The Upaniṣads represents the quintessence of the Vedic wisdom. The Upaniṣads which are regarded as the concluding portion of the Vedas, are the substratum of Indian philosophical wisdom that has thrown its light into the entire world. These are the very root from which Indian thought and spirituality flourish. The Upaniṣads, indeed are “while in one sense a continuation of the Vedic worship, are in another a protest against the religion of the Brāhmaṇas.”

The Vedas are engaged with the vast order (or phenomenons) and movement of nature related to the cosmic forces, which take the shapes of various deities and which are worshipped in numerous forms. In the Vedas, we find the references of different types of prayers, worships and various gods, such as Agni, Indra, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Prajāpati etc., associated with the creation-process, sacrifices and other topics. Sometimes they are mentioned unitedly as Viśve-devāh. According to Dr. Jogiraj Basu, “All the gods described in the Samhitā and the Brāhmaṇas are personal gods having anthropomorphic attributes; they represent

1. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 66
different aspects of the natural phenomena".  

Now, it is noticed that though in the Vedas, different gods are dealt with; whenever a prayer or worship is invoked of a deity, that particular one is ascribed with the Supreme power or Supreme god-head, reflecting the Henotheism of the Vedas. Again, other gods are only some different aspects of that Supreme power. From it, generated the idea of the Supreme, which can only be one. So, Max Müller rightly says, “Whatever is the age when the collection of our Rgveda Samhītā was finished, it was before that age that the conviction had been formed that there is but one, one Being, neither male nor female, a Being raised high above all the conditions and limitations of personality and of human nature, and nevertheless the Being that are really meant by all such names as Indra, Agni, Mātariśvan nay, even by the name of Prajāpati, Lord of creatures.” In the Rgveda also, we find that one god is worshipped and known differently. In this way, the Henotheism of the Vedas proceed to the way of monotheism with a systematic approach, and more noticeably through the conception of Rta or the unity of nature. The Vedic seers are busy depicting one single power as the cause of the world and the controlling factor.

2. Basu, Jogiraj, India of the Age of the Brāhmaṇas, p. 237
3. Vide, Radhakrishnan, S, Indian Philosophy, Vol.1, p. 96
4. ekaṁ sad viprā bahudhā vandanti
   agnim yamaṁ mātariśvānamāhūry RV, 1.164. 46
Amidst all the variations in the Vedas, a single central power, is conceived which may be defined as the main force that works underneath to lead a man’s life to the path of liberation by destroying all the pains and sufferings of this finite life and world, and the Upaniṣads carry out this monistic tendency. They recognize only one spirit which is regarded as the Ultimate Reality – almighty, infinite, eternal, incomprehensible, self-existent, the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. Herein alone, we, the finite human beings find the solutions of all our problems and can get an end of all our sufferings and ultimately attain liberation. In the Upaniṣads, we return to explore the depths of the inner world, i.e. the ideas and the concepts.

**MEANING OF THE TERM UPAŅIṢAD**

Almost all the philosophical systems of Indian philosophy seek their origin in the Upaniṣads. The philosophical truth preached by the Upaniṣads is such that cannot be revealed to everyone but to a selective one, so it is endowed with some mystic thoughts and experiences. It can be perceived through yogic practices only.⁵ Therefore, these Upaniṣads are

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⁵. Cf. taṁ dūrdarśaṁ guḍhamanupraviṣṭaṁ guhāhitam gahvareṣṭham puraṇāṁ KU, 1.2.12;
te dhyānayogānugataṁ apasyaṁ devatmasaktiṁ svaguṇaimūḍhāṁ
ŚU, 1.3
called *rahasyamayam* or mysterious. It is said in the *Amarakoṣa*,\(^6\) *dharme rahasya – upaniṣat syāt* (Upaniṣads are mysterious by nature). Thus, in *Nṛsiṁhottaratāpani Upaniṣad*, four times in succession, *iti rahasyam* (it is mystery) is mentioned, e.g. *abhayaṁ vai brahma bhavati ya evaṁ veda, iti rahasyam*.\(^7\) *(Whoever has known Brahman, becomes fearless, this is the mystery). Whenever the mention is made of *Upaniṣad* texts in ancient literature, some expressions are found as *guhyā ṛdeśāḥ*\(^8\) (secret instruction), *paramam guhyām*\(^9\) (the Ultimate secret), *vedānte paramam guhyām*\(^10\) (the Ultimate secret revealed in *Vedānta*), *vedaguhyaṁ*\(^11\) (the secret of Vedas), *vedaguhya upaniṣatsu gūḍham*\(^12\) (the secret of Vedas, which is stated in the Upaniṣads as mysterious), *guhyatamam*\(^13\) (the Supreme secret) etc. This thought of mystery is only communicated to the

\[\begin{align*}
6. & \quad \text{*Amarakoṣa*, 3.3.92} \\
7. & \quad \text{*Nṛsiṁhottaratāpani Upaniṣad*, 8} \\
8. & \quad \text{CU, 3.5.2} \\
9. & \quad \text{KU, 1.3.17} \\
10. & \quad \text{ŚU, 6.22} \\
11. & \quad \text{Ibid, 5.6} \\
12. & \quad \text{Ibid} \\
13. & \quad \text{Maitrī U, 6. 29}
\end{align*}\]
tested few. This secret doctrine or Rahasyam is not for the unfit persons and that is repeated in several Upaniṣads. The knowledge of the Ultimate Reality or Brahman is such a cherished thing that it should be revealed by a father to his eldest son who is fit to receive it or to a competent disciple because it comes down to the humans through a distinguished tradition. It is said in the Chāndogyopaniṣad that this secret doctrine is told to Prajāpati by Brahmā (Hiranyagarbha); to Manu by Prajāpati, then Manu reveals it to his offsprings (Ikṣvāku etc.) and the father tells his eldest son Uddalāka Āruṇi about it. Yājñavalkya, the great seer of the Vedic age also reveals the truth secretly to his trusted pupil in the Brhadāranyakaopaniṣad. Śaṅkarācārya, the founder of Advaita Vedānta School of philosophy, also interprets the term Upaniṣad as Brahmavidyā or the knowledge of Brahman which destroys the ignorance in totality and

14. Cf, tam etam nāputrāyā vānante'vāsine vā brūyāt BU, 6.3.12; idam vāva taj-jyeṣṭhāya putrāya pitā brahma prabruyāt – praṇāyyāya vāntevāsine CU, 3.11.5; MU, 3.2.11

15. tadvaitadbrahmā prajāpataya uvāca prajāpatirmanave manuḥ … CU, 3.11.4

16. BU, 3.2.13
also the bonds of birth and death and leads a man to attain \textit{Brahman}, the Ultimate Reality or the Supreme knowledge. In his view, the term means \textit{brahmavidyā} or \textit{parāvidyā} and in the secondary sense, the word \textit{Upaniṣad} indicates the whole literature in which this Supreme knowledge of \textit{Brahman} is revealed.\footnote{seyam brahmavidyā upaniṣacchabdavācyā ŠB on Ibid, Intro.} The term ‘\textit{Upaniṣad}’ comes from the root \textit{vāsad} with the prefixes ‘\textit{upa}’ and ‘\textit{ni}’ and ‘\textit{kvip}’ as its suffix. The root \textit{vāsad} has three meanings - (i) to loosen, (ii) to reach or to attain and (iii) to destroy.\footnote{SB on KeU, 4.7} According to him also, \textit{Upaniṣads} are related to mystical experiences – \textit{upaniṣadām rahasyam yac-cintyām}.\footnote{saderdhatorviśaraṇagatyavasādanārthasya upanipūrvasya kvippratyayāntyasya rūpamidaṁ upaniṣaditī ŠB on KU, Intro.}

