

The concept of atman in the upanishads religion essay



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Upanishads are regarded as the beginning of philosophy of Indian.

Indubitably, Upanishads have some of the earliest detailed discussion concerning topics of philosophy like the nature of existence and the self.

Disagreements have emerged on whether or not the Upanishads themselves really constitute philosophy as well as about what is their status within the later Indian philosophical tradition. This study looks at the main ideas presented by the texts and some of their most important influences on successive philosophical developments in India. The analysis part of this study briefly reflects on the whether the Upanishads are pre-philosophical basis or are simply the philosophy for subsequent traditions (Vess 45).

The research indicates that no any other book exist in the entire world that is as soul-stirring, inspiring as well as breathtaking as the Upanishad. The Upanishads philosophical teachings have been the source of comfort for many people in the West and in the East. The human understanding has not succeeded in imagining anything that is sublime and noble in the world's history than the Upanishads teachings. The Upanishads has the Vedas essence and are the ultimate and the source of philosophy of the Vedanta. Philosophical, original, sublime and lofty thoughts come up from all verses. They have the direct religious revelations and experiences of sages. They are the highest divine knowledge and products of the main wisdom thus they rouse the people's hearts and motivate them always.

The Upanishadic grandeur and glory cannot be sufficiently described in mere words as these words are finite and the language used to describe them is flawed. Solace and peace of mankind that prevail in the whole world has been contributed by the Upanishads. They are exceedingly soul-stirring and

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elevating. Millions of contenders have drawn motivation and direction from these Upanishads. They form part of the Vedas and are fortunes of incalculable worth. Apart from being rich in deep philosophical thought, they have great intrinsic value. Their beautiful language brings out the immense meaning hidden in the verses and passages. The Upanishads offer a vivid depiction of the Atman nature and the supreme soul in different ways and explain suitable techniques that assist in attaining the everlasting Brahman which is the utmost Purusha.

It is long since they were first offered to the universe. Yet up to now, they are still surprisingly charming and sweet. Their freshness is unique. Their aroma is penetrating and it makes more difficult for some people to live nowadays without studying them on daily basis. It is alleged that Schopenhauer who is a famous philosopher from the West, constantly had the Upanishads book and had a habit performing his commitments from its pages prior to going to bed. This philosopher said that there is no any other study that is as valuable and inspiring as the Upanishads. The Upanishads are considered to have undeniably exercised and still carries on in exercising a significant influence on the Indian religion and philosophy. They give a view of realism that certainly satisfies man's philosophic, scientific together with the religious aspirations.

The self (atman) is among the most broadly discussed topics during both the late and early Upanishads. During the earliest appearances in text, atman was utilized as a reflexive pronoun the same way 'self' term is used in English. However, this word changed its meaning, occasionally referring to ultimate reality, a life-force, consciousness, material body and even implying <https://assignbuster.com/the-concept-of-atman-in-the-upanishads-religion-essay/>

something like a soul during the time of early Upanishads and that of late Brahmanas. While atman does not contain a single consistent meaning among all of its appearances in text, there exists a considerable reliability as to atman meaning in accordance to any teacher in particular. In fact, it is conceivably more fruitful to regard as the Upanishads more collected works of teachings from dissimilar teachers than to deem them as integrated texts. Different Upanishads do not only have detectably diversified philosophical agendas but also it is implied that these teachers compete on who owns the best self teaching (Vess 45). These teachers frequently pits against each other to secure patronage, enlist students along with winning public competitions in debating.

One of the main famous self teachings appears in the Upanishad's Chandogya as the Uddalaka Arugi's instruction to Svetaketu who is his son. Uddalaka starts by elucidating that one can be familiar with the universal of a material stuff from a specific object that is made from that substance. That is by means of knowing anything made from clay, someone will know clay; through means of knowing an ornament made from copper, an individual will get to know copper; through means of knowing a nail cutter made from iron, one will come to know iron. Uddalaka makes use of these exemplars to give explanations that material things are not made from nothing, but describes creation as a transformation process of a creative being (sat) that emerges into the diversity that describes our experiences of everyday. The explanation of Uddalaka concerning creation is presupposed to have swayed the theory of satkaryavada. This is the theory that was accepted by the

Yoga, Samkhya and Vedanta darsanas that says that the effect subsists within the cause.

