

## CONCEPT OF ONENESS AND HUMAN VALUES IN UPANIṢADS

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The strong wish and ardent desire of every Indian is to "let all the people be happy and live in peace. This broader vision can be achieved only when people are psychologically prepared to respect each other, foster cooperation and co-existence, and are aware of their duties to society and others. Only then the concept of world peace will be established. Here, the spiritual unification of mankind is required. The Upaniṣads, considered sacred scriptures preach the idea of spiritual unity i.e. the Atman exists equally in all beings, animate and

inanimate, including trees, birds, beasts and humans. Aitareyopaniṣad states-

अण्डजानि जारुजानि स्वेदजानि उद्भिजानि च अश्वाः गावः पुरुषाः हस्तिनोन्यच्च यत्किञ्चेदं प्राणिजातं सर्वं तदशेषतः प्रजानेत्रम्। तद् ब्रह्म।<sup>1</sup>

Physical, mental and spiritual freedom are the slogans of the Upaniṣads. Freedom of thought and inquiry is taken for granted in the Upaniṣadic tradition. Hence, the Upaniṣads have an egalitarian outlook i.e. holding the principle of equal rights for all creatures.

Finding ways to mitigate global miseries and establish peace is the starting point of all Indian philosophies. We have our own way of seeking peace, through our personal efforts by following a dhārmic way of life, by resolving to maintain cordial relations with one another in every field of activity. Every Upaniṣad begins with śānti mantras and ends with the indication of three miseries namely adhyātmika, ādhibhoutika and ādhidaivika. Hence śānti is recited three times to allay these three sorrows. Sayana in his bhāṣya on Taittiriya Āraṇyaka

Says: विघ्नाश्च त्रिविधाः आध्यात्मिकाः आधिभौतिकाः आधिदैविकाः । तेषां त्रयाणाम् उपशमनाय त्रिः शान्तिः पठ्यते।

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<sup>1</sup> Kāṭhōpaniṣad -1-2-1.

Every individual experiences pain, which is a specific modification of rajas. The Upaniṣad mantra अन्यच्छ्रेयोऽन्यदुतैव प्रेयस्ते उभे नानार्थे - - हीयतेऽर्थाद्या उप्रेयो वृणीते।<sup>2</sup> contains the key to understanding the secret of humanity's current sorrows and sufferings. The śreyas as well as the preyas both bind the man. The result of preyas is abhyudaya, the worldly pleasure, whereas niḥśreyasa is freedom from bondage i.e. bliss. Hence he who chooses the divine i. e. śreyas triumphs while the chooser of preyas fails. Mundane bliss is an aid to the comprehension of the bliss i. e. Brahman. स य एष निर्दिश्यते ब्रह्मानन्दानुगमार्थम्।

Śrī Śankara says- even the mundane bliss is a minute portion of the bliss i.e. Brahmānanda लौकिकोऽप्यानन्दो ब्रह्मानन्दस्यैव मात्रा।<sup>3</sup> According to Chāndogyopaniṣad there are two levels of enjoyment- the un measurable or the great (भूमा ) and the measurable or the small(अल्प). यो वै भूमा तत्सुखं नाल्पे सुखमस्ति।<sup>4</sup>

It is clearly stated by Naciketus in Kaṭhopyaniṣad- No amount of money or material possessions can satisfy a human being.

Vedic Ṛṣis also prayed for world peace- "Let there be peace and peace alone to me. By that peace, peace everywhere, I cause peace for myself for all and for all the quadruped. शान्तिरेव शान्तिः शान्तिर्मेऽस्तु शान्तिः । तयाहं शान्त्या सर्वशान्त्या मह्यं द्विपदे चतुष्पदे च शान्तिं करोति।<sup>5</sup>

Numerous śānti mantras express the intention that all pancamahābhūtas should give śānti without harming any creatures in the world. The Upaniṣad, or Indian culture as a whole, are founded on the doctrine of unity of all life, one source and one essence and one goal. This unity is underlying the apparent diversity of race, religion, language, philosophy and art and custom in the life of Indian people. Man has to begin from his own self, the cosmic spirit is to be realized within one's own being i.e. the true part of adhyātma. He is obligated to uphold high moral standards while dealing with the fellow being and with every creature on earth because every being has its right in this world.

<sup>2</sup> Kaṭhopyaniṣad -I-2-1.

<sup>3</sup> Taittiriyaopaniṣad Śānkarabhāṣya - II-8-4.

<sup>4</sup> Chāndogyopaniṣad -VII-23-1

<sup>5</sup>Yajurveda Brāhmaṇam.

Chāndogyopaniṣad says एषां सर्वेषां भूतानां पृथिवी रसः। The concept 'the world is the shelter to all creatures'- makes one a samyagdarśī.

