ākāśa), sarvakarma (maker of all), sarvakāma (flawless desire), sarvagandha (substratum of all pleasant odour), sarvam idam abhyatta (enveloping all), avākya (silent), anādara (unenthusiastic).

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

1. The nineteenth section of the third chapter begins with the Mantra according to which Āditya is Brahman. This Mantra says that in the beginning there was asat (nonbeing); and then it became Sat. The first statement of the Mantra

stands in need of clarification. One possible interpretation is that Asat is interpreted as avyakrit (not expressed), i.e., potential. When the universe is in an unexpressed state, it is in its potential form. At that stage, nāma rūpa bheda (name and form distinction) does not exist. In this restricted sense only it can be regarded as asat.

2. Tat tvam asi (that is you) occurs in Uddālaka's exposition on seven occasions. It means that you are the very same Ātman, which being the most subtle and true, is also the primal source of the universe. In other words, I should feel my identity with the universe, Brahman.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress III**

1. Uddālaka defines 'Swapiti' as the association of an individual with his true nature, i.e., Sat. The association of individuals with Sat becomes possible when Sat comes to be associated with Manas. In other words, Swapiti is realised when Sat is dissociated from Manas. The nature of Swapiti is better understood when we understand the nature of 'Suṣupti'! The *Upaniṣad* does not use this particular word. Instead, it uses another word 'swapanāntam' (end of dream state).



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## UNIT 13 BRHADĀRANYAKA UPANIṢAD\*

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### Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 An Overview
- 13.3 Reflection on a Core Issue
- 13.4 Philosophical Response
- 13.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.6 Key Words
- 13.7 Further Readings and References
- 13.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit you are expected to know the essential content of the *Upaniṣad* such as:

- significance of the Aśvamedha sacrifice and the creation of the Universe
- the meaning of ‘prāṇa’ (life)
- the importance of vital force
- the theme of ‘Righteousness’
- the magnanimity of Supreme Brahman
- the direction of seeking the Truth and Supreme Brahman

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### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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The *Bṛhadaranyaka* is literally translated as ‘Great-forest-teaching’. The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* is generally recognized to be the most important of the *Upaniṣads*. It forms the part of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. It illustrates an all-embracing, absolute, self-luminous and blissful reality of Brahman recognized as Ātman. The *Upaniṣad* is widely known for its philosophical statements. The whole composition of the *Upaniṣad* is in prose except for a few verses here and there. There are six chapters. They are further divided into forty seven sections called *Brāhmaṇas* and they are further divided into paragraphs called *Kaṇḍikās*. There are three major sections or *Kāṇḍa* consisting of – Madhu *Kaṇḍa* which explains the teaching of basic identity of the individual and the universal self. Muni Kanda or Yājñyavalkya *Kāṇḍa* has philosophical teachings and Khila *Kāṇḍa* narrates certain modes of worship and meditation. The aim of the *Upaniṣad* is to teach about self and thereby to show the identity of Ātman and Brahman.

## 13.2 AN OVERVIEW

The first chapter deals with Aśvamedha sacrifice and creation. It is known as Madhu Kāṇḍa. The *Upaniṣad* starts with the description of a sacrificial horse as a cosmic form. Each part of the horse is described as a divine thing in nature. And the horse has to be meditated as Prajāpati or Hiraṇyagarbha. The *Upaniṣad* says that meditating on the horse is equivalent to the horse sacrifice. There is a fable to illustrate the magnanimity of the vital force. Gods requested different organs to sing hymns for them. Once demons learnt about it they put evil to the organs and it was only the Vital force who could chant for the gods, rescued the organs from evil, fought against the death and brought victory to the gods. As an appreciation, gods offered food for vital force and all the organs agreed to be the part of the vital force.

The creator created the Universe and food. There are seven types of food created. One is the basic food for sustenance. Two foods for gods mean making libation to the gods. One is for animals – milk. The other three he retained for himself.

