CHAPTER : III

DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY
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3.1. Introduction

The Upanishad (उपनिषद्) comes from the term ‘उप-नि-सत्’ which implies sitting in close contact. And the underlying sense of the Upanishad is a pursuit of knowledge undertaken by the guru and his disciples as a disinterested joint venture to fathom the unknown for widening the horizon of wisdom and heightening one’s consciousness.\(^{22}\)

The relationship between the teacher and the taught that has been suggested is of genuine respect and genuine love for each other for attaining the true Truths unhindered. Thus, the Upanishadic system of education may be looked upon as not only the ideal educational system of the earliest type that exists in ancient India but it also happens to be the most esteemed type of modus-operandi in respect of inspiration for direct knowledge.

3.2. Upanishadic System of Education :

By ‘Upa’ (‘उप्’) we mean near, and the term ‘Ni’ (‘नि’) means closer and ‘sad’ (‘सद्’) means dwell. Hence, Upanishad is nothing but dwelling in the proximity to the secret knowledge. So, the governing idea of the Upanishadic

\(^{22}\) Taittiriya Upanishad, III.10 (PS)
system of education is to induce the pupil to be his own master in respect of
growing in the harmony of the universal qualities, especially the qualities of the
effulgent light with a view to attaining higher manhood through the flowering of
the best elements in him. After attaining great heights in different fields of
exploration some of the modern scientists have now been realizing after giving
much thought that the role of self-knowledge, as envisaged by the ancient Indian
educators of the Upanishadic age, has to be studied and explored with due regard,
especially in the matter of gaining True knowledge.

Upanishads are replete with wonderful examples of galaxy of great
teachers who are seers as well on the one hand and enlightened scholars of
outstanding heights and depths on the other. Through dialogues the qualities of
the illumined knowledge of the gurus and the sishyas have been spectacularly
displayed throughout the volumes of the Upanishads.

The Upanishadic system of education affirms unambiguously that although
knowledge of the Pure-Existent cannot be grasped ordinarily yet centuries of
experiments have led the Rishis to arrive at a swift-revealing method that
facilitates the higher self in man to exceed the sense-bound, reason-bound and
ego-bound circling tracts of mental consciousness of a dwarf humanity. Through
a regular application of such a profound as well as radical method the Rishis have
paved the way for unfolding the Vidyā (विद्या) or True knowledge of Existence-in-
itself with its multiplicity. In the circumstances, one who devotedly, sincerely
and regularly practices this method is now capable of looking at the reality or
seizing it in its totality - the Multiple One as a direct knowledge or experience by
exceeding the limitations of the ordinary mental inability. From all these it may
also be admitted undeniably that the ‘Atindriyam’ (अतिन्द्रीयम्) can equally be made
‘Buddhigrāhyam’ (बुद्धिग्राह्यम्) and the blinders that prevent man from seizing the
self-luminous and imperishable Pure-Existent can equally be done away with.
Perhaps the same spirit of enquiry as we find in the case of seer-teacher of the
Upanishadic system of education haunts Sir Jadadish Chandra Bose, the great
scientist who proves that a plant like all other living things has also the feeling of
suffering and pain by resorting to a higher method of experiment which was still
then not known to the other leading scientists of his time.

It may be reminded that such illumined seers having unruffled
concentration and wisdom are the acknowledged teachers of the Upanishadic age
and to some such revered Acharyas the tender-aged boys and girls surrender
themselves to undergo training for comprehensive knowledge under their able
guidance. In course of studies in the congenial surroundings of the Ashram the
gurus and the sishyas develop such an inscrutable tie of relationship and cohesion
that they feel that they have no longer separate identities and as such, they are in a
position to explore the mysteries of the universe jointly along with practising disciplines for more and more perfection of their experiments concerning the significance and meaning of human life. In the subsequent stage such a radical spirit of enquiry together with a positive, unprecedented and undivided passion for the sublime knowledge make the Upanishads what they seem to be – the fountainhead of Indian education system which again brings in its train wonderful flowering of art, literature, philosophy, spirituality etc. etc. The names of such great Acharyas that we find mentioned in the Upanishad and who are the chief architects of the Upanishadic system of education are Nārada, Uddālaka Āruni, Janak, Saunaka, Mahidāsa Aitareya, Jajnabalka, Satyakāma Jabala, Pippalāda, Sukeshin Bharadvāja, Gārgi Vachaknavi, Maitreyi, Prevahana Jairali.