A samyagdarśī perceives the Atman alone in all entities, from the avyakta down to the unmoving; in other words, he does not distinguish anything from the Atman and sees the Atman in all beings. He perceives even the Atman of all those beings as his own Atman. Such persons have no hatred to anyone- यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्यनुपश्यति। सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते।<sup>6</sup> A similar idea can be seen in Parasara smṛti. Parasara says: one who wants to be happy should feel that others also are like himself, and that the happiness and misery of others also are like those of himself-यथैवात्मा परस्तद्वद्द्रष्टव्यः सुखमिच्छता । सुखदुःखानि तुल्याति यथात्मनि तथापरे।

A samyagdarśī realizes the fact that prāṇa is equal to all-समत्वं प्राणस्य। Prāṇa is equivalent to the bodies of a small bee, a gnat, and an elephant. It is also equivalent to these three worlds and to this universe, i.e. the form of the Hiraṇyagarbha. As it is equal to all it is called as śama - समः प्लुषिणा पुत्तिकाशरीरेण समो मशकेन मशकशरीरेण - - -समो नेन

जगद्रूपेण हैरण्यगर्भेण।<sup>7</sup>

As long as the sense of duality persists one may perceive the other, but when the whole thing becomes Atman the possibility of seeing the other as a different entity disappears- यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं पश्यति। यत्र त्वस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत् केन कं जिघ्रेत् केन कं पश्येत्।<sup>8</sup>We feel plurality in various realms of our life. However, these distinctions only reflect the manifoldness of the same reality. That is involved in them and also complimentary e.g. tree as a whole is reflected in different forms, root, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Even though they differ in colour form and quality we feel the oneness within them. In our Upanisads like Katha, Chāndogya, Bṛhadārṇyaka etc. it is reiterated again and again that the ultimate reality behind the diverse forms of the material world is an undivided unity- a single force which is the very essence of created existence. In the Chāndogyopaniṣad this thought of oneness is shown through the nyagrodha phala dṛṣṭhānta.<sup>9</sup> Through this example the wise

<sup>6</sup> Īśavāsyopaniṣad - VII.

<sup>7</sup> Bṛhadārṇyakopaniṣad- I 3-22.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid - II-4-14.

<sup>9</sup> Chāndogyopaniṣad - VI-12-1.

man experiences the unity of life which is concealed in the universe i.e. Brahma tatvam.

The śāntimantra ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते- - - upholds a scientific truth. The words ॐ पूर्णमदः means that the un-manifested Parabrahma is full- पूर्ण . The words पूर्णमिदं means that this manifested relative is full. There is only one thing, the Absolute, from which the universe and all of its various systems descended. The relative has no independent existence apart from the absolute and all this dṛśyaprapanca should merge into the absolute at the end. There are many Upaniṣadic mantras which indicate oneness of Ātman- ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम्।<sup>10</sup> इदं सर्वं यदयमात्मा<sup>11</sup> ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वम्।<sup>12</sup> अयमात्मा ब्रह्मा।<sup>13</sup>

How can we realize this oneness? Kaṭhōpaniṣad says that nobody can attain Brahman with mere theoretical knowledge without turning away from evil character, without being tranquil, without practice trance and without controlling his mind. So Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad advises us to enjoy whatever we get with a sense of sacrifice. Do not aspire for someone else' wealth- तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः। The ultimate moral ideal of the Upaniṣads is complete self- abnegation, the utter renunciation of all selfish and personal desires. One who is in this state of inner purity, there is no longer thought of 'me' and 'mine.' So the śānti mantra says: ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं अक्षभिः यजत्राः। i.e. may we hear what is auspicious, see what is auspicious, and enjoy the life which is granted to us. Here "we" is used instead of 'I.'

Numerous life principles put forward by the Upaniṣads are assists in achieving peace. Universal love, ahimsa and daya(compassion) is the first principle of life. Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad says that one should practice Dama, Dana and daya.<sup>14</sup> While explaining the importance of these three qualities Śrī Śankara quotes the Bhagavadgīta śloka-त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं- - - कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभः तस्मादेतत्रयं त्यजेत्।<sup>15</sup> which means passion, anger and greed are three types of the gate to hell which destroys a person, therefore one should give up them. He also states that the three virtues Dama, Dana,

<sup>10</sup> Muṇḍakopaniṣad.

<sup>11</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad - II- 4-6.

<sup>12</sup> Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad - I.

<sup>13</sup> Mandukyopaniṣad- I-2.

<sup>14</sup> Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad - V-2-2-3.

<sup>15</sup> Bhagavadgīta - XVI-21.

and Daya should be cultivated by human beings only. There are no Devas and Asuras different from Manuṣyas - न देवा असुरा वा अन्ये केचन विद्यन्ते मनुष्येभ्यः। Among the human beings themselves, those who are passionate but endowed with other positive traits are called Devas. The greedy are the manuṣyas, and the men of cruel nature are the Asuras, who are under the influence of satva, rajas, and tamas respectively.

