CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONTROVERSY

4.0. History 213 – 215

4.1. Comparison and Contrast 215 – 228

4.2. Non-Scriptural Contrasts on ‘I’ or ‘Self’ 228 – 243
Chapter IV: The Controversy

Prior to addressing the theme of this chapter, we propose to explain clearly the controversy, which ensues between the attitudes in Sanskrit and Pāli scriptures, in the background in which they appeared. In this chapter, we shall study both sides, the similarities and dissimilarities and the pros and cons of both these traditions.

To begin with, the main focus in Sanskrit scriptures was on the existence of ‘ātman’, whereas the Buddha made references to either ‘atta’ or ‘anattā’ in explaining the cause and dissolution of dukkha (suffering). We have already seen in the course of Chapter III that the Buddha maintained wisely the attitude of moderation or the middle way (majjhimaṇaṭṭipaddā).

4.0. History

The Indian historian Lal Mani Joshi has rightly depicted the origins of the Vedic priests and chieftains in his book, ‘Brahmanism, Buddhism and Hinduism.’ Upon reviewing the Vedas thoroughly, we find them filled with mantras invoking might for military campaigns and conquests. The Aryans entered India and found a peaceful Dravidian civilization that they ultimately conquered and claimed as theirs.

‘With your help, O lord of bay steeds, I always go into prayer and into battle, seeking spoil; it is your whom I insist upon, when I go, longing for horses and kine, at the head of plunders.’

On such a note, it would be easy to claim that the controversy between the Vedic and Vedānta scholars and Buddhism is one mostly of ideology and that language plays a secondary role. In the above quotation, as in all quotations in the two systems, indeed as even in modern speech, the term ‘I’ is a standard conventional reference to the speaker as opposed to the reader and

1 RV. VIII. 53. 8
listener. The ideological difference is first, that there is no ‘ātman’ in Buddhism, or more precisely there is no ‘attā’; and second, that Buddhism emphasizes peaceful existence as opposed to conquest and plunder. Buddhism seems, largely, a more moralistic religion or way of life.

As Lal Mani Joshi sates, ‘It amounts to condemning the Buddha to the category of the primitive Vedic priests who were neither ascetic in outlook nor monks in practice, who neither knew the moral doctrine of karma and rebirth nor sought nirvāṇa as a release from saṁsāra. The historic founder of Buddhism was a muni, a yati, a śramaṇa, a bhikṣu, whereas the founders of old Indo-Aryan culture were warlike chiefs and householder priests.’

In this chapter, we shall examine thoroughly the controversy between the Sanskrit texts on the one hand and the Pāli Suttas of Buddhism on the other. In addition, there is the discrepancy between languages, which must be focused on. Pāli, or its basal language of Ardhamāgadhi, was the language of the masses in India at the time of the Buddha, and Sanskrit was used only by the learned class. Magadha was the kingdom of Emperor Aśoka. Ardhamāgadhi was a Prakṛti, or native language.

The primary scripture of the Classical Brahmanism was the four Vedas. Each text discussed a type of knowledge; but the theory stands that there was no real author. It claims that the learner had to assume that he was the author. Similarly, the later Suttas (discourses) of Buddhism were compiled and taught by others and not by the Buddha himself. To begin, Ananda, the Buddha’s personal attendant, began each discourse with ‘Thus have I heard’ (evam me suṭaṁ). It is exhortation that he neither taught nor held it as authority. The Buddha considered personal and direct experience more believable than mere authority, a fact that most modern people have been taught and accept.

Accordingly ‘śruti’ has an important function. ‘Śruti’ means ‘listening’ and implies that a learner must listen intently to the lessons. It also indirectly implies that the scriptures and the language they were delivered with were only spoken.

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2 Lal Mani Joshi: Brahmanism, Buddhism and Hinduism, p.35
Joshi describes the origin of Vedas as follows: ‘The Vedas are supposed to have a Divine origin. The ancient sages, whose names are associated with them had not intentionally composed them in the form of verses, but it is believed that they were revealed to them in their intuitive experiences and they were uttered by them in their ecstasies. No script was devised in the Vedic period and therefore, they had been transmitted to the later generations orally.’

The four Vedas were the base of early Aryan culture and that outward defiance made one an outcast from society: ‘What is that we call Vedas? It is already known to us that the perennial fountain of Indian culture and education, the fountain of Hinduism and the basis of the Aryan civilization. He who defies Veda is an atheist, a non-Hindu, an untouchable and a non-Aryan.’ This opinion is rather unyielding. It seems to suggest that the untouchables of the early Aryan time were any outsiders who did not accept the authority of the texts. From this, we extend the argument to the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads were the later texts to each of the four Vedas and the Buddha and his followers were opposed to the concept of a permanent or blissful self propounded by the Upaniṣads.

As we have mentioned in Chapter III, based on his personal experience, the Buddha refuted the existence of a permanent self and one that experienced bliss among so much suffering and transformation. It is a question posited even today as to how something permanent could create something impermanent and how something blissful could come from or cause suffering. These would seem to be obvious contradictions.

4.1. Comparison and Contrast

Joshi has given special attention to Rgveda, so we shall begin our chapter with that. He says that the core of thought or philosophy in that period was mostly in Rgveda. However, the Rṣis whom it is attributed to seem not to

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3 G. N. Joshi: The Evolution Of The Concepts Of Ātman And Moksa In The Different Systems Of Indian Philosophy, p.3
4 Nolini Kanta Gupta: An Introduction to the Vedas <http://home.t-online.de/home/helmeche>
have been motivated to compose the hymns (mantras) to propound any particular system of Philosophy. This would suggest that the Vедas in general and Рgveda particularly were inspired and not set down as principal spiritual texts. Concerning the concept of Ātman in the Vедas, Joshi explains later in the first chapter that it had come to mean many things. It is interpreted variously as ‘essence’ (swarūpabhootaḥ), body (deha), ‘intelligent principle’ (cetanā), ‘controller’(dharayītā), and ‘oneself’ (sвayam).

In seeking any similarity between terms of references between Vedic and Pāli scripture, one may begin by stating that for the most part, wherever it is relevant, aham is a simple, conventional reference to the speaker. Just as modern speakers refer to themselves, the Buddha and the Vedic Rśis so referred:

- (Attracted) by your bounties, I again come, Hero, to you, celebrating (your liberality) while offering this libation; the performers of the rite approach you, who are worthy of praise, for they have known your (munificent).
- I fly, like a hawk to its cherished nest, to that Indra who is to be invoked by his worshipper in battle, glorifying with excellent hymns, him who is invincible and the giver of wealth.
- May I, with my fellow-worshippers, obtain that your most excellent felicity and vigour, which, most mighty Indra, associate of heroes, the pious celebrate (as bestowed) by you, who are the humiliator (of foes), the protector of the three (worlds).