In the harmony of universal qualities Upanishadic system of education lays much emphasis of self perfection for the purpose of arriving at the ideal manhood and as such, disciplines in this regard have been laid down so that flowering of the entire human nature may steadily take place along with the concomitant growth of all other faculties in addition to the moral aesthetic, intellectual, social etc. etc.

23 आँ रह नावब्रत।
रह नौ मुनक।
रह वीर्य करवाह॥
तेजसं नावब्रतमल।
माविदिःशाव॥ (केनोपनिषत्,शान्तिपाठ) (PS)
In fact, the ancient Upanishadic system of education is purely value-oriented. It declares - स एवं सर्वेष्व शास्त्रां दाहिने ज्ञेय इति ह वै सर्वेष्व शास्त्राणि च एवं वेद।24 Here the process of learning makes one free from all egoistic fervour that causes ambitions and sins. We have reasons to believe that such a type of value education which has nowadays been introduced in different courses viz., Management, B.Ed., M.Ed. and other teachers’ training courses aims at instilling healthy and positive and man-making ideas among the trainees.

The man-making idea of the ancient Upanishadic system of education revolves round the concept - यथा सीमितेन मृत्युष्णेन सर्व मृत्युं विधातं स्थान।25 The inner objective of such a system of education drives at an all round development of the disciples with an integrated approach under the guidance of the seer-poets or great educators like the Rishis for coming out of the man within.

The Taittireya Upanishad declares – ‘वेदां भवाणिर्मती वेद सत्यं प्रोक्ताच तत्त्वो तत्त्वो ब्रह्मविधाम्।’26 From this we know that India is a unique land which possesses an ancient heritage of education which is not only comprehensive, all-round and complete but also of a lofty kind. The suggestion is that Upanishads are for Brahmavidyā and the aim of education is to arrive at the true truth or eternal truth.

24 Chândogaya Upanishad, 1.6.7 (PS)
25 Ibid. 6.1.4 (PS)
26 Mundaka Upanishad, 1.2.13 (PS)
Rishis of the Upanishads are seer poets. They are aware that man has a great future. According to them the contemporary man is not the complete man. He is only in the incipient stage. It occurs to them that a number of higher faculties wait in him. In course of time the unmanifested latent faculty will surely develop and it is expected that man through successive stages is supposed to attain higher and higher status. Therefore, the Rishis make a congenial environment in the ashram for the young learners so that such learners may know right from the very outset of their lives what is the goal of human life and how to reach the goal. Thus, the Rishis lead the scholars to walk along the difficult road to reach great height of light for having height, depth and width of life. As a matter of fact, the aim is to achieve the higher truths from their depth of their beings.

Upanishads constitute the last phase of the Vedic revelation. Indeed it becomes the basis of one of the unique traditions that the world has ever known. Ten hymns in Atharva Veda on Brahmacharya signify the comprehensive education supposed to be received by a young person before he/she marries and leads the family life. The education includes not only the study of the various subjects but also the spiritual initiation which is called as a second birth for the student for giving him tapas (तपस्), vigour, and intelligence. A fundamental

27 Atharva Veda, 11.5.10 (PS)
28 Ibid. 11.5.10 (PS)
29 Ibid. 6.133.4 (PS)
principle of Upanishadic education is tapas. Control and concentration of mind and senses are considered the highest tapas. Concentration, however, is only one component in the training of the will. According to *Taittiriya Upanishad*\(^{30}\) truth is all that needs to be cultivated. In fact, the entire thing is based on the secret knowledge of the process of concentration. Kireet Joshi holds the same view –

*In those times the task of the teacher was to awaken more than to instruct.*

*It was understood than true knowledge depended on the cultivation of powers of concentration*\(^{31}\).

