Chapter II

Upanishads : A Past for the Present

Why should we read the Upanishads in this age of Humanistic Education? Friedrich Nietzsche once said: "You can only explain the past by what is highest in the present. Only by straining the noblest qualities you have to their highest power will you find out what was greatest in the past, most worth knowing and preserving." Studying the Upanishads that way is helpful to the modern man through which he can transcend the barriers of the past and understand the present to prepare himself for the future.

The nature of man with his instincts and intuitions is not very much different in searching the "root". Inspite of our technological advancements and scientific achievements we donot want to be rootless so far as our antiquity is concerned. That is why the study of classics become more important to relate the present to the past and both past and present to the future. This is why the
The study of Upanishads seems important. Dr Radhakrishnan expounding the relevance of "Upanishads" aptly remarks:

The Upanisads, though remote in time from us, are not remote in thought. They disclose the working of the primal impulses of the human soul which rises above the differences of race and geographical position. At the core of all historical religions there are fundamental types of spiritual experience though they are expressed with different degrees of clarity. The Upanishads illustrate and illuminate these primary experiences.

By seeing the repetitiveness in the Upanishads and its irrelevance to our time we often criticise them as full of idealism, and less pragmatic. Here we talk of materialism which is based on our daily need and luxury, not of spiritualism which deals with our mind and spirit. The age-old spiritual need cannot be satisfied with bread and butter alone. In the Bible it is rightly said: "man is not born for bread alone." To understand the true meaning of the Upanishads one has to return to that age and that atmosphere in which the rishis were working. To explain more clearly Dr Radhakrishnan says: "We must not judge ancient writings from our standards. We need not condemn our fathers for having been what they were or ourselves for being somewhat different from them. It is our task to relate them to their environment, to bridge
distances of time and space and separate the transitory from the permanent.”

Swami Ranganathananda speaks in a similar vein when he claims that Upanishads are applicable to our contemporary living: "The truths that the Upanishads proclaimed ages ago are of contemporary interest in every age, because they are the fruits of detached and rational, sustained and sincere, pursuit of truth, and they are addressed to man as such, and not to any group or section there of, and have a profound bearing on his growth, development, and fulfilment.

Indian philosophy cannot be properly understood without the help of the Upanishads. So it is said to think of Indian philosophy without the Upanishads is like to think of the Bible without the Sermon on the mount. In the series of the Prasthanatrayi, the triple texts, Upanishads stand at the head, then comes Brahmastra and Bhagawad Gita. The words and imageries of the Upanishads not only have influenced Indian philosophy but also have influenced the literature of the West.

Indian philosophy takes its root in the upanishadic teaching. Samkhya owes the doctrine of Prakriti and the theory of three gunas to the teaching of the Upanishads. Svetasvatara Upanishad begot the theory of yoga, Mimamsa was developed from the Kathopanishad and Vedanta is a brain child of almost all the major Upanishads.

Sri Aurobindo sees the Upanishads as a "poetical master piece" and he finds in it the sublimest poetry:
"The Upanishads are the supreme work of the Indian mind, and that it should be so, that the highest self-expression of its genius, its sublimest poetry, its greatest creation of the thought and word should be not a literary or poetical masterpiece of the ordinary kind, but a large flood of spiritual revelation of this direct and profound character, is a significant fact, evidence of a unique mentality and unusual turn of spirit."  

Though Upanishads were written in Indian soil their importance and significance could be felt by the scholars all over the world. Dara Shikoh (1614-1659) the eldest brother of Aurangzeb and the eldest son of Shah Jahan translated the Upanishads into Persian entitled: Sirr-ul-Asrar or the "Secret of Secrets". He did it with the help of a few pandits of Banaras. Through such translations the Upanishads could cross the geographical boundaries of India and were rooted deep in the heart and mind of the people in the West. In the words of Winternitz:  

For the historian, who pursues the history of human thought, the Upanisads have a yet far greater significance. From the mystical doctrines of the Upanisads, one current of thought may be traced to the mysticism of the Persian Sufism, to the mystic, theosophical logos doctrine of the Neo-Platonics and the Alexandrian Christian mystics, Eckhart and Tauler, and finally to the philosophy of the great German mystic of the nineteenth century, Schopenhauer.
The influence of the Upanishads cannot be measured only as literature of the East. While speaking of "Brahma" the well-known poem of Emerson, Will Durant says, "the philosophy of Upanishads—this monistic theology, this mystic and impersonal immortality has been dominating Hindu thought from Buddha to Gandhi, from Yajnavalkya to Tagore. To our own day the Upanishads have remained to India what the New Testament has been to Christendom—a noble creed occasionally practised and generally revered. Even in Europe and America this wistful theosophy has won millions upon millions of followers, from lonely women and tired men to Schopenhauer and Emerson." Upanishads are relevant to our present day society, although they were written by many seers and sages between 800 to 500 BC. To ascertain the importance of the Upanishads Will Durant writes: "The Upanishads are as old as Homer, and as modern as Kant." 

Comparing the Bible with the Upanishads Paul Deussen says: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," so the Bible demands. But whence comes this demand, that I feel in me and not in the other? "Because" here intervenes the Veda (The Upanisads) providing clarification, "thy neighbour, in truth, is thy own self and what separates thee from him is mere illusion." 

Connotations of the Term "Upanishad".

The term "Upanishad" is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root sad (sit), the prefixes upa and ni—(nearby) which means to sit down near a teacher from whom a pupil receives esoteric knowledge. The pedagogical tradition
reveals that a pupil seeking the sacred knowledge used to sit in front of a guru or a teacher. Shankara derives the word "Upanisad" as a substantive from the root sad, "to loosen," "to reach," or "to destroy," with upa and ni as prefixes. If we accept the derivation, Upanishad means the knowledge of the ultimate by which ignorance is loosened or destroyed. Here Upanishad means "the knowledge that destroys ignorance." "Sitting near for learning" and "through learning destroying ignorance" both the meanings are fulfilled in case of Yājñavalkya's teaching to Maitreyi. Maitreyi, Yājñavalkya's wife unhesitatingly chose spiritualism and rejected materialism. The wise teacher removed all types of ignorance and enlightened her way to attain spiritual bliss. Upanishads are known as the knowledge of reality or tattvijnana and secret doctrine or rahasya. The Upanishads themselves indicate that they are the truth of truth or Satyasya Satyam (Br 2:1:20) and as supreme secret or Parama guhyam (Kath. 1:3:17). Will Durant translates the term Upanishad as "confidential conferences of philosophers." Classification and Numbers of Upanishads:

It is difficult to tell how many Upanishads have been written from Isa to Allopanishad till date. It exceeds more than two hundred, though Indian tradition accommodates only one hundred and eight Upanishads which are prescribed to attain salvation in the stock list of Muktika Upanishad (I:30-39). The principal Upanishads are said to be ten and Shankara adding one more, made it eleven in order to

The researcher does not wish to include all the major Upanishads available in the Indian libraries because of their several contradictory doctrines and the wide variety of beliefs and unbeliefs and for their inconsistencies. Besides, they donot speak of a speculative philosophy; rather they speak religious ideas of Tantra and Puranas and glorify the prayer and worship of Siva, Shakti and Vishnu and other cults. Her next reason to avoid these lesser Upanishads is that there are Upanishads like *Āllopanishad* which was written during seventeenth century at the instance of Dārā Shikoh, the son of the Moghul emperor Shāhjāhān, in praise of Islam.
Like Allopanishad there exists one more Upanishad named Christopanishad written after the British came to India. There are many more non-vedic Upanishads of recent origin which do not develop any system in their teaching. Benjamin Walker writes about them: "these lesser Upanishads are for the most part devoid of literary merit, being repetitive and generally poorly written, with many grammatical inaccuracies. Several are merely incoherent sentences joined together."  

