Chapter - III

CONCEPTION OF SOUL - ITS ORIGIN
AND DEVELOPMENT
Chapter - III

CONCEPTION OF SOUL - ITS ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

III. 1. INTRODUCTION

From the very dawn of the mankind man wondered at the mysterious functions of the natural phenomena of the universe. It was amazing to him how the sun rose in one direction and set in the opposite direction. He wondered to see why the moon appeared at night unlike the sun. Why so many stars in the sky and what they might have been. He wondered at the mighty powers of lightning, thunder, storm, rivers etc. He was amazed to see the peculiar worlds of animals, of birds, of plants, and so on. As a result, as the time passed on, so many what, why, whence, whither, hows appeared to his mind which made him constantly thinking and thinking. But he could not get any satisfactory answer to his queries. As he had no clear conception of the natural forces, he was bound to submit to them blindly and to worship them as gods out of fear and cupid love. But at the same time he was not sitting idle. While going to solve the mysteries of the universe, he looked at himself and wondered to see how he came into being. Wherefrom he has come? Where will he go? What is his beginning and what is his end? Will he be born again after death or this is the first and last birth? Actually, who is he? Who is taking birth and
who is going to die? Is there any creator? If there is a creator, who is he? - Thus thinking and thinking man passed many centuries. Ultimately he speculated the conception of a Creator-God, the Supreme Brahman. He speculated the idea of Soul (=Ātman), a permanent Entity, which is the principle of thought and action in man. This is the Soul which thinks, wills and feels. This Soul is the permanent Entity which maintains transmigrations. Gradually various theories developed, such as the existence of Soul as a substance independent of the body, its immateriality and immortality, and so on.

In India speculations regarding Soul started from the Vedic period and they took a final shape in the Upanishads which ever since remained fundamental in Indian thought. Of course, from the time of Buddha a parallel current of thought came into being that there is no permanent entity like Soul. In the evolution of Indian philosophy these two parallel traditions, i.e. Ātman-doctrine and the Anātman-doctrine, run side by side never coming into compromise; but it was a boon in disguise we should say that they gave birth to a vast treasure of Indian Philosophical Literature for which India occupied the pre-eminent place in the history of world civilization.

III.2. DERIVATIVE MEANING

The Indian term corresponding to Soul is Ātman (=Pali Attā), the derivative meaning of which is uncertain. It has been variously
derived from \( \sqrt{\text{an}} \), to breathe; \( \sqrt{\text{at}} \), to move; \( \sqrt{\text{va}} \), to blow. So the meanings of the word \( \text{Atman} \) derived are: the breath, the soul, the principle of life and sensation, the individual soul, self, abstract individual, oneself, and the like. As the derivative meanings of the word \( \text{ATMAN} \) are misleading, we will prefer to use the word in the original i.e. \( \text{ATMAN} \) in the present context, instead of Soul or Self etc.

### III.3. CONCEPTION OF \( \text{ATMAN} \) IN THE VEDIC PERIOD

In the Vedas especially in the \( \text{Rg-Veda} \), we find the cosmological concept of \( \text{Atman} \). In the \( \text{Rg-Veda} \) the visible sun, whose diameter is 10 fingers, was conceived as the \( \text{Atman} (=\text{Puruśa}) \) of the universe and the principle of all that is and of all that is to be. Far greater than \( \text{Puruśa} \), the visible sun, was \( \text{Puruśa} \) the 'Original Sun' which was the first cause of the universe, nay, the universe itself. It is from this Original Sun that the visible sun, the moon, the earth, water, fire, air, the mid-air, the sky, the regions, the seasons, the creatures of the air, all animals, all classes of beings (including human) had originated.\(^1\)

Behind the origin of the Invisible Original Sun there developed a conception of Prajāpati, the God of gods, who brought forth \( \text{WATER} \) which contained \( \text{FIRE} \). This \( \text{FIRE} \) was the Golden Germ - the cause of the universe.\(^2\) This Sun is the lord of all beings, the lord of the bipeds and the quadrupeds. He is the giver of vital spirit, power and vigour. It is he who fixed and holds up the heaven
and the earth. At last this idea took a final shape in the abstract or metaphysical conception of God. Viśvakarman, the Rg-Vedic Seer, comes to the conclusion that he is the sole God who created and ordained this universe. God is one and only one (eka eva). He is the unborn one (=aja) in whom all the existing things abide. He is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and One. He is invisible due to this delusive universe appearing before our eyes.

The above doctrine of Viśvakarman is of immense historical importance as in it we find the basic ideas of the Vedānta in the making. Moreover in it we find two distinct conceptions - one is logical and the other is ontological. In the first, God conceived as the first cause of the universe is logically distinguishable from the conception of the universe; and in the second, God, viewed as identical in substance with the universe, is the universe.

III.4. CONCEPTION IN THE LATER VEDIC PERIOD

In the later Vedic period we find a further development in the conception regarding God, the Supreme Soul, and man. There is a transition from cosmological to physico-psychological speculations. The later Vedic seers like Mahīdāsa conceives the idea of two ultimate knots while determining the length of the whole change of the universe - from its origin to the end. These two ultimate knots are represented by Prajāpati and Brahman in the case of the universe, and by Prāṇa and Prajñā in the case of man. But in the truest sense of the term what we call metaphorically two
knots are really two aspects of one and the same first and last knot; i.e. of the Divine. Thus God as Prajāpati is the efficient cause, the first unmoved mover; but he is again just Brahman, the final cause or end, the very perfection on which all turn their thoughts, after which all things strive. (5) Again, in one aspect, God is Prāṇa, spirit or the living principle of the universe, the pure vital energy and activity. In the other aspect, God is Prajnā, the pure intelligence, the eternally active self-conscious reason (=prajñāna). The whole realm of change is led by Brahman, the self-conscious reason (=prajñā-netra). (6)

From the above it seems that Mahidāsa conceived Soul as the complement of a living body which comes directly from the Divine and through which we can approach the Divine. Again, in its essence Soul is just the vital principle (=prāṇa) in virtue of which we can discharge our functions as living beings. In the Soul there is the function of reason (=prajñāna). The faculty by which we see form, hear sound, perceive odours, utter speech, taste food, and all that which comes from the heart and the mind, namely, apperception, comprehension, understanding, cognition, intellect, insight, retention, judgment, reflection, receptivity, memory, conceiving, willing, breathing, loving, desiring - all bear in varying degrees the name of Reason -