Soon after Uddalaka's instruction to Svetaketu, he made a sequence of inferences from a number of comparisons that have empirically observable accepted phenomena to give explanation on self as a non-material essence that is present in every living being. First, he made use of nectar as an example. He described that bees collect nectar from dissimilar sources, but as this nectar is gathered together, it turns out to be a single unit. Equally, water that is evidently seen flowing from rivers that are different joins together when they arrive at the ocean. These examples are utilized to show that the self will one day finally merge into the new being (sat). Svetaketu is asked by Uddalaka to carry out two experiments. With the first experiment, Uddalaka gives him instruction to make a cut to a banyan fruit to get the seed in the fruit. His son realized that he could observe nothing within the seed. Uddalaka makes a comparison to the fine seed essence that was not visible to self. The second one involves Svetaketu getting instructions to put a little salt in some water. Svetaketu could not see salt in water when he returned the next day. Only to realize that salt had evenly distributed in water when he tasted it. Uddalaka made a conclusion that, similar to salt in dissolved in water, the self is not directly discernable, but seeps into the whole body. Uddalaka gets attention to Svetaketu following these natural phenomenal descriptions giving emphasis that the self functions the same way in a single individual as it does in every living being. He continues to say that the fine essence in that case was what the self was in the whole world.

The most outstanding teacher in the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajnavalkya, further describes atman in view of consciousness as compared to a life force. Yajnavalkya engages Uddalaka (who was his former teacher and his senior associate) into a debate. He makes it clear that the self is an inward controller which is present in every cognizing and sensing, but it is distinct. He continues to say that it is seer which not seen, the thinker which is not thought about, the hearer which is not heard and the knower which is not known. The explanation that Yajnavalkya gave was that everyone discerns the self existence via self actions and what it does, but not through their senses. He points out that the self, which is considered as consciousness, is not regarded as a consciousness object. Even Yajnavalkya questions his wife Maitreyi in the Brhadaranyaka about the means through which a person really know himself and with what means does one really knows the whole world. On a number of occasions, Yajnavalkya pays attention to the constraints of language when trying to describe atman. He suggests that since the self is not an object of knowledge, it has no capability of having attributes and as a result it can only be illustrated using propositions that are negative. Yajnavalkya also says to King Janaka that that self (atman), a person can merely say "not, not". The self is ungraspable because it can not be clutched. The self is indestructible because it can not be obliterated. Self is unbound because it is trembling and it cannot be damaged.

Prajapati is seen in Upanishad as a different prominent self teacher. Like Yajnavalkya, Prajapati views the self in lines of consciousness. He personally portrays atman as an agent which is responsible for cognizing and sensing. On the other hand, regardless of some similarities between him and

Yajnavalkya in atman teaching, Prajapati rejects some of his points. The teaching of Prajapati is given in terms of his philosophy to Indra who is considered a god that takes place throughout a number of episodes in a period of over a century.

Prajapati's first teaching delineated self as a material body that drives Indra away hoping that he had learnt the true atman teaching. Just before returning to other gods, Indra recognizes that these teachings are untrue, and goes back to Prajapati to be taught more. This trend goes on for a number of times before Prajapati in the end presenting atman as the one that is always aware as his ultimate and true teaching. Some of the teachings which Prajapati gives as incomplete or false are atman description in context of dreamless sleep. Yajnavalkya described this self teaching as the uppermost goal and the main bliss in his teaching to King Janaka.

Possibly the most renowned self teachings in the brahman and atman identification was conveyed by Sandilya in the Upanishad of Chandogya. Comparable to the word atman, brahman has numerous different but related implications in the Vedic literature. The ancient word usages are closely related to the influence of speech. According to Brahman, it meant a truthful speech or dominant statement. Brahman still retains this correlation with speech in the Upanishads and eventually comes to refer to this reality too.

Sandilya starts his teaching by saying that brahman refers to the whole world. He further gives an explanation of what takes place to the public during death period as in line with their resolve in this humankind. Sandilya describes atman in different ways and equates him with Brahman. He says

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that self (atman) that is within his heart was brahman. On his disappearance from this world, he would enter into it. As a consequence, if a person recognizes brahman as the whole world and that the self as brahman, then that person turns into the whole world during death.