At a first glance, the above speeches would appear to be mere personal utterances without any special meaning. Even though there is no metaphysical, abstract meaning to ‘I’ in the next passages, the mood and tone

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5 G. N. Joshi: The Evolution Of The Concepts Of Ātman And Mokṣa In The Different Systems Of Indian Philosophy, p. 4
6 Ibid., p. 6 – 7
7 RV. I. 11. 6
8 RV. I. 33. 2
9 RV. VI. 26. 7

216
approaches it at least indirectly. Notice how Indra, the principle speaker, addresses others:

- *(Indra)* – Where, Maruts, has that (sacrificial) food been assigned to you, which, for the destruction of Ahi was appropriated to me alone: for I indeed am fierce and strong, and mighty, and have bowed down all mine enemies with death-dealing shafts.\(^{10}\)

- *(Indra)* – By my own prowess, Maruts, I, mighty in my wrath, slew Vītra: armed with my thunderbolt, I created all these pellucid gently-flowing waters for (the good of) man.\(^{11}\)

- The showerer (of rain), I supported the seven rivers flowing and meandering over the earth; doer of good deeds, I spread out the waters: I found by war a path for man to go in.\(^{12}\)

- I have kept up in them that which no deity, not even Tvāṣṭā, has maintained, bright, desirable, (contained) in the udders of the cows: in the rivers (I uphold) the water up to the (source of the) water, the delightful Soma and the milk and curds.\(^{13}\)

The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, which we will cover in a following section here, noted that Indra and the other Vedic deities (gods) referred to themselves as ‘I’ conventionally as well. The Buddha, in similar style, did not refer to anything as exalted as Ātman but kept the tone as mere conventional reference.

In the *Yajurveda*, as in the above examples, the speaker uses ‘I’ much the same way as common speakers did then and now, as a personal pronoun and first person reference in speaking. The tone may sound mighty, but it does not exceed the exaltation expected or refer to some abstraction like Brahman or Ātman.

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\(^{10}\) RV. I. 165.6

\(^{11}\) RV. I. 165.8

\(^{12}\) RV. X. 49.9

\(^{13}\) RV. X. 49.10
• O God, the Lord of Vows, I will observe the vow. May I have strength for that. Pray grant me success in the fulfillment of my vow. I take the vow of renouncing untruth and embracing truth!14

• Lord of the universe, Oh God, may I become a good householder through Thee, the Protector of the universe. Oh Lord may Thou protect my house, being adored by me, the guardian of my house. May our domestic duties be performed free from idleness. May I live for a hundred years day and night in the presence of God!15

The ‘responder’ in the following utterances, too, speaks with an ordinary reference of ‘I’:

• O man, just as I perform the sacrifice in this world of God, the Creator of the universe, by the force and strength of vital breaths, and the earth’s power of attraction and retention, so do thou. Just as I observe the details of the performance of the sacrifice, so do thou. Just as I cut the necks of the sinners and punish them, so do thou. Just as I through this sacrifice, attain to eminence, and become a big preacher of the *Vedas*, so do thou. Just as I preach to the king the lofty teachings of the *Vedas*, so do thou!16

• O learned man, just as I with the aid of Vedic speech, the Killer of fiends and infuser of strength, perform the invigorating sacrifice, so do thou. Just as my wise, and able man, expert in the science of *yajña*, performs the sacrifice or unearths this place to test it geologically, so shouldst do thy man! Just as I a geologist resort to strength-giving agriculture and the science of geology, so do thou. Just as my equal and unequal man geologically digs a place, so shouldst do thy man. Just as I a learner and teacher, perform the sacrifice, the giver of soul-force or practise this act of reading and teaching, so do thou. Just as my similar

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14 YV. I. 5
15 YV. II. 27
16 YV. V. 22

218
or dissimilar companion regularly performs this sacrifice so shouldst do thine.\textsuperscript{17}

The third book of \textit{Vedas, Sāmaveda}, features a reference to gods and \textit{Ṛṣis} which resembles those of the \textit{Ṛgveda}. We have, in Chapter II, mentioned the history of this scripture. As in the former two \textit{Vedas}, given above, the ‘I’ in the \textit{Sāmaveda} is no different; it remains to be used as a personal pronoun and conventional reference term:

- I seek with song your messenger, oblation-bearer, lord of wealth, immortal, best at sacrifice.\textsuperscript{18}
- If I, O \textit{Indra}, were, like you, the single ruler over wealth, my worshipper should be rich in kine.\textsuperscript{19}
- I from my Father have received deep knowledge of eternal Law: I was born like unto the Sun.\textsuperscript{20}

The fourth and last of the \textit{Vedas}, the \textit{Atharvaveda}, follows below. Passages from the \textit{Atharvaveda}, hailed as the “\textit{Veda} of the Masses”, must doubtlessly express such common sentiment as the attitude of a \textit{Ṛṣi}, an ascetic and scholar.

- I take to myself their sacrifice and splendor (\textit{vārcas}), their abundance of wealth and their intents (\textit{cittā}), O Agni; be his rivals inferior to him; to the highest firmament make this man ascend.\textsuperscript{21}
- Up hath gone you sun, up this spell (\textit{vācas}) of mine, that I may be slayer of foes, without rivals, rival-slayer.\textsuperscript{22}
- A rival-destroying bull, conquering royalty, overpowering – that I may bear rule over these heroes and the people (\textit{jāna}).\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{YV.} V. 23  
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{SV.} I. i. i. 2 \textit{[RV.} IV. 8. 1\textit{]}  
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{SV.} I. ii. i. 3 \textit{[RV.} VIII. 14. 1\textit{]}  
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{SV.} I. ii. ii. 1 \textit{[RV.} VIII. 6. 10\textit{]}  
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{AV.} I. 9. 4  
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{AV.} I. 29. 5  
\textsuperscript{23}
• Like Atri I slay you, O worms, like Kaṇva, like jamadagni; with the incantation of Agastyā I mash together the worms.24

The tone of the last quotation seems closer to a Kṣatriya or a rājā than a Rṣi. Rṣis were seers and ascetics. Yet, there is no more exalted tone than that, despite the bellicosities of it. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the Vedic gods, such as Indra, spoke as men. They referred to themselves conventionally, without any exalted connotation:

• Indra after having killed Vṛtra thought, ‘I might perhaps not have subdued him’, (apprehending his revival), and went to very distant regions.25
• He thought, ‘I will frighten them.’ ... He (Indra) perceived, ‘the Marutas are certainly my friends; these (men) love me! Well, I shall give them a share in this (my own) celebration (Śāstra).’26

Agni, a principle early Vedic god along with Indra and Varuṇa, speaks in very plain language as though addressing an assembly. The assembly was of course the companion devas who beseeched his support.