The preposition ‘\textit{upa}’ indicates, in contrast to \textit{pariṣ. ad, samsad} (assembly), a “confidential secret sitting”\footnote{Deussen, P., \textit{The Philosophy of the Upanishads}, p. 13}. Thus, the word ‘\textit{Upaniṣad}’, so formed, denotes sitting down near the instructor or ‘\textit{guru}’ for getting the secret knowledge or instructions from him. In the same context, it is also said to be \textit{parāvidyā} i.e., Supreme knowledge.
Literally, the Upaniṣads are also known as ‘Vedānta’ because they are the concluding portions of the Vedic literature. Chronologically they come at the end or the last stage of the Vedas, which includes the Saṃhitās, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas respectively. Here, The Saṃhitās and the Brāhmaṇas unitedly form the Kṛmakāṇḍa or the ritualistic portion of the Vedic literature, while the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads are regarded as the Jñānakāṇḍa or the portion of knowledge or wisdom. The old philosophical beliefs which are scattered in the Saṃhitās are more thoughtfully illustrated later with an innovative approach. It is perhaps a developed state of mind on the part of the Upaniṣadic seers. The various ideas and similes regarding an unseen, eternal principle of the Vedas are more clearly flourished in the later Upaniṣadic periods. The eternal philosophical quests of the human spirit regarding the nature and the very beginning of this unfolded creation and to which unseen principle it belonged, have their germs in the early Vedas itself and the Upaniṣads are just like the proper outcome of these thoughts of the Vedas. They contain the essence of the Vedic teachings. They embody the aim or fulfillment of the Vedic thought. Thus it is stated, *vedānto nāmo upaniṣad pramāṇam.*

That is, *Vedānta* means the Upaniṣads which are the

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21. VS, p. 19
valid means of knowing *Brahman*. Again, it is said that one who ascertains the import of the knowledge of the *Vedānta* or the Upaniṣads, becomes liberated.²² Here, the main import is the *Brahmavidyā* or the knowledge of *Brahman*. This profound teaching endowed with mystery as found in the *Vedānta*, is declared in former time – *vedānte paramāṁ guhyāṁ purākalpe pracoditāṁ*.²³

Here, one thing must be mentioned that the word *Vedānta* in later times denotes the philosophical systems also which are based upon the Upaniṣads.

Now, different western philosophers have interpreted the term *Upaniṣad* in their own ways. Among them, we can refer to the great philosopher, Paul Deussen who has occupied a prominent position in the Vedic studies. According to him, the term *Upaniṣad* can be interpreted no fewer than three heads: (a) secret word, (b) sacred text and (c) sacred import.²⁴ There are various words, names, expressions, formulas etc. in the Upaniṣads which are secretly delivered to people with proper efficiency and fitness. All these are endowed with mystery, which include sometimes secret information of the knowledge of *Brahman* or secret rule. For

²². MU, 3.2.6
²³. ŠU, 6.22
²⁴. Cf. Deussen, P., *The Philosophy of the Upanishads*, pp. 16-17
instance, in the Kauśītaki Upaniṣad, one who possesses the Supreme knowledge, the secret rule is that he should not beg which is called as Upaniṣad.\textsuperscript{25} Because without his begging, however, he receives offerings.

Again, in the views of Deussen, in some other places, Brahman is described by some mysterious words and expressions, such as tadvanām\textsuperscript{26} (that is the Adorable), satyasya satyam\textsuperscript{27} (Truth of the truth) etc. These particular expressions are termed as Upaniṣad – uktā ta upaniṣad\textsuperscript{28} (Upaniṣad is told to you). Like this, the words tajjalān\textsuperscript{29} (from which all are born, stay and dissolve in which), neti neti\textsuperscript{30} (not this, not this) etc. refer to this Upaniṣad. Again, some ritual conceptions or practices i.e. knowledge of the secret meaning of Udgīthā as Aum\textsuperscript{31}, can be regarded as ‘secret import’ of the term Upaniṣad as a special subject. Hence ‘secret text’ implies some portion of the older texts such as of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, iti upaniṣadaḥ\textsuperscript{32} etc. of philosophical teaching.

\begin{flushleft}
25. ya evaṁ veda tasyopaniṣat na yācediti Kau U, 2.1, 2
26. KeU, 4.6
27. BU, 2.1.20; 2.3.6
28. KeU, 4.7
29. CU, 3.14.1
30. BU, 2.3.6
31. CU, 1.1.10
32. TU, 2.9
\end{flushleft}
In the view of Oldenberg, the word *Upāniṣad* denotes *Upāsanā* or the sense of worship because of the regular practice of the Upaniṣadic texts to describe the significance of *Brahman* or *Ātman* by relating to some specific symbols. According to Maxmüller, the word *Upāniṣad* is derived from the root *ṇīsad* in the sense of destruction by the ancient philosophers, because the word intends to destroy ignorance or *Avidyā* through the path of divine revelation or it is derived from the same root in the sense of approaching, because through the Upaniṣads alone, one can come nearer to the knowledge of *Brahman*.

Keith also agrees with the views of Deussen when he regards that the word *Upāniṣad* implies 'secret word' or 'phase', 'secret text' or 'secret import' that contains philosophical speculations mainly on the nature of the universe and of *Brahman* or *Ātman*.

**NUMBER OF THE PRINCIPAL UPANIṢADSS**

The number of the Upaniṣads varies in the view of different scholars. The scholars put forward different views regarding this topic, as

there is no exact record. From the current data, we come to know that it runs over more than two hundred. As the Upaniṣads form one part of the Vedas and signifies the authenticity and wide acceptance of the texts known as śruti (revealed literature), it is somewhat not possible to assign a certain and fixed number for them. Because like the rest of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads also are handed down orally for so many years and they have got the status of written composition only in later times. For this process, the number of these texts also varies from scholar to scholar and only inferences can help in this matter. However, the Muktikopaniṣad36 refers to 108 Upaniṣads and their respective Vedas to which they belong.

Among them, 10 Upaniṣads are stated as belonging to the Rgveda like Aitareya, Kauśītaki, Nādabindu, Ātmaprabodha etc; again 19 of them, to the White Yajurveda, eg., Īśāvāsyā, Brhadāraṇyaka, Jāhāla, Haṁsa etc.; 32 to the Black Yajurveda, eg., Kāṭhavalli, Taittirīya, Brahma etc; 16 to the Sāmaveda, eg., Kena, Chāndogya, Āruṇi, Maitṛāyaṇī, Maitreyī etc. and the rest 31 to the Atharvaveda, eg., Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṅḍukya, Atharvasīras, Atharvaśikhā etc.37 Here, it should be mentioned

36. MkU, 1.30.39

that of these Upaniṣads, all are not of same importance. Some of them are not traditionally authentic and probably of later origin as evidenced by the worship of some sectarian deities or religious doctrines.

The number of Upaniṣads, as found in the collection of Dārā Shikoh is fifty and again in Colebrooke’s collection, it is fifty-two. According to Professor Weber, their number can be reckoned as 235.38 Again, Maxmuller published an alphabetical list of the Upaniṣads in 1865 where he mentioned about 149 Upaniṣads which he called as real. He also said, “To that number Dr. Burnell in his Catalogue (p. 59) added 5, Professor Haug 16, making a sum total of 170”.39 A sum total of 112 Upaniṣads are found in the Nirṛaya Sāgara Publications.40 These are: Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praṇa, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍukya, Taippīrīya, Aitareya, Chaṇḍogya, Bhṛhadāraṇyaka, Śvetāsvatara, Kaustubha, Maitreyī, Kaivalya etc. At the last of this list, we find the name of the Muktika Upaniṣad.

Another collection of Upaniṣads, namely, Upaniṣat – Saṁgrahah, compiled by Prof. Jagadish Shastri, contains 188 Upaniṣads.