These are the reasons for which the Upanishads are classified into two general categories, the vedic and the non-vedic Upanishads. The vedic Upanishads historically and textually are divided into three groups:

1. The first group of the Upanishads are the Aitareya, Brhadāranyaka, Chandogya, Taittiriya and the prose parts of the Kena Upanishads. Brhadāranyaka and Chandogya are the earliest and Kena seems to be the latest in the series of earliest Upanishads of various sakhaś or schools of vedic allegorical expression in the style of the Āryakas.

2. The second group of the Upanishads are Katha, Isa, Svetāsvatara, and Mundaka which are composed in verse and their mode of expression is unlike the first group of Upanishads; less metaphorical and less allegorical.

3. The third group of the Upanishads are Praśna, and Ṣaṁkhyā Upanishad in prose order.

The non-vedic Upanishads are many. As they do not come under the tradition of Śruti they are called the later
Upanishads. Not only are they anti-vedic in tradition but they do not belong to the post-vedic period. Hence they are called non-vedic Upanishads.

Authorship:

It has been a part of Indian tradition to eliminate the authorship of the holy text by the author himself. The omission of the author's name from the text leaves the text to survive for eternity. It is believed that Vyāsa compiled the four Vedas, wrote eighteen volumes of The Mahābhārata along with eighteen Purāṇas. The linguistic analysis and the theme of the heavy volumes reveal that there lies a thousand years of gap between the Vedas and The Mahābhārata and between The Mahābhārata and Purāṇas. This makes the scholars interpret that Vyāsa is not a proper noun but the term Vyāsa means "Poet". This leads us to the conclusion that all the early works of literature of India including the Upanishads were anonymous.

The Upanishads which are in dialogue form are assumed to be the work of the participants engaged in the dialogue; but in Isa, Svetāsvatara, Mundaka, Mandūkya, Taittirīya and Aitareya which are not in dialogue form the authors cannot be named as Yama, Indra or Prajapati which are mentioned in these texts.

Some of the important doctrines which are associated with the names of a few renowned rishis like Yājñavalkya, Svetaketu, Āruni, Bāłāki, and Śāndilya may be the early exponents of the doctrines attributed to them.
As the Upanishads are a part of the Vedas and belong to the *Sruti* or revealed literature, they are *Sanatana* or timeless. Truth is always impersonal and eternal. So the inspired poets of the Vedas designate it as *apauruseya* and *nitya*. Being a part of the Vedas Upanishads are also believed to be impersonal and eternal. This may be another reason for the rishis to eliminate their names from the text and leave it to eternity to survive.

Towards a Datefixing:

The chronology of the Old Testament forces both the Oriental and Occidental scholars to find out a possible date of Vedas and Upanishads. The Western Orientalists and historians suspect the calculation of the time of Indian scriptures by the Indian scholars as "purely guess-work", or "greatly overestimated". For them Indian scholars have added without scruple, "a few thousands or even a million of years." Maurice Bloomfield speaks in the similar manner: "It is truly humiliating to the students of ancient India to have to answer the inevitable question as to the age of the Vedas with a meek, "we don't know." Professor William D. Whitney has left behind the witty saying that Hindu dates are merely ten-pins set up to be bowled down again.

Even the Arabian traveller Alberuni wrote in 1030 in his *India*: "Indians unfortunately pay very little attention to the historical sequence of things; they are
very careless in the enumeration of the chronological order of their kings and if they are pressed for a clarification, and they do not know what to say, they immediately begin to tell tales."  

It happens with many orientalists because their history is confined to a few thousand years and the civilization of India is so ancient that to remember or to calculate the date is next to impossible. Lucille Schulberg justifies the statement. He says:

Historic India is not a country. It is a culture, one of the oldest and the most consistent on earth. That culture has been contemporary to almost all civilizations. It existed, in nascent form, when the sun rose on Egypt's first kingdom in the Fourth Millennium BC. Well developed, it was present when the sun sparkled on classical Greece in the Fifth Century BC and set on the British Empire in this century. The culture consists predominantly of a religion and a mode of living called Hinduism.

Again Lucille tells: "Archeologists and anthropologists now know that the beginnings of civilization in India are nearly as old as civilization itself."

In that case, western history is simply an infant. "In Western history," says Lucille Schulberg, "a thousand years is a long time. The rise, decline and fall of the Roman Empire all took place within that span of time; ancient
Greece rose and fell in less than half of it. But it took a full millennium... to lay the foundations of Hinduism." In spite of knowing this many cannot think that there could be a civilization older than 5000 BC, because Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656) an Irish Anglican theologian compiled a chronology of events in the Bible and proved that the year of creation was 4004 BC, a date which was printed in the margin of the first chapter of Genesis in many editions of AV Bible and accepted as late as the Darwinian controversies of the 19th Century. So they cannot think there could be a civilization beyond that period. The following diagram will give a clear understanding of the Western Age calculation:
It won't be irrelevant to cite the following passage where V.L. Bullough speaks of the limitation of Western historians:

Months have names, as do the days of the week, but years ordinarily do not. Instead, they bear numbers, usually dating from some special occasion. Medieval English states dated from the accession of a king; the first Roman year began with the legendary founding of the city; the Greeks utilized the year of the first Olympic games; and the Jews went back to creation. The Muslim era began with the flight of Muhammad from Mecca in the year 622 of the Christian era, usually abbreviated AD for the Latin words anno domini, the year Jesus was born. Even this date is a miscalculation, however, for historians now realize that Jesus was born several years before this. Nevertheless, the system is a convenient and widely used chronological scheme. Dates before the Christian era, usually noted BC, are accurate for several hundred years back in the Mediterranean region, and through dependence upon the annals of the Assyrian Kings, for several centuries further back. Up to this period, all dates are approximate, and even these approximations have changed radically within the last two decades. For the second millennium (2000–1000 BC), the approximations of
historians can be accepted as reasonably accurate. For the third millennium (3000-2000 BC), uncertainty increases to the point where authorities can do little more than guess in which century some known happenings actually occurred. The fourth millennium (4000-3000 BC), goes back into what is properly called Prehistoric, when even the events themselves become obscure. 27

But William Thomson Baron Kelvin, a Victorian British physicist, has calculated and said that the ages of the sun and earth could not be more than 100 million to 400 million years, which confirms after the discovery of radioactivity that it can be more and not less than the period Kelvin stated. 28

The "Big Bang" and "Steady State" theories about creation reveal the idea that the universe began with the explosion of a single mass of material, so that the pieces are still flying apart. The latter theory says that things in space have always existed and have always been going further apart as new atoms come into being. The astronomers place the time of birth of our universe at around $15 \times 10^9$ that comes to 15 billion years. As the formation of earth and the evolution of life on it are comparatively recent occurrences, it can be dated back between 1000 and 5000 million years.