That the Upanishadic system of education is fairly comprehensive is seen. In spite of his having knowledge of a number of sciences and texts related to vedas Narada (the pupil) and Sanatkumar (the teacher) in Chāndogaya Upanishad\(^{32}\) are in search of that knowledge by which sorrow can be removed. We find a distinction here between knowledge and ignorance (विद्या and अविद्या)\(^{33}\).

In the Isha Upanishad\(^{34}\) the aim of the Upanishadic education is to prepare the pupil to pursue the paths of that spiritual attainment by which immortality is attained. The Vedic based Upanishadic system of education is an integral system

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30 Taittiriya Upanishad, XI (PS)
31 Joshi, Kireet, The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil, p.33 (SS)
32 Chāndogaya Upanishad, VII.1 (PS)
33 Ibid. I.II.4-5 (PS)
34 Isopanishad, 14 (PS)
of education; it covers the pursuit of sciences and arts and possession of a comprehensive knowledge. The learner has to discover everything for himself and realize knowledge ultimately in the proper sense of the term through a life-long process of education.

According to Katha Upanishad\textsuperscript{35} an educated man who possesses supreme knowledge by concentration of mind, must have his senses under control, like spirited steeds controlled by a charioteer. From the Vedic age onwards, the central conception of education is that there is a source of resplendent light which gives us a correct lead in the various spheres of life.

Character building is the main objective of education. It is the responsibility of an ideal teacher. The best teachers are those who not only impart knowledge but also make their pupils developing noble virtues. Continuous learning and regular study are of great importance. Choice of books which purifies the senses and mind, enhances intellectual and spiritual power, and inspires a person to do noble deed. There is no end to learning. It is the duty of man to move ahead in quest of knowledge\textsuperscript{36,37}.

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\begin{itemize}
  \item 35 Katha Upanishada, iii, 6 \textit{(PS)}
  \item 36 Rg Veda, V.30.7 \textit{(PS)}
  \item 37 Yajur Veda, 30.1 \textit{(PS)}
\end{itemize}
In Katha\textsuperscript{38} and other Upanishads we get some indication of the method of teaching and learning. Different methods of studies are found prevailing in the Upanishadic period. One of such methods of teaching is in the form of a dialogue in which series of questions and answers are made as a method of explaining a subject\textsuperscript{39}. Here in this method the Brahmacharins are found asking questions while the guru in his discourses imparting lessons on different topics referred to him. Illustrations\textsuperscript{40}, stories\textsuperscript{41} and parables\textsuperscript{42} are used as devices of oral teachings.

The distinctive and profound manner that Upanishad maintains all through in delineating spiritual ideas and lofty philosophies through very simple and fascinating narratives and anecdotes such as the saga of Ushasti & Mahavat or the saga of Indra & Virochan is simply a unique style of imparting education. Nor is this all. It is interesting to note that the Upanishads have also resorted to conversational method such as the dialogue of Narada & Sanatsujat or the dialogue of Shvetketu & Udalak for bringing the precepts concerning Brahavidyā (ब्रह्मविद्या) before the young learners in a very convincing manner.

The secret of learning lies in the power of concentration in thought. This secret of concentration can be seen in the much-quoted prayer of Vishwamitra (a

\textsuperscript{38} Katha Upanishad, Briguballi, I (PS)
\textsuperscript{39} Mukherjee Radha Kumud, Ancient Indian Education, p.112 (SS)
\textsuperscript{40} Prasna Upanishad, II (PS)
\textsuperscript{41} Katha Upanishad (PS)
\textsuperscript{42} Kena Upanishad, III (PS)
celebrated sage of the Vedic period), which helps developing the faculty of intelligence and thought by resorting to concentration on the highest object of Knowledge. In this connection Kireet Joshi’s remark is very relevant –

*The Vedas and Upanishads as only the fountain-head of Indian philosophy and spirituality, of Indian art, poetry and literature, but also of Indian education and of the Indian tradition of teacher-pupils relationship* \(^{43}\).

