



to rebirth. So, the human beings are always in search of a way to end of suffering completely and to reach to a state of immortality. This, according to the *Upaniṣads*, can be achieved when we know the true nature of our Self (*Ātman*). This theoretical aspect of the teachings of the *Upaniṣads* deals with the following three issues-

1. The Self or essence of man - *Ātman*
2. The Self or essence of the world - *Brahman*
3. The relation between *Ātman* and *Brahman*

But, in Indian tradition, theory and practice go hand in hand, since here, people do not do philosophy, rather live in philosophy which is seen throughout the ages to the modern day. *Raman Maharshi, Swami Dayananda, Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Yogananda*, etc. are such people who got realized and led the society. This practical side is the realization of the highest truth to fulfill the highest purpose of life and *Upaniṣads* present the most practical philosophy of self-realization. As per Upaniṣadic philosophy, there is the pure-consciousness as the ultimate essence of human being which is called as *Ātman* and it is identical with the essence of the world which is called as *Brahman*. In the practical realization of this truth, one need to go through a proper method - logical as well as experiential⁴, which can be framed within a formal epistemological study and it can be said as epistemology of self-realization.

From this point of view, we can consider the *Upaniṣads* as more epistemological than metaphysical. The *Upaniṣads* are called as *Brahma-vidyā*, or Science of *Brahman*, and also the *Ātma-vidyā*, or Science of *Ātman*. *Śaṅkara* is in view that the word '*Upaniṣad*' denotes ultimate knowledge primarily and the books that deals with the knowledge of *Brahman* secondarily.⁵ He says that *Upaniṣad* is called *brahmanavidyā* as it makes *Brahman* attainable to the *mumukṣu*⁶. *Mu. Up.* says that this '*brahmanavidyā*' which *Upaniṣads* teach is the basis of all knowledge.⁷

⁴ *Ātītyevopalabdhānyantata bhāvena cobhayaḥ.*

Ātītyevopalabdhānyāntarābhāveṇa prastānta. Kathopanīṣad. 2.3.13

⁵ *Tasmātvidyāyānta mādītyaḥ vṛtyopaniṣadāchāhāda vartate gṛante na bhaktyā. Intro. of Kathopanīṣad Śāṅkaraśāṅgīya.*

⁶ *Parant brahmar na gamayanti brahmo gamayitṛim yoganī brahmo vidyopaniṣad. Ibid.*

⁷ *So brahmanavidyānta sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā. Mūṇḍakopaniṣad. 1.1.1*



From another point of view, *Upaniṣads* are metaphysical as well as epistemological in nature. *Upaniṣads* discuss two questions- what and how? When 'what' is related to metaphysics, 'how' is related to epistemology. *Upaniṣad* discusses Ultimate Reality as an object of inquiry and also the process through which it can be realized. Śve. Up. starts with the question- *kim kāraṇaṁ brahma? Kutaḥ sma jātū śivāma kena kva ca saṃpratīṣṭā?*⁸ *Maitreyi* asks- what is that through which one can attain immortality?⁹ Or *Nācika* asks- *Ātman* exists or not?¹⁰ *Aitareya Upaniṣad* raises the question- "Which is It that we worship as this Self? Is it that by which one sees, and by which one hears, also by which one smells odour, and by which one utters speech, and by which one taste the sweet or the sour?"¹¹ As a whole, the common question of the *Upaniṣads* is as Śamṛāta says- "What is that knowing through which everything can be known?"¹² Again, *Tyāgavalkya* raises the question that since *Ātman* is the eternal knower, how can we know the knower, i.e. *Ātman* or *Brahman*?¹³ *Nācika* also raises this question that how can he know *Brahman*? Does it shine (of itself) or does it shine (in reflection)?¹⁴ It has been answered also that this *Ātman* can be known by *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nidhīyāna*.¹⁵ Both the question is prominent in *Upaniṣads* but as for epistemology, the questions related to how is more important and it is also so, since *Upaniṣads* are called *brahmanvidyā* or *ātmanvidyā* or *parīvidyā* which leads one to realization.