Even though the teaching of Sandilya about atman and brahman is frequently regarded as the central Upanishads' doctrine, it is vital to keep in mind that this does not make the only characterization of ultimate of reality or the self. Whereas some teachers like Yajnavalkya, also associate atman with brahman, teachers like Uddalaka Aruni, do not create such assumption. In fact, Uddalaka, whose famous phrase 'tat tvam asi' is usually a statement of the brahman and atman identity by Sankara, he by no means uses the expression of the Brahman. Even in his teaching to Svetaketu who is his son and on some of his numerous Upanishads appearances (Deussen 33). Furthermore, it is habitually unclear, even in the teaching of Sandilya, whether or not relating atman to brahman denote to the complete self identity and ultimate reality or if atman is believed to be a quality or aspect of brahman. These types of debates regarding the way to interpret the Upanishads' teachings have persistent all through the philosophical tradition of India and are principally Vedanta darsana's characteristic.

Besides, while the majority of brahman's teachings make assumptions that the universe came from one undifferentiated theoretical cosmic principle, several passages explains creation from a materialist viewpoint, relating the world as rising from an original natural element like air or water. For

example, the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad has a teaching accredited to the

Kauravyayani's son that portrays brahman as being equivalent to space
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(Easwaran and Nagler 18). The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad's section comprises of a passage that describes the world as starting from water. Correspondingly, Raikva in the Chandogya Upanishad draws the world's beginnings to microcosmic breath and cosmic sphere' wind.

Despite the distinctions among various conceptions of teachers of atman about the self, there exist various general tendencies. The majority of the Upanishads philosophers believe that atman resides within the body only when it is still alive. They assume that atman is responsible for keeping the body alive, and it does not perish when the entire body dies, instead it finds a residence in another person's body. Yajnavalkya gives details that when a caterpillar reaches the end of a grass blade when it takes one more step, it collects itself together. In the same way the self (atman), after throwing down the body along with having drove out ignorance, to take another step, it collects itself together (Hume 7).

These portrayals of atman have been a catalyst for selfhood of Buddhist conceptions in the early hours of Upanishads. The Buddhists overtly rejected all notions of an unchanging and inseparable Self without introducing the phrase no-self (anatman in Sanskrit; anatta in Pali) to illustrate the deficiency in any fixed soul, but also to clarify karmic connection from one generation to the next in context of five skandhas. Five skandhas is a theory upholding that what the thinkers of Upanishads mistake as a cohesive self is really composed of five components that are focus to change. Other than the pure influences of philosophical, the Buddhist texts in the early hours utilized numerous metaphors, tropes and mythical scenarios that were Upanishadic characteristic. For instance, the Samannaphala and Ambattha Suttas in the <https://assignbuster.com/the-concept-of-atman-in-the-upanishads-religion-essay/>

Upanishads, share related structures of narrative among stories. These literary borrowings merged with influences of philosophy designate that the Buddhists in the early days who had changed from families of brahmin recognized the Upanishads much faster. Though the immediate Upanishads influence on the Buddhist tradition took place mainly in the early era.

Upanishads knowledge wipes out ignorance which is the Samsara seed. 'Shad' in this context means to 'destroy' or 'shatter' and through getting knowledge of the Upanishads a person is capable of sitting next to Brahman to reach Self-realization. That's why the name 'Upanishad' that implies Brahman knowledge, leads to Brahman and also facilitates aspirants to achieve Brahman. Two ideas govern the Upanishads teaching: the first one denotes the final emancipation which can be reached only through Ultimate Reality knowledge, or Brahman. The second one involves those who are endowed with the four ways of salvation, Vairagya (dispassion), Viveka, (discrimination), Mumukshutva (yearning for liberation) and Shad-Sampat (the six-fold treasure; etc.), can acquire Brahman. The Upanishads educate the philosophy of utter unity.

In accordance with the Upanishads, the men's goal is the recognition of Brahman. Self-realization by itself has the capability of driving out ignorance and presenting immortality, everlasting peace and eternal bliss. Brahman Knowledge can remove all delusion, sorrows and soreness. Vedanta is usually set aside for those people who have unchained themselves from the chains of reserved religion. Upanishads are only meant for the chosen few that are fit and creditable to be given the instructions.

Conclusion

There study has been identified that no any other book exists in the entire world that is as soul-stirring, inspiring as well as breathtaking as the Upanishad. The Upanishads philosophical teachings have been the source of comfort for many people in the West and the East. Moreover, it is shown that the Upanishads offer a vivid depiction of the Atman nature and the Supreme Soul in different ways and explain suitable techniques that assist in attaining the everlasting Brahman which is the utmost Purusha.