40. Vide, Dasgupta, S.N., A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 28
This is divided into two parts, of which in the first, we find from Īśāvāsyā to Muktikopaniṣad. After that, in the second, there are 68 Upaniṣads, classified under five heads as (a) Yogopaniṣadḥ, (b) Sāmānickedaṇṭopaniṣadāḥ, (c) Vaiṣṇavopaniṣadāḥ, (d) Śāivopaniṣadāḥ and (e) Śāktopaniṣadāḥ.

Now, coming to the point of the number of the Principal Upaniṣads, we notice that there also, it varies from scholar to scholar. In this issue, we can take a clue from the great commentator Śaṅkarācārya, who has commented on eleven Upaniṣads of all these texts. These are Īṣa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praṇa, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍukya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, Bhadāranyaka, and Śvetāsvatara. Regarding the number of the Principal Upaniṣads, S. Radhakrishnan comments, “The Principal Upaniṣads are said to be ten” 42. But he also refers to the commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya on eleven Upaniṣads which include the Śvetāsvatara also in the list. 43 But in the view of some scholars, one of the means to recognize the genuine Upaniṣads of the Vedic tradition, i.e. the commentary of Śaṅkarācārya which is available on the Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad, is not of his own. It is said that this commentary is not written by Śaṅkarācārya

41. Shastri, J.L., Upaniṣat Saṅgrahah, pp. 5-9
42. Radhakrishnan, S., The Principal Upaniṣads, p. 21
43. Ibid
himself, following textual evidence by the scholars.\textsuperscript{44} Hence, the question of the primacy of Śvetāsvatara is hereby said to be refuted. According to some scholars, Śaṅkarācārya has also commented on the Nṛsiṁhapūrvaratāpanī Upaniṣad\textsuperscript{45}, which is not traditionally accepted as belonging to the Principal Upaniṣads. The tradition, generally, regards Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Munḍaka, Maṇḍukya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, and Brhadāraṇyaka, as the ten Principal Upaniṣads in the order. The Śvetāsvatara is frequently added to this list.

However, Śaṅkarācārya, refers to the Śvetāsvatara, Kauṣītaki, Jābāla, Mahānārāyaṇa and Paṅgala Upaniṣads in his commentary of Brahmasūtra. Rāmānuja, the founder of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy also adds the Subāla, the Cūlika, the Garbha and the Mahā to all these Upaniṣads. Vidyārāṇya in his Sarvopaniṣadārthānubhūtiprakāśa mentions twelve Upaniṣads, viz. Aitareya, Taittirīya, Chāndogya, Munḍaka, Praśna, Kauṣītaki, Maitrāyaṇīya, Kaṭhavallī, Śvetāsvatara, Brhadāraṇyaka, Talavākāra (Kena) and Nṛsiṁhottaratāpanīya Upaniṣad.

Now, among the oriental scholars, Maxmuller, in his book Sacred Books of the East, has mentioned the number of the Principal Upaniṣads as twelve, with the Maitrāyaṇī and the eleven Upaniṣads

\textsuperscript{44} The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. I, pp. 347
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid
commented upon by Śaṅkara. According to Deussen and Keith, the fourteen Upaniṣads are accepted as the Principal Upaniṣads in their respective works such as Aitareya, Kauṣitaki, Taittirīya, Kaṭha, Śvetāśvatara, Mahānārāyaṇa, Brhadāraṇyaka, Īśa, Chāndogya, Kena, Maitrāyaṇī, Praśna, Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍukya. Hume, refers to the number of the Principal Upaniṣads as thirteen, with Maitrāyaṇī and Kauṣitaki, except Mahānārāyaṇa.

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE PRINCIPAL UPANIṢADS

As the number of the Upaniṣads, the chronological order of them is also not certain. It is quite a difficult task to assign any precise chronological order to the Principal Upaniṣads. Because there is no such proof upon which we can rely on completely. Therefore, some of the scholars of oriental study, only attempt to represent a rough estimate of the relative periods of the Upaniṣads, based on the development of the thoughts and also of the style of expression and language.

In the view of S. Radhakrishnan, the first place must be taken by the ancient prose Upaniṣads, which are closely connected with Brāhmaṇas


47. Hume, The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, p xi
and Āraṇyakas. The oldest Upaniṣads are those that are in prose and non-sectarian in character. The style of language is also similar with that of the Brāhmaṇas, which are full of allegories. According to Radhakrishnan, “The Aitareya, the Kauḍītaki, the Taittirīya, the Chandogya, the Brhadāraṇyaka, and parts of the Kena are the early ones, while verses 1 - 13 of the Kena, and IV. 8-21 of the Brhadāranyaka form the transition to the metrical Upaniṣads, and may be put down as later additions.” 48 According to him, Kathopaniṣad is of a later date, because it bears the testimony of certain elements of the Sāṁkhya and the Yoga systems of philosophy. It also quotes passages from the Bhagavad-Gītā.

Radhakrishnan regards the earliest ones as pre-Buddhistic that are written in prose. In these Upaniṣads, we find pure Vedāntic speculations. But the later Upaniṣads are more inclined to religious worship and devotion and they are post-Buddhistic. Deussen has classified the Upaniṣads into four distinct stages and arranged the Principal Upaniṣads accordingly. 49

(a) Ancient Prose Upaniṣads

The ancient prose Upaniṣads are closely connected with the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas. They resemble greatly in their ways of

49. Deussen, P., The Philosophy of the Upanishads, pp. 23-26
expressions, languages etc. with that of the Brāhmaṇas and are full of allegories. They are Brhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Kauṭāki and Kena. Deussen points out that of these Upaniṣads, Brhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya are the richest in contents and the earliest among all the extant Upaniṣads.

(b) Metrical Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads belonging to this period are the Kaṭha, Īṣa, Śvetāśvatara, Muṇḍaka, and Mahānārāyaṇa. Again, according to him, “the transition is made by Kena 1-13 and the verses of Brhadāraṇyaka 4.4.8-21, undoubtedly a later addition.”

These texts are distinguished from the previous ones, not only by the form, but also by their contents. Their connection with the Vedic Śākhās becomes loose with the changes of time and distinct phrases are introduced with the metrical style in language.

(c) The Later Prose Upaniṣads

The later prose Upaniṣads are the Praśna, the Maitrāyaṇīya and the Maṇḍukya. The character of language is closely connected with the Classical Sanskrit following greater development and complexity of style, with frequently used repetitions. Thus though these Upaniṣads are

50. Ibid, p. 24
composed in prose, they are different in each and every respect from the earlier prose compositions.

(d) The Later Atharvaveda Upaniṣads

In this group, a large number of Upaniṣads, mostly small in size, ascribed to the Atharvaveda are included. These Upaniṣads are somehow sectarian in character or consisting of some religious elements. They have established the original Upaniṣadic thoughts in their respective ways. Concisely speaking, they are sometimes related with different practices of Yoga; or manifest the life of a Sannyāsin; or depict various religious worship, sacrifices etc. by relating to their respective sects i.e. Śaivite, Vaiṣṇavite etc. Thus in the words of Deussen, “a new interest in the Yogic practices, in the life of the Sannyāsin and the characteristics of sects came to the fore.”

Keith also agrees with the views of Deussen in classifying the Upaniṣads. He only maintains that among the earliest Upaniṣads, the Aitareya occupies the first position. Thus, in his view, the Aitareya Upaniṣad, “is not to be dated later than any of the other Upaniṣads.” About the last stage i.e. the later Atharva Upaniṣads, he has given a more

51. Deussen, P., Sixty Upanishads of the Veda, p. 3
52. Keith, A. B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, p. 498
systematic presentation, including them under four categories. These —
“(1) merely develop doctrines already found in the older Upaniṣads or (2)
devote themselves to the glorification of the Yoga practices, by which
religious ecstasy was produced or (3) deal with the condition of the
Sannyāsin or (4) finally give themselves up to the glorification of Rudra-
Śiva.” 53 In this way, some of the western scholars, have tried to show the
chronological order of the Upaniṣads, following their assumptions based
on certain factors.