Second to fourth chapters are Muni Kanda or Yājñavalkya Kāṇḍa. The second chapter starts with a discussion between Ajathasathru and Gange. Ajathasathru preaches about self and explains three states of mind – waking, dream and deep sleep.

Whereas Yājñavalkya teaches, answers and speaks; about Self with his wife, scholars at the emperor Janaka's court and to the emperor Janaka himself. Yājñavalkya tells his wife Maitreyī about the knowledge of self. He says that the real self is heard, reflected on and meditated upon and thus realized. Everyone, even the gods, being and all reject the man who knows them to be different from the self, because all these are only the self. As various kinds of smoke proceed from the fire kindled with damp fuel, even so the *Veda* etc. have come out of the Supreme Self.

The Emperor Janaka performed a sacrifice and wished to give a thousand cows to a learned Vedic scholar. Yājñavalkya instructs his pupil to lead the cows to his place. And when challenged by the other scholars he answered all their questions satisfactorily.

One of the scholars asked him - what is immediate and direct, to the inner self. He replied that it is that which works in the body – ‘prāṇa, apāna, vyāna and udāna’. He further explained that it is a sun, hearer, thinker and knower in every body and it cannot be seen directly, heard, thought or known like a sense object. He said more by explaining that it does have physical or psychological emotion. The one who understands this knowledge, he too will be just such. Self knowledge he said once attained will not be lost. When asked if he is aware of ‘inner control’ and the sutra connects to it. He confirmed that he knows and said that the sutra is ‘vayu’, and explained about the inner control how it is in all beings but not acknowledged. It does not have a separate body but it is his presence that makes the body and the organs. He gave in detail the strength of the inner control,

“adrṣto draṣṭa, asrutaḥ srota, amato manta, avijñāto vijñāta . . . esa ta ātmantaryāmy amrtaḥ ato’nyad artam,” (3. 8.1)

He said, “The inner self that controls you is yourself and immortal.”

For the question which is above heaven, below the earth, which is heaven and earth both in between and which was, is and will be. Without hesitation he replies that it is ‘unmanifested ether’.

Once he was examined by the scholars, Yājñyavalkya questioned the scholars in return. He asks them: if the tree is pulled out, it springs again, from what root does man spurts after he is cut down by death. None was able to answer his question. He gave an explanation to his question by saying that Brahman, the absolute, intelligence and bliss, is the root from which a dead man is re – born.

Yājñyavalkya guides the emperor Janaka in understanding the Supreme Brahman. He tells him that recognizing the vital force, one has to understand Brahman at – the gross, subtle and causal body respectively in the state of waking, dream and deep sleep called ‘Vaisvanra, Taijasa and Prajna’. He clarifies further.

Fifth and sixth chapters form the third and the last division, Khila Kāṇḍa of the *Upaniṣad*. Khila means supplement. In the beginning of the fifth chapter, invocation is repeated. Adi Śaṅkara’s commentary says, “Brahman, which is the theme of all the *Upaniṣads*, is described once more in this Mantra to introduce what follows; for certain aids, to be presently mentioned, viz, ‘OM’. Self – restraint, charity and compassion, have to be enjoined a steps to the knowledge of Brahman – aids that, occurring in this supplementary portion, from part of all meditation.”

Some explain the Mantra thus “From the infinite causes the infinite effect is manifested. The manifested effect is also infinite or real at the present moment even in its dualistic form.

The fifth chapter introduces some of the auxiliary meditation which do not clash with rites, confer to prosperity and lead one gradually to liberation.

“tad etad evaisa daivi vag anuvadati stanayitnuh – da, da, da, iti damyata, data, dayadhvam iti. Tad etad trayam sikset, daman, danam, dayam iti.” (5. 2. 3)

There is a parable about how gods, men and demons understood one sound, ‘da’. Prajāpati taught gods, men and demons. At the conclusion of the education before leaving the Guru they asked for a final guidance from the Guru. Prajāpati said, ‘da’ and asked them how they understood the sound. Gods said ‘da’ was ‘control,’ men said it was ‘charity’, and demons said that it was ‘merciful’. At that moment they heard the rumbling of the clouds sounding, da, da, da and repeated – control, give and have compassion.