• The Devas went to war with the Asuras, in order defeat them. Agni was not willing to follow them. The Devas then said to him, ‘Go thou also, for thou art one of us.’ He said, ‘I shall not go unless a ceremony of praise is performed for me. Do ye that now.’ So they did. They all rose up (from their places), turned towards Agni, and performed the ceremony of praising him. After having been praised, he followed them.27

23 AV I. 29. 6
24 AV II. 32. 3
25 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, III. 2. 15
26 Ibid., III. 2. 20
27 Ibid., III. 4. 39

220
These utterances seem to resemble the speech of men, of Aryan kṣatriyas and rājas, but do not carry the attitude of supremely exalted beings or ideas such as Paramātman.

The next text worth looking at closely is Satapatha Brāhmaṇa. Therein, like the above, are personal references without metaphysical connotation:

- ... while announcing it with the formula, ‘I take thee, agreeable to so and so!’ ... (I Kānda, 3 Adhyāya, 2 Brāhmaṇa, 6)
- ... with the text, ‘I spread thee, soft as wool, pleasant to sit upon for the gods!’ ... (I Kānda, 3 Adhyāya, 3 Brāhmaṇa, 11)
- ... he said, ‘Verily, I am not equal to this, that I should be your Hotri, and that I should carry your oblation. Already you have chosen three before, and they have passed away. Restore them to me: then I shall be equal to this, that I should be your Hotri and that I should carry your oblation!’ ... (I Kānda, 3 Adhyāya, 3 Brāhmaṇa, 13)
- And again, ‘May I not sin against thee with my foot, O Vishnu!’ Vishnu, indeed, is the sacrifice; it is the latter therefore that he propitiates by saying, ‘may I not sin against thee!’ Furtherm ‘May I step into thy wealth-abounding shade, O Agni!’ whereby he says, ‘may I step into thy auspicious shade, O Agni!’ (I Kānda, 4 Adhyāya, 5 Brāhmaṇa, 2)

The Aitereya Āranyaka, which follows, contained similar style of speech:

- In the verse, ‘Mitra of holy might I summon (and Varuṇa) who make perfect the oil-fed rite.’ (I. 1. 4)

In the fourth Adhyāya the bird offers the prayer where he expects the blessings from the supernatural, addressing himself as ‘I’:
• The eighty gāyatrī tristichs are this world, and whatever glory, might, wedlock, proper food, and honour there is in this world, may I obtain it, may I win it, may I possess it, may it be mine. (I. 4. 3)

In Āranyaka II Adhyāya 1, the Brahman enters into the man and ultimately takes control of the total being of the man and declares:

• They strove together, saying, ‘I am the hymn, I am the hymn.’ (II. 1. 4)

This holds a puzzle for us, because the metaphysical and abstract meaning of ‘I’, which is Brahman, is vague. To all extents, the ‘I’ herein is a reference in the same vein as the preceding ones. In the passage below, the Hotṛ-priest also speaks in this tone:

• (He should say), ‘I produce thee with the gāyatrī metre. I produce thee with anus ubh metre. I produce thee with uṣṭih metre. I produce thee with bṛhatī metre. I produce thee with pankti metre. I produce thee with triṣ ubh metre. I produce thee with jagatī metre. I produce thee with virāj metre. I produce thee with dvipada metre. I produce thee with atichandas metre… ‘For up-breathing I strike thee, for down-breathing I strike thee, for cross-breathing I strike thee.’ But he should not say, ‘I strike thee,’ for other desires… He then pushes the swing to the east (with the words), ‘For breath I push thee,’ crosswise (with the words), ‘For cross-breathing I push thee,’ and back to himself (with the words), ‘For down-breathing I push thee.’ (With the words), ‘May the Vasus mount thee with the gāyatrī metre, I mount after them,’ he places his elbows on the back plank. (V. 1. 4)

The visible tone of metaphysics in the Vedic period is best observed in the Aitereya Brāhmaṇa, wherein passages such as the following are noted. However, we mark that the comparison in this passage is between the purohit and the king. In fifth chapter of this eight book the verses of a Vedic hymn
shows the importance of the office of a Purohita who became the guardian of the empire. In the following hymns the word ‘I’ has been used in a metaphysical sense expressing the relationship between the king and the Purohita:

- Now follows the mantra for appointing the Purohita: ‘Bhūr, Bhuvah, Svah, Om! I am that one, thou art this one; thou art this one, I am that one; I am heaven, thou art the earth; I am the Sāman, thou art the Rik. Let us both find here our livelihood (support). Save us from great danger (just as was done) in former times; thou art (my) body, protect mine. All ye many herbs, of a hundred kinds, over which the king Soma rules, grant me (sitting) on this seat, uninterrupted happiness. All ye herbs ruled by Soma the king, which are spread over the earth grant me (sitting) on this seat, uninterrupted happiness. I cause to sit in the kingdom this goddess of fortune. Thence I look upon the divine waters (with which the king is washing the feet of the Purohita).’ ‘By washing his (the Purohita’s) right foot I introduce wealth obtained by sharpness of senses into the kingdom; by washing his left foot, I make that sharpness of senses increase. I wash, O gods! The first (right) and second (left) foot for protecting my empire and obtaining safety for it. May the waters which served for washing the feet (of the Purohita) destroy my enemy!’

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa too features a rather abstract and metaphysical tone, while still using ‘I’ as pronoun. In Chapter II, earlier, we have explained that the speaker remained unidentified, carrying a more metaphysical or impersonal connotation.