"ko'yam ātmeti vayam upāasmahe katarah sa ātmā yena vā paśyati, yena vā śrṇoti, yena vā gandhān ājighrati, yena vā vācaṁ vyākaroti,
yena vā svādu cāsvādu ca vijānīti. Yad etad hṛdayaṁ manas 
caitat. Saṁśjnānam ajñānam vijñānam prajñānam medhā 
dṛśīr 
dṛśīr matir manāśā jūtiḥ smṛtiḥ saṁkalpaḥ kratur asuḥ kāmo 
vaśa iti sarvāṁ evaitāṁ prajñānasya nāmadheyaṁi bhavanti”(7) 

The major difference between the Vedic and the Post-Vedic thinkers lies in the fact that the former devoted solely on the problem of the creator, the Supreme Soul, while the latter on the created, the individual Soul, as well as its relation with the Supreme Soul. In reality, however, to the Post-Vedic thinkers the problems are not quite different. Rather they are two aspects of one and the same problem. Thus the two questions - "Who is he"? and "Who am I"? are capable of being answered briefly by "I am he" = "Soḥham". They have got the solution of the problem - "Who am I?" in the following order :-

a) I am an individual being, as all the animals of the earth and all the creatures of the air are. All organic beings and all inorganic beings are formed from Puruṣa - the Sun or solar substance.

b) I am annamaya (=composed of nutritive elements), a man in the process of formation, that is to say, a seed or sperm, composed of food or five elements, produced from the essence of food digested by the father, communicated to the mother and established in the womb.

c) I am prāṇamaya (=a body imbued with life), a living body, a
body imbued with life, composed of food or elements, nourished by food, reduced at death to a corpse dissolved into the elements.

d) I am manomaya, a psychological man, a conscious individual, who can perceive through the senses, who dreams, imagines, thinks, feels, wills, and who perceives duality and plurality among things, perpetual and conceptual.

e) I am viññānamaya, a metaphysical man, a thought-free but conscious man, a thinker who realises the unity of cause in the variety of appearance.

f) Lastly, I am ānandamaya, spiritual or religious-ethical man, a blessed Ātman, united with the Divine.\(^{(8)}\) (Taittirīyopanishad, II.2-5; III.2-10).

So, to the question "Who am I?" the answers are given in the ascending order i.e. there are stages of transition: firstly, from the physical world to the organic; secondly, from the organic world to embryonic man; thirdly, from embryonic to physiological man; fourthly, from physiological to psychological man; fifthly, from psychological to metaphysical man, and lastly, from metaphysical to religious-ethical man.

Thus, the conception of Ātman, both Supreme Ātman and the individual Ātman, took a considerable shape in the post-Vedic period. There were speculations, therefore, that the Ātman can be traced from the notion of a small entity residing in the heart having the size of a thumb (=āṅgustha)\(^{(9)}\) to that of the universal reality
of all things. So, in a sense, the Atman is more minute than the minute, and again it is greater than the great. The whole universe is pervaded by Atman. It is in everything, in every living substance as a razor put into a razor case, or as fire in aragi wood. But the Atman is beyond the apprehension of the senses. The senses can represent Atman only in parts or fragments. For instance, when Atman breathes, we call it breath (=Prana); when it speaks, we call it speech (=Vak); when it sees, we call it sight (=Cakshu); when it hears, we call it hearing (=Srotra); and when it thinks, we call it thought (=Manas). But one cannot have the clear idea of Atman if one conceives one or other of these alone (=ekaikam) or one by one. For Prana, Vak, Cakshu, Srotra and Manas - all these represent only the names of one or other functions of the Atman (asya etani karmanamany eva) - all bear in varying degrees the name of one and the same act of reasoning. The Atman acts always as a whole; as a whole it breathes, as a whole it speaks, as a whole it sees, as a whole it hears, as a whole it thinks. Thus all the functions of the Atman find unity in it.

III.5. CONCEPTION IN THE UPAISHADS

In the Upanishad the speculations regarding Atman as a permanent Entity took a final shape. The Post-Vedic seers described the five-fold manifestations of Atman, namely, Prana, Vak, Cakshu, Srotra and Manas, the Prana, the vital principle, was regarded as the best of the five. Firstly because, the working of the systems in
a living body depends ultimately on the vital breath. Each system exercises its own function independently, no doubt, in harmony and co-operation with other systems, but the unity of the whole organism is maintained by the vital breath. Secondly because, the functions of the body, such as eating, digestion, excretion, circulation, and the like, stand in need of the help of vital breath. Thirdly because, when vital breath departs all other members like Vāk, Cakṣhu, Śrotā etc. are bound to leave the body, as bees are bound to leave the hive when their queen leaves it.

But still the problem remained unsolved. There had been queries after queries as regards Prāṇa, the vital principle. In the Prāṇopaniṣad, Āśvalāyana asks: From what Prāṇa itself is born? How does it come into body? Where does it dwell in a fully developed and fully active body? Into how many systems are functions of Prāṇa divided? How does the Prāṇa leave the body? How again does it bind itself to external objects? And how does it maintain its inner essence or subjective elements? (12)

The answers to all the above queries of Āśvalāyana came from the Rshi Pippalāda as follows:

"The spirit, solar self or principle of life (=prāṇa) is generated from the psyche, Ātman, that is to say, from itself, from its inner essence. From its inherent desire to be that the Ātman comes into body. The Ātman dwells in the heart from which extend 101 arteries and nerves towards different parts of the body. In each
of these, there are a hundred branches, and for each of these branches, there are 72,000 capillaries and nerve-fibres. It is through all these channels that the supreme ruler (i.e. Ātman) sends forth his command to his officials (i.e. different systems in the body) who are stationed in various centres of activity, and who are doing special works for the healthy upkeep of the kingdom of Ātman.\(^{(13)}\)

The Ātman leaves the body by death. Both at the time of death and at the time of rebirth, the sense-faculties become or remain absorbed in mind. By death the Ātman departs free from sense-apprehension and representative cognition, and proceeds towards a world - good, bad or mixed - heavenly, infernal or human - as willed before death.\(^{(14)}\)

In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhat, the conception of Ātman, the Brahman, has been expressed very explicitly as follows.

