CHAPTER – III
UNITY IN UPANISHADS

The Upanishads, generally hailed the end portion of the Vedas, contain the basic teachings of all the Indian knowledge systems. Hence the term Vedanta applied to them. The Upanishads, given in the form of the Dialogues regarding the secrets of this as well as the nether worlds, contain the gems of the highest metaphysical thought few other branches of knowledge could deal with. The Vedic thought condensed, the Upanishads occupy prominent place in the vast expanse of Vedic literature or the entire range of Indian metaphysical texts. Reflections of an age with its never ending quest for knowledge, they are couched in the flower bed of poetic diction bristling with imageries, stories, parables, apothegms and dialogues, all in their effort to seek the ultimate reality of everything. They, as noted above, are given in the form of dialogues between the teacher and the pupil who were sometimes father and son. Even the God of the world of death unrolling before an ordinary mortal a thousand secrets of the realm beyond the terrestrial plain, forms the core story of one of the Upanishads. The style of the dialogue elucidating the highly complex and complicated subjects is so inimitable that it forms the most effective method of academic instruction too.

Upanishad, literally meaning ‘sit near’, presents the picture of the disciple ‘sitting near’ the teacher in his earnest desire to sit near the ultimate reality which the Indian lore calls truth or God. It is also interesting to note that a direct communication and intimacy between the teacher and disciple was essential for the proper imparting of knowledge. It also points to the highly secret and
intuitive nature of the teaching that should be imparted only to an earnest student worthy of receiving it. A true aspirant of knowledge would spend the whole life span, if required, to attain the supreme wisdom from the teacher. The story of Indra and Virocana who approached Prajapati for self knowledge narrated in *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, of Satyakamajabala who as directed by his teacher Gautama looked after four hundred cows whose number he increased to a thousand through the years’ effort and also Upakosala who approached Satyakama who initiated him into a twelve years preliminary discipline are clear examples of the test of earnestness conducted by the teachers before imparting the supreme knowledge.\(^1\) Indra spent about hundred years of celibacy before Prajapati imparted to him the divine knowledge. The criteria of accepting the disciples too were based on some principles. The student could be of any age, caste, sex or profession and might be a *brahmachārī* or an ascetic, a king, a housewife, god, and even an *asura* or one born of the family of demons. So also the teachers too could be kings like Janaka, Ajatasatru, gods or goddesses like Indra, Yama and Uma, or learned ladies like Gargi, and Maitreyi. This suggests that the seers of the Upanishads believed in equality and unity of humanity and in the divinity inherent in all men irrespective of mundane differences. It was almost a divine relation based on principles and their unfailing practice. The programme of academic give and take was marked with perfection of mutual love and reverence. The teacher and the taught, the seeker and the sought, the subtle and the gross, all are presented in their perfect harmony in the Upanishadic scene. The sense of coherence expressed through out the Upanishadic literature makes it impart the message of unity, unity between man and God, between God and nature, between the entirety of the universe and all the elements within it, all merging together in their unbearable ecstasy of a perfect creative unity. The age old apothegm that creativity comes from unity is thus well explained in all the
Upanishadic teachings. Unity alone is the ultimate reality and in unity exists the real beauty, Upanishads elucidate and explain.

Upanishads are more than thousand in number of which only some have become popular thanks to the commentaries by thinkers like Gaudapada, Sankara and Ramanuja. The Muktika Upanishad refers to hundred and eight Upanishads. The first ten Upanishads mentioned in the Muktika, along with a few other ones are regarded as principal Upanishads. They are Īśāvāsyam, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chhāndogya, Brhadāranyaka, Kaṭha, Kēna, Praśna, Munḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Svētāśvatāra and Kauśitaki.

A part of Sukla Yajur Vēda samhita, Īśāvāsyam Upanishad that contains eighteen spells (mantra) is highly spiritual. With its first sūkṣma alone explaining the secret of the Vēdānta it occupies a superior position in the Upanishadic hierarchy. This Upanishad derived its name from the first word of its first line which has it that everything abides in God (Īśāvāsyamidam sarvam). While the first mantra emphasizes renunciation born of the highest knowledge as the means to realize God the second mantra recommends the path of karma or action for those who lead the mundane life. The third verse speaks of those who, failing to follow either of these paths, fall into the world of darkness. Hymns four to eight describe the all inclusive, all embracing and unattached nature of the soul which is beyond good and evil. The ninth to the fourteenth describe the imperfection involved in following only one of the paths of karma and upāsana (or devotion) without harmonizing the both. Hence the Upanishadic injunction to reconcile karma and upāsana. The last four verses are the prayers chanted during the end of life intended to free the soul from the cycles of birth and death so that it could attain the eternal beatitude. The Īśa Upanishad thus points to the need of a desirable reconciliation of the paths of knowledge (jñāna), action (karma) and devotion (upāsana).
*Kéna Upanishad*, a part of the *Talavakāra Brähmana* of *Sāma Vēda* consists four chapters with thirty four mantras. *Kénēshītam patati prēshitam manah* is the first *mantra* or hymn of the Upanishad and hence the name *Kéna* which means by whom? This Upanishad is a dialogue between the teacher and a disciple who enquires into the ultimate energy that vitalizes the sense organs, mind and life of man. The teacher explains the self or *ātman* as all pervading but beyond everything. It is not controlled but controls the sense organs, mind and life. This Upanishad elucidates that the nature of the *ātman* is highly secret that even he who has believed to have known does not really know it. Thus it says:

It is conceived of by him by whom It is not conceived of.
He by whom It is conceived of, knows It not.
It is not understood by those who (say they) understand It.
It is understood by those who (say they) understand It not.²

The third and the fourth chapters are narrative of the all inclusive and absolute and the unknowable *Brahman*. *Kéna Upanishad* has it that the individual soul enmeshed by the senses, mind and the ego gets the vision of the absolute only through the guidance of the ultimate and not through anything else. This Upanishad also recommends ethical disciplines and *upāsana* or devotion to attain knowledge of the *Brahman*.

*Kathopanishad* occupies an important place among the Upanishads. The simple and poetic verses of this *Upanishad* come in the *Kato* branch of *Krishna Yajur Vēda*. It deals with the problems of eternal and the ephemeral, a mind boggling subject which confused the generations of thinkers. Here the *Upanishad* analyses this problem psychologically in the story of Yama-Nachiketas dialogue. The conversation having unfolded the supreme knowledge regarding the soul helped Nachiketas secure knowledge of the *Brahman* and get free from attachment and cycles of birth and death.
Prasñopanishad and Mundakópanishad, the two complimentary Upanishads appear in the Atharva Védā. The Praśana Upanishad deals with Para and Apara or mundane and transcendental knowledge. Praśna Upanishad as the word indicates is given in the form of question and answers. It is the story of the six students who approached the teacher, sage Pippalada with certain questions. Here the teacher put to test the seekers’ real interest for knowledge by fixing one year brahmacharya or celibacy for them prior to answering each question. While the first question deals with the problem of the origin of the living things the second is related to the existence of the gross body. The answer throws light on the element of prāṇa which enlivens the sense organs and the mind and awakens and enkindles the spirit within. The answer to the third question discloses the origin of the prāṇa as ātman and the secret of the work or the karma as the determinant of the whole process. As to the fourth question regarding the state of sushupti the Upanishads give a detailed description of the four states of the soul – jāgarita, swapna, sushupti and tuṛīya. Answer to the fifth question throws light on the ōmkāra upāsana as a means for the concentration of mind, the most necessary aspect of self realization. A very detailed description of the Ātman is given through the sixth question and its answer.

The Mundakópanishad is also given as the teacher–taught dialogue, the kind found in the Praśna. The word Mundaka means one who has shaven his head as a disciplined brahmachārī or the seeker of knowledge. It also means the knife, which chops off all the chords of ignorance and desire. This Upanishad comprising 65 mantra or spells is divided into three munḍaka or portions, each munḍaka consisting two paragraphs or khandā. This Upanishad which consists of Angiras’ instruction to his disciple Saunaka speaks of the superiority of ātmavidya or the spiritual knowledge over the material because it is the former that helps one realize the Ever-existing. There is a description of the soul as the
enjoyer of all the worldly life and the pure soul enjoying the eternal bliss. This is symbolically presented through the two birds sitting on the branch of a tree, one eating the fruit and the other still and silent, enjoying the supreme bliss. One is ķivātman or the individual soul and the other parmātman or the indwelling supreme spirit, both residing in the same body. While one is attached to the world, the other is free. When a man sees the Universal Ruler in himself, then the distinction between the Good and Evil ceases and he is freed from the passions and reaches the goal, i.e., becomes one with the universal. This Upanishad describes the path of attaining spiritual knowledge in a systematic and enlightening manner.