The third section has, the deeper and significance of the Prajāpati - heart, (intellect)

– hr da ya. If one meditates on these three syllables, one obtains results corresponding to the meaning of ‘hr’ receive presents, ‘da’ receive power, ‘ya’ have heavenly world. If the meditation on the three syllables is so powerful, how much more must be that on intellect itself?

Whole of fifth chapter deals with meditation and the result of such meditation. There are meditations on – Satya, Solar being, Mind, Lightning, *Vedas* as cow,

and Vaiśvānara. The main objective of these meditations is that one must have a definite goal. It is meaningless and will not yield results if one meditates on different things at a time. Meditation means concentration on one thing, deeply, regularly and with determination. The main aim of meditation is to get enlightenment.

There is an elaborate discussion about how one should be able to face illness, death and funeral. The *Upaniṣad* says that one should look at it as a penance.

The qualities, virtues and importance of the vital force are explained at different sections, with explanations and with fables. Here is a meditation on the vital force in different names. As vital force is the chief of all the organs, it has to be meditated as, “Uktha,” as it raises the universe. The one, who meditates on vital force as ‘Uktha’, will have a son who is a knower of vital force. And the one who meditates will achieve union with and abode in the same world as ‘Uktha’ then the vital force has to be meditated as “yajus,” for all the beings are joined with one another. Next one is to meditate on vital force as, ‘saman’, because it brings in the union, for him who knows it. The last one is to meditate on vital force as ‘kṣattra’, as vital force protects the wounds. The one who knows the significance of the word will not need any other protection and achieve the world of ‘kṣattra’.

The meaning and the power of Gāyatrī chandas, meter is dealt in detail. Gāyatrī is the chief of the poetic meters. Only Gāyatrī chandas have the power to protect those who chant Gāyatrī Mantra. It is a prayer to ‘Savit’, the Sun. Each pada is of eight syllables. The first pāda’s eight syllables are equivalent to – ‘bhūmi’, the earth, ‘antarikṣa, the sky, ‘dyaus’, heaven. The second pāda’s eight syllables are the same as ‘Ṛcaḥ’, ‘Yajumsi’, and ‘Sāmani’, the three treasures of knowledge, the three *Vedas*. The third pada’s eight syllables are similar to ‘prāṇa, apāna, and udāna’. And the fourth pada is ‘supermundane,’ ‘paro’raja’. It is a visible foot, because the solar being is visualized and he alone shines the entire universe. The results of knowing the whole of Gāyatrī are incalculable.

The sixth chapter opens with an allegory. The organs had a dispute among themselves and each claimed that it was ancient and very important. Finally they decided to take their dispute to Prajāpati. He said that the organ which makes the body wretched while leaving would be superior to the others. So, to test each one’s superiority, organs one by one left the body for a year and came back after that period to find out how the body was in its absence. The explanation given is very practical and beautiful. The answer carries scientific meaning. To give an example, the organs said that they lived like ‘idiots’ in the absence of mind. But still the body functioned. The last one to leave was vital force. Once it started leaving, all the organs started losing their strength. Immediately, they pleaded that the vital force should not leave the body.

“ma bhagavah utkramih, na vai saksyamas tvad ṛte jvitur ity, tasyo me balim kurutcti, tatheti.” (6. 1. 13)

They agreed that the vital force is the superior and offered food to the vital force.

There is an interesting incident about Svetaketu, son of Goutama and grandson of Aruṇa. S’vetakeru after completing his education went to the court of the king

Prajanya. The king asked him five questions and Śvetaketu failed to answer all the questions. Even then the king invited him to stay. But Śvetaketu left the court in shame and went to his father who was also his Guru and narrated what happened in the court. His father expressed his genuine ignorance about the subject talked about in the king's court. But at the same time, he decided that he had to go to the king and learn what he did not know. He invited his son to join him. But Śvetaketu refused. The father went and requested the king to take him as a student and learnt about the doctrine of five fires - of heaven, the rain gods, the world, man and woman. The king further instructed that the householder and the hermit if they meditate on these fires then they would go to Brahma loka.