"Sa va ayam Ātma Brahma viṣṇumayō manomayaḥ prāṇamayōms cakshurmayaḥ śrotramayaḥ prthivīmaya ṛṣipayōmaya vāyumaya ēkašamayōm tejomayaṭeṣamayaḥ kāmamayo kāmamayō krodhamayo krodhamayo dharmamayo dharmamayo sarvamayōm tad yad etad idaṁ ṛṣipayōmaya iti yathākārī yathākārī tathā bhavati - śādhumaya śādhrumaya pāpakārī pāpī bhavati, punyah punyāna karmanā bhavati pāpakārī pāpī pāpena.\(^{(15)}\) - That this Ātma, Brahman, consists of activities of understanding, of thought, of the senses, of the eyes, of the ears, of the Earth, of Water, of Air, of Ether, of Fire ... etc.etc. This shows that there is nothing in
the universe which is not pervaded by Ātman or Brahma, the eternal, the absolute. The creator and the created both are one and the same. It is Brahma and Brahma is the Ātman supreme. In the Chāndogya-panishat, there is an illustrative episode how Rishi Uddālaka Āruni taught his son Śvetaketu this teaching. When Śvetaketu came back home after studying Vedas for twelve years, he was thinking himself very learned and proud. Uddālaka, his father, removed his son's conceit teaching him the Great Utterance "Tat tvam asi"—"Thou art that". Uddālaka made his son take some salt and put the same into the water, and next day he asked for the salt back again, and the son said that he could not find it. Then the father said: "Taste from the top of the water"; and the son said: "It is saltish". The father said: "Taste from the middle of the water" and the son said: "It is saltish". Again the father said: "Taste from the bottom of the water"; and the son said: "It is saltish". Then the father told his son that as the salt which could not be seen yet pervaded all water, so it was with Brahma, the Universal Ātman. All-pervading, omnipresent, eternal, the root, the life, the essence, the substance of all, one and indivisible in substance, separate in the manifested sheaths that Ātman is going of Its own substance to evolve; whatever is, exists and lives by It, the Ātman of the universe, THAT from which everything proceeds. Thus Uddālaka taught his son that the salt was everywhere in the water though it had disappeared from sight; in like manner
the universe is pervaded by THAT, the One, Brahman, who is not visible. And at last Uddālaka spake the words:

"That which is the most minute, this universe has it as its Ātman. THAT thou art, O Śvetaketu—

"tat tvam asi" (16)

So, there lies the bridge. Ātman and Brahman are one. It is said that in the heart of men there is a cavity, and there is Brahman to be found hidden, the Ātman of man, the Ātman of the universe. It is one and the same everywhere, in the great and in the small. There is no difference, there is no separation; there is one undying and ancient Ātman, and that Ātman is the same Ātman in everybody. There may be difference in condition, in manifestation, but the essence and the nature is one and the same; and therefore, it is written in the Chāndogyopanishat that Ātman is the bridge. Crossing that bridge the blind no longer are blind, the wounded no longer are wounded, the sorrowful no longer are sorrowful. Therefore crossing that bridge, nights verily become as days. Eternally radiant is that place of Brahman. (17)

The Mundakopanishat also teaches the same doctrine where also we find: "Know that Ātman alone; cease from other words; THAT is the bridge to immortality" (18) In the same line of thought the Kathopanishat (19) also said:

"Eko vaśi sarvabhūtāntarātmā ekaṁ rūpaṁ bahudhā yaḥ karoti/ tam ātmaṁ yevaṁ yunāpyanti dhīrās teṣāṁ sukhaṁ śāśvataṁ n'etaresāṁ".
"The one controller, the inner Ātman of all beings,
Who makes his one form to be manifold,
The wise who perceive him abiding in the Ātman,
To them is eternal happiness, not to others".

The Ātman cannot be seen by means of perception, say for example, with the eyes, with the mind, with the speech, and the like. It cannot be attained by scriptural instructions, nor it can be apprehended by the intellect.\(^{(20)}\)

It is not to be reasoned about, because it is inconceivable, being subtler than the subtle.\(^{(21)}\) ("atarkyo'cintya esa ākāśātma evaiṣa krṣṭnakṣhaya eko jāgarti" - Maittā. Up.VI. 17). The Ātman which is hidden within all things does not shine forth. So it can be attained by a person of sharp intellect, by a person who is pure both bodily and mentally, with the help of sharp and pure knowledge, with the help of Yoga-practices, right knowledge and celibacy.\(^{(22)}\)

### III.6. THE SHEATHS OF THE ĀTMAN

The Ātman consists of five sheaths (=koshas), viz. annamaya-kosha, prāṇamaya-kosha, manomaya-kosha, vijñānamaya-kosha and ānandamaya-kosha. The gross body is the annamaya-kosha of the Ātman, while the subtle body contains the prāṇamaya-kosha, the manomaya-kosha and the vijñānamaya-kosha of the Ātman. The causal body, constituted of avidyā (=nescience), is the ānandamaya-kosha of the Ātman. The pure Ātman when falsely identified with these Koshas appears to be actually pervaded by them. So the pure Ātman
should be carefully discriminated from the five Kośhas. Here an attempt has been made to give a clear idea of these five Kośhas of the Ātman so that the readers may have a better idea as regards the functions of the Ātman.

A. Annamaya-Kośha or the Food-sheath - The sheath of food is the body that we use, the body that we wear, a thing that we use for certain purposes. There is a double activity in this Kośha of ours that we call our body. Firstly, there is the activity of the atoms and molecules and the cells of the body. This is not our activity but theirs. Not our activity, but the activity of the Ātman in the atoms and in the molecules and in the cells of the body. Haeckel, the great German Materialist, finds in the separate cells of the body a cell-activity which is not the activity of the body as a whole. He finds that the separate cells of the body exercise particular functions of their own, without regard to the general actions of the body. They select, they choose, they accept, they reject, each cell according to its own impulse, each cell according to its own work. But there is this strange peculiarity that the so-to-speak independent action of the cell is limited to its own narrow interest and sometimes it will act against the general welfare of the body of which it forms a part. For example, suppose there is a cut, a wound in some part of the body. What will the cells do? They will set to work at once; without any thought of our brain, without any consciousness of ours, without any direc-
ting force of our intelligence, they will bring to the place of wound
the new supplies that are wanted for the filling up of the hole
in the body that has been left. They will build and build and build.
They will build beyond the point that is necessary and make a
scar which we cannot get rid of. In the language of the physio-
logists it is the unconscious memory of the cell that makes the
building go on, following out their individual activity of the law
of their own nature. This activity of the cells is the activity of
the Ātman in the matter of the body. This activity in the cells
is the Ātman working in the atoms, working in the molecules,
working in the cells. That is the place of Ātman as regards these
individual cells of the body; not working in the sheath as a whole
but in every constituent part; for Brahman is omnipresent, all-
pervading, as the salt in water, and can be absent from no spot
in space.