This Big Bang theory strangely concides with the 14 Manvantaras which speak of the complete life of the
universe, out of which Swayambhav, Swarochish, Outami, Tamas, Raiwat and Chakshish have passed and Vaivaswata Manvantara is now passing, each manvantara having its 71 chaturyugis. Again the Atharv Veda (8:2:21) speaks about the Kalpa, the period a creation which consists of 4,32,00,00,000 years. Manusmriti (1:68:73) divides kalpa into 1000 Chaturyugis, each consisting of four Yugas (epochs), Sat, Treta, Dwaper and Kali, with a life period of 17,28,000, 12,96,000, 8,64,000 and 4,32,000 years respectively. Mahabharata, Puranas and Surya Sidhantha accept this subdivision. According to Surya-Sidhanta the present Kali era is of the 18th chaturyugi of the seventh manwantra. Sir William Jones once remarks the Hindu chronology as "absurdity so monstrous", because they, "established their period of seventy-one divine ages as the reign of each Menu.... I will now follow step by step, mention this ridiculous opinion with a serious face. It comes to three million eight hundred and ninety-two thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight years ago." 29

While considering the age of the Vedas many Orientalists try to date it only after it came to the manuscript form, avoiding the period of its oral tradition. In a civilized world thinking about a culture without a script is unthinkable. From the vedic period to upanishadic period a number of academies were established, where there was no scripts or alphabet. So memorising the lessons were a part of their curriculum. That is the only way to preserve the hymns of the ancients. Simple memory may deceive but memorising it may not. We know how William Wordsworth has
regretted his failure to recapture his memory when he revisited Tintern Abbey after five years and wrote:

An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied. 

In such case memory plays a greater role. To understand Indian history we have to "accept memory as a premise of knowledge", as "we infer history from evidence that includes other people's memories." And the entire ancient scriptures come from memory of the seer-poets and run from generation to generation. All the past records of the Hindus cannot be termed as "myth" or "story". Carl L. Becker tells: "In the history of history a myth is a once valid but now discarded version of the human story, as our now valid versions will in due course be relegated to the category of discarded myths." 

For India there are "no criteria for differentiating between myth and history.... What the Westerner considers as history in the West, he would regard as myth in India... what he calls history in his own world is experienced by Indians as myth." After all history is primarily a chronological exercise of remembering dates.

Upanishads are another name of Vedanta and Vedanta means the end of the Vedas or Varasya entah. So chronologically and factually the Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas. G.M. Ram concludes that chronologically they came at the end of the Vedic period. Mahābhārata indicates that Drīḍhasūrya and Sukadeva were
studying the Upanishads. From this it is clear that the upanishadic period can be fixed after the vedic age and before the Age of the Mahābhārata. But it will be easier if we calculate the age of the Upanishads from the age of Buddha. Buddha died in 477 BC, Alexander invaded India in 326 BC, and in 315 BC Chandragupta established his Maurya dynasty and his grandson Ashok ruled India in about 250 BC. If one continues to go back to Indian history suddenly there is a dead stop at the threshold of Puranic age and the link between vedic India and Puranic India is missed. Hence the researcher prefers to start with Bhārat war as it is a landmark to settle the dates of events occurring before and after this great war.

The 7th Century Aihole inscription of Pulakesina II states that the Mahābhārata war broke out in 3102 BC which is the starting point of the Kali era as mentioned in the astronomical account of Aryābhata. Kali-era starts with king Parikṣita as the Dvāpara age is said to have closed with the war. Both Mahābhārata and Purāṇa mention that there elapsed a period of 1015 or 1050 years between the birth of Parikṣita and the coronation of Mahāpadma Nanda. In 382 BC Mahāpadma Nanda ascended the throne. If one bases on this calculation and adds 1,015 to 382, the Bharat war falls on 1397 BC.

According to Puranic genealogies if 1710 years of the 95 generations comprising of Satva-era = 40 generations; Treta = 25; Dvāpara = 30 generations are added to it, we can reach the age of Manu Vaivasvata, the seventh Manu, who saved mankind from deluge. Ganga Ram Garg has
calculated it to 3110 BC and ascertained that the year 3102 BC as mentioned in the Pulakesina's inscription refers to the date of Manu Vaivasvata or the date of Deluge rather than that of the Mahābhārat war. Basing on this date the period of Harischandra can be placed about 2500 BC while Sagara of Ayodhyā and Dusyanta and Bharata of Hastinapura flourished between 2550 and 2300 BC. That way, the age of Ramachandra should come roughly to 1950 BC, while the Pāṇḍavas flourished about 550 years later.

It won't be out of place to mention here that the deluge for the first time mentioned in Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa (1:8:1) which also have been referred to in the Old Testament (Gen.6:13-22) speaks about Noah, the tenth descendant of Adam. The deluge prevailed in the Babylonian tradition where Ut-napishtin like Noah played a similar role. If Babylonian flood occurred about 3100 BC, the flood to occurred at the same time in the year 3102 BC. But A.L.Basham does not agree with the date. He keeps Mahābhārat war at best to be during 900 BC.

A comparative chronological tables of Indian history as prepared by Will Durant and A.L.Basham is given below. According to Durant the history starts from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BC</th>
<th>Neolithic Culture in Mysore</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2900</td>
<td>Culture of Mohenjo-daro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Aryan invasion of India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>The Vedas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800</td>
<td>The Upanishads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>599</td>
<td>Mahavira, founder of Jainism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
32

563 - 483: Buddha
500: Sushruta, physician
500: Kapila and the Samkhya philosophy
500: The earliest Puranas.
329: Greek invasion of India.

A.L. Basham's chronology of Pre-muslim India\(^1\) is as follows:

Prehistoric Period:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BC</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.3000</td>
<td>Agricultural communities in Baluchistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2500-1500</td>
<td>The Harappa Culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.1500-900</td>
<td>Composition of the Hymns of the Rg Veda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.900</td>
<td>The Mahabharat War.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.900 -500</td>
<td>Period of the Later Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and early Upanishads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Max Muller has specially classified the Vedic literature in four periods:\(^2\)

1st Sutra Period, 500 BC.
2nd Brāhmaṇa Period, 600-800 BC.
3rd Mantra Period, 800-1000 BC.
4th Khandas Period, 1000 BC.

Both Max Muller and Sir Monier Williams agree that the early hymns of Vedas were originally composed between 1000 to 1500 BC.\(^3\) But Bal Gangadhar Tilak had altogether a different view while fixing the time of Vedic period. His findings take him back to 4500 BC approximately to fix the age of the Rg Veda. He said: "the Taittiriya Samhitā and the Brāhmaṇas begin the Nakshatras with the Krittikās
or the Pleiades, showing that the vernal equinox then coincided with the aforesaid asterism (2500 BC), the vedic literature contains traces of Mriga or Orion being once the first of the Nakshatras and the hymns of the Rig Veda, or at least many of them, which are undoubtedly older than the Taittirya Samhita, contain reference to this period, that is, about 4500 BC approximately. 44

Both these above accounts given by western and eastern Orientalists are hypothetical and lack sufficient proof. If we accept the accounts prepared by the Western Orientalists regarding the vedic and upanishadic period matching to their 4004 years of creation then according to Robert Ernest Hume the Upanishads were written around 600 BC just prior to the rise of the Buddha. 45 Margaret and James Stutley are of the opinion that the dating of the thirteen (or fourteen) classical Upanishads is conjectural, but internal evidence suggests that they were composed between 700 and 300 BC, some of them revealing changes of style and views, and of repeated revision. 46 According to Radhakrishnan: "these Upanishads belong to what Karl Jaspers calls the Axial Era of the world, 800 to 300 BC when men for the first time, simultaneously and independently in Greece, China and India questioned the traditional pattern of life." 47

