CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

From our foregoing discussion it is clear that the Upaniṣads are the store house of the deep penetrating thoughts of the seers. The legends found in the Upaniṣads are replete with the rich philosophical wisdom and mystical experiences recorded by these seers. These legends, set mainly in dialogue form between the preceptors and his disciples or in the form of debate between the great sages, serve the purpose of providing easy understanding of the deep mystical speculation. These legends also provide us insight into some social conditions of that age including the educational system. Hence, a study of these legends is much needed effort which has been undertaken by us in a humble way. In the following lines we are going to summaries our findings.

1. Firstly we must mention that the monistic tendencies grew quite early in the Vedas, in some of the Ṛgvedic hymns, which have flourished later in the Upaniṣads to the full extent. The idea of oneness is initially sounded in those hymns by the great Vedic seers which is later strongly established in the Upaniṣads. Thus the Upaniṣads carry these ripe thoughts, endowed with deep philosophical insight to their fullest consummation. These thoughts make them one of the most valuable
scriptures, through which one can set free from the fetters of ignorance or Avidyā.

2. Legends generally involve some historical persons. Hence, we have tried to trace the historical background of the great personalities mentioned in the legends. We have found that some references of these great philosophers are also mentioned in the Buddhist records.

3. Regarding the chronological order of the Upaniṣads, we have accepted the prose and non-sectarian Upaniṣads as the oldest. In this respect, the Chāndogya and Br. Ādāranyaka are treated as ancient Upaniṣads.

4. While dealing with the legends we have tried to give our own interpretations in some cases, e.g. the legend of Umā, Haimavatī etc. In this context, we have also discussed about the word Śūdra used in the legend of Jānaśruti and Raikva and the right of a Śūdra to acquire Brahma – knowledge. We have found that the explanation given by the traditional scholars like Śaṅkaracarya etc. is not acceptable.

5. The core objective of the Upaniṣads is to impart the Supreme knowledge of Brahman. We have noticed different approaches of the seers to define this principle. Various mystical expressions like Brahman, Ātman, Puruṣa, Sat, Bhūman etc., used by the Upaniṣadic seers revolve round this Highest Principle. The Upaniṣads describe
Brahman as Sat (Truth), Cit (Consciousness), Ānanda (Bliss), Ananta (Infinity), Aksara (Absolute) etc.

Regarding the nature of Brahman, we have found that the Upaniṣads describe it as both Saguṇa (qualified) and Nirguṇa (qualityless). This is in contradiction to the claim of the later philosophers like Śaṅkarācārya, Rāmānuja etc. who regard Brahman either Nirguṇa or Saguṇa.

6. The relation of jīva and Brahman is the apple of discord among the Vedāntins. While Śaṅkarācārya propagates the relation of identity between jīva and Brahman on the basis of some Upaniṣadic statements, Rāmānuja and others uphold the relation of part and whole. Madhva again proclaims that the jīva and Brahman are different. In this regard, we have found that the Upaniṣads are more inclined towards the direction of identity. Of course, there are passages propagating the relation of part and whole as also difference. However, these are fewer in comparison to those teaching identity.

7. Regarding the interpretation of the Upaniṣadic Mahāvākyā, viz. Tattvamasi, we have found that Śaṅkarācārya’s view is more true to the context, where the main purport of Āruṇi is to convey the non-difference of Śvetaketu, the individual self, with Sat Brahman.
8. The concept of value has attracted much attention from the scholars now-a-days. The legends of the Upaniṣads provide us a glimpse of the value system of that age – both spiritual and social. The four-fold value, viz. Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa have found their place in these legends. Among these, the Upaniṣads were more concerned with the spiritual good of people and as such, they give stress on the spiritual value i.e., Mokṣa. However, it is noticed that the valuability of Artha and Kāma is not totally discarded by the Upaniṣadic seers. The moral value i.e. Dharma is recommended in many a context.

9. The universal values Satya or truth, Śraddhā or faith, Dāna or liberality, Tapas or penance, Brahmacarya or the life of chastity, Dama or self-restraint are elaborated in many passages of the Upaniṣads. This also points to the social consciousness of the seers.

10. The highest value according to the Upaniṣads is Mokṣa. It is found that Mokṣa which is the Supreme good of life is according to the Upaniṣads, nothing but the attainment of Brahman. The Upaniṣads also declare that Mokṣa is attainable only through the knowledge of Brahman. For attaining this knowledge of Brahman, the Upaniṣads give stress on self-restraint and also some other means like śravaṇa, manana, nidānādyāsana etc.
11. In the view of the Upaniṣadic seers, it is seen that Mokṣa is attained not only after death, but also while living. This is what is called jīvanmukti by the later thinkers.

12. The path of liberation consisting of self-restraint, knowledge of Brahman etc. is not practicable for all. The Upaniṣadic seers have not neglected the persons of inferior weet. For them, the path of gradual liberation through worship and meditation is prescribed.

13. As liberation is attainable through Upāsanā also, the Upaniṣads contain vivid descriptions of various types of Upāsanās. It is found that some of these Upāsanās lead to liberation through the attainment of Brahma – knowledge. Some Upāsanās again concede worldly fruits.

14. It is found that there are many elements of devotion. It may be concluded that the seed of the concept of Bhakti which has been developed in later times, is found in these Upaniṣadic Upāsanās.

In this way, it is seen that the study of the legends of the Upaniṣads reveals many hidden ideas.