CHAPTER - V

Conclusion

The foregoing study of the Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad in the light of the commentaries of Śaṅkara and Madhva reveals that the Upaniṣad comprises of the mantras facilitating the postulation of the doctrines of both Advaita and Dvaita systems. As has been brought out, the Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad holds a special fascination for all students of philosophy, as it is a happy blend of charming poetry, deep mysticism and profound philosophy, in the frame of interesting dialogue between god Yama, the preceptor and young Nāciketa the disciple. In order to show the valuable merits of Upaniṣad in the light of the interpretations of both Śaṅkara and Madhva, the story of the Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad runs through the following chapters.

With a view to understanding the nature, scope and importance of the Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad, the first chapter unveils in brief, the features of the important facets of the Vedānta such as Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahmasūtras. In order to show the relationship between the Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad and Vedas, major Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahmasūtras, similar passages from respective texts are enlisted here.

Further, the first chapter entitled as “Introduction to Upaniṣads” carries its subject-matter through different heads such as - (1) Upaniṣadic philosophy in general, (2) Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad in Vedic literature, which covers the four Vedas, Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad, the Bhagavadgītā, the Brahmasūtras, (3) A Brief outline of the major Upaniṣads. The subject-matter under these sections traces a wide and a deep influence of the Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad on the entire Vedic literature.
The second chapter dealing with the salient features of the systems of Advaita and Dvaita schools, runs into two sub-divisions each of which is dedicated to explain the doctrines of respective systems. As is well known, the Advaita philosophy advocated by Śaṅkara, has the main theme of \( \text{brahma ca sarvam na pratimāna} \). The enumeration of this single line-theme follows under many sub-topics which are grouped into two, such as: (1) Epistemology of Advaita and (2) Its metaphysics. Śaṅkara's Advaita admits six means of knowledge such as: \text{Pratyakṣa, Anumāṇa, Upamāṇa, Śabda, Arthāpatti,} and \text{Anupalabdhi.} In order to give the picture of the phenomenal world of experience, the topics that are dealt with, are: nature of \text{Ajñāna}, power of \text{Ajñāna}, order of world-creation, world appearance as illusory. Similarly, the aspect of Brahman, its names and forms are also explained. With a view to showing Brahman's nature of oneness with the soul, the nature of individual soul, transmigration of the soul, are also explicated. Further, the theory of \text{karma} and \text{jñāna} have been briefly dealt with to pinpoint the path way to the realisation. Lastly, the nature of liberation is explicated as well.

So also, Madhva's philosophy has the basis of nine doctrines such as, Lord Viśṇu is the Supreme Brahman, the universe is truly real, the five-fold difference is fundamental, jīvas are dependent on the Lord, the embodied souls are inherently graded as higher and lower, liberation is enjoying the bliss befitting to one's original form, the means to secure liberation is pure devotion to Lord Viśṇu, the means of valid knowledge are only three, viz., perception, inference and verbal testimony, Lord Viśṇu alone is known by the entire mass of scriptures. These points are elaborated in due manner.

The third chapter abounds in three sections. The first section gives a rendering of the mantras of the \text{Kāthaka Upaniṣad} without being biased to any system of Vedānta. This part of rendering provides a general understanding of the entire \text{Upaniṣad.}
The second section provides original commentary of Śaṅkara on the Upaniṣad; and simultaneously the translation thereof is given in a simple language. The third section offers Madhva’s original commentary on the Upaniṣad; and English translation thereof is also given. The translations of the commentaries of both Śaṅkara and Madhva given here, serve the purpose of easy understanding of the Upaniṣad readily in the light of respective commentaries.

The fourth chapter is an important section of the thesis as it deals with a comparative and critical evaluation of the commentaries of Śaṅkara and Madhva on the Kāthaka Upaniṣad. The Upaniṣad opens its subject-matter introducing in simple language, the performance of the Viṣvajit-sacrifice which in question demands the giving away of all possessions as gifts. Vājaśravas is a performer of sacrifice and Naciketa is his son. As Vājaśravas is giving away as gifts the useless cows, Naciketa starts watching its proceedings intently. Being fortified with an accession of śraddhā, Naciketa thinks within himself about Vājaśravas’ proceedings of the sacrifice. Being a truthful son, he cannot reconcile himself to it. Naciketa reminds his father suggestively that he, as his son is also meant to be given away, and he wants to know to whom his father proposed to give him. When the same question is asked by him for third time, his father loses his temper and explodes in anger “Unto Death I give you.”

Naciketa is found as lover of the Truth; Therefore, hearing the angry words from his father, he is not perturbed. The mind and heart of Naciketa have become fearless due to his deep love of Truth. Even god Yama holds no terror for Naciketa when he enters the former’s realm. Thus, Naciketa is a shining example for human society, ancient or modern. Yama keenly feels a sense of guilt of being outside for three nights, and decides to make amends by offering him three boons.
The first boon asked by Naciketa is in favour of his father. Such a loving consideration of Naciketa for the well-being of his parents may be remarked as hall-mark of an expansion of one's own individuality. The young lad Naciketa in this context, pinpoints a cardinal truth of achieving the acme of perfection.\footnote{1}{Supra - Chapter IV p. 271}

Then, Naciketa formulates his second boon for securing the heaven through the knowledge of sacrificial fire. Readily granting his boon, Yama explains to him the nature of sacrificial fire, which is the source of the world. And Naciketa on his part, repeats everything as told. Yama is wonderstruck by the sharp intelligence and memory of Naciketa. In return, being pleased as this, Yama proclaims its estimate of the fruit of sacrifice by naming it as \textit{Nāciketa-sacrifice}. In this context, Śaṅkara means ‘\textit{Svargaloka}’ as the famous heaven. But, on the basis of the subject-matter dealt with in the \textit{Upakrama} and \textit{Upasamhāra}, it is shown that \textit{svargaloka} does not mean here as famous heaven but \textit{Mokṣa} itself.\footnote{2}{Supra - Ibid., p. 273}