The oriental scholars have divided the Age of Upanishads into four periods. In the first period they keep Brihadāranyaka and Chāndogya Upanishads for their prosaic expression. In the second period they keep Katha and Svetāsvatara Upanishads for their metrical style. 48
And the rest of the Upanishads in the subsequent two periods. But Margaret and James Stutley keep all the Upanishads in three periods. They put it this way:

Six belong to the earliest; six to the middle, regarded as pre-Buddhist and pre-Pāṇini; the last two to a time shortly after the establishment of the Buddhist order. The first group consists of the Aitareya, Kausitaki, Taittiriya, Brhad-Ār, Chān. and Kena; the second, Kāthaka, Svetāsvatara, Mahā-Nārāyana, Īśā, Mundaka, and Prasna; the third, Maitrayaniya and Māndūkya. Those of the first group resemble Brāhmaṇas in language and style, a simple, slightly clumsy prose, but by no means lacking in beauty. Some of the second group are mainly composed in verse, and unlike those of the first group, reflect Sāmkhya and Yoga views, though their inclusion may be the result of late recensions. Those of the third group are definitely post-vedic, both in language and views. 49

Geography of Upanishadic India:

The seers of the Upanishads were well acquainted with the vast India beyond Sindhu in the West and the Ganga in the East, including Sri Lanka and the adjacent seas. 50 Not only that, as Chāndogyopanisad (2:3:3) reveals
they also knew the opposite side of the earth.

The geography of upaniṣadic India was not very much different from vedic India.

Vedic India was called as Sapta-sindhavas or the land of the seven seas. Avesta refers to Sapta-sindhu as Hapta-Hindu as in Persian language sa becomes ha. In course of time Hindus became Indus that is India and Herodotus must be credited for such a variation.

The present India was known in the past as Jambudvīpa with mount Sumeru in the centre encircled by seven samudras or seas. Bharatvarśa was one part of Jambudvīpa and it had nine divisions or nava-khanda, separated by seas.51 Patañjali, Panini and Manu referred to Bharatvarśa in their works. In Mahābhāṣya (12:2:1) Patañjali has described its area from the region where the river Sarasvati disappears in the West, to the Black Forest in the east and from the Himalayas in the north to the Paripātra in the south. 52

Kavyamimamsā refers to the five divisions53 of Vedic India as follows:

1. Madhyodesa (Middle country)
2. Uttarāpatha (Northern part)
3. Prācyā (Eastern part)
4. Daksinapatha (Southern part)
5. Aparānta (Western part)

Panini mentions in his Astādhvyāi the Prācyā-Bharatadesa in the eastern side of India. Baudhāyana in
his Dharmasūtra (1:1:2:9) refers to the Madhyadesa or middle part of India which was lying to the east of the region where the river Saraswati vanishes, to the west of Kalakavana which is identified with a tract somewhere near Prayaga, to the north of Pāripātra and to the south of the Himalayas. Manu in his Dharmasūtra calls Aryavarta Madhyadesa which extended from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya in the south and from Vinasana to the west to Prayāga in the east. Manu in his law book has written: "That land,... which lies between the two divine rivers Sarasvati and Drishadvati the (sages) call Brahmāvarta,... The plain of the Kurus, the (country of the) Matsyas, Panchalas, and Sūrasenakas, these indeed, the country of the Brāhmanical sages, which ranks immediately after Brahmāvarta.... That country which lies between the Himavat and the Vindhya mountains to the east of Prayāga and to the west of Vinasana (the place where the river Sarasvati disappears lies in the Hissār districts) is called Madhyadesa the central region. But between those two mountains (just mentioned), which (extends) as far as the eastern and the western oceans, the wise call Aryāvarta the country of the Aryans." The Geography of India during the upānīṣadic period was confined to the area mentioned above.

Place of the Upanishads in Vedic Literature:

The Upaniṣhads form a part of the vedic literature, vedic literature cannot be understood without the Samhitas, Brāhmanas, Āranyakas and Upanishads. If Brāhmanas consist of the prose portions of the Vedas, Āranyakas give an allegorical interpretation of Vedas suitable for the sages.
residing in the forest and the Upanishads represent as "maps of consciousness", that gives us the way that may lead us from death to life and life to death. To understand the literature of the Upanishads it is necessary to understand pre-upanishadic literature. In the series of the pre-upanishadic literature are the four Vedas having their tremendous impact on Upanishads. Rg Veda's impact can be found on Aitareya Upanishad, Yajurveda on Isa, Katha, Taittiriya and Brhadāranyaka Upanisads, Sāma Veda on Kena and Chāndogya and Atharwa Veda on Mūndaka, Māndūkya and Praśna.

The Vedas generally are believed to be the oldest literary document of the so-called Indo-European languages. Theodre Goldstucker tells about the Rig-Veda: "If the Rig-Veda— the oldest of the Vedas, and probably the oldest literary document in existence— coincided with the beginning of Hindu Civilization, the proper creed of the Hindus, as depicted in some of its hymns, would reveal not only the original creed of this nation, but throw a strong light on the original creed of humanity itself."59

The word Veda comes from the root word Vād means to know, kindred with the latin Vīd, Greek ἴδ, Gothic Vait, Lithuanian Vēidë; literally all of which mean "knowledge".60 The root word Vīd according to dhatupath of Pāṇini is derived from five Verbs:

- Vida Jñāne To know
- Vida Sattyam To be
- Vida Labhe To obtain
- Vida Vichārane To consider
The Veda is one but subject-wise it is classified into four collections or *Samhitas* known as the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharvaveda. The Rigveda is the biggest and the oldest of all.

When there was no script, no alphabet and no written form the seers through *Swara* (phonetics), *Chhanda* (meters), *devata* (subject matter), *rishis* (seers) along-with *Nabavidhapatha* (nine method of recollecting) protected the Vedas. So that it could not be interpolated and could reach us almost in the same manner as we read it today.

It is a common belief of the Hindus that Rg Veda, the social sciences was first conceived by Agni rishi; Yajurveda, the practical science by Vayu rishi, Sāmveda, the psalm by Aditya rishi and Atharva the metaphysics by Angirasa and Vedas are the unlimited source of knowledge, so they trace their authorship to Supreme Divinity.

Rigveda is divided into ten sections called *mandalas*. Each *mandala* divided into eight sections each being called *astaka*. The famous Rigvedic hymn says that God is one, but the sages call Him by various names. Agni, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Pushan, some are the different names of the same God. The Yajurveda comprises the hymns taken from the Rigveda and the prose passages are explanatory to the Rigvedic hymns from the ritualistic point of view. Hence this Veda is partly in verse and partly in prose. This Veda has two main divisions viz., *Suklayajurveda* and
Krsnayajurveda. The former is called Sukla because it is well arranged. The latter school is be called Krsna because of its disorganised nature of its contents. The former branch has only the hymns to be recited while the later has, in addition to that the explanatory portions on the performance of the sacred rites. Yajurveda deals with different yajnas or sacrifices, mainly on rituals and rites. Agnihotra, Ashvamedha, Rajsuya, Sarvamedha, and many types of sacrifices are prescribed for the benefit of mankind.

Sāmveda contains 1810 hymns but of which only seventy-five hymns belong to this Veda, most of the hymns being repeated and heavily borrowed from Rigveda. The entire Sāmveda is excellently arranged in a musical set-up.