DATE OF THE UPANIṢADS

Regarding the date of the Upaniṣads, we cannot assign any exact
date to them for insufficient records. Though there are great divergences
of opinions, there are also enduring efforts done by modern scholars to get
a clue to this difficult yet interesting question. As we know that the
Upaniṣads are not the independent work of a single author, but a vast
literature which are handed down first orally generation by generation, and
then into a written composition, so, assuming a fixed date of composition
to the Upaniṣads has given rise to a great controversy among the scholars
and historians. Paul Deussen observes, “For these treatises are not the
work of a single genius, but the total philosophical product of an entire
epoch, which extends from the period of the wandering in the Ganges

53. Ibid, pp. 500-501
valley to the rise of Buddhism, or approximately from 1000 or 800 B.C., to 500 B.C., but which is prolonged in its offshoots for beyond this last limit of time”.\textsuperscript{54}

However, all historians agree that they belong to the pre-Buddhistic era, basically the earliest Upaniṣads, may be a few of them are post-Buddhistic. It must be stated that Buddhism being only a reaction against Brāhmaṇism, presupposes the existence of the whole Vedic literature including the Vedāṅgas also. Therefore according to Maxmuller and others, the entire texts such as the hymns, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, and the Upaniṣads etc. of the Vedic literature must be pre-Buddhistic. That means it must have originated before 500 B.C.\textsuperscript{55}

Generally, the accepted dates which are assigned to the early Upaniṣads are 1000 B.C. to 300 B.C. In the view of Radhakrishnan, some later Upaniṣads with the commentary of Śrī Śaṅkaraśārya may belong to about 400 or 300 B.C. which are post-Buddhistic.\textsuperscript{56} According to M. Winternitz, “It must have been also taken many centuries for the development in the history of religion from the simple natureworship of the \textit{Rgveda}

\textsuperscript{54} Deussen, P., \textit{The Philosophy of the Upanishads}, p. 51

\textsuperscript{55} Vide, Winternitz, M., \textit{A History of Indian Literature}, Vol. I, p. 303

\textsuperscript{56} Radhakrishnan, S., \textit{Indian Philosophy}, Vol.I, p. 142
hymns up to the theosophical-philosophical speculations of the Upaniṣads, and again to those phases of belief in gods and cults as found by Megasthenes about 300 B.C. in India.”

Thus, the lower limit of the Upaniṣadic age is usually fixed by the majority of scholars as 300 B.C.

THE RGVEDA: THE BASIS OF UPANIṢADIC MONISM

The Upaniṣads are the basis of Indian philosophical thought. All the philosophical ideas that are enumerated in the schools of Indian philosophy have their basis in the Upaniṣads. They also believe in the authority of the Vedas in initiating their doctrines. All the schools of Indian philosophy, basically point out that the ultimate thrust of human life is to get rid of all the unfulfillment, the emptiness and to attain absolute peace that is full in itself. In the Upaniṣads, these fundamental discussions about the Absolute and the material world as a whole are narrated thoroughly by the enlightened seers. Here, we find the utterances of the Vedic seers which embody their illumined experiences. They are the records of the mystical experiences which cannot be attained by ordinary perception and inference, but through sādhanā or spiritual means.58

58. Cf. aprāpte śāstraṁ arthavat, Mimāṁsā Sūtra, 1.1.5
According to S. Radhakrishnan, “The sages are men of ‘direct’ vision, in the words of Yāska, sākṣāt-kṛta-dharmāṇaḥ, and the records of their experiences are the facts to be considered by any philosophy of religion.”

The truth, intuited by the seers, is the knowledge of Ultimate Reality, the one and only independent, absolute principle. It is compared to the divine breath that bestows on the human spirits. In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, it is said ‘asya mahato bhūtasya niḥśvasitametad yadṛgvedo yajurvedah sāmavedo’tharvāṅgirasā itihāsāḥ purāṇāṁ vidyā upaniṣadāḥ ślokaḥ ..., etāni sarvāṇi niḥśvasitāni,’ (from this great Being, are breathed out the Rgveda, the Yajurveda, the Śāmaveda, the Atharvaveda, Itihāsa, the Purāṇas, the hymns of the Upaniṣads etc., thus all these are breaths of that greatest One). Therefore, the Upaniṣads are undisputedly valid, timeless and sanātana because they are breathed out by Brahman or the Ultimate Reality. As a part of the Vedas, these are regarded as Āruti or authentic by nature according to the Indian tradition. In the Upaniṣads basically, we find the discussions of the Ultimate Truth that is known as Brahman or Ātman. Regarding Brahmacidyā or the knowledge of Brahman, Upaniṣads are the one and only pramāṇa or the means of knowledge.

59. Radhakrishnan, S., The Principal Upaniṣads, p. 22

60. BU, 2.4.10
The other pramāṇas, perception, inference etc. may have their rules in their respective fields but in the line of acquiring knowledge regarding Brahman, one has to accept the authority of the Upaniṣads. Therefore, The Ultimate Reality or Brahman is known as Aupaniṣadaḥ Puruṣaḥ. ⁶¹

The Upaniṣads are the most valuable treasure of Indian culture and civilization. The teachings of the Upaniṣads, the deepest and the finest thoughts of the human hearts, have been inspiring generations till today and illumines the whole world by their inexhaustible significance and great spiritual power. In the Mundakopaniṣad, it is thoughtfully narrated as Veddāntavijñānam⁶², the wisdom of the Veddānta.

The oneness of Brahman or Ātman is the main teaching of the age-old Upaniṣadic texts. With the occurrence of Brahmajñāna (the knowledge of Brahman), all other complications regarding bondage or avidyā are destroyed, and one can transcend across and be a liberated soul. He can attain the status of Pūrṇabrahma⁶³ or the Brahman which is full in itself. Therefore, it is said as brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati.⁶⁴ (The person who knows Brahman, becomes himself Brahman).

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⁶¹. BU, 3.9.26
⁶². MU, 3.2.6
⁶³. IU, Šāntipātha
⁶⁴. MU, 3.2.9
The Upaniṣads come at the last stage of the Vedas. Therefore, it is evident that without the very existence and the influence of the Vedas, the Upaniṣads and the profound philosophical thoughts that are embodied there, cannot come into existence. They are like the successful outcome or the ripe fruit of the Vedas. In the Muktika Upaniṣad, it is rightly said, *tileṣu tailavad vede vedāntaḥ supratiṣṭhitah*65 (*Vedānta* is well-established in the Vedas like the oil that is always contained in the seed of oil).

The Upaniṣadic concept of the Ultimate Reality which is generally known as Ātman or Brahmaṇa, had its origin in the pre-Upaniṣadic texts, such as the Samhitās, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas. It is traced to the Vedas, even in the *Ṛgveda* itself. So, it can be understood that it had its roots in the Vedas, springing up to its culmination in the Upaniṣads and then branching off into the various systems of Indian philosophy. The philosophical tendencies regarding the Absolute truth which are dormant in the Vedic hymns are developed and given new meanings where necessary in the Upaniṣads.