Maṇḍūkya Upanishad, though the smallest among the Upanishads is the most important of all. Its importance is so much that according to Muktikōpanishad a study of Maṇḍūkya alone is sufficient for a seeker (mumukṣhu) of moksha or salvation to attain ātmajñana or knowledge of the spirit. The subject which is of great spiritual depth is so briefly explained here that it is much beyond the ken of ordinary perception. And had it not been for the interpretations by the later scholars like Gaudapada, the author of Maṇḍūkya-kārika this Upanishad would have remained obscure. Maṇḍūkya is among a number of other works of Indian lore in interpreting and explaining the time bound Sagun/a Brahman and the timeless NIRGuṇ/a Brahman. It speaks of ōmkāra as the symbol of Brahman.

Three states of the soul jāgrat, swapna and sushupti are compared to the matras A, U, and M of the ōmkāra. It interprets the fourth, turīya as the all encompassing into which the three stages of universal existence represented by these three letters or sounds merge together as an undifferentiated and unbound whole. Hence the need, according to the Maṇḍūkya, of ōmkārōpāsana or the seeking of the ultimate unity to realize Brahman.
Taittariyopanishad is found in the eighth and ninth chapters of the Taittariyoranyaka of the Krishna Yajur Veda. Sankara has classified the śloka or verses into valli like Siksha Valli, Brahmānanda Valli, and brīghu valli. Śīsksha valli comprises of verses which aim at generating interest towards Brahma jñānānanda and preparing the seekers for attaining higher wisdom. Vēdānta valli gives an exhaustive description of the nature of Brahmā and vedantic knowledge. The Brigu valli articulates the methods to attain Brahmajñāna. The description of the kōsās which cover up the soul is found in this Upanishad which ends with a description of the state of realization by one who has attained it.

Aitareya Upanishad forms a part of Aitareya Āranyaka of Rk Veda. There are five Aranyakas in the Aitareya Āranyaka. The fourth, fifth and the sixth chapters of the second Āranyaka constitute the Aitareya Upanishad. The subject matter of this Upanishad is centered on the destruction of avidya which is the cause of kāma karmas that bind the human being to the mundane activities. The Upanishad in its wider aspect therefore elaborates the steps that enlighten the seeker with the streaming effulgence of Vidya or knowledge so as to help him become one with Brahmā. Like Īsā Upanishad, Aitareya also starts with the declaration that the world is the expression of the very ātman itself (Ātmā va idamēka ēvāgra āsīt). The mahāvākya or the great saying of the Rk Veda, Prajñānam Brahmam is mentioned in the last mantra and ends with the description on the state of immortality attained through self-realization. The Upanishad elaborates on Ātma-Brahma identity in the light of the theories of adhyārōpa and apavāda. The mundane superimposed on ātman or the reality prevents the ordinary human being from understanding the Truth. Therefore the Upanishad exhorts to renounce the world and be unattached to realize the reality. This is the gist of the theory of apavāda.
**Chhāndōgya Upanishad** is a part of *Sāma Vēda*. This Upanishad deriving its name from the word *Chandoga* meaning *sāma gāyaka* deals with a wide range of about 110 subjects and bristles with apothegms in abundance, all revealing the nature of the *Brahman*. One of the gems of Indian spiritual literature, it also mirrors well the socio-cultural life including the systems of education of the period it was composed in. A laudable manual for the ethical and virtuous life, both individual and social, the *Chhāndōgya* consists of five chapters dealing with different types of *sadhāna* or the preparations for the attainment of the *Brahman*. It highlights *upāsana* or the worship of Īmākāra, Āditya, Prāṇa, etc. all aiming to help the seeker prepare his mind to transcend the world of *karma* to attain *jnāna*. According to the Upanishad it is the *upāsana* or total surrender of mind to a deity that helps one get concentration and steady the mind (*amanibhāva*). The most famous saying *tat tvam asi* which is the conclusion of the spiritual discourse Uddalaka Aruni delivered to his son Swetaketu, the dialogue between Narada and Sanatkumara, emphasizing the importance of the knowledge of the *Brahman* to attain solace and serenity in life and the story of Indra and the asura king Virochana approaching *Prajāpati* for self-knowledge are the most noted highlights of this Upanishad. *Chhāndōgya* thus upholds the importance of self-knowledge, establishes the *Atman-Brahman* identity and discourses through examples the various means for attaining it.

The word *Bruhad* which means ‘vast and expanding’ itself shows the loftiness and depth of the *Bṛhādāranyaka Upanishad* which is a part of the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sukla Yajur Vēda*. The *Sukla Yajur Vēda* has two branches, the *Kanva* and the *Madhyandina*. The chapters, four to nine in the last *kāṇḍa* of the *Madhayndina* and the first eight chapters of the last *kāṇḍa* of the *kanva* branch constitute this Upanishad which has six chapters in total. Just like *Chhāndōgya*, *Bruhadāranyaka* too explains its message through stories and
anecdotes. It is divided into three kandas, Madhu Kāṇḍa, the Yajñāvalkya kāṇḍa or Muni Kāṇḍa and the Khila Kāṇḍa, each consisting two chapters. The first chapter explains the symbolic meaning underlying the Vedic rituals like Aśwameṭḍha wherein the sacrificial horse or mēḍhyāśwa symbolizes the all pervading reality of the world. Here the Upanishad aims to uplift the seeker’s mind from the mere materialistic and ritualistic to the purely spiritual as found in the six Brahmanas of its first chapter. The second chapter gives the dialogue between king Ajatasatru and the Brahmin Balaki in which the former teaches self-knowledge and the eternity of the Brahman to the latter. The famous discourse between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi that differentiates between the eternal nature of the Brahman and the ephemeral nature of the worldly riches too takes place in this chapter. The third and fourth chapters are the most important ones. While the third chapter introduces Yajnjavalkya, the doyen of spiritual knowledge who elucidates the lofty ideas about Brahman in a metaphysical tournament at the court of King Janaka of Mithila where a scholarly audience engaged him with a number of hairsplitting questions related to spirituality, the fourth contains spiritual dialogue between Janaka and Yajnavalkya which zeroes in elaborately on the theory of the rebirth of jīva or the soul. The fifth and the sixth chapters constitute the Khila Kāṇḍ which is only an anubandha or appendix to the Upanishad explaining some upāsana or the modes of worship for the gradual liberation of the soul. The sixth chapter contains the story in which Prajapati explains the superiority of prāṇa over the physical organs. Here the sense organs meet Prajapati with the question, which among them is more important than the other. Prajapati’s reply that the one whose withdrawal leads a person to inactivity is the most important, reveals to the sense organs that without prāṇa no life is possible, and hence the superiority of the prāṇa. The last portion deals with rituals and their procedures for material prosperity like the birth of a
noble son, etc. Thus the Brhadāranyaka, as its name reveals, is a vast jungle of knowledge with a wide spectrum of subjects, all skyscrapers in the horizon of wisdom.

The above mentioned ten Upanishads are the Daśāpanishads commented as of supreme importance by the Vedic scholars including Sankara. The central message of the Vedas is conveyed in the most enchanting and heart touching way in them. There are many other Upanishads which are only imitations of the Daśapanishads with a few exceptions like Śvētāśvatāra and Maitri.

The international community of philosophic scholarship has widely accepted the spiritual importance of the Upanishads. But they are criticized as claiming to have reached truths about reality and the world without pursuing a strict methodology. This may be analyzed in the backdrop of the truths articulated in the Upanishads. These truths are reached through a long a span of daily observance. It was to the seers experiments combined with experience or experiments leading to experience. The truth deriving from their practicing the knowledge systems was to them something to be realized rather than something to be discovered and left. Knowledge proved practical to them in all the aspects of life. It was for the teacher to ring out the darkness from his disciple’s mind and ring in infinite light. Gu in Sanskrit is a one-letter word, which means darkness or ignorance, and ru means that which obstructs or does away with darkness. Thus guru is one who eradicates ignorance and enlightens. Guru or āchārya was a daily practitioner of his knowledge who turned his life itself into his message, which his disciples were expected to imbibe and emulate. Therefore the teacher by his own holy life or brahmacharyam sought the brahmachārin or disciple. Āchārya was bound to keep himself on the path of observance or ācharaṇa. The lore thus defines an āchārya:

āchinōtihi śāstrāṇi
hichārē sthāpayityapi
svayamācharatēchāpi
tasmādāchārya uchyate.

Along with imparting to the students the spiritual knowledge he himself has imbibed, the teacher sees his disciples strictly observing and practicing it. But for this the teacher too must continue to move in his spiritual path. He alone is called a real āchārya or the teacher.

