



The Concept of Supreme Sense in Upanishads

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Abstract:

Continually, in studying the Upanishads, we have to divest ourselves of modern notions and to realize as closely as possible the associations that lay behind the early Vedantic use of words. We must recollect that in the Vedic system the word was the creator; by the word Brahma creates the forms of the universe moreover, human speech at its highest merely attempts to recover by revelation and inspiration an absolute expression of truth which already exists in the infinite above our mental comprehension. Equally, then, must that word be above our power of mental construction.

Keywords: *Supreme sense, Upanishad, Vedic system*

From the red hand quine to able swing the duty. Right resolve or intention feet the transcendental unity in Kena or Katha, but last chosen the idea of diversity. The twelve great Upanishads are written round one body of ancient knowledge; but they approach it from different sides. Into the great kingdom of the Brahavidya each enters by its own gates, follows its own path or detour, and aims at its own point of arrival. The Isha Upanishad and the Kena are both concerned with same grand problem, the winning of the state of immortality, the relations of the divine, all-ruling, all- possessing Brahman to the world and to the human consciousness, the means of passing out of our present state of divided self, ignorance and suffering into the unity, the truth , the divine beatitude. As the Isha closes with the aspiration towards the supreme felicity, so the Kena closes with the definition of Brahman as the Delight and the injunction to worship and seek after that as the Delight. Nevertheless there is a variation in the starting-point, even in the standpoint, a certain sensible divergence in the attitude.

For the precise subject of the two Upanishads is not identical. The Isha is concerned with the whole problem of the world and life and works and human destiny in their relation to the supreme truth of the Brahman. It embraces in its brief eighteen verses most of the fundamental problems of life and scans them swiftly with the idea of the supreme self and its becoming, the supreme lord and His workings as the key that shall unlock all gates. The oneness of all existences is its dominating note.

The Kena Upanishad approaches a more restricted problem, starts with a more precise and narrows inquiry. It concerns itself only with the relation of mind-consciousness to Brahman-consciousness and does not stray outside the strict boundaries of its subject. The material world and the physical life are taken for granted, they are hardly mentioned. But the material world and the physical life exist for us only by virtue of our internal self and our internal life. According as our mental instruments represent to us the external world, according as our vital force in obedience to the mind deals with its impacts and objects, so will be our outward life and existence. The world is for us, not fundamentally but practically at any rate, what our mind and senses declare it to be; life is what our mentality or at least our half-metalized vital being determines that it shall become. The question is asked by the Upanishad, what then are these mental instruments? What is this mental life which uses the external? Are they the last witnesses,

the supreme and final power? Are mind and life and body all or is this human existence only a veil of something greater, mightier, more remote and profound than itself?

The Upanishad replies that there is such a greater existence behind, which is to the mind and its instruments, to the life-force and its working what they are to the material world. Matter does not know mind; mind knows matter; it is only when the creature embodied in matter develops mind, becomes the mental being that he can know his mental self and know by that self matter also in its reality to mind. So also mind does not know that which is behind it, that knows Mind; and it is only when the being involved in Mind can deliver out of its appearances his true self that he can become that, know it as himself and by it know also Mind in its reality to that which is more real than Mind. How to rise beyond the mind and its instruments, enter into himself, attain to the Brahman becomes then the supreme aim for the mental being, the all-important problem of his existence.

For given that there is a more real existence than the mental existence, a greater life than the physical life, it follows that the lower life with its forms and enjoyments which are all that men here ordinarily worship and pursue, can no longer be an object of desire for the awakened spirit. He must aspire beyond; he must free himself from his world of death and mere phenomena to become himself in his true state of immortality beyond them. Then alone he really exists when here in this mortal life itself he can free himself from the mortal consciousness and know and be the immortal and eternal. Otherwise he feels that he has lost himself, has fallen from his true salvation.

