



IMPORTANCE OF STUDY OF UPANISHADS IN THIS YUGA, A TANTRIC VIEW.

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ABSTRACT

The *Upanishads* are the teachings imparted by a *Guru* to his student sitting by his side [sitting at his feet]. This also means “that which takes one to the *Brahman*”. If a student sits close to the teacher when he is receiving instruction it means that a *Rahasya* (a secret or a mystery) is being conveyed to him. *Upanishad* is explained by

Samipasadana, sitting down near a person. Another explanation proposed by *Sankara* in his commentary on the *Taitiriya Upanishad*, *Param Sreyo Syam Nishannam*. The *Kali Yuga* dwarf finds himself a prey to the glamour of phenomena and the allurements of the senses. Not having spiritual insight, he takes the unreal for the real. The essence of *Upanishadic* message is the burning desire to be free from Time and Space.

KEYWORDS: *Upanishads, Brahman, Varnam.*

INTRODUCTION

How *Upanishad* became the recognized name of the philosophical treatises contained in the *Veda* is difficult to explain. Most European scholars are agreed in deriving *Upani-shad* from the root *Sad*, to sit down, preceded by the two prepositions *Ni*, down, and *Upa* near, so that it would express the idea of session, or assembly of pupil sitting down near their teacher to listen to his instruction. In the *Trikandasesha*, *Upanishad* is explained by *Samipasadana*, sitting down near a person. Another explanation proposed by *Sankara* in his commentary on the *Taitiriya Upanishad*, *Param Sreyo Syam Nishannam*. The *Upanishads*, no doubt, were

meant to destroy ignorance and passion, and nothing seemed more natural therefore than their etymological meaning should be that of destroyers.^[1]

The history and the genius of Sanskrit language leave little doubt that *Upanishad* meant originally session, particularly a session consisting of pupils, assembled at a respectful distance round their teacher. The secrets of the *Upanishads* were handed down only from Guru to Disciple for thousands of years and at the present time the translations of the *Upanishads* originally written in Sanskrit are available in all principal languages of the world. The *Upanishads* are the aggregate of the treatises of the ancient sages in India and those are made available to the whole world for serving the cause of humanity. The identity of the *Brahman* and *Àtman* with God, and the entire doctrine of the *Upanishads* centers round the soul.^[1]

Upanishad consists of a series of religious and philosophical treatises, written in Sanskrit, concluding the exposition of the *Vedas*. The Philosophy of the *Upanishads* forms the essential basis for culmination in the Indian Doctrine of the Universe. The *Upanishads* are also called “*Vedanta*” the concluding part of the *Vedas*. Decidedly for the Indian minds the *Upanishads* are a great source for deriving the metaphysical products in terms of Transdental philosophy.^[1]

Purpose of *Upanishad*

Upanishads investigate the nature of reality & their principal conclusion is that in both the universe of large & in the individual human being there is a ground of pure being which is impervious to change. To realize this being in oneself means Salvation. i.e. the cycle of rebirth.

The *Upanishads* where first translated from Sanskrit into Persian by, or it may be Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Shahjehan, an enlightened Prince, who openly professed the liberal religious tenets of the great Emperor Akbar, and even wrote a book intended to reconcile the religious doctrines of Hindus and Mohammedans. He seems first to have heard of the *Upanishads* during his stay in Kashmir in 1640. He afterwards invited several Pandits from Benares to Delhi, who were to assist him in the work of translation. The translation was finished in 1657.^[1]

When the *Upanishads* have once been translated from Sanskrit into Persian, at that time the most widely read language of the East and understood like -wise by many European Scholars, they became generally accessible to all who took an interest in the religious literature of India. Anquetil Duperron, the famous traveller and discoverer of the Zend-avesta, received one MS, of the Persian translation of the *Upanishads*. After receiving another MS, he collected the two and translated the Persian translation into French (not published) and into Latin. The Latin translation was published in 1801 and 1802, in 2 volumes.^[1]