The thoughts laid down in the Upanishads are thus not mere speculations. The Upanishadic teacher in fact leads the students through various stages of spiritual experience, finally leaving him to personally experience what is taught. Mundaka Upanishad classifies Knowledge into two, the higher and the lower. Of these, the lower is the Rk Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sāma Veda, and the Atharva Veda. The higher knowledge helps the seeker apprehend the Imperishable or akṣara. True knowledge arises only from self realization. Upanishad again says:

The Soul (ātman) is obtainable by truth, by austerity (tapas), by proper knowledge (jñāna), by the student’s life of chastity (brahmacarya) constantly (practiced).

It could therefore be seen that apart from earnest desire one requires meditative concentration, ethical virtues like truthfulness, morality and discipline. Such a disciple alone, the lore says, is eligible for knowledge based exclusively on hearing from the lips of a guru, reasoning and the final intuitive insight. The Upanishads do not accommodate the ideas regarding revelation and faith which in turn leads to dogmatism but offer a set of teachings which are strictly based on
logic and intuitive reasoning. The student is trained to use his coherent and crystal clear intelligence, capable of reflecting the reality as it is. This is well illustrated in a passage of the *Praśna Upanishad* wherein the Seer or the *drushṭa* named Pippalada says to a group of disciples like Sukesan Bharadwaja, Saibya Satyakama, Sauryayanin Gargya and others. The Seer said to them:

Dwell with me (*samvatsyata*) a year (*samvalsara*) more, with austerity (*tapas*), chastity (*brahmacarya*) and faith (*sraddhā*). Then ask what questions you will. If we know we will tell you all.\(^6\)

The seekers thus laid their foundations of knowledge on reason, followed reason as far as it led, and when reason failed reason itself showed them the way to highest plane.\(^7\) How reasoning leads to intuition is thus explained by Sri Aurobindo as follows:

… certain faculties in us enable our mentality to arrive at conceptions which we may indeed deduce by ratiocination or by imaginative variation from the facts of the physical world as we see them, but which are not warranted by any purely physical data or any physical experience. The first of these instruments is the pure reason.\(^8\)

Intuition gives us that idea of something behind and beyond all that we know and seem to be which pursues man always in contradiction of his lower reason and all his normal experience and impels him to formulate that formless perception in the more positive ideas of God, Immortality, Heaven and the rest by which we strive to express it to the mind. For
intuition is as strong as Nature herself from whose very soul it has sprung and cares nothing for the contradictions of reason or the denials of experience.9

The first step in truth realization is reasoning through which its inefficiency to grasp spiritual unity is apprehended. This helps one mentally prepare for yet another path to knowledge. Here lies the importance of the guidance of a proper guide or guru who is essential for attaining knowledge. Thus says the Mundaka Upanishad:

Such a knowing (teacher), unto one who has approached properly Whose thought is tranquilized, who has reached peace, Teaches in its very truth that knowledge of Brahma Whereby one knows the Imperishable, the person, the True.10

The next stage is dialectics wherein the method of intellectual conviction or understanding is attained through hearing rather than experience. The whole course of dialogue between Uddalaka and Swetaketu occurring in the Chhändögya Upanishad vivifies how the sequential dialogue between teacher and student results in the conviction of the student. Swetaketu is a srutarshi or one who has knowledge of the ultimate through hearing from a rishi or the seer. The Upanishadic teachers appear to have employed a number of methods to convince the disciples the nature of the truth they elucidated. These included enigmatic method, aphoristic method, etymological method, mythical method, analogical method, dialectic method, synthetic method, monologue method, ad-hoc method and finally regressive method.11

But the final realization or experiencing the ultimate truth according to the Upanishads comes from within, or from one’s intuition. This is the stage where the seeker finds himself identified with the truth sought or becomes one with it or realizes that he is the very part of the entirety that manifests into the
manifoldness of the universe. He comes to know that he is that entirety in miniature or he is the very Brahman itself. This is what the Vedanta declared when it said, “I am He”, “Thou art That”, “All this is the Brahman”, “this Self is the Brahman”, etc. Thus say the Upanishads:

As in this case he would not be burned [because of truth].
So this whole has that [truth] as its soul.
That is Reality. That is Atman [soul]
That art thou, Svetaketu.

Then he understood it from him - yea, he understood. 12

One can go by will farther than this stage to the final intuitive experience and realize the ultimate unity in the self which is creative, pervasive, supreme and universal. This is the stage when one becomes identified with the universal whole and attains the self-knowledge or ātmajñāna. Thus says the Upanishad:

Then he becomes unitary in this prana.
Then speech together with all names goes to it;
the eye together with all forms goes to it;
the ear together with all sounds goes to it;
the mind (manas) together with all thoughts goes to it. 13

The central message of the Upanishads is the idea of unity according to which everything in the universe is the expression of one, non-dual reality. To help one realize this fundamental non-dual reality the Upanishads make use of many ideal paths of understanding and methods of explanations. Being a part of the world which holds in it the non-dual energy or pure consciousness (prajñānam brahmam) the attainment of this unity becomes the ideal. 14 When this Brahman is enveloped by adjuncts of mind, body, life etc, it appears as individual self but when one understands the ultimate truth as the one indwelling spirit of
everything the idea of unity becomes the reality for the seeker. Swami Vivekananda explains this Upanishadic teaching thus:

There is really no difference between, matter, mind and spirit. They are only different phases of experiencing the One. This very world is seen by the senses as matter, by the very wicked as hell, by the good as heaven, and by the perfect as God.\textsuperscript{15}

The world, soul, and what is called the ultimate are thus one according to the Upanishads. It is one’s way of experiencing that differentiates one from the other. Realization of the unity behind the diversity is the mission and the end of the seeker, say the Vedic seers. Finding unity in diversity is thus the motto of the Upanishads.

The teachings of the Upanishads are based on the fundamental principle of unity pervading the world garbed in multiplicity and diversity. An earnest seeker of truth and peace who turns towards Upanishads will attain the solace and sublimity he strives to find out from the depth of his soul. The supreme importance of Upanishadic teaching could well be summed up in the words of the thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi who said about \textit{Isa Upanishad}:

I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the \textit{Upanishads} and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes and if only the first verse in the \textit{Isopanisad} were left intact in the memory of the Hindus, Hinduism would live forever. According to the German thinker Schopenhauer:

In the whole world there is no study, except that of the originals, so elevating and beneficial as that of the
Oupnekhat. It has been the solace of my life and it will be the solace of my death!  

_Bhagavad Gita_ speaks of itself as the nectar churned out from the milk of enlightenment drawn from the cows that are the Upanishads. That the _Gita_, the gem of philosophy itself is an outcome of the Upanishadic thought alone would suffice to proclaim the supreme metaphysical importance of the Upanishads.

The Atman-Brahman concept of the Upanishads has influenced the views of many great thinkers down the centuries and has changed their very world view itself. The Upanishadic view that energy resides in everything guided Western physicist Spinoza to the thought that every thing worldly possessed soul except in that he related the mental aspect of a thing with its physical complexity and explained the soul or psyche as a byproduct of the physical or material. \( \text{\textit{Atman}}, \) the _Upanishad_ say, is the all pervading power that animates everything which would otherwise have been inanimate. The _Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad_ for instance establishes the importance of the individual soul and universal soul. It thus explains the surmounting value of the _ātman_:

Verily, this Soul is the overlord of all things, the King of all things. As all the spokes are held together in the hub and felly of a wheel, just so in this Soul all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all these selves are held together.

The Upanishads refer to the macrocosmic and microcosmic character of “that great unborn Soul” which is indestructible, deathless, immortal, fearless… _Brahman_. Soul according to the Upanishads is of indefinable nature. Incomprehensible, it assumes manifold appearances. Unimaginable are its capabilities and unfathomable its potential.

Thus says the _Mundaka Upanishad_.

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Vast, heavenly, of unthinkable form,
And minuter than the minute, It shines forth.
It is farther than the far, yet here near at hand,
Set down in the secret place (of the heart),
Even here among those who behold (It). 21

The omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient nature of the Soul is thus well explained in the *Bhagavad Gītā* as follows:

With hands and feet everywhere,
With eyes, heads and faces everywhere,
With ears everywhere,
It rests pervading everything in the world.

It is manifest in the functions of the various organs,
Yet bereft of all sense organs, unattached,
Yet sustaining everything, without attributes,
Yet the protector of the qualities.

It is without and within all beings
It is moving and unmoving, being subtle’
It is incomprehensible; it is far, yet near.

It is undivided in beings
And yet remains as if divided
It is the sustainer of beings
As also the destroyer and creator.