- ... if he were to fling (the grass-bush) away with the words, ‘The air I throw away, the heaven I throw away!’ ... (I Kānda, 2 Adhyāya, 4 Brāhmaṇa, 14)

28 VIII. 5. 27
• ... he flings (the wooden sword at it), ‘Lest I should injure the earth with this sharp thunderbolt!’ ... (I Kānda, 2 Adhyāya, 4 Brāhmaṇa, 15)

• ... may I not injure the root of thy plant!’ ... (I Kānda, 2 Adhyāya, 4 Brāhmaṇa, 16)

• ... with the text, ‘May I drive Araru away from the earth, the place of offerings!’ ... (I Kānda, 2 Adhyāya, 4 Brāhmaṇa, 17)

Further toner and more reference is found in the Aitereya Āranyaka, in Adhyāya IV, as follows:

• In the beginning the one self was this, there was nothing else blinking. He thought, ‘Shall I create worlds?’ he created these worlds, water, lights, mortal, and waters... He thought, ‘There are these worlds. Shall I create guardians of the world?’ (II. 4. 1)

• He said to them, ‘To these deities I assign you, I make you sharers in them.’ (II. 4. 2)

‘I’, while still as a personal pronoun, has an abstract and impersonal tone in these passages.

In comparison with the Vedas, we have placed the Buddha’s references to himself, intended only conventionally since he did not debate on the existence of Ātman, in the following section. The reader may note that the tone in these passages is authoritative wherever the Buddha’s knowledge extended, but does not assume a high and mighty attitude.

‘This only I teach. Sorrow and its end to reach.’

The Buddha merely identified himself as speaker, in the above quotation. He distinguished himself from the Vedic or Vedāntic teachers. Again, one must observe that in the above quotation, the Buddha also defined the scope of his dharma. In his discourses on anattā or non-self, the Buddha

29 MN. 22 – Alagaddipama Sutta

224
refers to 'I', 'me' and 'myself'; but his objective was always to elucidate the falseness of the concept that any one of the five aggregates was a self.

"Monks, I will teach you the Dhamma admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end; I will expound the holy life both in its particulars & in its essence, entirely complete, surpassingly pure – in other words, the six sextets. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"This, monks, is the path of practice leading to self-identification. One assumes about the eye that 'This is me, this is my self, this is what I am.'"30

Modern psychology, science and language all agree that, fundamentally, an assumption is a personal opinion but neither a fact nor a scientific conclusion. Therefore, when one assumes that the eye, or any part of the body, or the body as a unit, or the mind, is a self or is himself, his opinion is certainly not based upon recognized scientific information and therefore erroneous. But we will notice, at least superficially, that the Buddha’s reference did not exceed the common, conventional frame. By the same hand, the Buddha admonished that one should practice the opposite to this idea and declare that the eye, the eye-medium, etc. was not me, not myself, I am not this.

‘Now, this is the path of practice leading to the cessation of self-identification. One assumes about the eye that 'This is not me, this is not my self, this is not what I am.'"31

So far as we may observe, the Buddha did not refer to anything extreme or exalted like the ātman of certain Vedic scriptures. However, the similarity between them can be found from the common references made in the two scriptures. The Rsis or devas of the Vedas and the Buddha, or particular monks and ascetics, refrained from such attitudes. The contrasts are, of course, wherever and whenever the Vedas or the succeeding literature refers to Brahman or Ātman as being blissful or permanent. Empirically, the Buddha understood that the whole of life was neither blissful nor permanent and doubted the explanations of Brahman in this form. We may observe the

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30 MN. 148 – Chachakka Sutta: The Six Sextets
31 Ibid., 148
following passage: “And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: ‘This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am’?” “No, Lord.”

Thus, we begin the angle of contrast between the Buddha’s wisdom and the hypothetical references of the Vedic and Vedānta literature. In all that is temporary, painful, subject to change, there is nothing that can be attributed to oneself or as being a self, a soul, etc. The Buddha thoughtfully began his examination of the group of five monks, during his sojourn at Varanasi, with the query that all around them is inconstant, and asked them if they agreed that it was or that it was constant. He pursued the topic by asking the monks to identify that inconstant object as painful or pleasant, and received the same result. He asked next as to whether an inconstant and painful and stressful object was subjected to change or not. Of course, it was so. The monks were, finally, urged to ‘let go’ of those same things in order to prosper, be happy and attain parinibbāṇa.

The Buddha in Anattā-lakkhaṇa Sutta has clearly pointed out to us the concept of ‘I’:

"Form, monks, is not self. If form were the self, this form would not lend itself to dis-ease. It would be possible [to say] with regard to form, 'Let this form be thus. Let this form not be thus.' But precisely because form is not self, form lends itself to dis-ease. And it is not possible [to say] with regard to form, 'Let this form be thus. Let this form not be thus.'

"Feeling is not self...

"Perception is not self...

"[Mental] fabrications are not self...

"Consciousness is not self. If consciousness were the self, this consciousness would not lend itself to dis-ease. It would be possible [to say] with regard to consciousness, 'Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.' But precisely because consciousness is not self, consciousness lends itself to dis-ease. And it is not possible [to say] with regard

32 Ibid., 148
to consciousness, 'Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.'

"What do you think, monks -- Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"...Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"...Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"...Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."...

"What do you think, monks -- Is consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, lord."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, lord."

"And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"Thus, monks, any body whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near, every body is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple grows disenchanted with the body, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is fully released. With full release, there
is the knowledge, 'Fully released.' He discerns that 'Birth is depleted, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.' "

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the group of five monks delighted at his words. And while this explanation was being given, the hearts of the group of five monks, through not clinging (not being sustained), were fully released from fermentation/effluents."33

The following section is assigned to non-scriptural comparisons and contrasts from various scholars.

4.2. Non-Scriptural Contrasts on ‘I’ or ‘Self’

‘Soul’ in the Vedic sense was equivalent with breath (prāṇa). In defense of this concept, European scholars attempted to link Old Germanic or Teutonic language via the term ‘athom’. Both terms, they believed, developed from the prefix ‘an’ which means ‘to breathe.’ Again, Teutonic was a derivative language of the Indo-Aryan and Indo-European languages, and some Sanskrit or Aryan influence exists. But the connection between the two concepts will be vague without textual reference translated from Old Germanic. Joshi adds the term ‘asu’ to this glossary and explains that it, too, was synonymous with breath.

Further, Puruṣa is described in the texts as the personification of man, regarded as the soul, and the source of the universe. It is the universal soul. Puruṣasūkta of the Rgveda describes the Puruṣa as the life-giving principle in all animated beings, said to have a thousand, that is innumerable, heads, eyes and feet, and as being one with all created life. It continues to explain that although as the universal soul he pervades the universe, as the Individual soul (ātman) he is enclosed in a space of narrow dimensions.34 Thus, we perceive the ages-old contradiction of infinite abiding in finite forms. The phrase

33 SN. XXII. 59 – Anattā-lakāha Sutta: The Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic.
34 RV. X. 90.
‘having innumerable heads, eyes and feet’ is likely a metaphor for existing in innumerable animate objects.