B. Prāṇamaya-Kośa or the Life-sheath - It is the outgoing energy
of Ātman. It is the sheath of activity, not of knowledge, the sheath
which is to actively gather everything, and hand it on to the recep-
tacle which lies within. It co-ordinates all the separated cells
of the body and makes them into one complex and orderly whole.
This is the function of this prāṇic sheath. It works in the subtle
matter, in what we sometimes call an astral body. But this should
not be confused with the Śūkṣma-śāṭra or Liṅga-śāṭra of the
Hindu books. It is rather the astral body, the lower astral, an
essential part of the Sthūlopādi. We are told in the Kaushīvatī-
upanishat that speech, sight, hearing and everything else are dependent
on Prāṇa in the body. Sight is not the eye; hearing is not the ear;
taste is not the tongue; smell is not the nose; touch is not the skin.
It is the Prāṇa in every case which gives the sense-activity to the
organs, and which is the transmitter of the outer vibration to the
sense-centres which lie in the Manomayakośa. But Prāṇa is not
the knower, i.e. it is a sheath for action only, not for thought.

Prāṇa divides itself into five Prāṇas, viz. (1) Prāṇa (the up-breathing
or respiratory system), (2) Apana (the down-breathing or alimentary
system), (3) Samāna (the back-breathing or metabolism), (4) Udana
(the out-breathing or special senses) and (5) Vyāna (the on-breathing
or circulatory system).

From Ātma this Prāṇa is born (ātmana eṣa prāṇo jāyate). Ātman
in itself cannot work. It is Sat, quiescent, immovable, unchangeable.
It works through Prāṇa. Therefore it is said that from Ātman this
Prāṇa is born.

Prāṇic activity can be compared with electric currents. We find
electric currents in every part of the body where any functional
activity is being carried on. Take, for example, our brain. Whenever
there is thought, electric currents are running through it, and if
we test the brain, the instrument answers to the current and we
find the same all over the body, in the contracting muscle and so
on. And we know that without ether (=ākāśa) the electricity cannot
manifest. Similarly without Ākāśa (=ether) Prāṇa cannot manifest, cannot show itself. Thus Prāṇa is the organiser and controller of the annamaya-kosha of man, holding together the complicated aggregation. Not only that Prāṇa is a bridge between all the sheaths of man. It is the great transmitter, transmitting outwards the moving energy, gathering and transmitting inwards all the contacts from the outer universe. In short, the Prāṇamaya-kosha gathers from the outermost and carries inwards to the innermost. At the same time it transmits the moving energy outwards. According to the Kauḍītaki-Upanishat, when death comes, Prāṇa gathers everything together, and withdrawing from the body hands over everything to the KNOWER, the receptacle of all.(25)

C. Manomaya-Kosha or the Mind-sheath - The Manomaya-kosha has got double function. In truth, it is the organ of thinking, but at the same time it is pervaded by the senses. The receipt from without and the elaboration1 from within - this double function is going on in this sheath always. The Manomaya-kosha collects all the sensations transmitted by the Prāṇanamaya-kosha and turns them into percepts, that is, the connection between the outer object and the internal sensation. It then elaborates the percepts into concepts, that is, changes the recognition of the connection into the ideal form which is capable of preservation and is the material for all possibility of future thought. And this is in truth the process of thinking.
So, the main function of the Manomaya-kosha is to receive from without and elaborate them from within. It is just like the crucible of the chemist into which he throws different materials and a new combination comes out - not new in its essential elements, but new in its combined existence. Just as there is a difference between the threads of cotton separate and the cloth into which those threads of cotton are woven, so there is a difference between the separated sensation and the elaborated ideas woven out of them by the Mind.

D. Vijnanamaya-Kosha or discriminating sheath - It is the sheath of the Atman by which the lower sheaths are to be mastered. Into this sheath experiences are reflected from the Manomaya-kosha as ideal concepts; into it is reflected everything which in the Manomaya-kosha is collected. So, the Manomaya-kosha is the collector and elaborator, while the Vijnanamaya-kosha is going to arrange and to discriminate, to have the whole of this elaborated collection as material to work on, the whole of this as material by which is going to gain higher consciousness and a more perfect cognition of the individual Atman. So, the special work in this sheath is the work of abstract reasoning, dealing with pure ideas, separated from the concrete presentations, the realm of truth, no longer so illusory as the other. For here we have the abstract and not the concrete, the pure internal working no longer confused by the senses, nor in any way interfered with by the outer world; there is pure intelligence, clear vision, intelligence unmoved by the senses, intelligence
tranquil, strong and serene.

E. Ānandamaya-Koṣha or the sheath of bliss - It is said that the 
Ātman clad in the ānandamaya-koṣha begins to come face to face 
with Itselt which is Brahman. Here, in this stage it seems well-nigh 
as though the Knower and the Known were one. In the words of 
the Mundakopanishat:

"Yaḥ sarvajñāḥ sarvavid yasyaiṣa mahimā bhuvi/
Divye Brahma-pure hy esa vyomny ātmā pratiṣṭhitāḥ/
Manomayaḥ prāṇa-sārīra-netā pratiṣṭhito' nne hṛdayāṁ saṁnī-
dhāya/
Tad vijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ ānandarūpam amṛtaṁ yad vibhāti"(26)

- He, all-wise, all-knowing, glorious in the world, in the divine city 
of Brahman, placed in the ether, standeth Ātman; of the nature 
of mind, ruler of Prāṇa, of the body, of food. Concentrated in the 
heart, by the knowledge of THAT, the wise behold the Radiant, 
whose body is bliss, immortal.