It is the light of lights, and is said to be
Knowledge which is beyond all darkness,
It is knowable and accessible through knowledge,
And is implanted in the heart of all beings.\textsuperscript{22}

The ātman-brahman relation is inextricably one and the same that the lore speaks about ātman as the very part of the brahman. A purified ātman is brahman in miniature. Thus says the Chhändögyöpanishad:

He who according to rule has learned the Veda from the family of a teacher, in time leftover from doing works for the teacher; he who, after having come back again, in a home of his own continues Veda study in a clean place and produces (sons and pupils); he who has concentrated all his senses upon the soul (Ātman); he who is harmless (ahimsant) toward all things elsewhere then at holy places (ūrtha) –he, indeed, who lives thus throughout his length of life reaches the Brahma world and does not return hither again.\textsuperscript{23}

The word Brahman which connotes the ultimate reality of the universe originally meant reality which grows or swells. Originated from the root br which means ‘expands’, Brahman may nearly be translated into ‘the ever expanding one’ or the one which is tended to be expanded (bruhad). The gross and subtle as well as the infinite energy, Brahman may be described as the all encompassing everything or the basic essence of this universe and all the universes, if any. It is in everything and above everything, the primordial and the final reality. Some foreign indologists in their dilettantish interpretation took the word Brahman for mere ‘prayer’ with which the ancient Indians, they say, tried to propitiate their Gods. Thus goes one such interpretation:
Every attempt to explain this central idea of Indian philosophy must proceed from the fact that the word Brahman throughout the Rig-Veda in which it occurs more than 200 times signifies without exception nothing more than ‘prayer’. Like Soma and other gifts, the prayer of the poet is offered to the gods; they enjoy it; they are fortified by it for their heroic deeds; and as man stands in need of the various benefits of the gods, the gods need for their welfare the offerings and especially the prayers of mankind; prayer is a ‘tonic of the gods’…thus the idea became more prominent that human prayer is a power which surpasses in potency even the might of the gods. In the moments of religious devotion man felt himself raised above his own individuality; felt awakening in himself that metaphysical power on which all worlds with their gods and creatures are dependent. By this curious development …Brahman, the old name for prayer, became the most usual name for the creative principle of the world.24

To Oldenberg it meant the magic spell which produces the desired effect. To Max Muller it meant ‘word’. But such readings of Europeans cannot be taken into face value and have been vilified many times by original thinkers of modern India. For instance Sri Aurobindo refuted this view about the occidental reading in Indian philosophy and culture. A Europe with its materialistic approach, he believed, could hardly understand the wisdom of India couched in the most mystic and symbolic of all literary expressions ever available. Its intellect he says
could not cut across mere superficialities. He says, the Vedic Rishis or Seers surely knew about their own religion, more than Roth or Max Muller.

The word Brahman could thus meticulously be interpreted as that which grows or expands. Brahman as all intelligent interpretations explain is the central energy the universe evolves out from and recedes to or expands ever from and contracts to. The Upanishads affirm that Brahman is the all inclusive and self-sufficient source of all that is in this world, the ultimate reality (sat).

Many Upanishads like Īśa, Kēna, Chhāndogya and Taśtrāyi, and especially Maitri discuss the dual aspects of Brahman thus:

There are assuredly, two forms of Brahma: Time and the Timeless. That which is prior to the sun is the Timeless (a-kāla), without parts (a-kāya). But that which begins with the Sun is time which has parts...

The same Upanishad speaks of the timeless and indeterminate also. The concept of saguṇa Brahman is elaborated in the terminology of the later Vēdānta where Brahman is the material as well as the efficient cause of the world. Chhāndogya Upanishad refers to Brahman as taṭjaṭān or that which gives rise to, supports and reabsorbs the world. Brahman is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world. Brahman as the immanent reality of the world is also expressed in the Īśa, Kēna, Chhāndogya, Taśtrāyi etc. This kind of an explanation helps one to have a gradual understanding of what this ultimate oneness is so that he may not remain unfamiliar with and perplexed about the all encompassing nature of Brahman into which everything dissolves and disappears. Only through the medium of the visible one can reach the invisible. The general method of apprehending reality is made use of by some Vedantins to help layman develop the idea of an ultimate oneness which is responsible for the origin of the world and its working. It is due
to this reason that great men like Sankara posited the existence of *Saguṇa Brahman* or *Īśwara* which was unbecoming of an Advaitin like him. Swami Vivekananda clarifies this idea as follows:

What is the most evolved notion that man has of this universe? It is intelligence, the adjustment of part to part, the display of intelligence, of which the ancient design theory was an attempt at expression. The beginning was, therefore, intelligence. At the beginning that intelligence becomes involved, and in the end that intelligence gets evolved. The sum total of the intelligence displayed in the universe must, therefore, be the involved universal intelligence unfolding itself. This universal intelligence is what we call God. Call it by any other name, it is absolutely certain that in the beginning there is that Infinite cosmic intelligence. This cosmic intelligence gets involved, and it manifests, evolves itself, until it becomes the perfect man, the “Christ-man”, the “Buddha-man”. Then it goes back to its own source.  

Upanishadic Seers who sought after this idea of unity explain it in unambiguous terms as Absolute, One without a second, encompassing all, devoid of qualities and dwells in each entity of the world as consciousness. They name it as *Brahman* and “bring out in several fanciful and mythological accounts of creation the great truth of the oneness of the world”. Other abstracts that connote the same are *Purusha, Ātman* etc. Suffice it to say that the ultimate cosmic principle is the *Brahman* which is the soul in all things. The dialogue
between Ushasta cakrayan and Yajnavalkya referred to in the *Brahadāranyaka Upanishad* throws light on this identity.

Then Ushasta Cakrayana questioned him [on Brahman],

‘Yajnavalkya said he, ‘explain to me who is the Brahma present and not beyond our ken, him who is the Soul in all things.’

‘He is your soul (atman), which is in all things,’

‘Which One, O Yajnavalkya is in all things?

‘He who breathes in with your breathing in (prana) is the Soul of yours, which is in all things. He who breathes out with your breathing out (apana) is the Soul of yours, which is in all things. He who breathes about with your breathing up (udana) is the Soul of yours, which is in all things. He is your soul, which is in all things’.

Thus Brahman is the one Supreme Being pervading and overruling the whole universe. *Maitri Upanishad* explains Brahman as the cosmic intelligence. It says:

“Verily, in the beginning this world was Brahma, the limitless One-limitless to the east, limitless to the west, limitless to the north, and above and below, limitless in every direction. Truly, for him east and the other direction exist not, nor across, nor below, nor above.

Incomprehensible is that supreme Soul (*Ātman*), unlimited, unborn, not to be reasoned about, unthinkable – He whose soul is space (*ākāśātman*)! In
the dissolution of the world He alone remains awake. 
From that space He assuredly, awakes this world, which is a mass of thought. It is thought by Him, and in Him it disappears."

These lines bring out the monistic idea regarding the Brahman which is both the beginning as well as the end in one. Sankara’s finding Brahma satyam jagannithya jīvō brahmaiva nāpara or Brahman alone is the reality since jīva is nothing other than the Brahman is of much significance. Jagat which means ever moving is indeed the reflection of the very Brahman itself which too is ever expanding, dynamic and vibrant. The world is only a mass of thought originating from the mind, the adjunct or the sheath which covers the pure soul with its power of samkalpa-vikalpa (imagination and projection)

Brahman is not god conceived in the ordinary sense of the term. It is not a concept which serves the purpose of religion, sociology or theology. It is the primordial energy or the undifferentiated consciousness and the ultimate one which is the all comprehending whole. Īsāpanishad describes Brahman as “One amidst the many, swifter than the mind”. It is the potential one that includes within it the past, present and the future. Space too like time is a part of the infinite. Time and space are the constructs of mind to fit into the manifest world in a sequential order. Relative, they are not absolute like Brahman. Space and time are inherent in Brahman or Brahman is space. They being the parts of Brahman, often the lore equates them with Brahman. Hence the Upanishadic view that Brahman is time and space too. Chhândögya Upanishad thus speaks of Brahman as the space from which everything proceeds and recedes to:

“‘To what does this world go back?’ ‘To space,’ said he.
‘Verily, all things here arise out of space.
They disappear back into space, for space alone

66
Cosmology of ancient India as discoursed by Yajnavalkya in *Brahadāranyaka Upanishad* views space as only one of the expressions of *Brahman*. Space does not have absolute nature but is only relative to the degree of enlightenment attained by mind which is the locus of *māya*. *Brahman* is postulated as manifest in a person’s psychic activities playing with *karaṇa* and *antakaraṇa* (sense organs and the mind). The more the mind is steadied the brighter the eternity and infinitude shine. Having out-stepped the confines of time and space one becomes the very part of the eternity itself. To such a person with his steadied wisdom or *sthitaprajña* as given in the terminology of the *Gītā* space and time stretch in their infinitude before him. He sees the far as he sees the near. He sees the future as he sees the present. Hence his capability to speak about what happens far away and what is stored in the future, one of the *ashtaiśwaryasiddhis* or rare potentials attained by supermen. Sri Aurobindo describes it as follows:

> Even in Its universal being Brahman exceeds the Movement. Exceeding Time, it contains in Itself past, present and future simultaneously and has not to run to the end of conceivable Time. Exceeding Space, It contains all formations in Itself coincidently and has not to run to the end of conceivable Space. Exceeding Causality, It contains freely in Itself all eventualities as well as all potentialities without being bound by the apparent chain of causality by which they are linked in the universe. Everything is already realized by it as the Lord before it can be accomplished by the separated personalities in the movement.