The young learners that gather round the āshrams of the Rishis during the Upanishadic age are required to practise Brahmacharya (ब्रह्मचर्य). Through the practise of Brahmacharya (ब्रह्मचर्य) they learn how to turn Retah (रेत) to Tejah (तेज). And in the next stage they are supposed to undergo transformation from Tejah (तेज) to Ojah (ओज). In the process of the *Brahmacharya* they are made capable of enhancing their power of the brain magnificently. In fact, the retaining power of the memory of such learners can be increased enormously and on the other hand they are in a position to make their power of comprehension escalated spectacularly. What to speak of their analytical power! One may wonder how potential the learners will become in respect of using their analytical tools when they reach the level of *Ojah*. To the ancient Indian sages and the seers education means a man-making programme. The system of *Brahmacharya* enables young

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\(^{43}\) Joshi, Kireet, *The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil*, p.30 (SS)
learners not only to augment the powers of the brain it equally helps them to bring out the real man within. Thus, Kireet Joshi has rightly said –

*The secret of learning lies in the power of concentration in thought. This secret of concentration was discovered and underlined in the Veda, and it can be seen in the celebrated prayer of Vishwamitra (a prominent sage of the Vedic period), which singles out the faculty of intelligence and of thought to be of supreme importance, and which enjoins that faculty of intelligence and thought to be concentrated on the highest Object of Knowledge.*

### 3.3. Significance of the study:

The Rishis are aware of all about the past, present and future of mankind. They know that in the different stages of evolution the latent powers in man will be evolved. Rabindranath is also conscious of the trend of evolution and he strives hard to see that the young learners are inspired to have the latent power manifested in them comprehensively as far as possible during their span of life.

An analogous instance may not be out of place in this connection: *Lenin knew that in his time Russia was an agrarian economy. But he did not wait for polarization and coming out of the army of the proletariat. He went forward to*

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44 Joshi, Kireet, Taittiriya Upanishad, p.95 (SS)
reach his goal. We may point out here that Rabindranath is also not ready to wait for the slow movement of evolution like the step-jump he prefers the model of the Rishis of the Upanishads and makes sincere attempt for creating a congenial environment at Santiniketan Āshram wherein the young learners may set foot on a track leading to the fulfillment of full-fledged manhood capable of thinking from the depth of the truth fearlessly.

A comparative study of the three leading educators of modern India viz., Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo reveals that Rabindranath, of course, has outlined his thoughts on education in concrete terms. He has elaborately discussed his scheme of education in his articles and tomes. Bathed in the light of the Upanishads and charged with the mantras of the seer poets right from the early days through the direct impact of his father’s mode of life he comes forward to implement his ideas in the practical field when sets up Āshram Vidyālaya at Santiniketan. By education he does not mean to form mental skill in the exteriorized life only. Taking a macro view of life it occurs to him that an individual learner is not a separate being segregated from the Transcendental Being – the source of all existence. From the teaching of the Upanishads he believes that while one is an individual one is also the part and parcel of the whole and one has everything that the supreme has. Hence, he is inseparable from the Supreme – if one keeps contact with the Transcendental
being his faculties are strengthened and divinized⁴⁵. Therefore, keeping contact with the Supreme through self-opening every individual learner should carry on practice of *Gayatri Mantra* regularly from the early stage of life. From this conviction Rabindranath, the great teacher introduces practice of *Gayatri Mantra* and meditation daily⁴⁶. Of course, he takes the trouble of encouraging and inspiring the little learners so that they may take interest and try for themselves devotedly in the matter of carrying on some such programmes.

To Swami Vivekananda also education means toiling from imperfection to perfection. He observes ‘*Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man*’⁴⁷. It occurred to him that the brutal elements in man must be removed by cultivation. He does not lay stress on acquisition of facts only. His emphasis is laid on developing inner consciousness of a learner through concentration which may accumulate tremendous power and enable man to focus light on the true Truth⁴⁸. ‘To him the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts’⁴⁹. Swami Vivekananda believes that academic learning and acquisition of data or facts may enlighten and enrich one but unfoldment of the higher faculties of man is essentially necessary for the growth of a total man. He

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⁴⁵ Rabindrarachanabali, Chaturdaskhanda (Prabandha, Dharma), p.548 (PS)
⁴⁶ Ibid. p.547 (PS)
⁴⁷ The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. IV, p. 358 (PS)
⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 490 (PS)
⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 38 (PS)
lays stress on manifesting the latent purified man or perfect man out of crude human materials. He says –

*What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow*\(^{50}\).