A concluding note on the term is that the Rṣīs who were the chief scholars of the Rgveda seemed to be aware of a concept or an entity called Ātmā, synonymous of the ‘principle of vitality’ or animation. ‘Anima’ is a term meaning life principle or vitality in ancient Latin. The Ātmā of the Rgveda could not be identified with either any one part of the body or with the body as a united organism. The Ātmā survived the physical body after death, is conscious, imperceptible, subtle, eternal and essential.

There is a reference in Rgveda wherein Agni, the deity of fire, must assuage the ‘Unborn Spirit’ so that it will be reborn. Further, the Rgveda believed that cremation purifies the spirit of evil and other imperfections.

According to the Vedas, the dead rise to the Yamaloka, which by the way is in the firmament and not the underworld like Classical Greek thought, and dispense with their imperfections. This is the resting place of the dead. Yamaloka is reputed to have bliss rather than suffering and the ‘soul’ ascends to it rather than being destroyed along with the body.

The term amṛta, or immortality, also is used frequently in the Rgveda, but the Rṣīs whom it is attributed to believed that the after life was a fortunate and blissful extension of life on earth. On both of these matters, the Buddha had a counterpoint. In any case, this shows that the Vedic seers, or Rṣīs, viewed the body as a ‘vehicle’ toward their perfection. Yoga was not meant to be contemptuous or to torture the body for spiritual advancement; it was, and is today, a worship practice, physical discipline equal to calisthenics and gymnastics and a way to sound mental and physical health.

Furthermore, the Aryans were not the first to create the idea of transmigration. It appears to be a pre-Vedic and aboriginal doctrine based on cyclical birth and re-birth. Various sources agree that the Aryans borrowed it like other aspects of Dravidian culture. Maurice Bloomfield believes that the

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35 Griffith R. T. H. (Tr.): The Hymns of the RgVeda, Vol. II, RV XI, 2.1-1
36 Ibid., Vol. II, RV X, 14.8
37 Ibid., Vol. II, RV X, 14.9
concept ‘filtered into the Brahmanical consciousness from below, from the popular sources, possibly from some of the aboriginal, non-Aryan tribes in India.’ Garbe has written that ‘the Aryan Indians can have received only the first impetus to the development of the theory of transmigration from the aboriginal inhabitants’ and, therefore, ‘the assumption of a constant changing continuance of life, and its connection with the doctrine of the power of deeds’ were borrowed and elaborated upon.

The second period of Classical Brahmanic literature includes the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. The Āraṇyakas come from āranya, which means forest in Sanskrit. These texts succeeded the four Vedas and preceded the Upaniṣads. A certain passage from the Aitareya Āraṇyaka is rather peculiar, in that it seems to deify the soul. Even today, ‘God’ and ‘soul’ are vague, undefined concepts, but few would even think of worshipping the ‘soul’ as these questions are put by Colebrook: “What is the soul that we may worship him?” It is succeeded by a lengthy enquiry into the nature of ‘soul’: “Which is the soul? Is it that by which man sees? By which he hears? By which he smells odours? By which he utters speech? By which he discriminates a pleasant or unpleasant taste? Is it the heart (or understanding)? Or the mind or will? Is it sensation? Or retention? Or attention? Or application? Or haste? Or pain? Or memory? Or assent? Or determination? Or animal action? Or wish or desire?”

So in the same manner that pro-animistic scholars tried to determine ātman from anatā in Buddhism, through the process of deductive reasoning, the Aitareya Āraṇyaka attempted to discern the nature of ‘soul’ from what it was not. As we discussed in Chapter III, the above items are mostly the aggregates of mind.

In conclusion, Colebrook points out thus: ‘All those are only various names of apprehension. But this (Soul, consisting in the faculty of apprehension) is Brāhma; he is Indra, he is Prajāpati, the lord of creatures; these gods are he; and so are the five primary elements: earth, air, the ethereal

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38 Bloomfield Maurice: The Religion of the Veda, p.254
39 Garbe Richard: The Philosophy of Ancient India, p. 5
40 Colebrook, H. T.: Essays on the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus, p. 29
fluid, water and light; these, and the same joined with minute objects and other seeds (of existence), and again other (beings) produced from eggs, or borne in wombs, or originating in hot moisture, or springing from plants; whether horses or kine, or men, or elephants, whatever lives, and walks and flies, or whatever is immovable (as herbs and trees); all that is the eye of intelligence. On intellect (every thing) is founded; the world is the eye of intellect, and intellect is its foundation. Intelligence is (Brahmā) the great one. By this (intuitively) intelligent soul, that sage ascended from the present world to the blissful region of heaven; and obtaining all his wishes, became immortal. He became immortal. The scholars have gone full circle into the procedure of discerning the ‘soul’, discerned only the mental compounds and deduced that they are in fact the Ātman or Brahman.

Joshi’s conclusion of the Aitareya Āranyaka is that the text clearly defines ‘soul’ as ‘intelligent principle, present in all things ranging from the inanimate things like the earth to the highest gods like Indra and Prajāpati, including the vegetative and animal kingdom.’ To be objectively critical, earth and stone, being inanimate objects, must lack ‘soul’ if soul is a synonym of intelligence or animation. Inanimate objects obviously possess neither quality. It seems to be very confusing to attempt to define what is indefinable.

Proceeding from this, we reach the focal point of our discussion, the Upaniṣads. These are the conclusive texts of the Vedic period and are, hence, the founding texts of the Vedānta. Vedānta means, in Sanskrit, the termination or culmination of the Vedas. Herein, the texts speak on multifarious philosophical issues such as immortality, individual ātman, saṁsāra and bondage to it, and so on. Joshi credits the Upaniṣads with totally one hundred and twenty texts, but thirteen require special attention. In the last chapter, we have mentioned passages from some of these texts, in reference to individual ātman and Brahman.

41 Ibid., p. 29 – 30
42 G. N. Joshi: The Evolution Of The Concepts Of Ātman And Moksa In The Different Systems Of Indian Philosophy, p. 26
43 Ibid., p. 29
All the Upaniṣads equate Brahman with ‘Ultimate Reality’. ‘Brahman is the Absolute, the source, sustainer and end of every thing in the world and it includes in it all things in the world, whether gross or subtle, physical or mental, transient or immortal, concrete or occult, material or spiritual. The Brahman is the all-pervading Reality as it envelopes everything that exists.’  

Brahman and Ātman according to the above description would appear to be mutually synonymous.