Athravaveda deals with physical and material sciences, such as physics, chemistry, medicine and biology, astronomy, mathematics, psychology, sociology and political science. Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads came after the close of the creative activity of the vedic age. The post-vedic period took up the work of preserving the vedic texts and brought out different interpretations of it. The philosophical interpretation was called the Upanishads. Slowly in course of time the secondary literature grew enormously in size and new subjects like Vedāṅga, Sikṣā, Vyākarana, Nirukta, Jyotisha and Kalpa grew in their own way as accessories of the vedic literature.

Vedas cannot be considered as a text for educating the priests; they were composed to record the thoughts and
beliefs of a religious order, hymns to be chanted for the propitiation of Gods. But we can make out the outline of an ideology that created the priestly class, and helped maintain a social system, essentially pastoral, ritualistic and very primitive if not barbaric at all. They present a picture of reality that includes the gods and goddesses, though wrathful, often benefactors of mankind.

The vedic literature can be classified into two broad channels, **Sruti** and **Smriti**. **Sruti** means heard or revealed, and **Smriti** means memorised. Sruti is higher than Smriti because it is believed to be a direct revelation from God. Apart from the Vedas all other scriptures are known as Smriti which are compositions of human head and hand. Sruti includes the hymns of Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanishads and Smriti includes **Dharma Shāstras, Darsanas, Itiḥāsa and Purānas**. The following diagram shows the classification of the vedic literature:

![Vedic Literature Diagram]

**Vedic Literature**

- Sruti
- Smriti

- Vedas
- Brāhmaṇa
- Upanishads
- Dharma Shāstras
- Itiḥāsa
- Purānas

The Vedas which are the fountainhead of all Indian philosophical and religious traditions are classified into two systems: **Mantra and Brāhmaṇa**. The Mantras are primary and the Brāhmaṇa section tells us about the mantras.

Vedas have two main divisions as **Karma Kanda**
(portion of action) and Jñāna Kānda (portion of knowledge), as presented in the following diagram:

![Diagram of Vedas with Karmakanda and Jñānakanda branches]

Karma Kānda has three sections:

1. Samhītas : are the collections of hymns, prayers, benedictory words and sacrificial formulas collected from the four Vedas. The Samhītas cover a wide range of subjects, ranging from social problems to metaphysical concepts of creation. Most of the hymns in the Samhītas are addressed to gods.

2. Brāhmaṇas : consist of prose texts explaining the observations of sacrificial rites through theological discussions and mystical significance in it. It codifies various rituals and analyses various terms used in the hymns. It can rightly be called the real link between the Vedas and the Upanishads. A Brāhmaṇa is for the Brahmins and by the Brahmins. Surendranath Dasgupta explains that anything relating to pray to Brahman by the Brahmins are called Brāhmaṇas. Brahmaṇas follow the recitation parts from the Rigveda, performance from the Yajurveda, chanting parts from Sāmveda and
officiating parts from the Atharvaveda.

For each Vedas Brāhmaṇas are many. The Aitareya and Kausitaki Brāhmaṇas belong to Rigveda, the former determines the duty of the priest of the Rigveda whereas the latter covers the entire sacrificial method. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (a hundred paths) belongs to Sukla Yajurveda and covers a large number of legends like Manu and the fish, love affair between Purūravas and Urvāsi and Gopatha Brāhmaṇa elucidates the various ceremonies of the Atharvaveda rituals through parables, legends and myths. Like them Taittiriya belongs to Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda and Jaiminiya and Tāndya belong to the Samveda and known for their independent interpretation of the mantras by preserving the parables of the past and preparing the background for the Upanishads to come.

3. Āranyakas : (The Forest Text) with their mystic and symbolic explanations of sacrifices have inspired the hermits in the wilderness (aranya) so they took it as an ideal text book. Textually Āranyakas are the continuation of Brāhmaṇas. One of the Brāhmaṇas, Aitarey Āranyaka belongs to the Rigveda. Āranyakas attempt to explain the invisible basis of the visible universe.
Jnāna Kānda:

Vedānta: The Upanishads are usually called Vedānta or the end of the Veda not because they came after the vedic period or taught at the end of the vedic teaching but because they give a final interpretation to the vedic creed. Based on this interpretation, Shankara, Rāmanuja, Madhavachārya, Nimberka and Vallabhāchārya developed their theories of Vishishtadvēta or special monism; Bhedāveda or dualism and Shudhadvēta respectively.

In order to understand the literary complex of vedic literature one has to study the Samhitas, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, the Upanishads, the Sūtras, and the Vedāṅgas.

Each Veda comprises a Samhita, a Brāhmaṇa, and a Sutra. Again Brāhmaṇa is sub-divided by the exponents of the Vedānta in three orders according to the following scheme:

1. Rigveda 1.1 Samhita 1.2.1. Vidhi
2. Yajurveda 1.2 Brahmana 1.2.2. Arthavāda
3. Samveda 1.3 Sutra 1.2.3. Vedānta or
4. Atharvaveda Upanishads

Similarly for other Vedas (2-4).

To understand the whole scheme of vedic literature with its Sākhā, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upanishads the following table is prepared. Bāskala Saṁhitā, Rāṇāvanta Saṁhitā, and Kāthaka or Caraka Brāhmaṇa have been excluded from the table as these Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇa are not
available now. But *Kapisthala Sāmhitā* is included because it is partially available:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vedas</th>
<th>Sākhā or Recension</th>
<th>Brāhmaṇas</th>
<th>Āranyakas</th>
<th>Upanisads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rg Veda</td>
<td>1. Sākala Sāmhitā</td>
<td>Aitareya Kausītaki or Sāmkhāyana</td>
<td>Aitareya</td>
<td>Aitareya</td>
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<td>2. Sāma-</td>
<td>1. Kauthuma Sāmhitā</td>
<td>i. Pañcaviṃśa</td>
<td>Samaveda has or Tāndya not a single</td>
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<td>ii. Sadāviṃśa Āranyaka...</td>
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<td>iii. Sāmavidhāna The title</td>
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<td>iv. Ārseya Āranyaka is,</td>
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<td>v. Mantra perhaps, an</td>
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<td>vi. Devatādh- idiosyncrasy yayana or Daivata schools none</td>
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<td>vii. Vaṁsa of which</td>
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<td>viii. Sāmhitop- actually call anisad any text of theirs and Āranyaka</td>
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<td>ii. Jaiminiya</td>
<td>i. Jaiminiya - -</td>
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<td>Sāmhitā</td>
<td>ii. Talavaka-</td>
<td>- Kena</td>
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<td>Āra or Jaiminiya Chāndogya</td>
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<td>Upanisad</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brāhmaṇa</td>
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<tr>
<td>iii. Ārseya</td>
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Style and form:

The earliest prose Upanishads were influenced by the Brāhminical prose style and the verse Upanishads were written in the form of ballads and epics. As the earliest Upanishads were in oral form, there are repetitions of phrases, clauses and sentences like Sada jananam hrdaye sannivista or notatra vacyo bhāti as in Svetāsvatara Upanishad. The seers of
Upanishads use the grammar and style of the prose with brevity and extreme economy of words which seem to be closer to that of Patanjali's.