### **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 does the cosmic horse symbolize?

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2. Explain briefly Yājñavalkya's difference between one God and many gods

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### **13.3 REFLECTION ON A CORE ISSUE**

The first chapter is ritualistic. At the Vedic time, Aśvamedha sacrifice was considered to be the greatest sacrifice and one who performed it would attain Brahmaloaka, the highest heaven.

In the *Upaniṣad*, the description of the sacrificing horse is symbolic. It is looked as a cosmic horse and the description brings out the psychological element that is present in the counterparts of the body of the horse, and the body of the universe outside. Ādi Śaṅkara observes that meditating on such a horse will derive the result of the horse sacrifice even without performing the sacrifice.

The universe was created as the creator was all alone and he wanted a company. He created male and female from his desire. At the same time he did not lose his entity. When the male and female took different species form, all creatures were born. The creator created Gods. Then he himself entered all his creation in a microcosm level as a vital force. Vital force guided the different organs in the body. The description of creation is both spiritual in nature and has poetic beauty.

Perhaps, the core-statement of the *Upaniṣad* is the following:

“asato mā sad gamaya, tamaso mā jyotir gamaya, mṛtyormā amṛtam gamaya.”  
(1. 3. 28)

The *Upaniṣad* says that repetition of Mantra is being given for one who knows the vital force. The one who understands the meaning of the Mantra, if one chants the Mantra the result is elevation to divinity.

The literal meaning of the Mantra is – “From unreality lead me to reality, From darkness lead me to light,

“From death leads me to immortality.”

The first two lines have deeper meaning. ‘From unreality (evil) leads me to reality (good),’ evil is death, if our thoughts and actions are evil, they will degrade us. So lead me away from that type of death. Lead me to good, good is immortality, if one follows righteousness, it will lead to divinity and that is immortality. The second line, ‘from darkness leads me to light,’ darkness is death, all ignorance, being of the nature of a veil, is darkness and it is death. And light is immortality opposite of darkness and divine in nature. Knowledge brings luminous light, an imperishable nature. The first Mantra says help me to identify myself with the means of realization, instead of with things that are not such; while the second line says, help me to move away, for it is a form of ignorance – and attain identity with the result. The third Mantra ‘from death leads me to immortality,’ gives combined meaning of the first two and it does not have any inner meaning. If the chanter knows that the vital force is identified with the Mantra, then he will be able to obtain a boon that he desires for.

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### **13.4 PHILOSOPHICAL RESPONSE**

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The *Upaniṣad* speaks of a universal Brahman and an individual soul, Ātman, and at times asserts the identity of both. Brahman is the ultimate, both transcendent and immanent, the absolute infinite existence, the sum total of all that is, was or shall be. The *Upaniṣad* brings out the mystic nature and intense philosophy, Brahman is not described as the God in a monotheistic sense but He is be all and end all, who resides within us.

The *Upaniṣad* opens with a description of a symbolic placement of the parts of the individual in the cosmic quarters, with the spiritual purpose of an individual meditation, where the subject mingles with the object. The individual mentioned here is the horse of the Aśvamedha Sacrifice, which is the object of sacred use and while, commonly considered, it is one of the items in the Aśvamedha Yajña, and it becomes a part of an external act; in the *Upaniṣad*. It becomes a piece of contemplation to transfer every object to a universal subject. It transforms the ritual technique into an inward contemplation of the spirit.

Ādi Śaṅkara and others have mentioned that the horse mentioned here is Prajāpati or a creator of the cosmos. It is not just an animal in the sacrifice. That is how one needs to look at it. So, there is a descent from casual condition to subtle condition and from subtle to gross and from gross to the variegated forms of manifestation in this world. So also the horse to be contemplated in the various aspects of its functions, and the functions are mentioned here in respect of the ritual of the Asvamedha Sacrifice.