Ātman is scattered throughout these texts in myriad forms. It is first described as breath, or principle of vitality (prāṇa), which reflects the earlier Vedic viewpoint. The Kausitaki Upaniṣad received first mention as a text containing this view and emphasized that the ‘soul’ must be that. The text assumes that the senses, defined as deities, debated for supremacy in the body and lost the debate to ‘vital breath’ without whom or which the body altogether would cease to function.  

Thus, ‘prāṇa’ was realized to be the most vital principle of existence.

In the modern term ‘prāṇa’ can mean ‘oxygen.’ ‘Breath’ is the means by which oxygen enters the body of organisms other than fish and sea animals, and is an important beginning in meditation and yoga techniques.

By contrast, the Kaṭha Upaniṣad did not refer to ‘prāṇa’ in relation to the physical body. Controversy continues via the attitude toward mind and body. As we have pointed out clearly in Chapter II that the ātman (self) is compared to the owner of a chariot, the body is the chariot, the intellect is the driver, the horses are the senses and the mind is the rein by which the intellect controls the senses.  

Thus, the Self exists within the body, but is not the mind nor the senses, nor the body itself; We can also determine that compiler of this Upaniṣad believed that the body is led on by the senses, likening them to horses which lead the chariot, but needs the mind and intellect to control the senses, as the charioteer must control the horses. The sense objects then impel the senses toward them or to some goal, since they are described as roads. One

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44 Ibid., p. 29
45 Kausitaki Up. II. 14.
46 Kaṭha Up.-I, 3.3, 4. Tr. Max Müller, p. 12
may notice that the *Upaniṣad* believed that behind the mind is a force or concept which compels even the charioteer; that is ātman or the referent of aham.

It should be mentioned that the order of mind and intellect are inverted. Mind is not an aggregate of intellect; contrarily, intellect is an aggregate of mind. Thus, it should have been written that 'mind is the charioteer and intellect are the reins'. In contrast, the Buddha argued that here was only 'pañcakkhanda' or five aggregates: body as first aggregate (*rūpakkhandha*) and the other four being aggregates of the mind (*nāmakkhandha*). To him and his followers, there was only a charioteer and a chariot. According to Buddhism the mind is not the controller but merely a forerunner of action as the *Dhammapada* has clearly pointed out: 'Mind is the forerunner of all evil states. Mind is chief, mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with wicked mind, because of that, suffering follows one.' And 'Mind is the forerunner of all good states. Mind is chief, mind-made are they. If one speaks or acts with pure mind, because of that, happiness follows one.'

*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* shows clearly that *Brahman* is 'Self' and from it arose ether (*ākāśa*), from ether, air, from air, fire, from fire, water, from water, earth. From earth, herbs, from herbs, food, from food, seeds, from seeds, man. Man thus consists of the essence of food. We can argue this point by taking the attitude that human life does not consist only of food. The physical body formed out of the earthly matter is not all; over and above it is the vitality or the energy that sets the human body into activity is also indispensable. This vitality is expressed by means of the breath. But the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* goes ahead and says, 'Different from this, which consists of breath, is the other, the inner Self, which consists of mind. The former is filled by this.'

So, we can deduce that the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, too, attributes the Ātman as breath. Breath here takes the connotation of 'vitality' and the special feature

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47 *Dhp.* 1.
48 *Dhp.* 2.
50 *Taitt. Up.* 2. 3. Tr. Max Müller.
or the differentia of mankind is the mind, the thinking mind. An organism though equipped with all the sense organs, the physical apparatus with all the motor organs and the vitality, it cannot reach the status of a man as long as it does not possess the mind, we mean the thinking mind. This, at least, is a more scientific analysis. The very thing that differentiates man from other animals is his ability to think and discriminate; and it is lack of this, or ignorance, which propels him from humanity into a more animal existence.

Henceforth, the mind is the next synonym of ‘self’ or ‘soul’. The Taittirīya Upaniṣad continues to describe the inner Self as matter (annam), life (prāṇa), mind (mano), intelligence (vijñānam) and finally describes it as bliss (ānando). 51 Thus, the Upaniṣad continues to contradict itself; but this is evidence that something as indefinable and unclear as ‘soul’ or ‘self’ is indescribable and open to controversy.

The Upaniṣads describe Self as two distinct types, as distinguished in Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad. The second type can be called ‘bhūtātman’, or elemental soul, which has the following description: ‘he, who, being overcome by the bright or the dark fruits of action, a good or an evil womb, so that his course is downward, overcome by the pairs of opposites.’ 52 There are totally ten elements (bhūtani); the five gross elements (mahābhūtani) as spoken by the ‘world element’ and five subtle elements (таn-mātṛa). The body (sarira) is composed of both types, but the inner self is called elemental soul. However, the immortal Self, or Ātman, is described as resting within like a ‘drop of water upon a lotus leaf.’ Nature or ‘prakṛti’ and qualities or ‘guṇa’ confuse the elemental soul. 53

The Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad distinguishes this Self from the Universal and Higher Self by describing the former as ‘doer’. Inner Self is the causer of all actions, but is overcome by the guṇas and transforms; whereas the Universal Self is beyond the guṇas and is deemed to be free. The description of Universal Self in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad is more abstract – ‘As the one fire, the

52 Maitrāyaṇi Up. 3. 2. Tr. Hume, R. E., p. 418
53 Maitrāyaṇi Up. 3. 2.
one air, after it has entered the world, though one becomes different according
to whatever it enters, thus the one Self within all things becomes different,
according to whatever it enters, and exists also without. It supposes that the
many ‘souls’ are united by their essence. They are compared to reflections in
clean water, and the universal Self is compared to the sun.

_Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad_ has the most fascinating description of the soul
and the description in part will be mentioned later in this thesis. One will notice
the multifarious terms used to describe it and will certainly feel a bit confused.
The texts that preceded Buddhism were often self-contradictory, as great truths
such as the god being in the body of man have been attributed, and we must
believe that such confusion was the main argument of the Buddhist doctrine of
anattā. The _Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad_ describes the soul as follows:

‘Whoever has qualities (güna, distinctions) is the doer of deeds that
bring recompense;
And of such action he experiences the consequences.
Undergoing all forms, characterized by the three qualities,
treading the three paths;
The individual Self roams about according to its deeds (karman).
He is the measure of the thumb, of sun-like appearance,
When coupled with conception (saṅkalpa) and egoism (aharākāra).
But with only the qualities of intellect and of Self,
The lower (Self) appears of the size of the point of an awl.
This living Self is to be known as a part of a hundredth
part of the point of a hair – subdivided a hundredfold.
The soul is neither a male, nor a female, nor neuter.
The soul being attached to what it experiences, gets new
births according to previous deeds. The form and the nature of soul is
determined from the qualities of the deeds of each soul.’