When the infinite consciousness or primordial energy wills to evolve itself into appearance, the first derivate, *chit-śakti* or *māya* emanates. *Māya* is Brahman’s power of manifestation which causes the appearance of world with its name and
form, differences and diversities, time and space and all that are governed by the principle of causality. *Brahman* manifests with the same care and accuracy in the minutest as well as the most gigantic entities of the world, maintaining the natural law of energy conservation, transforming itself from one state to another without any change in the sum total of energy. The *māya* thus works in different ways to cause the appearance of the world of differences and diversities simultaneous with its maintaining the totality of energy through its dynamics of evolution and manifestation. According to Sri Aurobindo

Science reveals to us how minute is the care, how cunning the device, how intense the absorption it bestows upon the smallest of its works even as on the largest this mighty energy is an equal and impartial mother, *samam brahma*, in the great term of the Gita, and its intensity and force of movement is the same in the formation and upholding of a system of suns and the organization of the life of an ant-hill.\(^\text{33}\)

The power and the ‘Absolute’ are not separate but co-exist in their potential phase (*praṇaya*) in a universal homogeneity. Force which is the derivate of the undifferentiated consciousness is not an unintelligent energy but has consciousness or *bōḍha* inherent in it.

He creates this work, and rests again

Having entered into union (*yōga*) with principle

(*tattva*) after principle,

With one, with two, with three, or with eight,

With time, too and the subtle qualities of a self.\(^\text{34}\)
The cosmic rest of the **Brahman** between the two cycles of manifestations is described *salila* or water without any wave and ripple. This is symbolically presented by the lore through the ‘Cosmic Sleep’ of the Vishnu on the infinity again represented through the serpent **Ananta** meaning ‘without end’ or infinite, all amidst the infinite water sheet. It is the state to which **Brahman** withdraws after manifestation to prepare itself for the next cycle of creation. This phase in which the universe exists only in a potential form, just as the future tree exists in the seed, is the state of **pralaya** or absorption. The first fluttering, waving, thought (**prathama spanda**) turns the ‘Being’ into the ‘Become’ or the unmanifest into the manifest. Out of the blissful infinite which is in perfect equilibrium the form arises. With *yogamaya* or consciousness force undergoing self manifestation, the one becomes the many. **Brahman** is the lord of *yogamaya* or **sakti** which through contracting and expanding or attractive and repulsive processes gets transformed into the material world of differences and diversities.

This is how Sri Aurobindo explains it:

“Matter is the presentation of force which is most easily intelligible to our intelligence, molded as it is by contacts in Matter to which a mind involved in material brain gives the response. The elementary state of material Force is, in the view of the old Indian physicists, a condition of purer material extension in Space of which the peculiar property is vibration typified to us by the phenomenon of sound. But vibration in this state of ether is not sufficient to create forms. There must first be some obstruction in the flow of the Force ocean, some contraction and expansion, some interplay of vibrations, some
impinging of force upon force so as to create a beginning of fixed relation and mutual effects. Material Force modifying its first ethereal status assumes a second, called in the old language the aerial, of which the special property is contact between force and force, contact that is the basis of all material relations. Still we have not as yet real forms but only varying forces. A sustaining principle is needed. This is provided by a third self-modification of the primitive Force of which the principle of light, electricity, fire and heat is for us the characteristic manifestation. Even then, we can have forms of force preserving their own character and peculiar action, but not stable forms of Matter. A fourth state characterized by diffusion and a first medium of permanent attractions and repulsions, termed picturesquely water or the liquid state, and a fifth of cohesion, termed earth or the solid state, complete the necessary elements”.

The Brahman has thus two aspects. It is the ultimate, undifferentiated, homogenous reality in which everything exists in a potential state which is indeterminate with no qualitative differentiation. This is nirguṇabrahman which is śivam or bliss. Thaittirīya Upanishad refers to Brahman as ānanda. (ānandam Brahma, ānandādhyéva khalvimāni bhūtāni jāyante.) It is Vishnu or the one with expanding and all pervading nature. When nirguṇabrahman through its own deliberate thought separates its power or force, the world with its manifoldness arises. Māya or chit-śakti is that which projects the world out of Brahman.
Sacred poetry (*chhandas*), the sacrifices, the ceremonies, the ordinances, the past, the future, and what the Vedas declare this whole world, the illusion-maker (*mayīn*) projects out of this [Brahma]And in it by illusion.\(^{37}\)

According to *Ṛk Vēda* in the beginning there was neither nothingness nor differentiated substances (*nasadāśinnō sadāśīd*) but only eternal, undifferentiated pure consciousness. *Taittirīya* has it that the *Brahman* desired thus:

Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself!

Having performed austerity he created this whole world, whatever there is here. Having created it, into it, indeed, he entered. Having entered it, he became both the actual (*sat*) and the yon (*tya*), both the defined (*nirukta*) and the undefined, both the based and the non-based, both the consciousness (*vijñāna*) and the unconscious, both the real (*satya*) and the false (*anṛta*). As the real, he became whatever there is here.\(^{38}\)

Upanishads describe the origin of the phenomenal world. *Praśna Upanishad* mentions *praṇāpati* creating *Raya* and *Prāṇa*, the first creations through intense meditation. Upanishads refer to five physical elements attaining their gross stage from the subtle unified state and becoming the world of matter which is a play of *māya*. The picture is that of a pendulum between the potential and kinetic i.e. the unity and diversity, an idea the Upanishads introduce to help know the inherent and ultimate unity as a part of cosmology, especially the origin of the cosmos, if such a thing ever happened.

In *Kathā Upanishad* the *Brahman* is explained as the life source (*praṇa*) which controls every worldly occurrence. Swami Vivekananda explains the *Brahman* as
the *Prāṇa* or the life that infuses *spanda* or vibration into the cosmos. According to him,

… all the forces, whether you call them gravitation, or attraction, or repulsion, whether expressing themselves as heat, or electricity, or magnetism, are nothing but the variations of that unit energy. Whether they express themselves as thought, reflected from *Antahkarana*, the inner organs of man, or as action from an external organ, the unit from which they spring is what is called *prana*. Again, what is *prana*? *Prana* is *Spandana* or vibration. When all this universe shall have resolved back into its primal state, what becomes of this infinite force? Do they think that it becomes extinct? Of course no. If it became extinct, what would be the cause of the next wave, because the motion is going in wave forms, rising, falling, rising again, falling again? Here is the word *Srishti*, which expresses the universe… It is *Srṣṭi*, projection. At the end of a cycle, every thing becomes finer and finer and is resolved back into the primal state from which it sprang, and therefore it remains for a time quiescent, to spring forth again. That is *Srishti*, Projection. And what becomes of all these forces, the *Pranas*? They are resolved back into the primal *Prana*, and this *Prana* becomes almost motionless – not entirely motionless; and that is what is described in the Vedic *Sukta*: “It
vibrated without vibrations” – *Anidavatam*... And what becomes of what you call matter the forces permeate all matter; they all dissolve into *Akasha* from which they again come out; this *Akasha* is the primal matter. Whether you translate it as ether or anything else, the idea is that this *Akasha* is the primal form of matter. This *Akasha* vibrates under the action of *Prana*, and when the next *Srishti* is coming up, as the vibrations become quicker, the *Akasha* is lashed into all these wave forms which we call suns, moons and systems”.