The creation of the Universe has symbolic description. How things came, and what is that we see with our eyes. What is the connection between the effect and cause? What is our connection with the Universal Being? What is the relationship between the individual and the Absolute? All these are discussed in detail.

The *Upaniṣad* narrates how ignorance can be removed by understanding the vital force - the self. It is difficult to say when or how the ignorance comes. But the knowledge, determination to know the truth, a seeker can understand self. Once it is realized that the self is the supreme Brahman, the knower will become Brahman, there will be no distinction between the two.

“The coordination of the functions of the body, mind and vital force points to the existence of an extra corporeal being for whose sake all those exist. This is what we know as the individual self. But its nature is transcendent. Stripped of the limiting adjuncts that are superimposed by nescience, the individual self is identical with the Supreme self.

Only material things, which affect and have dimensions, come within the range of the organs, but not the Self. Similarly it is beyond all other characteristics of limited objects such as decay, relationship, bondage, pain and death.”

Ādi Śaṅkara says even though each caste is assigned with specific rituals, meditation guides to enlightenment. In the *Upaniṣad* it is repeatedly stressed on the importance of meditation and suggests that it is equivalent to rituals and brings intelligence and understanding of self. And who ignore this and depart this world with ignorance will sustain great loss, loss of enlightenment.

But to understand an Absolute with inner intelligence is challenging to the seeker. He has to understand a Brahman who is neither coarse nor fine, neither short nor long, neither redness nor oiliness, neither shadow nor darkness. He is neither ether nor air. He is without a physical form. He cannot be measured, and devoid of interior or exterior. But everything exists because of him. He is the seer, thinker, hearer, knower of all, “*etasminb nu khalv akṣara, gārgi, ākāśa otas ca protas ca.*” Brahman is reflected in the eternal and the infinite power of knowledge, He is unconditional and a pure essence of creation.

The realization of such Brahman as supreme self will lead to ‘Truth’. This truth does not come in slow pace, but like a flash of lightning. The enlightenment is instantaneous. “Not this, not this, suggests that while there is a realm which consists of the duality of subject and object, which is perceived by the intelligence to be coextensive and reciprocally necessary, there is absolute unity from which all dualities proceed, which is itself above duality. .... Many systems of thought distinguish between the absolutely transcendent Godhead, ‘who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto’ and the creator God. In this famous passage of ‘*na iti na iti,*’ the *Upaniṣad* speaks to us of the absolute transcendent non – empirical Godhead.” (S. Radhakrishnan)

The *Upaniṣad* takes the readers to examine the depth of perfection in them and see the purity within to realize Brahman. The means to this end is ‘Knowledge Truth, Righteousness, and understanding the magnanimity of the Heart.’ If one is determined and honest in seeking the enlightenment, one is sure to experience the power of Supreme Brahman within.

### 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 difference between ritual performance and meditation?

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2. Write a brief note on the significance of 'OM.'

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### 13.5 LET US SUM UP

The *Upaniṣad* starts with Asvamedha sacrifice; the horse is compared to the cosmic Being and says that each part of the horse has to be meditated upon in relation to cosmic beings. Starting from the horse it takes to the creation of the Universe. There was nothing whatsoever here in the beginning. From nothing everything started, the creation of a beautiful universe. And the magnanimity of life is 'Prāṇa.' Self, Ātman is superior to everything else.

The *Upaniṣad* covers rituals, enthralling description of the creation of the universe. It has interesting fables to make the reader understand the importance of Vital force. The creation of 'Righteousness; is fascinating and beautiful. It brings out how Righteousness is the answer to seek the 'Truth' and Brahman. There are intellectual discourses to emphasize the magnanimity of Supreme Brahman. Literal and inner meaning of the sound 'da' word 'food,' and Mantra, astomā sadgamaya...' are narrated in a highly significant way.

The *Upaniṣad* successfully narrates that the meditation is as powerful as the ritual. Various meditations are given and the results of such meditations are stressed. There is a lengthy discussion on 'Gayathi' meter.

The *Upaniṣad* is successful in helping the reader to work in the direction of seeking the Truth and Supreme Brahman.