But his Brahman-consciousness is not represented by the Upanishad as something quite alien to the mental and physical world, aloof from it and in no way active upon it or concerned with its activities. On the contrary, it is the Lord and ruler of the entire world; the energies of the gods in the mortal consciousness are its energies; when they conquer and grow great, it is because Brahman has fought and won. This world therefore is an inferior action, a superficial representation of something infinitely greater, more perfect, and more real than itself.

What is that something? It is the all-bliss which is infinite being and immortal force. It is that pure and utter bliss and not the desires and enjoyments of this world which men ought to worship and to seek. How to seek it is the one question that matters; to follow after is with all ones being is the only truth and the only wisdom.

The language of the Upanishad makes it strikingly clear that it is no metaphysical abstraction, no void silence, and no indeterminate absolute which is offered to the soul that aspires, but rather the absolute of all that is possessed by it here in the relative world of its sojourning. All here in the mental is a growing light, consciousness and life; all there in the supramental is an infinite life, light and consciousness. That which is here shadowed, is there found; the incomplete here is there the fulfilled. The beyond is not annulations, but a transfiguration of all that we are here in our world of forms; it is Sovran-mind of this mind, secret life of this life, the absolute sense which supports and justifies our limited senses.

All creation is expression by the word; but the form which is expressed is only a symbol or representation of the thing which is we see this in human speech which only presents to the mind a mental form of the object; but the object it seeks to express is itself only a form or presentation of another reality. That reality is Brahman. Brahman expresses by the word a form or presentation of him in the objects of sense and consciousness which constitute the universe, just as the human word expresses a mental image of those objects. That word is creative in a deeper and more original sense than human speech and with a power of which the utmost creativeness of human speech can be only a far-off feeble analogy.

The Upanishad asserts about this supreme cognitive principle, first that it is beyond the reach of mind and the senses; secondly, that it does not itself think with the mind; thirdly that it is that by which mind itself is thought or metalized; fourthly that it is the very nature or description of the Brahman-consciousness.

The Upanishad is not satisfied with the definition of the Brahman-consciousness as mind of the mind. Just as it has described it as speech of the speech, so also it describes it as eye of the eye, ear of the ear. Not only is it an absolute cognition behind the play of expression, but also an absolute sense behind the action of the senses. Every part of our finds its fulfillment in that which is beyond its present forms of functioning and not in those forms themselves.

This conception of the all-governing consciousness does not fall in with our ordinary theories about sense and mind and the Brahman. We know of sense only as an action of the organs through which embodied mind communicates with external matter, and these sense-organs have been separately developed in the course of evolution; the senses therefore are not fundamental things, but only subordinate conveniences and temporary physical functioning's of the embodied mind. Brahman, on the other hand, we conceive of by the elimination even of the mind itself. It is a sort of positive zero, an x or unknowable which corresponds to no possible equation of physical or psychological quantities. In essence this may or may not be true, but we have now to think not of the unknowable but of its highest manifestation in consciousness; and this we have described as the outlook of the absolute on the relative and as that which is the cause and governing power of all that we and the universe are. There in that governing cause there must be something essential and supreme of which all our fundamental here are a rendering in the terms of embodied consciousness.

No doubt, the contact of matter with matter is the original cause of these sensations; but it is only the eidolon of matter; as for instance the image of the forecast upon the eye, with which the mind is directly concerned. For the mind operates upon matter not directly, but through the life-force; that is its instrument of communication and the life-force, being is us a nervous impressions of form, through contractual images, as it were, which create corresponding values in the energy-consciousness called in the Upanishads the Prana.

The foundation of sense, therefore, is contact, and the essential contact is the mental without which there would not be sense at all. The plant, for instance, feel nervously, feels in terms of life-energy, precisely as the human nervous system does, and it has precisely the same reactions; but it is only if the plant has rudimentary mind that we can suppose it to be, as we understand the word, sensible of these nervous or vital impressions and reactions. For then it would feel not only nervously, but in terms of mind. Sense, then, may be described as in its essence mental contact with an object and the mental reproduction of its image.

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