To affirm the oral tradition of Upanishads Sukumari Bhattacharji writes: "Pauses are not grammatically or structurally determined but are plainly breath pauses, a necessary trait in an oral text. Another trace of the oral composition is found in the abrupt change of topics which perhaps becomes understandable if we assume that gaps were filled in orally with suitable gestures and words by the teacher during instruction; only the memorable portions of the texts were preserved."

Some Upanishads have long sections in dialectical style like Plato's dialogues. Sometimes questions are answered with counter questions to arrive at a solution. In such a situation many words are omitted in their communication. Their extreme precision at times leads to confusion because few link words or sentences are missing on the way during their dialogues. Moreover abrupt change of topics and the missing gaps between the topics, trace its oral composition and these gaps can be filled in only if we assume the teacher's gestures and words during instruction. Such discrepancies and omissions are found in almost all the early Upanishads mostly due to its oral composition.

We are thankful to the recitors who could continue these beautiful gems of the Upanishads till the invention of scripts. From oral tradition to written tradition some words, lines or ideas might be missing. Again during the period of invesion when the cruel invaders destroyed volumes of books
in the famous libraries of Nalanda and other similar seminaries it might have been recorded again from the memories of the scholars, and these are known to us today as Upanishads.

In spite of such omissions and missing words, the Upanishads employ the most widely used imageries like "the waters of the many rivers flowing into the ocean and losing their identity", (Mund.3:2:8) like "the water on the lotus leaves". (Chān. 4:14:3) "As rain water falling on a high place runs down in many different streams", (Katha 2:1:14) As"the honey maker makes honey by collecting it from the sap of various flowering trees from many places and turns it into one honey; as the different saps in that honey no longer know it themselves as 'I am sap from this tree, I am sap of that tree'.."(Chānd.4:9:2) "As the one fire... the same air have entered the earth and assumed different shapes."(Katha. 2:9:10) "As, from one lump of clay everything made of clay is known, for the difference is in words, in name alone...; as from one gold ingot is known everything made of gold..."(as from one nail-clipper everything made of iron", (Chān.6:1:4-6) "th body is the chariot soul the charioteer, the senses the horses," (Kath.3:3:15-16)

The Mundaka Upanishad uses a number of metaphors and analogies like, "as spider emits and draws in its thread", (1:1:7) and speaks of rituals as "unsafe boats", (1:2:7) "those that think they are wise", are "like the blind leading the blind,"(1:2:8) etc. and prayer like:

Oh! God, Lead us from death to immortality
from untruth to truth
which are universally acknowledged and being used on various occasions.

Sri Aurobindo sees in the Upanishads: "perfectly lucid and luminous brevity and immeasurable completeness.... There is a perfect totality, a comprehensive connection of harmonious parts in the structure of each Upanishad; but it is done in the way of a mind that sees masses of truth at a time and stops to bring only the needed word out of a filled silence." While analysing the rhythm, imagery and symbols, Sri Aurobindo outbursts emotionally. He says: "The rhythm in Verse or cadenced prose corresponds to the sculpture of the thought and the phrase. The metrical forms of the Upanishads are made up of four half lines each clearly cut, the lines mostly complete in themselves and integral in sense, the half lines presenting two thoughts or distinct parts of thought that are wedded to and complete each other, and the sound movement follows a corresponding principle, each step brief and marked off by the distinctness of its pause, full of echoing cadences that remain long vibrating in the inner hearing.... It is a kind of poetry - word of vision, rhythm of the spirit,... The imagery of the Upanishads is in large part developed from the type of imagery of the Veda and though very ordinarily it prefers an unveiled clarity of directly illuminative image, not unoften also it uses the same symbols in a way that is closely akin to the spirit and to the less technical part of the method of the older symbolism." 

The language of the Upanishads is conversational and very communicative. To save from a dry philosophical specu-
lation the upanishadic seers have: (1) abundant use of simple homely similes and metaphors; (2) repetition of an idea almost in the same words and expressions to ensure firm grasp and recollection; (3) use of riddle-like expressions which a man loves to master and reproduce with a feeling of superiority; (4) description of minute details to create and sustain interest; (5) short stories to attract attention before introducing a dry philosophical discussion; and (6) corroboration of a philosophical concept by means of popular beliefs and facts to excite curiosity and create faith. 65

Briefing the Authentic Upanishads:

Now it is time for selecting the vedic Upanishads of many non-vedic, pre-Buddhist and post-Buddhist Upanishads. The following principal Upanishads are arranged in order of importance and the Vedas with which they are connected. Our study is confined to the vedic ones of which the first eleven are authentic and important:

1. Brhadāranyaka - Yajurveda
2. Chāndogya - Samveda
3. Īśa - Yajurveda
4. Katha - Yajurveda
5. Taittiriya - Yajurveda
6. Aitareya - Rigveda
7. Prasna - Atharva-veda
8. Mundaka - Atharvaveda
9. Māndūkya - Atharvaveda
10. Kena - Samveda
11. Śvetāsvatara - Yajurveda
The Brhadāranyaka Upanishad is the longest and the oldest of all Upanishads. The literal meaning of Brhadāranyaka is the "Great Forest Text". It belongs to Sukla Yajurveda. It has six chapters; each chapter has parts which are called Brahmanas. Chapter one, two and four have six each and chapter three has nine; chapter five has fifteen; and chapter six has five Brahmanas respectively. The six Brahmanas of chapter one have eighty verses, the six Brahmanas of chapter two have sixty-six verses, the nine Brahmanas of chapter three have ninety-two verses, the six Brahmanas of chapter four have ninety-two verses, the fifteen Brahmanas of chapter five have thirty-three verses, and the five Brahmanas of chapter six have seventy-five verses: altogether, the Upanishad has three hundred and thirty-eight verses.

Chapter I deals with the superiority of prāna through a parable and through cosmology. Chapter II contains dialogues between Gārgya and Ajātasaṃrū: Yājñāvalkya and Dāh-yāṇc Ātharvana. In the fourth Brāhmaṇa of this chapter the famous conversation between Yājñāvalkya and his wife Maitreyi concerning the pantheistic self is highly illuminating:

Then said Yājñāvalkya: Ah! Lo, dear as you are to us, dear is what you say! Come, sit down. I will explain to you.
Then said he: Lo, verily, not for love of the husband is a husband dear, but for love of the Self a husband is dear. Lo, verily, not for love of the wife is a wife dear, but for love of the Self a wife is dear.
Lo, verily, not for love of the sons are sons dear, but for love of the Self sons are dear.
Lo, verily, not for love of the wealth is wealth dear, but for love of the Self wealth is dear.

... Lo, verily, not for love of the worlds are the worlds dear, but for love of the Self the worlds are dear.
Lo, verily, not for love of the gods are the gods dear, but for love of the Self the gods are dear.

... Lo, verily, not for love of all is all dear, but for love of the Self all is dear.
Lo, verily, it is the Self (Atman) that should be seen, that should be hearkened to, that should be thought on, that should be pondered on, O Maitreyi. Lo, verily, with the seeing of, with the hearkening to, with the thinking of and with the understanding of the Self, this world-all is known.
Chapter III has dialogues between Yājñavalkya and some other philosophers at the court of king Janaka. Chapter IV presents a dialogue between Janaka and Yājñavalkya and Chapter V deals with cosmology, eschatology and ethics. The last chapter deals with metaphysical discourses by Pravahana Jaibali on the five fires, instructions regarding rites for obtaining different kinds of sons; and ends with a geneological list.

