

The Science of Upanishads – Part 28: Aitareya Upanishad, Where Modern Science Coincides With Ancient Vedic Philosophy (Vedanta) (September 26-October 2, 2017)

Aitareya Upanishad is one of the most ancient Upanishads and is a Principal (Mukhya) Upanishad associated with Rigveda. The name descends from its author, Rishi Aitareya. The Upanishad advances three philosophical themes, two of which have caught the serious attention of modern science: first, that the Universe is the creation of the *Atman* (Soul); second, that Conscience is the essence of *Atman*. The Upanishad encompasses the *mahavakya*, the great aphorism “*prajnanam brahman*”, Consciousness is Brahman. It uses the word ‘Brahman’ for universal Consciousness and ‘Atman’ for individual Consciousness, but both have the same composition (*i.e.* Advaita Vedanta). This view gets crystallized into the later Upanishadic doctrine that the spirit or Atman in man (at microcosm) is the same as the spirit which is the cause of the universe, the Brahman or Paramatman (at macrocosm). These theories are discussed in elaborate details in the following Upanishads Viz., *Prasna, Mundaka, Taittiriya, Katha, Chandogya, Svetasvatara, Brhadaranyaka, and Maitri Upanishad, as elaborated earlier.* Creation is interpreted in the Vedas as a developmental course rather than as bringing into being something not hitherto existent. It was considered as an ongoing-process and not an event. The Purusha Sukta of Rig Veda paints a picture of the ideal Primeval Being existing before any phenomenal existence. This ancient Vedic Philosophy is indeed the forerunner of ‘Unified Field Theory’ or a ‘Theory of Everything’ being advanced by modern physics concerning creation of the universe. There are many striking similarities between the latest findings of Astrophysics and ancient Indian cosmological perceptions. Vedanta advocates Brahman as the ultimate Reality. Brahman is an impersonal-personal God. Impersonal God may be called the static aspect and personal God may be called the dynamic aspect of Brahman. The static aspect *Anid Avatam* - as Rigveda puts it, "It existed without any movement." Brahman is the truth, Conscience and bliss (Sachhidananda). The Knowledge, Will and Action are inherent in Brahman. God projects the universe by animating His *prakriti* (maya). The Astrophysics and Advaita Vedanta agree on several points: Advaita Vedanta upholds the notion of the pulsating or oscillating universe, which is Creation followed by dissolution and this process will continue *ad infinitum*. Science, on the other hand, uses the term "big bang" for the starting point of creation and "big crunch" for the dissolution of the universe. In conclusion, while Science is still exploring and remains inconclusive about a lot of things, Vedanta has already given its final verdict, which has so far been unassailable by Science!

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