But, of course, when we discuss the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy, we come across three central problems or issues, originated from the very nature of *Brahman-satchidānanda*. 'Sat' is the issue of Reality, 'cit' is the issue of knowledge and 'ānanda' is the issue of attainment or liberation, and all these three aspects are the very nature of *Brahman*. Hence, one cannot be discussed excluding others. Reality as 'sat', we need to realize through reality as 'cit' and become reality itself, realizing supreme bliss as the very nature. Thus, though epistemology deals with reality as 'cit', but it covers all the three issues more or less.

⁸ Śveṣṭyvatara Upaniṣad, 1.1.1

⁹ Bṛhadāraṇyakaopaniṣad, 2.4.3

¹⁰ Teyasaḥ prete vicikīṭṣā nanaṅya kīṭṣate nityamasīti caṅke. Kaṭhkopaniṣad, 1.1.20

¹¹ Aitareyopaniṣad, 3.1.1

¹² Ekaṁīdṛm bhūgavo vjīṭite sarvaṁīdān vijīṭitān bhāvānī. Muṇḍakopaniṣad, 1.1.3

¹³ Tjāṭānānavaṇe kena vjīṭīyātī. Bṛhadāraṇyakaopaniṣad, 4.5.15

¹⁴ Kāṭhaḥ na tadbrāhṁyaṁ kīnu bhāṭī vīṭhāt vā. Kaṭhkopaniṣad, 2.2.14

¹⁵ Ātmaḥ vā are śravaṇyaḥ śrotānyo manānyo nidhīyānītyo maitrajyānāmo vā are dāṭṭānavaṇe śravaṇena manānaṁ nidhīyānānān sarvaṁ vīṭhātī. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 2.4.5



There is another issue concerning the concept of knower. At empirical level, there is the existence of knower with its constituents, i.e. knowable object, process of knowledge and knowledge itself since plurality is there. But, it requires some explanations as *Upaniṣad* says- 'Yenedam sarvaṁ vjānānī, tañ kama vjānīyātī, vjānātīram are kama vjānīyātī'³⁴ - through what should one know That owing to which all this is known-through what, should one know the Knower? It raises the question-who is a knower in real sense? Is it *Ātman* or *jīvātma*? If *Ātman*, how it can be regarded as knower?

Concerning the cognitive process, *Upaniṣads* have not mentioned any valid means of knowledge such as *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *Upamāna*, etc. in a compact manner. But, there is discussion about sense-organs, mind, *buddhī*, consciousness, etc. and how they make contact.³⁵ It also describes the respective function of sense-organs.³⁶ The most important issues here are that of discussing about the fundamental of epistemology which requires duality³⁷ and the role of consciousness at empirical level.³⁸ But there is possibility of building up the concept of different *pramāṇas* in the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy and also to show how these concepts have been the source of later epistemological discussions. However, *Upaniṣads* definitely mention about *pratyakṣa*, *anumāna*, *upamāna* and *śabda pramāṇa*, though not literally, but conceptually, since it recognizes the testimony of *ācārya* regarding the knowledge of *Brahman* as well as the inability of sense-organs and logical reasoning to apprehend *Brahman*. Then there is the analogical method to support *upamāna* in describing *Brahman*.³⁹

Again, while in case of worldly objects, knowledge can be acquired through a process, involving intellect, mind, sense-organs; Ultimate Reality can be realized only through the verbal testimony in a particular sense, since the *Upaniṣads* say that verbal testimony cannot make one realized⁴⁰, but it can eradicate one's ignorance. Realization or knowledge of *Brahman* is not an acquired knowledge based on subject-object duality but it is a direct realization of consciousness

³⁴ *Bṛhadāraṇyakaopaniṣad*, 2.4.14

³⁵ *Ātmānān rātrīnān vīkṣvī śarīram rātrīnānān nū*,
Buddhīn nū śarīrīn vīkṣvī manāḥ pragrahānān ca. *Kaṭhkopaniṣad*, 1.3.3

śabdīyātī karyānāntarīparyāyātīnān gocarāt,
Ātmānānāntarīparyāyātīnān śloketīparyāyātīnān, *Ibid*, 1.3.4
Prātīkopaniṣad, 4.8