There is no primordial substance employed in the creation of the cosmos like clay used by the potter to mould the pot. Hence the Upanishads’ comparison of the mundane life with dream to give a fitting explanation for the universe. In dream or *swapna* which is a virtual reality one experiences as in an awakened mood. But the difference here is that in dream with no physical involvement, mind alone becomes the enjoyer, the enjoyed and enjoymnt, a process where the three combine to experience the evanescence. But so long as one is in dream he never realizes that what is experienced is only ephemeral. The fact that it was dream itself is realized only with one waking up when the dream world vanishes. Quiet similar is the awakened mood or *jägrat*. The occurrence of the world, the Upanishads say, is like a dream. The world is the differentiated consciousness which comes from the undifferentiated consciousness. Just like one falls into the dream from the awakened mood to which the mind gets back after the sleep individuals and things evolve from the undifferentiated and attain the differentiated state of entities with separate identities. And after a span just as the mind returns from the dream to the wakened state the differentiated entity returns
to the undifferentiated. This is the \textit{māyāvāda} which is the basis of \textit{advaitavedānta}. According to this explanation \textit{Brahman} remains in both the unmanifest and manifest forms simultaneously. Even when the \textit{Brahman} manifests into the multitude of appearances it remains unchanged, say the Upanishads. It thus with its total content and state unchanging, produces everything from it and draws them back. This is like magician conjuring up the magical world and causing it to vanish. The world thus appears like an enlarged dream, a big magic or \textit{māya} created by the very \textit{Brahman}. Hence the word \textit{māyīn} to describe the \textit{Brahman}. Māya is inherent in the very \textit{māyīn} just as the magic power in the magician. According to Upanishad \textit{māya} is the power of the \textit{māyīn}, the powerful. Māya creates the infinite variety out of the undifferentiated oneness. Being the one doing important (\textit{prakrūṣṭa}) works (\textit{kruti}) \textit{māya} is also called \textit{prakruti}. \textit{Prakruti} according to the \textit{Sāṅkhya} philosophy is the undifferentiated whole which is the ‘being’, the ‘become’ as well as the will that causes the ‘being’ to ‘become’. It is the \textit{Brahman} that causes itself, fills and out-steps itself. The world is thus the \textit{Brahman} in both its manifest and unmanifest forms. But this duality is only in the outer surface which vanishes at the awakening of consciousness which is within oneself as well as in the entirety, the \textit{Brahman}. When one realizes that the world is only a manifestation of \textit{Brahman} which is the embodiment of \textit{bōḍha} or consciousness he attains the state of consciousness or \textit{bōḍha} or the Buddhahood. Hence the call of the \textit{Gīta} to attain the \textit{bōḍha} or the supreme consciousness (\textit{buddhau saranamanviścha}) or the later prayer of Gautama the Buddha for seeking refuge in it (\textit{Buddham śaraṇam gachhāmi}). What is supreme is the \textit{bōḍha} or consciousness because it is the very \textit{Brahman} itself. Everything emanates from the \textit{bōḍha} or pure consciousness and returns to it.
But how could one know that world is only a manifestation of Brahman or how to explain that it is consciousness that manifests as the visible cosmos are problems that confront an Indian cosmologist. When the world of matter is analyzed into simple constituents one ends up with self or consciousness. Every stage of analysis proves that all that are analyzed are not realities but the only reality is the consciousness that realizes the ephemeral nature of the mundane. Hence a Vedantin’s refutation, ‘this is not’ (nēṭi) the reality and that the consciousness is the only reality that helps one know the unreality. This is the most convincing demonstration of the existence of omnipresent consciousness. It is necessary to explain how the consciousness appears as things and events. Upanishads point to mind as pure consciousness possessed by māya or force. They like modern science opine that Force or motion is the cause of appearances. Analyzing a complex unit, the cloth for instance to the last, one comes across thread, cotton, the atom and finally the sub-atomic particles which are in motion giving visibility to the particle. This force of motion is the cause of the visible universe according to the Upanishads. All what are visible are thus unrealities or mere appearances due to superimposition (adhyārōpa) which is a play of Māya with mind as its locus. Citing the example of the rope-snake confusion, the Upanishads say that the visible world is superimposed on the Brahman just as the snake on the rope.

According to Sankhya Brahman contains the qualities sattva, rajas and tamas (salila) in perfect equilibrium. When this equilibrium is disturbed by the force of prakruti the sattva is transformed into rajas and rajas into tamas and materialization takes place. When the momentum of the force increases sattva becomes faint and rajas dominates and when the momentum reaches the maximum tamas dominates and results in materialization. Solidity and mass are thus the results of motion. Experiments by the high speed particle accelerators in
CERN have shown that particles come out of nothing. An examination of the structure of an atom makes this clear. An atom consists mostly of empty space with nucleus at the centre which contains almost the whole weight of an atom. The electrons revolving around the nucleus have only negligible weight. This weight difference is due to the speed of the particles. The speed of the particles in the nucleus is 40,000 miles per second whereas the speed of the electrons is 600 miles per second. It is the speed of the particle which appears as the mass. Atom which is mostly of empty space appears as matter due to the high velocity of its particles that cover up the empty space giving the appearance of a solid the matter at rest. This high speed mobility or motion is thus reason of visibility. When motion ceases, the visibility too ceases with matter vanishing into the disappearance. This, the Védánta calls Alāta Brāmaṇa or swirling of torch that causes the appearance of circle filled with fire.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{rij}u \ & \text{vakra}dikābhāsa \\
\text{malātaspanditam yat}ṭa \\
\text{grahaṇagrāhakābhāsam} \\
\text{vijñānaspanditam tat}ṭa
\end{align*}
\]

Just like the speedy movement of fire at the end of the faggot band creates a circle of fire that appears straight and curved, so is the vijñāna or the unreal knowledge which appears the way one perceives it.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{aspandamānālata} \\
\text{manābhāsamajam yat}ṭa \\
\text{aspandamānām vijñāna} \\
\text{manabhāsamajam thaṭa}
\end{align*}
\]
Just as there is no straight or curved line of fire when the fire at the end of the faggot band remains still, so is the absence of differences when vijñāna or the unreal knowledge ceases to work. (Jñāna or the real knowledge dawns when the vijñāna or the unreal knowledge ceases.)

Revolving a burning faggot gives the appearance of a fire-circle which ceases to exist when the revolving stops. Here it is clear that the fire-circle does not come from the fire or from something outside it but from the act of revolving. Consequently when the revolving stops the circle of fire vanishes like an illusion. Likewise the world of experience is only a fanciful creation resulting from movement or force of the magic wand of the great magician, the Brahman or the undifferentiated consciousness.

The many in the universe are sometimes called parts of the universal Brahman as the waves are parts of the sea. But, in truth, these waves are each of them that sea, their diversities being those of frontal or superficial appearances caused by the sea’s motion. As each object in the universe is really the whole universe in a different frontal appearance, so each individual soul is all Brahman regarding itself and world from a centre of cosmic consciousness.

Upanishadic concept of Māya explains how the undifferentiated consciousness manifests as the visible world.

The core of Upanishadic teaching is the idea of unity. Though the māya conjures up the world of differences it vanishes the moment one realizes the
ultimate unity. When it is realized that the world is only the ātman manifest, one realizes the secret of the soul, world and God. According to Īśa Upanishad truth is concealed by the sheath of gold that is māya which conceals one and projects another (āvaraṇa and vikshēpa). Kathā Upanishad referring to māya as ‘adhruva’ has it that sages never find reality and certainty in the unrealities and uncertainties. It also pities at the ignorant and the dilettantes who styling themselves wise, blindly follow the blind. The word māya occurs in Čhāndogya Upanishad too which speaks of it as anṛta. Śvētasvatāra refers to māya as illusion and the power of God.

Sacred poetry (chhandas), the sacrifices, the ceremonies, the ordinances, the past, the future, and what the Vedas declare

This whole world the illusion-maker (mayin)

Projects out of this (Brahma)

And in it by illusion (maya) the other is confined.42

Here god is referred to as māyin or a magician whose power, the māya Śvētasvatāra Upanishad identifies with prakrti. Aitareya Upanishad defines māya as the power of ātman to manifest into the world of names and forms. All these Upanishadic views help conclude that though the word māya is used rarely, the māya elaborated by the Advaita vedantin has its root in the Upanishads. The veil, the knot, the web, the darkness, ignorance etc mentioned in the Upanishads are the various expressions of māya which is the force responsible for the concealment of the real and the projection of the unreal. It is the force that vibrates, moves and the velocity thus produced results as the material world. The work of māya that helps the brahman evolve into the world could be compared to that of a magician who conjures up the appearances which do not exist apart
from the magician. *Māya*, the power of *brahman* which cannot be separated from the source and helps it manifest as the world of separation and manifoldness is also called *prakruti* or the one with superior action (*prakrushiṭa krutirasya sa prakruti*). *Māya* has three aspects, *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas* in it. *Sattwa* is illuminating, resulting in the ultimate knowledge. *Rajas* is that which leads to attachment or enjoyment while *tamas* conceals the reality leading to ignorance. When *tamas* conceals the real, *rajas* projects the unreal resulting in Brahma *vivarta*. The nature of *māya* is indeterminate, resulting in the creation of an indeterminate world (*anirvachaniṇya*). Ordinary men in their mundane existence know not the working of *māya* acting concealed which but ceases to exist with one realizing the world as *brahman* or pure consciousness. It may therefore be understood that *māya*, the power of *brahman* toys with the mind, creating all illusions. In *Viveka Chūḍāmani* Sankara says:

> In dreams, when there is no actual contact with the external world, the mind alone creates the whole universe consisting of the experiences etc. Similarly in the waking state also; there is no difference. Therefore all this (phenomenal universe) is the projection of the mind.