### 13.6 KEY WORDS

**Aśvamedha** : The Ashvamedha (horse sacrifice) was one of the most important royal rituals of Vedic religion, described in detail in the Yajurveda (YV TS 7.1-5, YV VSM 22–25 and the pertaining commentary in the Shatapatha

*Brāhmaṇa* ŚBM 13.1–5). The *Ṛgveda* does have descriptions of horse sacrifice, notably in hymns RV 1.162-163 (which are themselves known as *aśvamedha*), but does not allude to the full ritual according to the *Yajurveda*.

**Hiraṇyagarbha** : Hiraṇyagarbha (literally the golden fetus or golden womb) is the source of the creation of the Universe or the manifested cosmos in Indian philosophy. It finds mention in one hymn of the *Ṛgveda* (RV 10.121), known as the *Hiraṇyagarbha sūkta* and presents an important glimpse of the emerging monism, or even monotheism, in the later Vedic period, along with the *Nāsadiya sūkta* suggesting a single creator deity predating all other gods (verse 8: *yó devév ādhi deva éka âsit*, Griffith: “He is the God of gods, and none beside him.”), in the hymn identified as *Prajāpati*. The *Upaniṣads* call it the Soul of the Universe or Brahman, and elaborates that Hiraṇyagarbha floated around in emptiness and the darkness of the non-existence for about a year, and then broke into two halves which formed the *Swarga* and the *Ṙthvi*.

**Macrocosm and Microcosm** : Macrocosm/microcosm is a Greek compound of “Macro” and “Micro”, which are Greek respectively for “large” and “small,” and the word *Kosmos* means “order” as well as “world” or “ordered world”.

**Prajāpati** : In Hinduism, *Prajāpati* (Sanskrit *praja-pati* means “Lord of creatures”) is a Hindu deity presiding over procreation, and protector of life. He appears as a creator deity or supreme god above the other Vedic deities in RV 10.121.10 and in *Brāhmaṇa* literature. Vedic commentators also identify him with the creator referred to in the *Nāsadiya Sūkta*.

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## 13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The main tenor of the *Upaniṣad* is ritualism and it is characteristic of the *Brāhmaṇas* in the *Vedas*. The description of the cosmic horse is entirely symbolic, and highly complicated to understand, as the purpose of the *Upaniṣad* is to bring out the psychological element that is present in the comparison that is made between physical counterparts of the body of the horse, and the body of the universe.
2. Yājñavalkya's answers help in immediate and direct understanding of Brahman. There are references to the contraction and expansions of different gods who are ruled by it. Yājñavalkya explains that gods are nothing but manifestations of the one God – Hiraṇyagarbha, who is the cosmic aspect of Vital force. He expands into countless gods and contracts into one entity.

Answering about the number of gods, Yājñavalkya says vasus are fire, the earth, air, the sky, the sun, heaven, the moon and stars. Rūdras are ten organs in man and the mind. Ādityas are twelve months. Thunder is Indra and sacrifice is Prajāpati. Thunder-cloud is the thunderbolt. Sacrifice is an animal. The six gods are the fire, the earth, the air, the sky, the sun and heaven. Three gods are three worlds. The two gods are matter and vital force and one and half a god is air that blows.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Meditation is one of the best ways to attain enlightenment. Meditation is effective and important like rituals. The difference between rituals and meditation is the following: for a ritual performance, one has to find a place for performing the ritual, determine auspicious time, get chanters, follow rigid discipline, and prepare offerings to the gods; whereas meditation does not need most of these things. One has only to meditate for a specific duration of time, and the time suitable to one's own convenience. Of course, self-discipline is necessary. One has to meditate every day with determination and dedication. The end result of both is the same, realizing Brahman.
2. Usually meditation needs a word. 'OM' is a powerful word for the same. Meditative repetition of the same is the best way of realizing Brahman. Even though Brahman and Ātman are the names of the same reality, it is said that OM is its most intimate appellation. Therefore, it is the best means to realize Brahman. It is both a symbol and a name.