Controlling and eliminating greed as implied by the words asteya and aparigraha and practicing contentment is the second principle. The third one, as indicated by the word "Brahmacarya," is the control of passions, especially lust. Hence, in the Upaniṣads life has been depicted as a form of yajña in which austerities, charities, non-violence and truthfulness are said to be the real offerings- अथ यत्तपो दानमार्जवमहिंसा सत्यवचनमिति ता अस्य दक्षिणाः।<sup>16</sup> Dharma means that which sustains all. It always keeps the good of the others. Mahabharata says: Only he who is always benevolent to all the people and is kindly disposed towards all by mind, word and deed knows dharma, not others. So our prayer must be for developing an egalitarian outlook and establishing peace in the world keeping it as the highest goal of our lives. It will be possible only through the knowledge of the unity of Brahman which is the settled fact reflected in the Upaniṣads of all recensions.

We should follow the path of dharma and develop an egalitarian outlook. A person who upholds the principle of equal rights for all people, while also loving and respecting other species is said to be an egalitarian. Following the dhārmic way of life, if everyone does his duty without transgressing into the lawful rights of others, peace is bound to be well established and there would be no occasion for the use of even the minimum amount of force. The will as conceived by the Upaniṣads has in it an element of complete freedom, a power sufficient to enable a man to act in direct opposition to the spontaneous tendency of his accumulated character and therefore to control his future.

Upaniṣad depicts a clear picture of the morality of that society, for example in the 5th chapter of Chāndogyopaniṣad King Asvapati explains the morality of his state Kekaya to the priests who approached him in quest of Vaiswanara vidya. He says: there is no thief in my country, none does not give charity in spite of being rich, no drunkard, none who does not maintain the fire, who is not learned and none who approaches the wives of

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<sup>16</sup> Chāndogyopaniṣad - III-17-4.

others. There cannot be a woman with bad character नमे स्तेनो जनपदे न कदर्यो न मद्यपो नानाहिताग्निर्नाविद्वान्न स्वैरी स्वैरिणी।

Upaniṣadic statements like सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम्। सत्यमेव जयते। etc. indicate that man's selfrestraint should benefit the world. It also says बलेन लोकस्तिष्ठति। Here Bala means ātmabala. Self-knowledge is neither information nor direct experience; it represents essentially freedom from self-ignorance. Atman deep hidden in all beings is not revealed to all but to the seers pure in heart concentrated in mind- to them is he revealed-संस्कृतस्य हि विशुद्धसत्वस्य आत्मज्ञानम् अञ्जसा एव उपजायते।<sup>17</sup> This brilliance arises from good conduct, so Upaniṣads proclaim that everyone should gain spiritual as well as material knowledge विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह। अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते। which means through avidyā- karma such as agnihotra etc. one transcends mortality- Mṛtyu. And by devatopasana he attains amṛtatvam. In contrast to material knowledge, which is the freedom of the senses, spiritual knowledge is the freedom from the senses. Upaniadic philosophy is characterized by a symbiotic link between the spiritual and material, microcosmic and macrocosmic, physical and psychical.

Economic planning and scientific understanding alone are perceptibly insufficient to guarantee happiness to all. It is also necessary to have a fundamental educational plan to produce a sufficient number of youths of good character who are also learned, resolute, morally and physically fit. The education system in the Upaniṣads is an appropriate model for this era as it trains the disciple not only as an individual to follow the ethical path for personal progress but also to care for the elders, the teachers, the guests and the world around him

मातृदेवो भव। पितृदेवो भव। आचार्यदेवो भव। अतिथिदेवो भव।

In this era, the awareness of the importance of the essential values to lead a proper life would produce a new generation of responsible citizens. Let each one of us remember the upaniṣadic mantra युवा स्यात् साधु युवा ध्यायकः आशिष्टो दृढिष्टो बलिष्ठः तस्येवं पृथिवी सर्वा वित्तस्य पूर्णा स्यात् स एको मानुष आनन्दः।<sup>18</sup> Suppose there is young man- in the prime of life, good, learned, most expeditious, most strongly built and most energetic. Suppose there lies this earth for him filled with wealth. This will be one unit of human joy i.e. world

<sup>17</sup> Taittiriyaopaniṣad- I-11.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid- II- 8-1.

peace- रसो वै सः । यद्वै तद् सुकृतम्। This peace is indicated by the happiness of the society in which individuals join. The peace of society creates the conditions for the peace of the nation and this universe.

The whole universe has consciousness as its eye. It is the foundation of the cosmos प्रजानेत्रो लोकः। प्रजा प्रतिष्ठा। प्रजानं ब्रह्म।<sup>19</sup> It reminds us of the vedic concept यत्र विश्वं भवत्यैकनीडम्। world as a single nest. The egalitarianism promoted by the Upaniṣads can be used to make this concept of oneness a reality. Even though an abrupt change in this world is not possible, for the better by improving ourselves and by doing so, the world will change. Therefore, let's elicit each individual to engender unity among all beings by adhering to the egalitarianism that is explicated in the upaniṣadic literature.

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