54 Katha Up. 2.5.9, 10. Tr. Max Müller, p. 19.
So, herein, we find that the individual soul is unlike and both the size of the thumb and the point of an awl, and the one hundredth part of a hair subdivided into one hundred parts. Furthermore, it is neither a male, nor a female nor neuter. At this point, it is worth mentioning that modern biology, being an exact science, has delineated gender in the flowing terms: whatever is not male, is female; whatever is not female, is male and whatever is undefined as either is deemed neuter. How can something be neither male, nor female nor neuter? What we must suspect from all that is that the ‘soul’ is nothing; only ‘nothing’ is beyond description and un-engendered. From the viewpoint of physics one can conclude that this soul is energy in its original state, which can by some unknown directive assume many forms. Only energy is un-engendered and beyond physical description, and Einstein has proved that energy creates matter and returns to its original state at some indeterminate period of time.

This description takes under it two other concepts, transmigration and karma respectively – ‘the individual Self roams about according to its actions (karman)’ describes in indirect terms that the individual soul wanders from one birth to another karmically, which is the theory of transmigration; and ‘The soul being attached to what it experiences, gets new births according to previous deeds. The form and the nature of soul is determined from the qualities of the deeds of each soul’ refers to the effects of past actions, which is the theory of karma.

The Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad shares this opinion: ‘Verily this Soul (Ātman) wanders here on earth, from body to body, unovercome, as it seems, by the bright or dark fruits of action.’

It appears that, at the time, the concept of both karma and transmigration had taken root. Concerning Buddhism the concept of Ātman was not taught and Mokṣa became Nirvāṇa. The previous Chapter in this thesis has brought out for the analysis of the attitudes of various researchers that the Buddha either directly avoided ‘ātmanavāda’ or indirectly suggested the nature of ātman through the teaching of ‘anattā’. The Pāli texts make use of ‘attā’ as a

conventional reference, just as we would today. That is customary in all times. Transmigration, as the Buddhist scholars have analysed, was not accepted; but *karma* was generally accepted.

Opinion has it that Buddhism was ‘atheistic’. Dependent Causation (*paṭīcchasamuppāda*) has posed the question of the origin of god and concluded that man evolves into god by his own *karma*. The Buddha relied upon empirical experience to prove his teachings, and modern researchers claim that his teachings allowed for scientific research and analysis. Thousands of years later, in the past century, scientists have proven the Buddha accurate and his teachings have taken firm hold in the West.

There is a direct and concrete statement from Joshi’s research that ‘Buddhism does not believe in the existence of an entity called self or Ātman’; and is therefore titled ‘nairātmyavādin’ or what Pāli terms as ‘anattā’. The previous chapter has set out to determine what is meant as ‘I’ or ‘atta’ in Buddhist scriptures. Buddhism recognises only infinite momentary states of consciousness. To quote Theodore Stcherbatsky, ‘The elements of existence are momentary appearances, momentary flashings into the phenomenal world out of an unknown source.’ For the Buddhists, reality is phenomenal and changing, which contradicts the Ultimate Reality of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. Since the existence is impermanent (*anicca*) then ‘self’ cannot be permanent either. The ‘self’ as separate from consciousness or abiding in all mental states cannot be possible.

The Buddha addresses Bādarāyana in the ‘Scriptural Chips’ while elucidating the concept of self in the following manner – ‘... But a self in the sense of the real Self does not exist. By false (imputation the elements of consciousness) is fancied (to represent a Self). There is here neither Self nor a sentient Being. There are elements, which depend upon (other elements acting

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57 G. N. Joshi: *The Evolution Of The Concepts Of Ātman And Mokṣa In The Different Systems Of Indian Philosophy*, p. 114
as) causes. If we carefully examine them, we do not find among all of them any individual.\(^59\)

A. B. Keith is of the opinion, "The conclusion is, therefore, that there is no real Self; the term is accordingly merely a convention. We never know the self as such, but merely have knowledge of psychic happenings, sensations, perceptions, feelings and so on."\(^60\) The term ‘self’ is a conventional term, usually reflexive as ‘one self’.

Mrs. Rhys Davids spoke of ‘attābhāva’ or ‘selfhood’ as referring to the individual as ‘bodily and mental organism’. Buddhism believes that self is arbitrary and that by them psychic unified experiences are understood. She points out in the further passage the nominalist view of reality of the Buddhists — "These are merely names, expressions, terms of speech, designations in common use in the world. Of these he who has won truth makes use indeed, but is not led astray by them."\(^61\) One who is enlightened may speak of ‘I’ or ‘self’ conventionally, due to those around him; but he knows the reality behind them. Mentally, those around such a person are not yet at that point of understanding and the enlightened teacher needs to teach to be understood.

However, the Buddha was not keenly interested in teaching existence and non-existence of self or soul; his main accent was on suffering (dukkha), its cause and its termination. People were miserable during his time, as they remain today. So whether a man can fly in the air by psychic power or in an aeroplane, he still suffers. The crucial matter, to him as to us all, is how to stop being unhappy. But he went on to analyse that the cause of suffering was both ‘anicca’ (impermanence) and ‘ahamkāra’ (egoism). He needed to teach about ‘anattā’ to counter any discussion about self or ego.

The Buddha and his disciples neither speculated nor pursued knowledge for its own sake, but relied on knowledge as the key to deliverance. His ‘dhamma’ (discourse) was intended to teach the cause and extinction of suffering, and knowledge fit into it as the instrument of that extinction.

\(^60\) A. B. Keith: *Buddhist Philosophy in India and Ceylon*, p. 176.
The previous chapter addressed the topic that all compounds were impermanent and that this was the cause of suffering. The Buddha imparted that suffering was due to egoism and attachment, and one should attempt to be detached from surroundings and circumstances; one should look at everything as being devoid of self. By egoism, it is meant that by one’s ‘ego’ or by oneself one accumulates suffering. One assumes that suffering is ‘mine’, ‘I am suffering’ and so on. Suffering arises due to impermanence around that existence and the individual erringly believes that it is his own. Nothing ever is one’s own; hence, neither is suffering. Therefore, in the same manner as it came, suffering will also depart. It is either displaced by other sufferings or is eradicated. If we choose to ignore it, what would happen?