> “In dreamless sleep, when the mind is reduced to its causal state, there exists nothing (for the person asleep) as is evident from universal experience. Hence man’s relative existence is simply the creation of his mind, and has no objective reality.”

This is how Sri Aurobindo puts it:

> Stability and movement, we must remember, are only our psychological representations of the Absolute,
even as are oneness and multitude. The Absolute is beyond stability and movement as it is beyond unity and multiplicity. But it takes its eternal poise in the one and stable and whirls rounds itself infinitely, inconceivably, securely in the moving and multitudinous. World existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the god numberlessly to the view: it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing.\textsuperscript{46}

Just as mind is the enjoyer and the enjoyed in dream, in the wakened state too it becomes an instrument of Maya experiencing the world. In dream and the wakened state, the mind works through different subjective experiences. But in the state of \textit{sushupti} or complete sleep wherein both body and mind become unconscious awakens the conscious soul or the consciousness experiencing the ecstasy of freedom from the mundane and union with Absolute. Self-realization thus leads to \textit{māya} ceasing its work. According to Gaudapada’s \textit{Māndūkyakārīka} the world of manifoldness is the projection of the mind which is the seat of \textit{māya} working out the functions of imagination and projection (\textit{sankalpa-vikalpa}). Mind is only a force vibrating as \textit{samkalpa} and \textit{vikalpa}. \textit{Samadhi} is the state in which there is no play of force. In quantum physics the ghostlike atoms materialize to form a visible reality. This is due to the collapse of consciousness. In \textit{Ātma-bodha} Sankara compares consciousness to the light of the Sun, that illuminates everything. “The body, senses, mind and \textit{buddhi} engage in their respective activities with the help of consciousness which is inherent in \textit{ātman}, just as men work with the help of light that is inherent in the sun”.\textsuperscript{47}
Consciousness chooses the form of reality we want to materialize and the choice is made not by pure intelligence or pure consciousness but by the consciousness disguised as mind which is the seat of \textit{māya}. To put it otherwise, mind chooses in agreement with its own inner urges and drives guided by its previous \textit{karma} or actions. As the Jaina teacher Vardhamana Mahavira theorized, \textit{karma} weighs down the soul or pure consciousness to the \textit{samsāra} or the fictitious material world. Modern science which seems to have realized this truth about the material world thus opines:

As we have seen, the act of observation causes the ghostlike superposition of potential realities to cohere into a single, concrete reality. Left to its own devices, an atom cannot make a choice. We have to observe it before a particular outcome is realized. The fact that you can decide to create either an atom-at-a-place or an atom-with-a-speed confirms that, whatever its nature, your mind does, in a sense, reach into the physical world.\textsuperscript{48}

When this movement is no more, there is no mind and also no world. The permanent union with the Absolute is possible only in \textit{samādhi}.

\begin{align*}
\text{manōdrisyamidam dvaitam} \\
\text{yatkinchil sacharācharam} \\
\text{manasōhyamanībhāve} \\
\text{dvaitam naivōpalabhyate}
\end{align*}

The duality seen in all the moving and unmoving is the mind-born when the mind vanishes, with it would vanish all the dualities.\textsuperscript{49}
Diversity thus disappears with the mind getting steady and still. Gaudapada even carried his views to the extreme of the non-creation of the world or *ajātavāda*. To quote him:

Some people regard the universe as the greatness of God, others as his creation, others as a dream, others as an illusion, others think of the world as an accidental product of time. Others regard it merely as the will of the God… still others the object of His enjoyment, some people call it a play of God, and yet others regard it as God’s nature.

\[
\begin{align*}
vibhūtim \text{ prasavam twanye} & \vspace{3pt} \\
\text{manyantē sṛṣṭi chintakāh} & \vspace{3pt} \\
\text{swapnamāyāswarūpēti} & \vspace{3pt} \\
\text{sṛṣṭiranyairvikalpītā} &
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ichhāmātram prabhōḥ sṛṣṭi-} & \vspace{3pt} \\
\text{riti sṛṣṭau viṇśchitaḥ} & \vspace{3pt} \\
kālāl prasūtim bhūtānām & \vspace{3pt} \\
\text{manyantē kāla chintakāh} &
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
bhōgārthām sṛṣṭirityanyē & \vspace{3pt} \\
\text{kriḍārthamiti chāparē} & \vspace{3pt} \\
deśasyēva swabhāvōya- & \vspace{3pt} \\
māpta kāmaśya kā spruha & ^{50}
\end{align*}
\]

But Gaudapada’s view of non-creation would dawn only to one who has control over his mind to the extent of realizing the world as a mirage. Having crossed the
world of dualities affected by happiness and sorrows, he experiences perfect bliss. Sankara’s theory of *māya* should be studied in the light of his theory of grades of reality. He does not completely negate the existence of the world but states that the world disappears for a person who realizes the highest reality or *parāmarṣṭikasatta* in the same way in which hallucination of snake in the rope ceases when the rope is apprehended. Thus grading the realities he was able overcome the criticisms leveled against the doctrine of *māya*.

Seekers of *mōksha* or liberation in their ignorance sometimes took the material world as an obstacle in their attaining it and hence their tendency to negate the reality of matter. But Upanishads remove this ignorance, explaining the material world and its working as the manifestations of the *Brahman*. *Brahman* or the Absolute spirit dwells both in the individual soul and the material world. This Upanishadic view is thus explained by Sri Aurobindo:

> There are always two possible views of the universe. The one supposes, with modern Science, Matter to be the beginning of things and studies everything as an evolution from Matter; or, if not Matter, then, with the Sankhya philosophy, an indeterminate inconscient, active Force or *Prakṛti* of which even mind and reason are mechanical operations, - the conscious soul, if any exist, being a quite different and, although conscient, yet inactive entity. The other supposes the conscious soul, the *Purusha*, to be the material as well as the cause of the universe and *Prakṛti* to be only its *Shakti* or the material of forms. The latter is the view of the Upanishads.\(^{51}\)
Munḍaka Upanishad says, the material world doesn’t hinder self-realization. Indeed the material world with its diverse experiences is a requirement of spiritual life, it being an arena to practice renunciation. To develop renunciation there must be a world to renounce. Brahman is the paternal aspect and the material world the maternal which fuse together into a creative unity i.e. the spiritual realization. Modern scientific discovery that mass is a form of energy established that there is a fundamental hidden reality, compassing probably towards a spiritual something. The Seers of the Upanishads intuitively experienced this ‘spiritual’ and realized that consciousness is the ultimate reality of which the material world is only the manifestation.

For in that higher and less hampered existence we perceive that consciousness and being are not different from each other, but all being is a supreme consciousness, all consciousness is self-existence, eternal in itself, real in its works and neither a dream nor an evolution. The world is real precisely because it exists only in consciousness; for it is a Conscious Energy one with Being that creates it. It is the existence of material form in its own right apart from the self-illumined energy which assumes the form …

Human body, considered a hindrance to self-realization, is in fact the manifestation of the ultimate reality. The sense organs and the mind combine into the physical form; the mind-consciousness combine makes the life. The world as matter is not the creation of the mind. That the matter ever existed, exists and will exist as the seat of energy is scientifically proved. Brahman the ultimate, involutes into the world and resides in everything material, remaining
transcendent too. Material world thus becomes the manifestation of the ultimate consciousness, the *Brahman*. Mind is only a higher expression of the Absolute consciousness through which one can experience the material world. Sense organs and the mind (*karaṇa* and *antakaraṇa*) help one experience the external world. Of these the mind is superior, coordinating and assimilating the sensations produced by the work of force. It is thus through the sense organs and mind the force or *māya* makes itself felt. This spiritual relevance of the material body or the material world is thus well summed up:

In other words, if Brahman has entered into form and represented Its being in material substance, it can only be to enjoy self-manifestation in the figures of relative and phenomenal consciousness. Brahman is in this world to represent Itself in the values of Life. Life exists in Brahman in order to discover Brahman in itself. Therefore man’s importance in the world is that he gives to it that development of consciousness in which its transfiguration by a perfect self-discovery becomes possible. To fulfill god in life is man’s manhood. He starts from the animal vitality and its activities, but a divine existence is its objective.\(^5^3\)

