

The Science of Upanishads (Final) – Part 58: Conclusions-Part-4

(April 25 –May 1, 2018)

With Part-4 of Conclusions, **today marks the end of the series on Science of Upanishads** that we started more than a year ago. Let us first complete the summary of the remaining six Principal (Mukhya) Upanishads before embarking upon some final thoughts and tidings of Upanishads and its relation to Science.

(6) **Mandukya Upanishad (Atharvaveda)** is the shortest of all the Upanishads, consisting of only 12 verses. It is considered the **number 1 among the list of 11 Principal Upanishads**. It discusses the syllable *Om*, presents the theory of four states of consciousness, and asserts the existence and nature of Atman. The Mandukya Upanishad is notable as the one Upanishad that alone is sufficient for knowledge to gain Moksha (Liberation).

(7) **Mundaka Upanishad (Atharvaveda)** contains three Mundakams (Parts). The first Mundakam, defines **the science of " Lower Knowledge " and "Higher Knowledge "**. The sections of Vedas dealing with rituals and sacrifices and their auxiliaries are classified as **The Lower Knowledge**; it endows a man with knowledge of the manifested universe and enables him to enjoy material prosperity on earth and happiness in heaven. **The Higher Knowledge** is the one that leads to the realization of the Imperishable Truth, the **Brahman**, the ultimate cause of the universe and all beings. The second Mundakam describes the **nature of the Brahman**, the Self, the relation between the empirical world and the Brahman, and the path to know Brahman. The third Mundakam expands the ideas in the second Mundakam and then asserts that the **state of knowing the Brahman** is one of freedom, fearlessness, complete liberation, self-sufficiency and bliss.

(8) **Prashna Upanishad (Atharvaveda)** is a series philosophical poems presented as questions (prashna) inquired by various Hindu sages (Rishis) and answered by Sage Pippalada. **The Prashna Upanishad consists of six main questions, asked by six seekers of truth and answered by sage Pippalapada.** The questions cover a wide range of subjects concerning the origin of creation, superiority of breath, the supporting and illuminating powers of manifest creation, the source of life for the physical body, the paths of breath in the body, the nature of dream and deep sleep states, the benefits of chanting the sacred mantra Aum and the significance of the sixteen tattvas or realities of Nature. **From the Upanishad, we learn that an enlightened master would not reveal the secrets of higher knowledge unless he was satisfied that the recipients were qualified and disciplined.**

(9) **Taittiriya Upanishad (Yejurveda)** emphasizes the importance of knowing the Brahman. It says, **"He who knows Brahman which is Reality, Knowledge, and Infinity hidden in the cave of the heart and in the highest of skies —he, being one with the omniscient Brahman, enjoys simultaneously all desires."** He who knows the Bliss of Brahman, whence all words together with the mind turn away, unable to reach it—he never fears.

(10) **Aitareya Upanishad (Rigveda)** is the only Mukhya Upanishad associated with Rigveda. It tells us how we as human beings find ourselves in the predicament in which we are – one part of knowledge being available to us through the faculties of our understanding, and another part totally unknown to us. **It establishes the spiritual character of the Absolute through a discussion of the nature of the Self of man, and proclaims this truth as “Prajñanam brahma”, meaning “Brahman” is pure Consciousness.**

(11) **Shvetashvatara Upanishad (Yejurveda)** forms a foundational text of the philosophy of Shaivism, as well as the Yoga and Vedanta schools of Hinduism. The Svetasvatara Upanishad opens with metaphysical questions about the primal cause of all existence, its origin, its end, and what role, if any, time, nature, necessity, chance, and the spirit had as the primal cause. It then develops its answer, concluding that **“the Universal Soul exists in every individual, it expresses itself in every creature, everything in the world is a projection of it, and that there is Oneness, a unity of souls in one and only Self”**. The text is notable for its discussion of the concept of personal god – Ishvara, and suggesting it to be a path to one's own Highest Self.

Now let us pause a little bit and try to understand the **justification of using the phrase, “The Science of Upanishads”** for our year-long series. **Is there any relation between Science and Vedanta manifested in Upanishads?** After studying the above 11 principal Upanishads, the answer is a resounding Yes. **These Upanishads have greatly revealed the rational insights, which are the products of an equally rigorous scientific investigation into a different field of experience, namely, the world of man's inner life. The apex point of all Vedic discoveries is the spiritual unification of all experience in the Atman and Brahman: *Brahmaivedam visvamidam varishtham*—‘All this manifested universe is verily Brahman the Supreme’ (*Mundaka Upanishad*).** The following quotation from Swami Vivekananda clarifies the distinction between scientific and spiritual discoveries:

“Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truth of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of (external) nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science because he reads the wrong book—the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he, too, reads the wrong book—the book without.” (from *Complete Works, Vol. VI, Sixth Edn, p. 81*)

A rationally broad analysis of facts would reveal that Science is nothing but a search for Unity. Vedanta, through Upanishads, has discovered this unity in the Atman/Brahman long time ago. It followed its own method relevant to this field of inquiry. In fact, **Vedanta hopes for and welcomes further radical advances in modern science by which its own spiritual vision of the “One in the Many” may be corroborated by positive scientific knowledge, so that the spirituality of science and the spirituality of religion may flow as a united stream to fertilize all aspects of human life. Vedanta is thus both religion and philosophy.** As religion, it discovers the truths of the inner world, and fosters the same discovery by others; and as philosophy, it synthesizes this science of the inner world with the other sciences of the outer

world, to present a unified vision of total reality, as well as to impart depth of faith and vision to human life and character.