There are moments, supreme and rare moments, that come to the 
life of the pure and the spiritual, when every sheath is still and 
harmonious, when the senses are tranquil, quiet, insensitive, when 
the mind is serene, calm and unchanging; when fixed in meditation 
the whole being is steady and nothing that is without may avail 
to disturb; when love has permeated every fibre; when devotion 
has illuminated, so that the whole nature is translucent; there is 
a Silence, and in the silence there is a sudden change; no words 
may tell it, no syllables may utter it, but the change is there.
All limitations have fallen away. Every limit of every kind has vanished; as stars swing in boundless space, the Atman is in limitless Life, and knows no limit and realises no bounds; light in wisdom, consciousness of perfect light that knows no shadow, and therefore, knows not itself as light; when the Thinker has become the Knower; when all reason has vanished and wisdom takes its place. Who shall say what it is save that it is Bliss? Who shall try to utter that which is unutterable in mortal speech - but it is true and it exists. That is the Anandamaya-kosha where the Atman knows Itself; its nature is Bliss; all the spheres have ceased; all else has gone; none but the pure may reach it; none but the devotee may know it; none but the wise may enter into it; for it is said, in the Mundakopanishat:

"Satyena labhyas tapasā by eṣa ātmā samyag-ñānena brahmacaryena nityaṁ/
antahsātTre jyotirmayo hi śubhro yaṁ paśyanti yatayah kṣīnadāśāh//7

"Steadfastly by truth, by austerity, by perfect wisdom, by Brahmacarya-practices, is this Atman attained. In the midst of the body, clad in light, He whom the sinless and subdued behold is pure."

III.7. CONCEPTION OF THE TEACHERS CONTEMPORARY TO THE BUDDHA

Apart from the teachers of the Vedas, the Brāhmaṇas and the Upani-shads, there were in India also other thinkers who had their own views on the theory of Atman. Some of them were contemporaries of the Buddha and some of them were his predecessors. Here an attempt
The Jainas do not believe in God. But they infer in the existence of the Ātman as the conscious agent which guides and regulates them and which helps the body and the senses do their work so systematically. They believe further that it is not only human beings that have Ātman but also everything else in the universe. There are as many Ātmans as there are living beings. There are Ātmans even in plants and particles of dust. Of course, all Ātmans are not equally conscious. Some of them have only one sense i.e. the sense of touch, some have two senses, some three and some four. Human beings and some higher animals have five senses through which they know things and work accordingly, as a result of which their behaviour and conduct seem to be better than those of the lower animals.

We have discussed beforehand that some of the Post-Vedic thinkers like Yājñavalkya and Uddālaka Āruṇi postulated five gross elements as the five roots of things, viz. earth, water, fire, air and ether. The Ātman of the Jainas is regarded as the sixth one, the intelligent principle, which appears under various forms or manifests itself in varying degrees of development. Ātman maintains transmigration from one birth to the other.

According to Mahēśvara the body is identical with the Ātman as well as different from it. Every Ātman is capable of attaining infinite
consciousness, power and happiness - the qualities which are inherent in the very nature of the Ātman. But they are obstructed by the material particles of Karmas, just as the natural light of the sun is obstructed by clouds. To the Jainas, the Ātman is intrinsically omniscient and basically pure and transparent. But it gets contaminated coming in contact with the foreign elements like karmas. When the influx of Karmic particle is at an end by the complete exhaustion of past and present Karmas, the Ātman can remove bondage and regain its natural perfections (=nijjaraṇa) and can shine forth with its natural vision and intrinsic lustre.

B. AJITA KESA-KAMALIN
Ajita, the materialistic thinker, was an elder contemporary of the Buddha. He was called Kesā-Kambalin as he used to wear the hair-garment. His disciples also followed his example by wearing similar garments, and that from this circumstance they also came to be known as Kesā-Kambalins. Ajita's doctrine of Ātman was described as Taṁ-jiṁa-tāṁ-sārīra-vāda, in contradistinction to the doctrine of Ātman being distinct from the body (=Aṁnāṁ-jiṁa-aṁnāṁ-sārīra-vāda). According to Ajita, the Ātman is not an entity distinct from the body. As a man drawing a sword from the scabbard can say "This is the sword and that is the scabbard", so we are not able to separate the Ātman from the body, pointing out, this is the Ātman and that is the body. Ajita, however, denied the future life. So he was charged with by some that by denying the future life
Ajita taught men to kill, burn, destroy, and enjoy all the pleasure of life. But actually that was not the fact. What he intended men to believe rather in life than in death, to show proper regard to persons when they are alive rather than showing honour to them after death. So the basis of Ajita's doctrine was laid in a statement of Yajñavalkya saying that the intelligible essence emerging from the five elements (i.e. earth, water, fire, air and ether) vanishes into after death.

C. MAKKHALI GOSĀLA (MASKARIN GOŚALA)

Makkhati Gosāla is best known as the third or last Tīrthaṅkara of the Ājīvika School. He predeceased Mahāvīra by sixteen years, and spent his whole life in biological researches. The tender regard which he showed for every form of life was a natural outcome of his philosophical doctrine. It appears from the Edicts of Asoka and the Mahābhāṣya, Patañjali's commentary on the Pāṇini, that Gosāla's school survived after him and his followers were known as the Maskarins (=Makkhalis) or "Idlers".

According to Gosāla's view the world originates and develops from its inherent force or immanent energy. He conceived Nature as a self-evolving activity. He seems to have understood by Nature the specific faculties or characteristics of a living substance other than those which it possesses in common with the race or species. At Gosāla's hands, the Brahmanic Āśrama-theory i.e. a notion of the gradual development of self came to be distinctly formulated as a biological principle of evolution. Gosāla was of opinion that Ātman is in its nature abso-
lutely pure and supremely white. It is discoloured i.e. may be defiled when it is affected by things which are foreign to its nature. Gosāla’s successors maintain that the Ātman has power to attain the highest state of purity or sinlessness, but just as distilled water may again be defiled on coming in contact with impurities, so may be the Ātman defiled by foreign elements like Rāga, Dveṣa, Moha, and the like.