So he is in favour of including some of the texts of the Upanishads in the curriculum for transformation of the total man\(^{51}\).

The dynamic attitude of Swami Vivekananda towards education that has been reflected in his writings and speeches reveals though graphically yet with tremendous effect. His attitude towards education has already been expressed symbolically. All that he suggests regarding education and learning are surely direct products of the Upanishads or the Vedanta philosophy.

Sri Aurobindo in his concept of Integral Education not only corroborates but lays emphasis on Psychic Education. Like the ancient seer poets of the Upanishads he also prefers to exceed the circling tracks of mind. He also attains the status of the seer poet and by virtue of his panoramic vision can envisage that a greater destiny waits man in his front. According to him what is needed is to involve the scholars to utilize psychic light with a resolute mind. He tries to

\(^{50}\) The complete works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. II, p. 15 (PS)

\(^{51}\) Nithiya P., Swami Vivekananda’s Views on Philosophy of Education, AJMR Vol.1 Issue-6, Nov, 2012 (SS)
remind the scholars that they should not waste their time in respect of their little selves and petty things as they are destined to have higher consciousness and transcendental light in this house of flesh if they are really inclined to do what is necessary on the occasion.\textsuperscript{52} He observes that the scholars of this land of ours are born with the vibrations of the heart-stirring lofty ideas that spontaneously move them towards dynamic inspiration to go forward having been charged with swift-revealing\textsuperscript{53} emotion and imagination. In fact, such scholars are gifted with invaluable insights of the head and heart. Sri Aurobindo points out that the Indian scholars\textsuperscript{54} have free access to the direct knowledge latent in humanity that exceeds the periphery of the reasoning intelligence as well. He further says that only a handful of such mighty and gifted scholars have so far been privileged to carry forward the unique faculty of direct knowledge that can command any knowledge at their discretion with great perfection. The idea is that it is an imperative need to create centres of learning that can make the scholars capable of acquiring the art of direct knowledge and revolutionize the outlook of the future course of education for achieving more and more perfection in human thought and knowledge.

\textsuperscript{52} Sri Aurobindo, Savitri, Vol 34, Book IV: Canto III: page 370 (PS)
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid. (PS)
\textsuperscript{54} The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol-1, The Brain of India, p.365 (PS)
Sri Aurobindo has not only given us his thoughts on education clearly but he has also delineated how to employ his ideas in the practical way. He introduces Integral education covering all the aspects of a human material. His stress on Psychic education and the exercise of the spirit may as well be compared with the analogous concepts and ideas of the Upanishads. But we are to keep in mind that like the Rishis of the Upanishads he is also a seer poet ‘कव्यः सत्वशृवः’. Like the ancient Rishis he is equally capable of seeing and listening to the truths of the universe. There is no denying that having being born in this holly land of India and being the son of the soil he is supposed to know the contents of the Upanishads and as such the influence of the Upanishads must also be on him.

3.4. Conclusion:

The ancient teachers of the Upanishads inspire their scholars to practise self-training through Brahmacarya. Rabindranath, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo all the three have one point in common for a comprehensive knowledge of a total man by unfolding the real man within in their views regarding education with a difference in the modus-operandi only. This can be summed up that man is already a mental being\(^{55}\) and for further progress man has to move towards the supramental. We are aware that the Rishis of the Vedic and

\(^{55}\) The complete works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol. 23, The Synthesis of Yoga, p.488 (PS)
Upanishadic ages have made experiments on supra-consciousness for instilling in the minds of the little learners. In fact, it is a step forward at a time when the reasoning intelligence of mankind has not even dawned upon most of the people of the rest of the world. The great educators like Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo have the privilege of coming in contact with the light of the Upanishadic education. As they are no ordinary educationists and as they are not only genius but they possess intuitive knowledge as well and as such, in their respective light they severally employed the lofty ideas of the Upanishadic education. And in successive chapters of this paper discussion has been made regarding the influence of the Upanishadic system of education on Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo part by part.