Being called upon by Yama, the brahmin-guest Naciketa selects the third boon that stands at the cross-roads of human thought and destiny. Naciketa at this stage wills to investigate precisely the mysterious internal nature of man with its faculty to transcend himself and perceive himself in the act of direct vision. Naciketa’s question relating to this tremendous theme however is to Yama like the bursting of a bombshell. How could he dare to impart this truth to a mere stripling? But Yama is bound by his promise to grant whatever the boon Naciketa seeks. In order to test Naciketa’s heart, Yama offers him attractive temptations. But, Naciketa stands firm. Yama is impressed with his plain speaking and admires his single-minded devotion to know the nature of the Highest Truth. Naciketa rejects sense-pleasures, firstly because they are...
transient and secondly because indulgence in them beyond a certain 
measure destroys the vigour of the sense-organs and arrests the onward 
march of the soul to the self-fulfilment. This is the universal truth; and this 
truth is well honoured by both the commentaries, Śaṅkara and Madhva.

Yama is highly pleased with Naciketa; he finds in him a fit student 
of Ātmāvidyā. Therefore, he begins his exposition with a pointed 
reference to śreyas and preyas as the ethical pre-condition to spiritual 
striving and realization. Yama’s exposition of preyas shows that the 
unbridle pursuit of sensate satisfactions is not the way to the realization 
of one’s spiritual nature. On the other hand, the path of śreyas which has 
two levels - the good life (dharma) and the divine immortal life (amṛta) 
leads to the realization of the Supreme Brahman. There lies no difference 
in the opinions of Śaṅkara and Madhva in bringing out the import of 
śreyas and preyas. In the same spirit, Yama further contrasts Vidyā, with 
Avidyā which are indentified with śreyas and preyas respectively.

After giving an exposition on the Vedantic concept of education the 
fourth chapter of the thesis explicates the nature of the Supreme 
Brahman which is well defined in the following mantra:

\[
\text{जानाम्यहं शेवधिशिवविनितं}
\text{न न अधुवेत्र। प्राप्ते हि धुवेतं तत्।} \quad \text{(1.2.20)}
\]

Śaṅkara’s commentary on this mantra is not very technical, 
whereas, Madhva understands each term of this mantra in its 
metaphysical application. To illustrate, the word अनित्यम् speaks 
Brahman’s being ever eternal.

More often, Madhva’s interpretation becomes more practical. This 
can be very well witnessed from the forgoing explanation of the mantra:

Though Śaṅkara and Madhva interpret the words like दुर्भाष्यम्, गृहमनुष्मिष्म् etc. with metaphysical touch, the difference lies in the purport thereof.

At times, Śaṅkara shows difference between Saguna Brahman and Nirguna Brahman; while Madhva regards them as the one whole. This Madhva's idea of unification of two into the single whole is quite extraordinary. This is adjudicated in showing the meaning of the mantra एनान्तवेवा�.rar Brahman. Thus, the Upaniṣad reads a number of adjectives declaring the nature and glory of the Supreme Brahman.

The Upaniṣadic text in the light of Śaṅkara's interpretation negates manifoldness of the phenomenal world, and affirms that Brahman alone is the only real entity. The same text in the light of Madhva's interpretation, however negates difference between various forms of the Supreme Brahman, and His attributes, His actions etc. He is all independent and inheres within Himself no difference. Thus Madhva upholds the view that Brahman is svagatabheda - varjita.

Further the fourth chapter systematically putforth the relation between jiva and Brahman. In the mantra भजं विष्णस्तो सुकुलस्य लोके - (1.3.1), the terms विष्णस्तो and प्रविष्टो speak of two forms of the same entity i.e., the Supreme Brahman, which are called Ātmā and Antarātmā. This is what Śaṅkara says. So too, Madhva here shows two forms of Lord Viṣṇu; but Antarātmā form of Brahman dwells in Vāyu, the best of all souls, and Ātmā form is the Supreme Brahman Himself.

4. Supra Ibid., p. 289
5. Supra Ibid., p. 291
6. Supra Ibid., p. 292
7. Supra Ibid., p. 332
8. Supra Ibid., p. 320
The immortal metaphor of chariot in the *Upaniṣad* (1.3.3) focuses much elevated metaphysical value. Śaṅkara's interpretation of this parable is quite phenomenal, while Madhva's is philosophical. In this manner the relation between jiva and Brahman has been regarded in accordance with their own philosophical doctrines.

Towards the end of the fourth chapter, the means of attaining liberation, the *jīvanmukti* concept and other allied details have been given as *Upaniṣad* records. In such context too, lively differences between Śaṅkara and Madhva are particularized. Although both the interpretations are self-sufficient to understand the *Upaniṣad* in the light of the respective opinions, Śaṅkara’s lucid commentary is found to be more prejudiced than that of Madhva to the *Upaniṣad*.

In a nutshell, it is that Naciketa does not come to philosophy with just an intellectual curiosity. As has been seen in the beginning of the *Upaniṣad*, Naciketa has forceful urge to realise the truth about human life and destiny. Accordingly he receives the same from his preceptor, and its entire technical aspects. With the help of the knowledge that he obtained, Naciketa realizes the true nature of the Supreme Brahman, becomes pure, spotless, immortal, and joins the unbroken procession of eternal children of the spirit. Thus, declares the *Upaniṣad* -

\[
\text{महामायो विरजोऽभूतःधृतंतु }
\text{रत्नोऽवेदं यो विद्यालाम्बनं} \parallel (2.3.18)
\]