D. SAṆJAYA BELATTHIPUTTA

Saṅjaya Paribbajaka, popularly known as a sceptic, was also an elder contemporary of the Buddha. In his hands scepticism came to be formulated as a definite method of philosophic investigation. He advocated Ajñānavāda (=agnosticism). When a question regarding any ultimate problem was put to him, he resorted to equivocation. He did not give any positive answer. His was the principle: "Ignorance is far better than the follies". He did not say anything specifically as regards the Ātman. But he criticised the existing conceptions regarding Ātman in the following lines:

"Some conceive the existence of an all-seeing Ātman, while others controvert it. Some speak of an all-pervading Ātman; others contend that the body being such an entity, it cannot be all-pervading. Some estimate that Ātman is equal to a digit in size, while others say that it is equal to a grain of rice. Some posit an Ātman that has a material form, while others that it is formless. Some point out that the heart is the seat of Ātman, while others oppose them by saying that the forehead would be right place..." Saṅjaya was of opinion that many moral injuries might result from the issues of such antagonistic blunders.
He, therefore, called away the attention of the philosophers from fruitless inquiries and directed it towards the Summum bonum which is the attainment and preservation of mental equanimity.

E. **Pūrana Kassapa (=Pūrṇa Kāśyapa)**

Pūrana Kassapa was the founder of a religious school and was followed by a large body of disciples and honoured throughout the country. As regards the Atman, Kassapa was of opinion that the Atman is passive (=niṣkriya). When we act or cause others to act, it is not the Atman that acts or causes others to act. So, whether we do good or bad, the result thereof does not affect the Atman in the least. The body only enjoys the effects of Karma.

F. **Pakudha Kaccāyana (=Kakuda Kātyāyana)**

Pakudha Kaccāyana was an elder contemporary of the Buddha. He was a Sophist. According to him a being is composed of seven elements, viz. earth, water, fire, air, pleasure, pain and Atman (=Appā, Jīva). These elements are ever lasting and immutable by their very nature. There is, therefore, no killer, no teacher, no hearer. His was the doctrine of Atma-sastha-vāda i.e. the doctrine of Atman as a sixth. In his six or seven categories, considered as the permanent elements of thought and existence, one may trace a background of the Vaiśeṣika categories, six or seven. Anyway, Kaccāyana was the propagator of the doctrine of Eternalism which maintains that the Atman and the universe are eternal. He viewed life and death as a kind of recurrent mechanical combinations (=samavāya) and separation of the elements.
III.8. CONCEPTION OF THE OTHER BRAHMANICAL TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOLS

A. THE NAiyAYIKAS

According to the Naiyāyikas, Ātman is a substance which is quite distinct from the mind and the body. The mind serves the Ātman as an instrument for the perception of psychic qualities like pleasure, pain etc. Ātman acquires the attribute of consciousness when it is related to any object through the senses. But consciousness is not an essential quality of the Ātman. It is an accidental or adventitious quality which ceases to qualify the Ātman in the state of liberation. The Ātman is all-pervading, indestructible and eternal.

B. THE VAiSEŠIKAS

According to the Vaiśešikas, the Ātman is an independent substance of which consciousness is an accidental property. Ātman is eternal and all-pervading. There are two kinds of Ātmans: one the individual Ātman (=jīvātmā) and the other Supreme Ātman (=paramātmā or Tīvra). The Paramātmā is one, and is inferred as the creator of the universe, while the jīvātmā is not one but many, being different in different bodies. The jīvātmā is internally or mentally perceived as possessing...
some quality when, for example, one says: "I am happy", "I am sorry", "I am satisfied", and so forth.

C. THE SĀNKHYAS

According to the Sānkhyas, the Ātman is an indubitable reality. The Ātman exists, because it is self-manifest and its non-existence cannot be proved in any way. The Ātman is different from the body and the senses, the mind and the intellect. It is the transcendent subject whose essence is pure consciousness. The light of the Ātman's consciousness ever remains the same, although the objects of knowledge may change and succeed one another. The Ātman is above all change and activity. It is an uncaused, eternal and all-pervading reality which is free from all attachment and unaffected by all objects. There is, however, not one universal Ātman pervading all bodies alike. The Sānkhyas admit a plurality of Ātmans, of which one is connected with each body.

D. THE YOGA CONCEPTION

According to the Yoga conception, the Ātman is a transcendent subject which is quite distinct from the body, the mind and the ego. In its own nature, the Ātman is pure consciousness, free from the limitations of the body and the fluctuations of the mind. But in its ignorance Ātman confuses itself with the mind, the first product of Prakriti, which is essentially unconscious. But being in the closest proximity to the Ātman, the mind reflects, through its manifesting power, i.e. consciousness of the Ātman, so as to become apparently conscious
and intelligent. The Ātman knows the objects of the world through the modifications of the mind which correspond to the forms of the objects known. It is a fact that the Ātman never undergoes any change or modification, but because of its reflection in the changing states and processes of the mind, the Ātman appears to be subject to changes. The aim of the Yoga scheme of philosophy is, therefore, to reveal the reality of man and the world - 'the real Self, the Ātman as eternally pure, enlightened and free, as the only true, unchanging happiness'.

E. THE MĪMĀṂSĀKAS

The Mīmāṃsakas, the believers in the authority of the Vedas as "Apauruṣeya" (i.e. not the works of any human author), prove the existence of the immortal Ātman and refute the materialistic view that the Ātman is nothing other than the body. But they do not admit consciousness as intrinsic to the Ātman. Consciousness arises in the Ātman only when it is associated with the body and then also when an object is presented to the organs of knowledge. The liberated Ātman has no actual consciousness, though it has the potentiality for it.

F. THE VEDĀNTINS

The Vedāntins thoroughly analyse the Ātman and distinguish between its outer sheath and its inner reality. According to them, the body, the senses, the mind, the intellect and the pleasures and pains arising out of them are but passing phenomena; they are not the permanent essence of the Ātman. They are merely the outer covers which conceal an inner, permanent reality, which cannot be identified with any of
them, though all of them are but the manifestations of the Atman.