In the Vedas, there are references of different gods, such as Agni, Indra, Rudra, Viṣṇu, Prajāpati etc. One of the main striking features of the Vedic gods is that they are the manifestations of the different types

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65. MkU, 1.9
of natural phenomena. They may be related to the sun or the changing
directions of it, i.e. sunrise etc., as noticed by the Vedic people or the
thunderbolt, terrific storm, lightning, rain etc. They are again sometimes
related to the concept of creation of the Universe, which has been ascribed
to various deities such as Puruṣa, Prajāpati, Hiranya-garbhā etc. Thus, we
find a vast number of gods available in the Vedic Saṁhitās. Professor
Williams remarks, “the deified forces addressed in the Vedic hymns were
probably not represented by images or idols in the Vedic period, though
doubtless the early worshippers clothed their gods with human forms in
their own imaginations.”66

Thus, in the Vedas, all these gods are personal gods representing
different aspects of nature. But it is noticed that whenever one particular
god is invoked and worshipped, he is worshipped as the Supreme one.
This particular feature of Vedic gods is termed as Henotheism or
Kathenotheism by the great philosopher Max Müller.67 For this, it is
different from the Greek polytheism, where also many gods are
worshipped, but they are ascribed with limited powers. They are not
endowed with the Supreme Godhead as the Vedas. In the words of Max

67. Basu, Dr. Jogiraj, *India of the Age of the Brāhmaṇas*, pp. 249, 183
Müller again, “When these individual gods are invoked, they are not conceived as limited by the power of others, as superior or inferior in rank. Each god, to the mind of the supplicants, is as good as all the gods ... It would be easy to find, in the numerous hymns of the Rgveda, passages in which almost every single god is represented as supreme and absolute.”

Thus, the philosophy of the Vedas is somewhat monotheistic in nature. Yāska, the eminent scholar of the Vedic age in his Nirukta, had amalgamated all these conceptions of deities and said that all gods are only the parts of one Supreme Self. Hence, it is asserted in clear and unmistakable words in the Rgveda -

\begin{quote}
\textit{ekāṁ sat viprā bahudhā vadanti} / \\
\textit{agnim yamaṁ mātariśvānamāhūḥ} /\textsuperscript{70},
\end{quote}

(The one existing Reality is called in different ways, as Agni, Yama, Mātariśvān etc. by the wise).

Thus, one thing is clear in the Vedas that the Supreme can only be one. Amidst all the variations, it is very much asserted that the Ultimate cause of this whole creation can be but one as there will be but one in the end. It is beyond all, the one principle serving all the deities

\textsuperscript{68.} Wilkins, W.J., \textit{Hindu Mythology}, p. 11

\textsuperscript{69.} ekasyātmanah anye devāḥ pratyaṅgāni bhavanti \textit{Nirukta}, 7.4

\textsuperscript{70.} Supra
Thus, some kind of monistic tendency has been initiated firstly in the *Rgveda* on its religious context from a deep penetrating sense of unity amidst all the multiplicity, wherever a worshipper turns his eyes. Thus it is stated that there are different types of sources of one fire; one sun illumines everything, the whole world; similarly the One dispels all darkness. It alone reveals itself in all these forms.\(^2\)

In some hymns of the *Rgveda*, the conception of a single, super personal, non-dual principle is actually admitted. Here, we have found different approaches of the seers towards the development of this unity or central power. According to S. Radhakrishnan, “this tendency is supported by the conception of *ṛta* or order. The universe is an ordered whole, it is not disorderliness.”\(^3\) In the *Puruṣasūkta* of the *Rgveda*, the idea of one god is developed ‘*etāvānasya mahimā ato jyāyānca pūrṣah/ pādosya

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71. RV, 3.55.11

72. eka evāgnir bahudhā samiddha

    ekaḥ sūryo viśvaṁ anu prabhūtaḥ /

    ekaivośāḥ sarvam idāṁ vibhāty

    ekaṁ vaidam vi babhūva sarvam//. Ibid, 8.58.2

73. Radhakrishnan, S., *The Principal Upaniṣads*, p. 34
viśvā bhūtāni tripādasyāmṛtam divi,74 (the world is being manifested by the spirit or Puruṣa by one fourth of his nature and three-fourths of Him remain unmodified). He singly pervades all the universe with thousand heads, thousand eyes and thousand feet and spreaded beyond that by ten fingers.75 Here, by his greatness, Puruṣa, which is greater than this, insists the creation of the universe. He is regarded as the Perfect Being which includes all the present, past and future objects of this universe and also the distributor of immortality.76 This idea is later flourished in the Taittirīya Āranyaka77 and also found in the Kaṭhopaniṣad78 where it is narrated as the Highest and the ultimate principle of the universe, in which as the spokes of a wheel in the nave, all multiplicity obtains its point of rest and resolution – puruṣānna paraṁ kiṁcit sākāsthā sā para gatiḥ. Thus, it is contributing to the Upaniṣadic concept of the para-brahman and the apara-brahman indirectly. Hence, it is said “This view prepares for the

74. RV, 10.90.3; CU, 3.12.6
75. sa bhūmiṁ viśvato vṛtvā atyatiṣṭhad daśāṅgulaṁ Ibid, 10.90.1
76. puruṣāṁ eva idaṁ sarvaṁ yat bhūtaṁ yateca bhavyaṁ uta amṛtavasya ṯāṇaḥ yaddanna atirohati Ibid, 10.90.2
77. Tai Ā, 3.12.1
78. KU, 1.3.11
development of the doctrine which is emphasised in the Upaniṣads that the spirit in man is one with the spirit which is the prior of the world."\(^{79}\)

In the hymn, 1.164 of the \textit{Ṛgveda}, the monistic idea is flourished. According to Paul Deussen, a perception of unity had been arrived at, at that time of the \textit{Ṛgveda}, which is expressed in these hymns, i.e., 1.164, 10.129 etc.\(^{80}\)

Here, the seer is seen making queries about a unitary first principle, which is regarded as the ultimate cause of the creation or the world including material and immaterial things. Sāyaṇa interprets it- Viṣṇu\(^{81}\), as the all-pervasive principle. Here, also we find the mantra –

dvā suparṇā sayujā sakāyā samānaṁ vṛksam pariṣasvajāte / tayoranyāḥ pippalaiṁ svādvattyanaśnannamy abhicākaśiti //\(^{82}\), (Two birds always united are dwelling in the same tree, where one enjoys different fruits sweet or bitter and the other simply looks on) which is also repeated in the \textit{Kāṭhopaniṣad}\(^{83}\) and also in other works. By this, the seer conveys

\(^{79}\) Radhakrishnan, S., \textit{The Principal Upaniṣads}, p. 39  
\(^{80}\) Deussen, P., \textit{The Philosophy of the Upanishads}, p. 85  
\(^{81}\) viṣṇorvyāptasya puruṣasya Sāyaṇa on RV, I. 164.46  
\(^{82}\) Ibid, 1.164.20  
\(^{83}\) KU, 3.1.1; SU, 4.7-8; MU, 3.1.1-2
the message that there is the utmost oneness or unity between the individual and the Supreme soul\textsuperscript{84} depicted by the same word ‘supārṇā’, demonstrating the continuity of the ideal of identity between the ultimate and the individual as propounded later in the Upaniṣads.

According to Vedic Indians, the source of creation and rulership can be ascribed to one being such as Prajāpati, the lord of creatures or Viśvakarman, the all-maker. At the base of everything exists that one Viśvakarman. He is their real essence.\textsuperscript{85} According to Keith, “We find here the tendency which is found in Indian conceptions to insist that the creator, who is self-created, is not merely the material cause but also the efficient cause of the world. The process, therefore, by which the world emerges from the unity at its base, assumes a decidedly curious aspect: there is first the unity, which may be conceived as a creator god, then, derived from it, the waters or other primeval substance; then the god appears in the waters as a spirit to bring about the development of the universe.”\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Sāyaṇa on RV, I. 164.20

\textsuperscript{85} RV, 10.81; 10.82

\textsuperscript{86} Keith, A.B., Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, pp. 437-438
In the *Rgveda*, the other efforts are also distinguished to maintain the conception of the unity of the universe by representing personal deities who are credited with the duties of creator, of ruler and preserver of the universe. Thus, Prajāpati, in the beginning, evolves and becomes manifested in the form of a golden egg or germ from which are developed the heaven, the earth, the creatures, the mountains, the rivers and so on.\(^87\) Here in the verse – *kasmai devāya haviśā vidhema*, (to whom the offerings are presented in worship), *ka* is for Prajāpati. According to the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, *Hiranyagarbha* is Prajāpati, which is also found in the *Rgveda*.\(^88\)