³⁶ *Kāṭhkopaniṣad*, 1.4-8

³⁷ *Yatra vā upādāna grātī tatīdīyo 'nyatī pāpī dānāyo 'nyatī'gṛhadānāyad rāgādānāyo 'nyatī*
vāśādānāyo 'nyatī'paryāyādānāyo 'nyatī'paryāyādānāyo 'nyatī'paryāyādānāyo 'nyatī' vjānīyātī. *Bṛhadāraṇyakaopaniṣad*, 4.3.31

³⁸ *Kāṭhāy sa 'Ātmā, yena vā pāpīyātī yena vā 'nyatī yena vā gāndhānjī'gṛhātī yena vā vācānī vjānātī yena*
ca vā svāde cāśvāde vjānātī. *Ātārīyopaniṣad*, 3.1.1

Prājñāde prātīyātīnān prājñādeśānān śakāḥ prājñā prātīyātī prājñānān brāhma. *Ibid*, 3.1.3

³⁹ *Rāṣṭrīyārīpāḥ*. *Śvetāśvarīopaniṣad*, 5.8

⁴⁰ *Nīyānātīnān parīvācānānān śabdīyātī*,
Nā śabdīyātī nā bahūnī śrūtānā. *Ātārīyopaniṣad*, 3.2.3



1. If self is the eternal knower, how liberation is possible? If liberation is there, who is the knower- *jīva* or *śākt*? And if it is the eternal knower, how can we know the knower?
2. We get two layers of reality in the *Upaniṣads*. Since the objects of knowledge, means of knowledge as well as knowledge differs in respect of the two layers, so, the knower also differs, but in what basis?
3. What is the role of consciousness?
4. How to decide the object in a non-dual reality?
5. Is Brahman can be an object? If so, how? Instead of two realities, how can it be one?
6. What are the means of knowledge? Since Brahman cannot be apprehended by the ordinary methods, what are the alternative methods to know Brahman?
7. What is the nature of knowledge? How its validity can be proved?

Thus, we see that in the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy, the whole discussion centered on knowledge - either ultimate or empirical and so to say on epistemology. Except this, there are the ethical issues also regarding the epistemology of self-realization. Ethics plays a great role in the process of realizing *Brahman*. Because, realization is only possible when an ordinary knower improves his eligibility so to say, purify his internal-organ through ethical means such as *sama*, *damā*, etc.⁴³ to be competent to be initiated to a realized *guru*. But, epistemology whether it is epistemology of empirical knowledge or epistemology of self-realization, is the central point of discussion where all other issues follow it. Accordingly, from this above analysis regarding two realities, it can be concluded that there is the possibility of an proper epistemological inquiry in the *Upaniṣads* which can contribute to the critical analysis of the epistemological issues, scattered in the principal *Upaniṣads* within a frame as well as to trace the origin of the later epistemological developments. Ranade says, 'Mysticism was the culmination of *Upaniṣadic* philosophy, as it is the culmination of all philosophies, and one who does not understand that the cosmology and the psychology, the metaphysics and the ethics of the *Upaniṣads* are merely a propaedeutic to their mystical doctrine, can scarcely be said to have understood the spirit of

⁴³ *Śaṅkaraopaniṣadśāṅkarācāryaśāstrīyānāma āraṇyaka-kāṇḍe*. *Chitrakūṭābhāṣya*, 2.21.



Upaniṣadic philosophy.⁴⁴ We have here added one dimension more, i.e. epistemology, to understand the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy in its real practical sense. Generally, Epistemology (Greek *episteme*, “knowledge”) is understood as the study of the nature and validity of knowledge. But, *Vātsyāyana* and *Jayantabhaṭṭa*, presenting an epistemological model, are of the opinion that an object can be philosophized through the analysis of knower, knowable object, process of knowing and knowledge⁴⁵. And it is our opinion that through the proper analysis of the four constituents of the epistemological model developed by *Vātsyāyana* and *Jayantabhaṭṭa*, we can conceptualize all the epistemological issues of the *Upaniṣadic* philosophy.

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⁴⁴ A Constructive survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy, p. 45

⁴⁵ *Evam ca jadhījyate pramāṇe pramāṇāṇaṃ pramāṇījyetaṃ chatazṛṇa vādānaṃ arthakatratvaṃ parīkṣamāyate itī tad vyākhyāyate* ; *Nyāya- mañjari* I.I.3. p.29; *Vātsyāyana bhāṣya* 4.1.1.



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