In the Vedānta Philosophy, an attempt has been made to find out the ways and means in order to discover the Atman, the Real Self. Realization of the Atman (=atmavidyā) is regarded as the highest of all knowledge (=parā-vidyā). All other knowledge and learning are but inferior to it (=aparā-vidyā). "The method of self-realization lies through the control of the lower self, its deep-rooted interests and impulses, and through study, reasoning and repeated meditation (śravaṇa, manana, nīdīhyāsana) till the forces of past habits and thoughts are completely overcome by a firm belief in the truths learnt. It is a difficult path which can be followed only if one is strong and wise enough to reject what is pleasant (=preyas) for what is good (=sreyas)". (30)

In the Vedānta a new interpretation of the SELF has been developed which is also very interesting, at the same time very thought-provoking. Yājñavalkya says to his wife Maitreya that Self is the only dearest thing to a man. If any person or thing is dear to a man, it is so only because of the Self. Nothing is dear for its own sake. In the words of Yājñavalkya: The wife is not dear because she is wife, the husband is not dear because of his being a husband, the son is not dear because of being a son, wealth is not dear for its own sake. All is dear because of the Self —

"Na vā are patyuh kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati, ātmanas tu kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati; na vā are jāyāyai kāmāya jāyai priyai bhavati, ātmanas tu kāmāya jāyai priyai bhavati; na vā are putrāṁkāmāya putrāḥ priyai bhavanti, ātmanas tu kāmāya putrāḥ priyai bhavanti;
na vē are vittasya kāmāya vittaṃ priyāṃ bhavati, ātamans tu kāmāya vittaṃ priyāṃ bhavati ...

The last but not the least, the keynote of the Vedānta Philosophy lies in the following line of thought:

All is God (=sarvam khalu idaṁ Brahma). Ātman is God (=ayam Ātmā Brahma). There is no multiplicity here (=neha inānāsti kiñcana). The Ātman or God is the only Reality. It is infinite consciousness and Bliss. The forces of desire take us away from the Ātman and condition our existence in the way we hanker after. The more we give up our hankerings for objects (worldly or other-worldly) and try to realise our identity with the true Ātman or Brahman (God), the more do we realise true happiness, perfect bliss. The Kathopanishat, therefore, declares: "A mortal attains immortality and unity with Brahman even here, in this very life, when his heart is free from all desires!"--

"Yada sarve pramucyante kāmā ye'sya hṛdi śrītāḥ/
Atha martyo'mrto bhavyat atra Brahma samaśnute//

G. ĀCĀRYA ŚAṆKARA'S INTERPRETATION

Ācārya Śaṅkara was well-known as the expositor of the Non-dualistic Philosophy i.e. Advaita-Vedānta. Here will be given some light as regards his interpretation of the Ātman-theory. According to Ācārya Śaṅkara, the Ātman is the only one reality without a second, without any limitation or attribute. It appears as many due to Avidyā or ignorance. As the water seems to be different due to different adjuncts, tastes and colours, the Ātman also seems to possess different forms,
names, castes and status superimposed on it due to different adjuncts which are themselves projections of Avidya. (33)

They are false like the bubbles of water ("budbudānīva vāriṇī"). The adjuncts (=upādhi) for which the Ātman appears to be many are of three kinds, viz. gross, subtle and causal. The physical body consisting of the five great elements (viz. earth, water, fire, air, and sky) is the gross adjunct. The subtle body made of the seventeen subtle elements (viz. 10 Jñānendriyas and karmendriyas, 5 Prāṇas or vital forces, the mind and the intellect) is the subtle adjunct. Avidya or nescience, which is neither existent nor non-existent, is the causal adjunct of which the first two adjuncts (gross and subtle) are but projections. The gross adjunct is the ānāmaya-kosā i.e. nutritive sheath of the Ātman. The subtle adjunct contains the prānāmaya-kosā (=the sheath consisting of activities of the senses), the manomaya-kosā (=the sheath consisting of activities of thought) and the vijñānamaya-kosā (=the sheath consisting of activities of understanding). The causal adjunct constituted of Avidya is the ānandamaya-kosā (=the blissful sheath). The pure Ātman when falsely identified with them appears to be actually pervaded by them. So the pure Ātman should be carefully discriminated from the five Kosās, says Ācārya Śaṅkara. Desire, attachment, pleasure, pain etc. exist in our mental states and cease to exist when the mind is dissolved as in deep sleep. So, they pertain to the mind and not to the Ātman. (34)

The divisions like the knower, the knowledge and the known are
also not real in the Ātman, but they are superimposed. As a result of the false identification, the Atman appears as the knower and the doer, and thinks itself to be a jīva i.e. an individual, with limitations. But when Ātman-realisation dawns, the Ātman knows that it is not a jīva but Paramātman itself and becomes free from the fears of sufferings due to repeated existences.\(^{35}\)

The essence of the Ātman-realisation is the Ātman itself. It does not require any other consciousness to reveal or illumine it. The Ātman is self-luminous or svaprakāśa. The false notion like jīva-hood or individuality (e.g. a rope appearing to be a snake due to ignorance) ceases when the essential nature of the Ātman is realised by the removal of ignorance. Then the Ātman shines in its true svaprakāśa (=self-luminous) glory and Brahman-hood is achieved. In fact, as Ācārya Śaṅkara says, the Ātman-hood or Brahman-hood is ever-achieved. It only seems to be unachieved through ignorance, like a necklace placed round the neck but forgotten.\(^{36}\)

Again when ignorance (=avidyā) is removed by realising the identity of jīva with the Ātman through the great teachings of the Upanishads—"Thou art that", "I am Brahman" etc., the already achieved Ātmanhood or Brahman-hood seems to be achieved anew, just like the forgotten necklace secured, as it were, when someone points it out. The Yogin realises that everything in the universe is the Ātman, and there is nothing different than Ātman, as the pots are nothing but the earth, different forms of the same earth.\(^{37}\)
Thus realising, the Yogin becomes jīvanmukta - freed from all disturbances of attachment and hatred and lives in constant peace. Though he is still in the midst of adjuncts like the body, the sense-organs, etc., he moves freely unaffected by their changes and attributes. He enters into the supreme attributeless Being (=Brahman) and becomes one with it. This is the final liberation - para mukti - the summum bonum.

But how to achieve that Realisation? Acarya Sāṅkara gives his formula in accordance with the teachings of the Upanishads as follows:

The aspirant for Self-realisation should control his senses, leave all attachments, and being seated in a lonely place meditate on that infinite Ātman with one-pointed devotion. By the purified intellect he should dissolve the visible universe in the Ātman and think of the Ātman as the clear sky. He should always meditate on the nature of the Ātman which has been described in the Upanishads by negative terms in excluding everything that appears as non-Ātman—"It is not that, it is not that" (=n'eti n'eti), "It is neither gross nor subtle" etc. are the expressions which can possibly point to the real nature of Ātman, all positive expressions being incapable of reaching the same.