Chandogya is a little more bulky than Brhadāranyaka Upanishad and is a part of the Sāmaveda. It has eight chapters. Its eight chapters have one hundred and fifty-two sections. These one hundred and fifty-two sections have altogether six hundred verses. Paul Deussen has introduced the Upanishad in the following words: "(it is) the greatest and the most significant one of those collections of theological-philosophical utterances, thoughts and legends which have come down to us under the name of the Upanishads and in the form of the text book of tenets of individual vedic schools." 57

This Upanishad is famous for the story of Satyakāma Jabāla. He was accepted as a brahmin because of his simple and straightforward answer and because of his truthful mother. This proves that caste was not determined by birth but by conduct and character. Secondly it teaches the doctrine of the identity of the Ātman i.e., self and the psychological principle of it which the teacher Āruni taught his student and his son Śvetaketu. It is again interesting
to note that Yājñavalkya the famous teacher of mystic truth of Brhadāranyaka Upanishad was a student of Āruni. The metaphysical section that begins with Chapter VI tells the famous doctrine, "Tattvam asī" or "That art thou."

Isā or Isāvāsyā Upanishad is named as such because of its opening word of the text Isāvāsyā. It is one of the shortest of the Upanishads and consists of just eighteen verses which is next to the Mandukya in its shortness. It can be credited for forming a part of the Śaṁhitā or mantra instead of forming the concluding section of the Aranyaka. It comes from the fortieth chapter of the Vājasaneyi Śaṁhitā of the Sukla Yajurveda.

It deals with many important topics like the paradoxical nature of the Atman, the path of knowledge and the path of action and nonattachment etc. The first verse of this Upanishad is a significant one. Here it is said:

By the Lord enveloped must this all be—
Whatever moving thing there is in the moving world.
With this renounced, thou mayest enjoy.
Covet not the wealth of anyone at all.68

Very much influenced by this verse Gandhiji once addressed at Kottayam: "This mantra tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God and that,... it will have to be a life of continual service of fellow creatures.69

Katha Upanishad is also known as Kathakopanishad which derives its inspiration from the Taittiriya school of
the Yajurveda. The meaning of the Upanishad is not known. This is perhaps the most widely known Upanishad than any other. Max Müller is of the opinion that Katha Upanishad has been "quoted by English, French, and German writers as one of the most perfect specimen of the mystic philosophy and poetry of the ancient Hindus." 

Though Katha for the most part is the concluding sections of the Brāhmaṇa section of the Vedas yet its association with Sama and Yajur and Atharva Veda creates much controversy among the scholars. Again the story of Nachiketas finds its root in the Brāhmaṇa of the Ta_amtiriya Yajurveda as well as in the Katha Upanishad. It has two chapters; each chapter has three sections; sections one, two and three of the First Chapter have 29, 25 and 17 verses respectively; sections one, two and three of the Second Chapter have 15, 15 and 18 verses respectively; and all the six sections of the two chapters have altogether a total of 119 verses. Like all other Upanishads Katha concentrates on one practical and three theoretical problems of life which is no doubt the subject of investigation to every philosophy. They are:

1. What is the highest object of man?
2. What is the last cause of the World?
3. In what connection is this cause with the World?
4. How do we know of it?

E. Roer in his introduction to Katha compares it with Plato and designates it as the best of the Upanishads:
The Katha has always been considered as one of the best Upanishads, and it must be admitted, that in elevation of thought, depth of expression, beauty of its imagery and an ingenuous fervour, few are equal to it. The lofty conception, by which in its introductory legend (of Nachiketa) Death is made to give a reply to the highest questions human mind can propose to itself, the enthusiasm and intimate conviction which Nachiketas shows about the infinite superiority of what is good over the pleasures of the world, even if their enjoyment be as perfect as lies in its nature, the firmness which he maintains amidst all the allurements that are placed before him, and which bears some resemblance to the energy of mind with which Plato in the first and second books of his "Republic" shows that justice has an incomparable worth, and ought to be preserved under any circumstances, the fine comparison of the body with a car, the soul with a rider, the senses with horses, the mind with the rein & c., and which again recalls Plato by the similar comparison in his "Phaedrus," - place it in a high rank as a poetical exposition of the doctrine that man is the same with the infinite soul.
Taittiriya Upanishad is so called because of rishi Tittiri. It is a part of the Aranyaka of the Krishna Yajurveda. This Upanishad is in three chapters or Vallis: the first chapter has twelve sections and the twelve sections have altogether twenty-nine verses; the second chapter has nine sections and the sections have altogether nine verses; the third chapter has ten sections and the sections have altogether fourteen verses, and the Upanishad has fifty-two verses. Its Siksa-Valli tells about the science of phonetics, Brahmananda-Valli on the five sheaths of the self: food, breath, mind, intellect and bliss and Bhrgu-Valli tells about the ultimate Being who is beyond all narratives and beyond the physical envelopments and limitations.

The first part tells about the rules of chanting mantras and the meaning of Aum. The second part proceeds to trace evolution from Brahma, the logos, to plants, and so through food to man's gross body. The third part tells how Bhrigu slowly arrived at a knowledge of the Brahman in five embodiments.

Aitareya Upanishad is so called because of rishi Mahidāsa Aitareya, the son of Itarā. The second Aranyaka of the Aitareya Brāhmana of the Rigveda is the source book of this Upanishad. It has three chapters: while, chapters second and third have only one section each and six and four verses respectively, chapter one has three sections, and each section has four, five and fourteen verses. It has altogether thirty three verses which makes it the third
shortest Upanishad. The first chapter describes the creation from ātman through Virāj and the different elements of creation. It brings out the correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, a cardinal doctrine of the Upanishads. The second chapter deals with the three births of man — conception, natural birth and extension of one's self in the son. In the last section Vāmadeva discusses on the nature of the soul as beyond the sense organs and its connection with intellect.

In a question-answer form the rishi explains the universal self like:

Question : Who is this one?
Answer : We worship him as the Self.
Question : Which one is the Self?
Answer : (He) whereby one sees, or whereby one hears, or whereby one smells odours, or whereby one articulates speech, or whereby one discriminates the sweet and the unsweet; that which is heart and mind—that is, consciousness, perception, discrimination, intelligence, wisdom, insight, steadfastness, thought, thoughtfulness, impulse, memory, conception, purpose, life, desire will.

All these, indeed, are appellations of intelligence.72

(Prasna) (3:1-2)

Prasna Upanishad belongs to Atharvaveda. From its name it is clear that this is an Upanishad of Prashna or questions. This Upanishad has six questions asked by six pupils to the same teacher Pippalada regarding the vedantic
doctrine. This Upanishad which is an Upanishad of six questions has therefore six sections, and each of the six sections has sixteen, thirteen, twelve, eleven, seven and six verses respectively making altogether a total of sixty-five verses same as the total number of the verses in the Mundaka. The main themes are:

2. Superiority of Prāna over the rest of the life forces.
4. About dream-sleep and deep sleep.
5. Meditation over the syllable Om.
6. The sixteen parts of man.

The Mundaka Upanishad belongs to the Atharvaveda and has three chapters; each chapter has two sections each of the total six chapters have nine, eleven, thirteen, ten, twelve, ten and eleven verses respectively and altogether the Mundaka has sixty-five verses.