Dahlke says, ‘Sorrow is real only so long as life is real – that is, so long as this corporeality is looked upon as true, soul-endowed I. The reality of sorrow falls along with the reality of the ‘I.’ When the ‘I’ is perceived to be illusion the sorrow also is perceived to be illusion. Sorrow is the result of ignorance.’

Since all compounded things are devoid of self, seeing them in such a way should lead to ‘right belief’ and freedom from suffering, or ‘nibbāna’. There is no self or ‘soul’ and that all impermanence leads to suffering. Since there is nothing except impermanence, no lasting entity such as ‘Ātman’ can exist. Likewise, with all being the cause of suffering, there can be no blissful self. The Buddha’s hypothesis is empirical knowledge based on his observations and experiences. He did not openly refute Ātman, nor did he insinuate its existence through deduction from what it was not. ‘Sabbe dhammā anattā’ (all compounded things are no self) contends only that there is no self in anything.

The previous chapter likewise indicated that modern science has failed to prove the existence of ‘soul’ but has learned the causes of nearly all natural phenomena. Modern psychology has analysed ‘ego’ (Lat. ‘I’) but has not proved its existence. The Buddha knew this more than two thousand years ago

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62 Dahlke Paul: Buddhist Essays, pp. 68 – 69.
and we know it today. Reality has remained constant through the centuries, although that reality is filled with change and sorrow.

What is a compounded thing? Two or more causes which are themselves dependent upon other causes. These things include relationships, work, and so on ad infinitum (infinitely). For instance, two or more persons meet, attract each other and form a relationship. Causes might be that they need each other or even that they used to know each other (in some past existence). When the circumstances or causes which brought those persons together change, such as ‘the need is fulfilled’ or ‘the infatuation dissolves and they see each other really’, they no longer feel interested or happy. They decide to separate from each other. Thus, the old formula: *aniccam dukkham* (impermanence is suffering).

Egoism (*ahamkāra*) has set in at one time or another. They became attached to each other. Infatuation or other misconception arises. When it disappears, people see each other sharply but they fail to see themselves. There can be no egoism, if there is no self; without egoism, there is no attachment; and without attachment, there is no suffering. What remains is the contentment or complacency, which is an aspect of enlightenment.

Joshi says, ‘A thing which is dear to an individual, causes disappointment and pain in him by ceasing to exist immediately after its occurrence. Man has an inborn tendency to expect long-term duration of a thing that gives him some kind of pleasure or satisfaction. Momentary things give only momentary pleasure. The moment an individual begins to enjoy the pleasure, it disappears. It is inherent in the nature of thing to be evanescent and transient.’

This last statement is resolution that there is no permanent or unchanging entity in the world. The nature of all things in life is temporary and fleeting, and all worldly phenomena follow this example without exception. That appears to be a universal observation of the sentient existence.

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63 G. N. Joshi: *The Evolution Of The Concepts Of Ātman And Moksa In The Different Systems Of Indian Philosophy*, p. 138
At this juncture, let us look at Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings about self. One notable writer on the subject is D. T. Suzuki. Suzuki explains the concept of egolessness in nirvāṇa and he describes the state of Nirvāṇa as one of enlightenment and not of darkness and blankness. He says, ‘Individual existences then as such lose their significance and become sublimated and ennobled in the oneness of the Dharmakāya. Egoistic prejudices are forever vanquished and the aim of our lives is no more the gratification of selfish cravings, but the glorification of Dharma as it works its own way through the multitudinousness of things. The Self does not stand any more in a state of isolation (which is an illusion), it is absorbed in the universal body of the Dharma. It recognises itself in other selves, animate as well as inanimate, and all things are in nirvāṇa. When we reach this state of ideal enlightenment we are said to have realised the Buddhist life.’

Here, the absorption is the event of egolessness and, simultaneously, the state of being magnanimous and humanitarian. This is called ‘upekkā’ or in Sanskrit ‘upeksā’. This is true ennoblement, since egoism is ignoble and leads to selfishness. Furthermore, one loses the desire to self-gratification by seeing all as related to himself. This is called interrelatedness.

In defense, we turn to Stcherbatsky’s analysis: Soullessness (anatā) is but the negative expression, indeed, a synonym for the existence of ultimate reality (dharmatā). Buddhism never denied the existence of a personality or a self, in the empirical sense; it only maintained that it was no ultimate reality (not a dharma).

Mahāyānism preaches the annihilation of selfish, egoistic existence through the universalisation of the personality, i.e. the aspirant must renounce self-interest and pursue humanitarian lifestyle, in which he or she is generous, broadminded and free from prejudice. He is magnanimous and sees all beings as one. By seeing that the so-called beings are really composed of aggregates, one realises that no one is different from any other. Except the non-physical

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realms, every being possesses a mind and a body. However, the non-physical realms are simply the mental states.

Thus in Mahāyānism the individual merges with dharmakāya. This is like the water of a river merging into the body of an ocean. River is an analogy of individual existence and ocean is universal life. The water that reaches the ocean is purified through its journey. Henceforth, purification of the self is a matter of course.

The evolution of the self in Mahāyānism is the ‘Bodhisattva-marga.’ According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the individual must evolve into an enlightened being while on earth, and alive. That is, Nirvāṇa is possible without the extinction of the body. He strives to become high-minded and generous. Nirvāṇa is the extinction of suffering and is not necessarily accomplished with the death of the body. Depending upon the life of that individual, he will pass into a state of temporary bliss or suffering but they are merely stops along the route. They are temporary abodes subject to flux.

D. T. Suzuki offers the following description: ‘Nirvāṇa, according to Buddhists, does not signify an annihilation of consciousness nor a temporal or permanent suppression of mentation, as imagined by some; but it is the annihilation of ego – substance and of all the desires that arise from this erroneous conception... and its positive side consists in universal love or sympathy (karuṇa) for all beings.’

Altogether, whether looking at the scriptural texts or at scholarly writings which compared the general attitude or approach to life, one must agree that the majority of similarities between the Brahmanic Rṣis and the Buddha, or his devotees, lies in the references to oneself throughout. In both cases, the references remained mostly conventional i.e., first person, personal pronoun and unexalted or concrete in tone. There were certainly enough descriptions of, or attempts to describe, Brahman or Ātman. Puruṣa, a common synonym, has been given adequate explanation in this chapter. However, upon reading closely, one will certainly realize that the image cannot fit because of

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even obvious contradictions. These provided ample space for debate; but, though the Buddha refrained from open debate for various reasons, his dharma expresses a clear albeit indirect argument against such terms. That is the region in which the contrasts existed.