H. ĀTMAN AS INTERPRETED IN THE BHAGAVADGĪTĀ

A better expression of the Upanishadic concept of Ātman is found in the Bhagavadgītā which is regarded as the essence of all the Upanishad. In the second chapter of the Bhagavadgītā, it is said about the
Atman as follows:

"Na jayate mriyate va kadacin, nāyaṁ bhūtvā bhavitā va na bhūyāḥ/
Ajo nityaṁ saśvato'yaṁ purāṇo, na hanyate hanyamāné saṁrire//"\(^{(38)}\)

The Atman is neither born nor does it die. Coming into being and ceasing to be do not take place in it. Unborn, eternal, constant and ancient, it is not killed when the body is slain.

Further, this Atman is uncleavable, incom bustible and neither wetted nor dried. It is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immoveable and everlasting.\(^{(39)}\)

- "Acchedyo'ayam adāhyo'yaṁ akledyo'aśoṣya eva ca/
  Nityaḥ sarvagataḥ sthānuḥ acalo'yaṁ saṁtanaḥ"//

Further, "Vāśāṁsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya, navāni grhṇāti naro'parāṇi/
  Tathā saṁtāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny anyāni saṁnyāti navāni dehi"\(^{(40)}\)

- As a man casting off worn-out garments puts on new ones, so the embodied (One), casting off worn-out bodies enters into others that are new.

As in the Upanishads, the Gītā also says that self-perfection is the acme of human aspirations, goal in life. But how to attain that self-perfection? The Gītā says that the self-perfection is possible with the help of the Yoga. It prescribes three Yogas, viz. Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga and the Karma Yoga. A bird requires two wings and a tail for its flight. The Atman is endowed with Bhakti and Jñāna to serve as two wings. Karma Yoga serves as the tail that maintains the balance. All spiritual practices are a part and parcel of these three Yogas.
It is customary with people to divide human activities into two distinctive types - the spiritual and the temporal, the sacred and the secular. But the Gītā makes no such artificial distinction. Life pertaining to this world is in no way different from the spiritual. There is continuity and homogeneity in life in all its stages. Man will be in the hereafter none other than what he is here and now. Change of body effects no more change in the personality than does change of clothings. It is only the mode of Karma that makes a person what he is. But Karma by itself is neither sacred nor secular. The attitude with which it is performed brings about a magical change in it. All Karmas become sacred in the hands of a spiritual man. On the contrary a man with a material outlook drags down even a sacred Karma to the vulgar plane. Because of his world-bound outlook, the uninitiated one fouls sacred Karmas into secular, whereas the message of the Bhagavadgītā is to metamorphose all Karmas into liberating sacred ones.
REFERENCES AND NOTES

1. R.V. X.90.1-16
2. Ibid. X 121. 8-9; cf. X.82.6
4. "na taṃ vidātha ya ima ... niḥāreṇa prāvṛtā"; Ibid.X.82.7.
5. Aitareya Āraṇyaka, I.3.4.9.
6. Ibid.II.6.1.5-6.
7. Aitareya. Up. V.1-2; Aitareya Āraṇyaka, II.6.3.
8. Taṭṭṭirīya, Up.II.2-5; III.2-10
10. tad yathā kṣhūraḥ kṣhurādhiśvahītaḥ syāt ... evam evaiṣa śīma
    idān śārīrān śīmaṇam anupraviṣṭaḥ ... - Kaushitaki Up. IV.2.0.
11. asya etāni karmanātīṃya eva.
12. "Bhagavan kuta eśa pṛṇo jāyate, katham śīrty asmin śārīre, śīmaṇaṁ
    va prāvibhajya katham pratiṣṭhate, keṇotkramate, katham bāhyyam
    abhidhatte, katham adhyātītītīm iti" - Prāṇopanishat, III.1.
13. "śīmaṇa eśa pṛṇo jāyate ... manokṭtenābāty asmincārīre ... hṛdi
    hyeśa śīmaṁ. atraitad ekaśataṁ nindriyāṁ khetiśāṁ śataṁ śatam ekaikasyaśāṁ
    dvāssaptatīr dvāssaptatītī pratisākāḥ-sāndrīḥahārśrīṁ bhavanti" - Prāṇopanishat,
    III.3-6.
14. "punarbhavam indriyair manasi sampadāyamānāṁ. yac cittas tenaiṣa
    pṛṇām śīrṣī, pṛṇās tejasā yuktaḥ sahītmanāḥ yathāśaṁkalपitāṁ lokaṁ
    nayati" - Prāṇopanishat, III. 9-10.

18. "tam evaikaṁ jānatha īśmānam; anyā vāco vimūnīcatha, arāmṣasyaiśa setum" - Mund. Upa., II.2.5.

19. II.2.12.


24. Ibid. III.3.


26. Mundaka, II.2.7.

27. Mundaka. III.1.5.


29. Dr.B.M.Barua, Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy, p.300.

30. Chatterjee and Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, pp.357-358.


33. nanopadhivasad eva jātināmāṃgaramśadayah/
ātmany āropitāṃ toye rasavānīdibhedāvat// - Ātmabodha, verse 11.

34. "Rāgecchā-sukha-duḥkhādi buddhau satyāṁ pravartate/
susuptau nāsti tan nāśe tasmād buddhes tu nātmanah"// - Ātmabodha, 23.

35. "Rajjuśarpavad ātmānaṁ jīvaṁ jñātvā bhayāṁ vahet/
nāhaṁ jīvaḥ paramātmeti jñātaṁ cen nirbhayo bhavet//" - Ātmabodha, 27.

36. "Ātmā tu satatāṁ prāptō'apy aprāptavad avidyāṁ/
tan nāśe prāptavad bhaṭīi svakānṭhābharaṇāṁ yathā//" - Ātmabodha, 44.

37. "Ātmāve'daṁ jagat sarvam ātmano'nyan na vidyate/
mṛdo yad vad ghaṭādīni svātmānaṁ sarvam tṛṣṇate//" - Ātmabodha, 48.

38. Bhg. II.20.
40. Bhg. II.22.