The most poetical of the Upanishads, it is written like an epic. It is derived from the root word "mund" means to shave. Mundaka means "a razor" which means the shaven head or a razor which can cut the knot of ignorance. It symbolises the last stage of the life of an individual when one retires to the solitude of the forest. In the form of a dialogue the disciple, Saunaka asks his teacher Angiras: "Sir, what is that by the knowing of which all this becomes known? (1:1:3)
This brahma-vidya can be obtained through the knowledge of the Self or Atman. So it is said in Mundaka:

This Self (Atman) is not to be obtained by instruction, nor by intellect, nor by much learning. He is to be obtained only by the one whom He chooses; To such a one that Self reveals His own person.

This Self is not to be obtained by one destitute of fortitude, nor through heedlessness, nor through a false notion of austerity. But he who strives by these means, provided he knows — into his Brahman-abode this Self enters.(3:2:3-4)

Mandukya Upanishad is the shortest among the major Upanishads, containing only twelve verses. It took two hundred and five verses for Achārya Gaudapāda to explain this shortest Upanishad in his Kārikās. The title of this Upanishad is very much doubtful. Probably seer Manduka has composed this Upanishad. Paul Deussen introduces this Upanishad like this: "in prose, it bears the name of a half-lost school of the Rgveda, but it is assigned to the Atharvaveda and is, as is shown not only by numerous citations but the systematic compactness of its manner of representation, considerably later than the prose Upanishads of the three older Vedas. Its brevity and precision is in marked contrast with the verbosity of the older Upanishads."
This Upanishad has given to Indian philosophy the famous theory of the four states of consciousness, had the mystic sounds a, u, m (aum), have correspondence with our state of Jāgrat (waking), Svapna (dreaming), sushupti (deep slumber) and then the self rests in the turiya or the fourth state of consciousness.

Nine chapters of the Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa of the Sāmaveda form the Kena Upanishad. So it is also called the Talavakāra Upanishad. N.A. Nikam explains it differently. According to him: "The Kena Upanishad gets its title from the question Kena, 'Because of what?' The question 'Because of what' is an upanishadic question. The Upanishads do not ask 'How' but 'What,' 'By What' or 'Because of what.' For instance, the Mundaka asks: 'By knowing what, Sir, is all this known?' As a 'What' entails a 'That,' the questions asked in Upanishads are about 'That': 'That,' is not a concept but a demonstrative symbol which denotes: 'That which is 'there', what is 'objective' and 'public'."

The Kena has only four sections; each of the four sections has nine, five, twelve and nine verses respectively making altogether a total of thirty-five verses. Out of the four first two chapters of the Kena Upanishad are in the form of a dialogue between the teacher and the taught. It deals with Ātman, or Pure consciousness which cannot perform its functions without the help of the sense organs and mind. To meditate upon pure intelligence is given importance to. The well known questionanswer can be cited here regarding the inscrutable Brahman:
Question:
By whom impelled soars forth the mind projected?
By whom enjoined goes forth the earliest breathing?
By whom impelled this speech do people utter?
The eye, the ear—what god, pray them enjoineth?

Answer:
That which is the hearing of the ear, the
thought of the mind,
The voice of speech, as also the breathing
of the breath,
And the sight of the eye! Past these escaping,
the wise,
On departing from this world, become immortal.
There the eyes go not;
Speech goes not, nor the mind.
We know not, we understand not
How one would teach it.
Other, indeed, is it than the known,
And moreover about the unknown.
Thus have we heard of the ancients
Who to us have explained it. 76

The rest two chapters explain the importance of
Brahman through a parable—the parable of the battle
between gods and demons. So they were proud of their
glory. Then Brahma appeared as a spirit. The God of fire
and air tried to know who it was but failed. Then the
king of gods Indra came to know it. The spirit vanished
and in its place appeared an exquisite beautiful lady who
taught him that they were simply instrumental and Brahma
was the real doer.
Svetasvatara is a short Upanishad of six chapters and belongs to the Taittiriya school of Krishna Yajurveda. Sveta means "Pure" and asva means "an organ of sense" and totally it means one whose organs of sense are very pure. B.D. Basu opines that the title of the book means the Upanishad propounded by Svetasvatara. The only reference of the author is Sve (5:21) where it is stated that Svetasvatara having known Brahman, by the power of his penance and by the grace of God, expounded it to the sannyasins and called the Paramahansas. Though it is not as big in size as Brhadaranyaka and Chandogya Upanishad it is well known for its metrical style and eloquent poetry. As it handles the spiritual problem directly so it is highly valued and considered to be the Bible for the Vedantist. S.V. Shastri sees in it "a short manual of Upanishad Doctrine for the beginner." According to G.R.S. Mead and J. C. Chottopadhyaya, the text is exceedingly corrupt, and many various readings are found in the commentaries.

Svetasvatara Upanishad is a mixture of ideas contained in vedanta, Sankhya and Yoga. Some of its passages can be compared with the Bhagavad Gita and Vedas and other Upanishads too. To give a definite conclusion regarding its composition is next to impossible. That leads Dr E. Røér to think: "It must have been composed at a time when the whole social and political system of the Bramhans was completed, when the fiction of the great Kalpas had been adopted, and the belief of the heroic times in the coequal power of the three great gods, Bramhā, Vishnu, and Siva, had already been abandoned for sectarian doctrines,
which are characterized by assigning to one of these gods all the attributes of the others. So Röer calls this Upanishad "a very loose" and "a compilation than an original work."

Upanishads, as we have already examined are a highly complex text, often rife with contradictions since they are written in a language clustered with symbols, images and metaphors. Often the text is meant to exercise some evocative spell on the readers. Parts of them have poetic appeal and philosophical significance as much as it can be conveyed in metaphors and symbols. A cursory glance at Katha, Íśa, Māndūkya, Svetāsvatara, Praśna, Mundaka, Kena, makes it evident that the text is rendered highly readable by rhythmic composition, through the sonorous appeal of individual lines, by reason of assonances and metaphoric language. This sufficiently points up to the fact that the authors kept the arousal of interest and sustenance of attention in the foreground while composing them. In Brihadāranyaka and Chāndogya parables and tales compose the warp and woof. These two are also highly attractive as text. We may safely infer that these texts were composed to initiate the students into the activity of philosophical meditation without distracting them by hairsplitting logic or dry philosophical discourse which we find in commentaries on Vedānta or Samkhya.
Endnotes:


12. Radhakrishnan 21n.


16 Ram 87.


19 Reed 12.


21 Bloomfield 18.

22 Winternitz 1:25.


24 Schulberg 31.
25 Schulberg 31.


34 Ram 90

36 Mahabharat (Shanti Parba 224:7).
38 Garg 14.
39 Garg 15.
40 Durant 1:389.
42 Bloomfield 14-15.
43 Bloomfield 15.
45 Hume 6.
47 Radhakrishnan 22.
49 Stutley 312.

52. Law 12.


55. Law 12.

56. Law 12.


60. Goldstucker 1:260.


63. Sri Aurobindo 5.

64. Sri Aurobindo 5-6.


Deussen 63.

Radhakrishnan and Moore 39.

Radhakrishnan, Principal Upanishads 568 (Harijan 1937).

Max Müller 15: xxi.


Radhakrishnan and Moore 63.

Radhakrishnan and Moore 54.

Deussen 605.

N. A. Nikam, Ten Principal Upanishads (Bombay: Somaiya Publications 1974) 11.

Radhakrishnan and Moore 42. (Kena 1:1-3).

S. V. Shastri ii.

S. V. Shastri iii.


Röer 35.