'If the reader has also received the benefit of the *Vedas*, the access to which by means of the *Upanishads* (Oupnekhat) is in my eyes the greatest privilege which this still young century (1818) may claim before all previous centuries, (for I anticipate that the influence of Sanskrit literature will not be less profound than the revival of Greek in the fourteenth century).' By F. Max. Muller.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy clung to the *Upanishads*, that he translated them into Bengali, Hindi, and English, and published them at his own expense. It was because he recognized in them seeds of eternal truth, and was bold enough to distinguish between what was essential in them and what was not. (*Upanishads* the Holy spirit of *Vedas*- Eleven classical *Upanishads* selected by *Àdi Sankaracharya* edited by F.Max Muller).^[1]

The *Upanishads* explained in *Sanatana Dharma*.

In other countries philosophers try to apprehend the truth on an intellectual plane. The *Upanishadic* enquiry is different, its purpose being to realize inwardly the truth perceived by the mind or the intellect. How are the *Upanishads* different from other philosophical systems? The *Upanishads* consists of *Mantras*, Sacred Syllables, and their sound is instinct with power. This power transforms the truths propounded by them into an intellectual inquiry. Here, in the *Vedas* –in the *Karmakanda* (the first part of the *Vedas*)- a way of life is prescribed for the seeker with actions and duties calculated to discipline and purify him. After leading such a life and eventually forsaking all action, all *Vedic karma*, he meditates on the truths of the *Upanishads*. Instead of being mere ideas of intellectual perception, these truths then become a living reality. The highest of these truths is that there is no difference between the individual self and the *Brahman*.

The four principal *Mantras*, (the four *Mahavakyas*), occur in four different *Upanishads*. Many are the rites that you have to perform, many are the prayers you have to recite, and

many are the ways of life you are enjoined to follow- all these according to the *Vedas*. But when it comes to achieving the highest ideal, the Supreme goal of man, you have no alternative to the *Upanishads* and their *Mahavakyas*.

The *Vedas* find their final expression in the *Upanishads*. Indeed, the *Upanishads* are called “*Vedanta*”. They form the final part of *Vedas* in two ways. The *Upanishads* throw light on the meaning and purpose of the *Vedas* and represent the end of the Scripture in more than one sense; while their text forms the concluding part of the *Vedas*, their meaning represents the ultimate truth of the same. The *Upanishads* are the summit of our philosophical {and metaphysical} system.^[2]

Upa-ni-shad means to “sit near by”. The *Upanishads* are the teachings imparted by a *Guru* to his student sitting by his side [sitting at his feet]. This also means “that which takes one to the *Brahman*”. If a student sits close to the teacher when he is receiving instruction it means that a *Rahasya* (a secret or a mystery) is being conveyed to him. Such teachings are not meant to be imparted to those who are not sufficiently mature and who are not capable of cherishing their value. What is held to be a secret in the *Vedas* is called a *Rahasya*.^[2]

Essence of Upanishadic teaching.

The essence of *Upanishadic* message is the burning desire to be free from time and space. It would be in proportion to the extent to which we burn within in our endeavor to be free from the spatio- temporal factor that we will be rewarded with the grace of *Isvra* and be lead towards the fulfillment of the great ideal.^[2]

There is no need to go the mountains or to the forest for instructions. Space and Time teach us how to remain unaffected by events. All that we need to do is to pray to Lord and make an effort to develop the will and capacity to put happenings of the moment back in time and distant in space.^[2]

We have two enemies who prevent us from reaching the state of *Amruta* (deathlessness): according to *Gita* they are ‘desire’ and ‘anger’. The first is denoted by desire, or *Kama*, the second by anger (*Krodha*). An *Upanishads* says that one who has no body (that is one who is not conscious of his body) is not affected either by desire or by anger. That is (it says) : “ if you wish to be free from the evils of desire and anger you ought to free yourself of your body right now when you are yet in this world.”^[2]

We are more conscious of our body when we are engaged in evil actions than otherwise. By thinking about evil matters the mind becomes coarser. Instead, if we perform *Vedic* sacraments and worship and chant *Vedic Mantras* for the wellbeing of the world, the desires of the body and the mind will wane. Eventually we will develop the maturity and wisdom to gain inner vision. In this way we will obtain release itself. Release from what? From *Samsara*, from the cycle of birth and rebirth. When we realize that the body and mind are not ‘we’, and when we become free from them- as mentioned in *Upanishads* – we are liberated from worldly existence.^[2]

We need all types of knowledge.