In the *Brahmanaspati* hymn, *Asat* is denoted as the cause. But here *Asat*\(^89\) does not mean that the world or the manifested is traced back to non-being or void, but only that the distinct occurs from the non-distinct one, which is later generated in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.\(^90\) So there is something, there is not nothing. As S. Radhakrishnan says, “It is their

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87. RV, 10. 121. 1, 2, 3, 4
88. *prajāpatirvai hiranyagarbhaḥ praśāpateranurūpatvāya* TS, 5.5.1.2; Sāyaṇa on RV, 10.121.1
89. RV, 10.72. 2-3
90. *asadvā idamagra āsid / tato vai sad-jāyata / tadātmānam svayamakuruta / tasmāttat sukṛtamucyate iti* // TU, 2.7
way of describing the absolute Reality, the logical ground of the whole universe. Non-being only means whatever now visibly exists had then no distinct existence".91

The most remarkable account of the timeless and living reality of a non-dual principle is found in the hymn of creation or Nāsadīya sūkta of Rgveda.92 Here, Deussen has expressed rightly, "In its noble simplicity, in the loftiness of its philosophic vision, it is possibly the most admirable bit of philosophy of olden times, no translation can ever do justice to the beauty of the original."93 In the Nāsadīya sūkta, again that world power is described as 'Tadekaṁ' (that one).94

It is the reality of one absolute principle as uncharacterisable one, the breathless one breathing by inner power itself. These expressions, Tadekaṁ etc. astonishingly presage the later formulation in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, ekameva dvitīyam95, (the One existing reality, without a second).

91. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, Vol.I, p. 104
92. RV, 10.129
93. Bloomfield, The Religion of the Veda, p. 234
94. na mṛtyurāśīdamṛtaṁ na tarhi na rātryā ahnaāśiḥ pragataḥ/ ānīdavātaṁ svadhayā tadekaṁ tasmāddhānyanna paraḥkimānāsa //
RV, 10.129.2
95. CU, 6.2.1
This pure consciousness is indefinable, ungraspable or without any qualities. Any limit or boundary to impose on this ultimate principle is to limit and bind the limitless and boundless.\textsuperscript{96} It does not depend upon others for its manifestation in the process of creation and again the manifestation does not interfere into the unity and integrity of the Absolute one. From this utmost unity or the absolute one, through the power of tapas\textsuperscript{97} or austerity, all the universe was evolved out, which was firstly covered with impenetrable void or indiscriminate water.\textsuperscript{98} From this, it is further influenced and revealed in the \textit{Mundakopaniṣad} as \textit{yasya jñānamayaṁ tapah},\textsuperscript{99} (the omniscient one who is endowed with the intrinsic power of penance).

The concept of \textit{Māyā} can also be traced to this hymn. Here, the meaning of the term \textit{svadhaya} is \textit{Māyā}, according to Śāyaṇa, the intrinsic power, by which the Ultimate cause becomes manifested, but remains in its own nature.\textsuperscript{100} It exists eternally without any external cause or effect as

\textsuperscript{96} BU, 3.9.26
\textsuperscript{97} tapasāḥ sraṣṭavyaparyālocanarūpaṁ caṇyaṭrāmnāyate ‘yah sarvajñāḥ sarvavidyasya jñānamayaṁ tapah’ iti RV, 10.129.3
\textsuperscript{98} salilamiva, yathā kṣīreṇāvibhāgāpannāṁ nīram durvijñānām tathā tamasā – vibhāgāpannāṁ jaganna śakyavijñānamiti Ibid
\textsuperscript{99} MU, 1.1.9
\textsuperscript{100} svasmin dhīyate dhṛiyata āṣṛitya bartata iti svadhā māyā
Śāyaṇa on RV, 10. 129.2
narrated in the hymn – *na parāḥ kīṇcanāsā*\textsuperscript{101}. Nothing beyond itself can limit it.

Thus, in this hymn, the distinction between the personal God or Īśvara and the Absolute Reality or Brahman, to some extant, is suggested here. God or the personal super-consciousness is derived as a manifestation of the Absolute.\textsuperscript{102} The unmanifested indeterminate attains determinations from the self-conscious Lord.

Thus, in short, in this hymn, the seer represents that in the beginning, there was only one all-pervasive, invisible and incomprehensible absolute principle which is ultimately the efficient and the material cause of everything whatever exists.

In this way, it is noticed that the monistic emphasis led the Vedic thinkers to arrive at the Absolute of the Upaniṣads.

**GREAT PHILOSOPHERS OF THE VEDIC AND UPANIṢADIC AGE**

We can prepare a speculative order of the scholars in relation to the philosophical thinkings in India, preceded by Mahidāsa Aitareya who was rightly recognised as the founder of the *Aitareya* school.\textsuperscript{103} His

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{101} RV, 10.129.2
\textsuperscript{102} Cf. Ibid, 10.129.6
\textsuperscript{103} Maxmuller, F., SBE., Vol. 1, p. xciv; Sāyaṇa's Intro. on Ait Br
\end{footnotes}
philosophy is highlighted throughout the whole Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka. Then after him, we may consider some other names who engaged themselves in shaping the later philosophical concepts and evolutions of this great land. One of such thinkers is Raikva, of whom, as the historical evidence, it is only known that he was a resident of the villages that were later became famous as Raikva-parṇa, by dint of his far-reaching fame and genius, among the people of Mahāvrśa.104 Another scholar of the same repute is Satyakāma Jābāla, and there is a close connection between the philosophical notions of Jābāla and Mahidāsa Aitareya, because they both believe that the vital principle is the Supreme one in man. Thus, in regard to the immediate successors of Mahidāsa, we can include the name of Jābāla, who is also mentioned as an earlier thinker in the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.105 After that we must refer to Uddālaka Āruṇi, of whom, it must be admitted that, the Indian wisdom is very much rich to have such type of talent as its own cultivative product and heritage. Uddālaka Āruṇi was the contemporary of the scholars like Aupamanyava, Pauluṣi Indradyumna, Śārkarākṣya, Buḍila Āsvataraśvi, Āsvapati

104. CU, 4.2.5
105. BU, 4.1.6; 4.6.2
Kaikeya etc. Among the Buddhist works, we also find some valuable informations regarding the great personalities of the Vedic period. It is learnt that Auddālaka or Śvetaketu had got his education at Takklasila in Gandhāra and after that he had joined at the service of the King of Benares as a sub-minister under his father. Moreover, he is again presented in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* as the main circulator of the *Mantha* or Mortar doctrine.

Varuṇa, another scholar of great repute is regarded as the profound exponent of the *Taittirīya* School. He was the father of Bhṛgu Vāruṇi as narrated in expounding his philosophy in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*. Yājñavalkya, the famous scholar was a man of varied interests, such as religious, speculative, ethical, moral, social etc. He had introduced the doctrine of Double Negation of No, No or *Neti, Neti* to express *Brahman* or the Ultimate Reality. In the *Bṛhadāranyakopanishad*,

106. CU, 5.11. 1-4
108. BU, 6.3.7
109. TU, 3.1-6
110. BU, 2.3.6; 3.9.26; 4.4.22; 4.5.15; 4.2.4
we find Yājñavalkya as a spokesperson among the scholars nearly everywhere. With him are also associated the names of King Janaka of Videha i.e., the most renowned patron; Gārgī and Maitreyī, the two famous women of the Vedic era., Gārgī being the most eloquent and talented among the scholars to engage Yājñavalkya in a philosophical quest twice\textsuperscript{111}. Maitreyī, one of the two wives of Yājñavalkya, the other being Kātyāyanī, desired to know the Ultimate truth of this world and earthly objects.

Another scholar of renowned personality is Pippalāda. His philosophical theories and teachings are preserved in the \textit{Praśnopaniṣad} of \textit{Atharvaveda}. He is referred to as a contemporary of Sukeśas Bhāradvāja, Śaivya Satyakāma, Sauryāyanin Gārgya, Kausalya Āśvalāyana, Bhārgava Vaidarbhi and Kabandhin Kātyāyana.\textsuperscript{112} According to the Buddhist records, it is learnt that one Kakuda Kātyāyana is frequently stated to have been the elder contemporary of Buddha and on this basis, it can be drawn that Pippalāda’s date is not too far from the Buddha because Kabandhin Kātyāyana and Kakuda Kātyāyana “are practically one and the same”\textsuperscript{113}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Ibid, 3.6.1; 3.8.1-12
\item \textsuperscript{112} PU, 1.1
\item \textsuperscript{113} Barua, B., \textit{A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy}, pp.226-227
\end{itemize}
Another famous personality who acquires a prominent position is Naciketas. In the *Kathopaniṣad*, he is regarded as the son of Vājaśravasa, the descendent of Uddālaka.\textsuperscript{114} Again in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,\textsuperscript{115} Naciketas is referred to as a Gautama, the son of Vājaśravasa. It is also noticed that there are tremendous likenings and similarity between the concepts of these two philosophers, i.e. Uddālaka Āruṇi and Naciketas, just as the theory of Being of Naciketas with the logical reasoning of Uddālaka’s philosophical concepts are closely placed.

There are also some other scholars of famous teachings like Pravāhana Jaivali, Śaṅḍilya, Gṛgyāyaṇa, Pratārdana, Bālāki and Ajātaśatru etc. Śaṅḍilya was well-recognized by his doctrine of *Brahman* frequently quoted as *Śaṅḍilya-vidya*.\textsuperscript{116} In later times, a book on the theory of devotion or *Bhakti*, namely *Śaṅḍilya-Sūtra* is also ascribed to him. After that, coming to Pravāhana Jaivali, it is stated that he was the king of Paṅcāla according to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.\textsuperscript{117} His father was Jībala

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\textsuperscript{114} KU, 1.1.11; Maxmuller, F., SBE, Vol. 15, p. 4

\textsuperscript{115} T Br, 3.1.8

\textsuperscript{116} CU, 3.14.4; BSS, 3.3.31

\textsuperscript{117} CU, 5.3.1; 1.8.1
and also belonged to the warrior-cast. His other contemporaries were Śilaka of Śālavatī and Dālbhya of the school of Cikita. Like Śāṅḍilya, Jaivali also displayed the notion that from infinite space or ākāśa alone is originated the whole universe.

Now, the great scholar Gārgyāyaṇa is referred to in the Kauṭītaki Upaniṣad as the teacher of Uddālaka who was probably from a Kṣattriya origin. Pratardana was the son of Divoḍasa, the King of Kaśī. Here Pratardana’s philosophy resembles the thoughts of Mahidāsa and Gārgyāyaṇa. In the Kauṭītaki Upaniṣad, we get the reference of Pratardana as introducing some new thoughts of self-control (sāṃyamana), also recognized as āntaraṁ agnihotraṁ.

After that we can refer to Bālāki and Ajātaśatru. King Ajātaśatru, who was a contemporary philosopher of Janaka, the King of Videha, satisfied the philosophical postulations raised in the mind of Bālāki in a quest. This account occurs in the Kauṭītaki Upaniṣad and the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Regarding Bālāki, it can be said that he was

118. Kau U, 1.1-2
119. Ibid, 2.5
120. Ibid, 4.1-20
121. BU, 2.1.1-20
very thoughtful and intelligent who flourished at a time ‘among the Usūnaras, the Satvat Matsyas, the Kuru-Pānicālas and the Kāsi-Videha’.  

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COMMENTARIES ON THE UPAŅIŚADS

There are many commentaries on the Upaniṣadic texts by various scholars. Among these, most prominently, we can take the name of Sri Śaṅkarācārya, as the earliest available and the best of all, according to the traditional views. Śaṅkarācārya has commented upon twelve Upaniṣads elaborately, including the ten Principal Upaniṣads enumerated by tradition. These Upaniṣads are, Īṣa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍukya, Aitareya, Taittirīya. Chāndogya, Brhadāraṇyaka, ārsimha-pūrvatāpanīya and Śvetāsvatara.

Ānandagiri, has written gloss or tīkā on the commentaries of Śaṅkara on the ten Principal Upaniṣads, leaving out ārsimha-pūrvatāpanīya and Śvetāsvatara. Rāmānuja, the founder of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, though has not written any commentary on the Upaniṣads, has quoted from the Principal Upaniṣads in his writings. Madhvācārya, the founder of Dvaita (dualistic) philosophy has also written elaborate commentaries on the Prasthānatraya, consisting of the Bhagavad-Gītā, the Brahmasūtra and the Upaniṣads. Among the Upaniṣads, he includes the

122. Max Müller, F., SBE, Vol. 1, p. 300
ten Principal Upaniṣads enumerated by tradition. There are also some other explanations available on those Principal Upaniṣads. For example on the Īśa Upaniṣad, we have found the commentaries of Uvaṭācārya, Ānandabhaṭṭopādhyāya, Anantācārya and Brahmananda-sarasvatī.123 (the last one named as Rahasya). Moreover, references are also found about some explanations known as Dipikā or Vyrtti on these works written by the scholars like Śaṅkarāṇanda, Nārāyaṇa and Vidyāraṇya.124 Among these, Śaṅkarāṇanda has commented on Kena, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍukya and Taittirīya. He has elucidated on the Kauṣṭṭhaliya Upaniṣad too125. Rāmatīrtha has commented on the Maitrīya Upaniṣad. Nārāyaṇa’s Dipikā is found on Kena, Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍukya. Again, Vidyāraṇya has written Dipikā on Aitareya and Taittirīya.

Again, coming to the modern ones, we can mention about Nikhilānanda, who has written a commentary according to the standpoint of Advaita philosophy or non-dualism, in English on the eleven Upaniṣads, with the title “The Upaniṣads” in four volumes, following the Śaṅkarabhāṣya. These are the ten traditionally accepted Upaniṣads,

123. Vedānta-darśaner Itihaśa, p. 234
124. Ibid, pp. 234-235
125. Deussen, P., The Philosophy of the Upanishads, p. 29
along with Śvetāsvatara. Rangarāmānuja has also made an unique approach by interpreting the Principal Upaniṣads from the viewpoint of Rāmānuja.

TRANSLATIONS OF THE UPAŅIṢADS

The Upaniṣads are translated by different scholars into many languages. Among them, some important collections have come to our notice, which are worthy to be mentioned. According to Paul Deussen, “These collections or lists fall from the outset into two classes, in so far as they either contain the Upaniṣads in their entirety, or limit themselves to the Upaniṣads of the Atharvaveda.”126 Now, of the earlier format, we find the collections of the Muktika Upaniṣad of 108 Upaniṣads, classified according to the four Vedas which are previously mentioned.

Another collection is found of the Sultān Mohammed Darashikoh, the eldest son of Shah Jehan, which is regarded as an important document among the scholars. In this collection, Upaniṣads are translated from Saṃskrit into Persian, which was the most widely used language at that time, under the title 'Oupnek'hath' in the year 1656-1657. About him, Maxmuller has remarked, “He seems first to have heard of the Upaniṣads during his stay in Kashmir in 1640. He afterwards invited several Pandits from Benaras to Delhi, who were to assist him in the

126. Ibid, p. 33
work of translation. The translation was finished in 1657. After that, Anquetil Duperron translated the Persian version into Latin in 1801-02. It is a general collection of the Upaniṣad texts under twelve divisions, of three older Vedas and twenty-six Upaniṣads of Atharvaveda.

Now, of the later format, mentioned earlier, we have found the collections of Colebrooke and Narayana. Colebrooke has translated nearly fifty-two Upaniṣads into English. Here starting from Munḍaka and Praśna, a collection of 34 pieces of the Atharvaveda is comprised. In this collection are also included a number of later compositions, which then extended up to fifty-two finally.