We must make good use of our brain and mind. Indeed, we make them sharp as if by frequent honing so that they will help us in finding the truth. (Introduction of Hindu *Dharma*)^[2]

Principles of Tantra.

Mankind in the *Kali Yuga* have, by the efflux of cyclic time, dwindled into pygmies, both physically and spiritually, though, by the law of evolution, their intellectual capacity has increased. But it is not through intellect alone that spirit can march on its career of spiritual progress. A man, however great in intellectual accomplishments, may yet be a child so far as his spiritual nature is concerned. To activate the spirit, it is necessary to withdraw to a considerable extent his mind from the senses and the brain, which are the instruments of intellectual culture.^[3]

The *Kali Yuga* dwarf finds himself a prey to the glamour of phenomena and the allurements of the senses. Not having spiritual insight, he takes the unreal for the real, the evanescent for the eternal, bondage for freedom, and identifying himself with the body and the lower mind, makes of himself, inspite of his intellectual acumen, in spite even of the Upanishadic, Vedantic, and philosophic lore, a being who, so far as spirituality is concerned, is not far above the animal kingdom. Not having the strength nor the longevity to pursue the arduous Vaidik spiritual training, man would find himself in a very precarious state, and the Devine scheme of spiritual evolution would be frustrated, had not provision suitable to the times, been made for his Salvation.^[3]

The divine mother, *Adisakthi*, in her unbounded compassion for her children and in concert with the Devine Father, *Mahadeva*, therefore revealed the *Agamas* and *Nigamas* for the salvation of humanity. These *Agamas* and *Nigamas* are called as *Tantra*. The *Tantra* which is

known as *Mantra Sastra* is an exact science, and does not shrink from the severest test which may be applied to it. Use a mantra under the direction of a competent Guru, and you will acquire direct evidence of its efficaciousness.^[3]

Our hereditary professional Gurus initiate us with sacred *Bija Mantra* and *Gayatri Mantra* and teach us *Mantras* for the worshipping of our *Ishta devata*. If *Mantra* be a Sound Power, it must be yield the result sought for as soon as it is pronounced. Now, electricity is a physical force which has been imprisoned, so to say, in various sources of mechanical contrivances in order to produce various results. There are books which describe these contrivances and prescribe their uses. Can anyone, by mere reading of the books, handle these machineries and produce the desired results? If such be the case in dealing with physical forces, how much more is practical instruction necessary for the handling of spiritual and physical forces?

Varnas

The fifty *Varnas* are fifty sounds of the Sanskrit language, or rather of the primitive language of which Sanskrit is the modification. These articulate sounds have been represented in different languages by different symbols; and, according to the divergent conformations of the vocal organs of different races inhabiting different zones of the earth, they are pronounced differently. For instance, the first sound of the vowels is symbolized by 'AW' in Sanskrit, 'a' in Greek, 'I' in Arabic, and so on. It is present 'AW' in Sanskrit and derived languages in India, a in English, Alpha in Greek, Aliph in Arabic and so on. These are very subtle things, effulgent and chromatic. They are living energies, which human thought prompts to expression through the vocal organ. When the seat of sound – that is, the vehicle of Mother *Kundalini*- is penetrated by the active principle (*Rajas*) of *Prakrti* the sound is called *Dhvani*. *Dhvani* penetrated by the inert principle (*Tamas*) is called *Nada*.^[3]

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