Narayana also collected exactly 52 Upaniṣads including seven new sectarian texts, viz. – two Gopālatapanīya, Krishna, Vāsudeva with Gopīcandana, Śvetāśvatara and two Varadatapanīya.¹²⁸

Again, in the Bibliotheca Indica, we find the original texts of the Upaniṣads in part with elaborate commentaries. Another publication of great repute is the Ānandāśrama series. Upon these, we find the gloss, written by Ānandajñāna. There are also some other collections of the Upaniṣads. Such as, the Nirṇayāsāgara Publications, comprising 112

¹²⁸. Vide, Deussen, P., The Philosophy of the Upanishads, p. 35
Upaniṣads from Bombay in 1917. Further in total sixty Upaniṣads are translated into German language by Paul Deussen in 1897. Maxmuller has commented upon and translated the twelve oldest into English, in his book ‘Sacred Books of the East’.

S. Radhakrishnan has translated with a lucid and elaborate commentary, the eighteen Upaniṣads including the eleven upon which Śaṅkarācārya’s commentary was found. He also includes Kauśītaki, Maitrī, Subāla, Jābāla, Paṅgala, Kaivalya and Vajrasūcika Upaniṣad.

Again, Swami Vimalananda has interpreted exhaustively the Mahānārāyaṇa in English which is published from Ramakrishna Matha.

**CHĀNDOGYOUPANIṢAD**

_Chāndogyopaniṣad_, one of the Principal and largest Upaniṣads, next to the Brhadāraṇyakopaniṣad, belongs to the Sāmaveda. It consists of the last eight chapters, out of ten of the Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa of Talavakāra Śākhā. It is also the bulkiest of the Upaniṣads, along with the Brhadāraṇyaka and plays a significant role for the collections of profound philosophical thoughts, utterances and also the legends of great

130. Max Müller, F., SBE, Vol. I and XV
importance. It deals with the Saman, which is sung by the Chandogya - chando sāma gāyati iti chāndogaḥ. Chandogyopanisad, firstly, discusses the significances of Udgītha, of which pranava or the holy syllable Aum is also a part and is given prominence. Thus, it leads on, by presenting various allegorical considerations and mystical interpretations of the samans and also through emphasizing on different types of Upāsanās or ritualistic worships in the line of meditation, to the ultimate goal of all the Upaniṣads i.e. the Brahman or Ātman. Here, we find that the last three chapters, viz., sixth, seventh and eighth deal mostly with the doctrine of Brahman or Ātman, the eternal infinite Truth. It is worth mentioning that in the sixth chapter, we find the Upaṣadic grand sentence or utterance, ‘That Thou art’. The meaning of this sentence is that the individual self is non-different from the transcendent Self (Paramātmā). This is called the Mahāvākya because it conveys the message of identity between the individual self and Brahman in its strongest and boldest expression. This finest Upaniṣadic thought which has subsequently become the faith of millions of Indians, is nine-time repeated in the legend of Śvetaketu and Āruṇi, elaborated in the sixth chapter of the Upaniṣad, to stress the idea. The seventh chapter of the Upaniṣad professes the doctrine of Bhūman, also a synonym of Ātman or Brahman through the grand imagination as laid down by the legend of Nārada and Sanatkumāra very scientifically. In
this Upaniṣad, various Brahmavādins and eminent seers of that time, through various interesting legends, explain to their disciples the real nature of their own self as identical with Brahman.

**BRHADĀRANYAKA UPAṆIṢAD**

The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad belongs to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of the White Yajur-veda (Śukla Yajur-veda). The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is divided into fourteen Kāṇḍas or sections. Among these the last one is called Brhadāranyaka. It is the only Āraṇyaka of the Yajurveda. Of this Āraṇyaka, the last six chapters consist of the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad. So this is regarded as an Āraṇyakopaniṣad. Among all the Principal Upaniṣads, it is the largest and the most important one with reference to the philosophical discourse of different scholars. It consists of three Kāṇḍas, namely — Madhu Kāṇḍa, Yajñavalkya Kāṇḍa and lastly, Khilakāṇḍa. Each Kāṇḍa or section contains two chapters each. Hence, the whole Upaniṣad is divided into six chapters which are further subdivided into the parts called Brāhmaṇas.

The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad is available in two rescensions, viz., the Kāṇva and the Mādhyandina. Of which, Śaṅkarācārya commented on the first one, the Kāṇva Śākhā. The Brhadāranyakopaniṣad contains the most elaborate discussions regarding the nature of the Ultimate Spirit or Ātman. In this Upaniṣads, the great sage, Yajñavalkya narrates his profound teachings through dialogues with other sages and with his wife.
This conversational method of teaching helps the reader to rise up to the highest stand-point of the knowledge of the concept of Ātman.

In the Brhadāranyakopanisad, we find different exponents such as Yājñavalkya, Janaka, Ajātaśatru, Gārgi etc. speculating on the philosophical doctrine of Ātman. Among them, Yājñavalkya is the prominent one. Therefore, according to his name, in this Upanisad, we find that one of the three Kāṇḍas or sections is named as Yājñavalkya Kāṇḍa.

The first Kāṇḍa deals with the principal teachings of the one and only Absolute Truth. It shows the identity of the individual and the Supreme Soul. The next one, Yājñavalkya Kāṇḍa is related to the logical and philosophical justifications. The third Kāṇḍa expounds the path to the realisation of the previous teachings through Upāsanā or meditation. Hence, this Kāṇḍa also has a greater spiritual import and value.

SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Upaniṣads are the mystical records of the seers. They are the evidences of the illumined thoughts of age-old vitality. They bear the profound philosophical beliefs which do not belong to any religion or clan, but for the entire human-race. They show the way to liberation or Mokṣa, the highest goal of human-life. All the queries of human heart regarding pains and sufferings, and temporary enjoyments of life find a path of
solution in these texts. They are the invocations of peace, nay, an eternal peace, through the knowledge of the Supreme Reality i.e., Brahman. By the knowledge of Brahman, one can get the Ultimate Release or Mokṣa.

The Upaniṣads contain many legends through which they have disclosed their concepts of Supreme Reality and other topics. In the legends of the Upaniṣads, different ways are adopted, such as questioning and answering sessions; various debates, discussions etc. which are full of logical speculations, to show the hidden significances of their innermost thoughts. There are so many legends in the Upaniṣads which state in their unique style the mysterious concept of Brahman and also others. Here, it is noticed that the main philosophical theories are often narrated through these legends. Moreover, different informations regarding educational, social, historical etc. are also found in them. As we know legends are generally attached with historical backgrounds. They are about living personalities, situations; though in some cases, they are also related to some popular beliefs. Hence, from a thorough study of these legends, we can collect the most valuable data of that age. A detailed study of these legends of the Upaniṣads will be useful and beneficial for the entire society.

There is also ample scope for this study. Because it is found that a proper and elaborate study of these legends have not been done till date.
It is true that many scholars – both Eastern and Western have taken up the philosophical concepts of the Upaniṣads for study. Some scholars have also dealt with the educational and social aspects of these works. But no such attempt has been made to study the legends of the Upaniṣads from their proper perspectives. Hence, a need is felt to study extensively these legends in order to show their significance in the field of philosophical speculations. The easy and lucid narratives of the legends require proper investigation.

However, there are many legends in the Upaniṣads, it is difficult to discuss all these legends in one dissertation which must contain a limited number of pages. Hence, the stress is given mainly on the legends of the Chandogyopaniṣad and the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. We have also discussed some other legends of great profundity which includes the Kena, the Katha, the Praśna and the Taittiriya Upaniṣads.

Again it should be mentioned that in the present write-up, those ten Principal Upaniṣads, are treated as the main treatises, which are traditionally selected. These Upaniṣads are also unanimously regarded as authoritative among the different scholars.