Science has it that mass is a form of energy. According to Upanishads *Brahman* is the cosmic energy which is undifferentiated consciousness, all pervading bliss (*śivam*). When this gets transformed into force (*śakti*), it appears as matter through the acts of attraction, repulsion, contraction and gravitation (*māya*). Matter is thus a mode of *Brahman*, a fact one perceives through mind which is another mode of *Brahman*. It is the mind’s ability to distinguish helps one
experience diversity. Born of Brahman or consciousness, the differentiating mind merges back to its source. Mind here must not be mistaken as subjective mind (identified with body, senses) but it is the universal mind. As Swami Ranganathananda says:

*Védānta* and *Sānkhya* reduce the universe of objects and events, external and internal to consciousness. This is the *mahan atma* or *mahat*, which is the totality of the mind and matter in the manifested universe in their subtlest forms. When knowledge penetrates the universe to its depth, it reveals itself as consisting of nothing but an ocean of awareness or consciousness.⁵⁴

But those who perceive the world as merely material with nothing mystical desire to get rid off it to attain liberation. To them *mōksa* is an after-death state. Liberation involves two aspects – the object to be liberated and from what it is to be liberated. This takes one to the concepts of *jīva* and *ātman*. *Jīva* is individual soul and *ātman* the universal soul. *Jīva* is *ātman* micro-formed in human body. Adjuncts like matter (physical body), vital airs (*prāṇa*), and mind (*manas*) combine to limit and condition the pure self or *ātman*, making it the *jīvatman*. Though Life or *prāṇa* appears to succumb to death, in reality it is not annihilated by death but continues its progress, assuming ever new material forms in its sojourn through the cycles of birth and death till it attains self-realization. The soul, *ātman* or *Brahman* dwells in the mind which exists in body. It could thus be concluded that matter, considered the lowest of the planes of existence, has in it the *Brahman* or ultimate cosmic energy as its underlying substratum. *Brahman* is thus latent in matter. It is worth examining the concept of *kōśa* as explained in the *Upanishads*. Accordingly soul is covered by layers of *kōśas* or sheaths of
which the first is *annamaya kōśā* or the sheath of food (physical body nourished and sustained by food). Upanishadic verses relate the importance of food. Inside the *annamaya kōśā* or physical body rests the sheath of vital air or *prāṇamaya kōśā*. Third is the mental sheath or *manōmaya kōśā* encased in the sheath of vital airs. Inside the mental sheath is the sheath of intellect or *vijñānamaya kōśā* and the final sheath is of bliss or *ānandamaya kōśā*. One finds such an explanation of the *kosas* in the *Taittirīya Upanishad* and *Kaṭha Upanishad*.

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indriye`byah para hyartha artiśebhyaścā param manah
manasastu para buddhiḥ buddhērātmā mahān param.
Higher than the senses are the objects of sense.
Higher than the objects of sense is the mind (*manas)*
Higher than the mind is the intellect (*buddhi*).
Higher than the intellect is the Great Self (*atman*).
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mahataḥ paramavyaktamavyaktāt purushaḥ paraḥ
purushānna param kinchīt sā kashṭā sā para gatiḥ.
Higher than the Great is the Unmanifest (*avyakta*).
Higher than the unmanifest is the Supreme person.
Higher than the Supreme person there is nothing at all.
That is the goal. That is the highest course.55
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Indriye`byah param manō manasah satvamuttamam
Satwādadhi mahānātmā mahatō avayktamuttamam
Mind is higher than the senses
Higher than the mind is intellect
Soul is higher than the intellect
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Higher than the soul is the unmanifest.\textsuperscript{56} *Katha Upanishad* says that soul is the *mahat* or *hiranyagarbha* which is the manifest form of *avaktyam* or unmanifest primordial energy. This soul is the fifth or last *kōśa* characterized by bliss or *ānanda* and hence the name *ānandamaya kōśa*. Beyond the *ānandamaya kōśa* is the absolute *Brahman* or the unchanging ultimate which is without beginning and end symbolically represented through the symbol *sūnya*, a circle whose beginning and end are undifferentiated or *avyakta*. It is this entity which is *sūnya* or *avyakta* everything emanates from and returns to. The cyclical process of manifestation and withdrawal is the fission and fusion i.e. the many emerging from and returning to the one. This explains the idea of unity and diversity as complimentary states which in their perfect synthesis bring out the Creative Unity.

Existence in primal stage is subtle. Subtlety is the nature of *Brahman*. But passing through the different levels of manifestation it becomes complex and gross at different levels of the material or physical plane. Physical plane is a reality in its gross manifest form which is both universal and particular. The different parts for instance, the mineral world, the plant life, the animal kingdom, and the human society are related to the highest not in an abstract or mechanical way but as the very parts of the universal. All parts in the universe share the light of this universal spirit and possess specific features on account of the special duties assigned to them.\textsuperscript{57} It is *Brahman* or consciousness that manifests as particles. *Chitśakti* or consciousness manifests as *chētanaśakti* or life force and finally as *jaṭhaśakti* or material particles. It is relevant to look to what Sri Aurobindo ponders as follows:

> Is the material state an emptiness of consciousness – even though from the point of view of evolution an original and not an intermediate sleep? And by sleep
the human example teaches us that we mean not a suspension of consciousness, but its gathering inward away from conscious physical response to the impacts of external things. And is not this what all existence is that has not yet developed means of outward communication with the external physical world? Is there not a conscious Soul, a Purusha who wakes for ever even in all that sleeps?

To this Brhadâranyaka Upanishad answers that everything in this world is Brahman which is sat or pure intelligence. In sleep with the mind and body withdrawing from activity atman finds itself in perfect union with Brahman. This is the state of sushupti wherein the human soul becoming free of the sense organs enjoys bliss in perfect union with the Absolute. Brhadâranyaka Upanishad deals with this question in the following dialogue between Ajatasatru and Gargya:

Ajatasatru said: ‘when this man was asleep thus, where then was the person who consists of intelligence (vijnâna)? Whence did he thus come back?

And this also Gargya did not know.

Ajatasatru said: ‘when this man ease senses (prâna), rests in that place which is the space within the heart. When that person restrains the senses, that person is said to be asleep. Then the breath is restrained. The voice is restrained. The eye is restrained. The ear is restrained. The mind is restrained.

When he goes to asleep, these worlds are his. Then he becomes a great King, as it were. Then he
becomes a great Brahman, as it were. He enters the high and low, as it were. As a great king, king taking with him his people, moves around in his own country as he pleases, even so here this one, taking with him his senses, moves around in his own body (śārīra) as he pleases.

Now when one falls sound asleep (sushupta), when one knows nothing whatsoever, having crept out through the seventy-two thousand channels called hita, which lead from the heart to the pericardium, one rests in the pericardium. Verily as a youth or a great king or a great Brahman might rest when he has reached the summit of bliss, so this one now rests.

As a spider might come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this Soul come from all vital energies (prāṇa), all worlds, all gods, all beings. The mystic meaning (Upanishad) there of is ‘the Real of the real (satyasya satya). Vital energies, verily, are the real. He is their real.’

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad relates it further in the conservation between Yajnavalkya and Janaka:

Verily, there are just two conditions of this person: the condition of being in this world and the condition of being in the other world. There is an intermediate third condition, namely, that of being in sleep. By standing in this intermediate condition one sees both these conditions, namely being in this world and
being in the other world. Now whatever the approach is to the condition of being in the other world by making that approach one sees the evils [of this world] and the joys [of yonder world].

This, verily, is that form of his which is beyond desires, free from evil, without fear. As a man, when in the embrace of a beloved wife, knows nothing within or without, so this person, when in the embrace of the intelligent Soul, knows nothing within or without. Verily, that is his [true] form in which desire is satisfied, in which the Soul is his desire, in which he is without desire and without sorrow.

Aitareya Upanishad too holds the view that everything in this world is Brahman which is sat or pure intelligence. It says:

He is Brahma; he is Indra; he is Prajapati; [he is] all these gods; and these five gross elements (mahā-bhūtāṇi), namely earth (prithivī), wind (vāyu), space (ākāśā), water (apus), light (jyōtismi); these things and those which are mingled of the fine (ksudra), as it were; origins (bīja) of one sort and another: those born from an egg (anda-ja), and those born from a womb (jaru-ja), and those born from sweat (sveda-ja), and those born from sprout (udbhij-ja); horses, cows, persons, elephants; whatever breathing thing there is here – whether moving or flying, and what is stationary.
All this is guided by intelligence, is based on intelligence. The world is guided by intelligence. The basis is intelligence. Brahman is intelligence.61

The Taittārīya Upanishad also gives the same idea about the process of manifestation as follows:

He desired: ‘Would that, I were many! Let me procreate myself! He performed austerity. Having performed austerity he created this whole world, whatever there is here. Having created it, into it, indeed he entered. Having entered it, he became both the actual (sat) and the yon (tya), both the defined (nirukta) and the undefined, both the based and the non-based, both the conscious and the unconscious, both the real (satya) ad the false (anrta). As the real he became whatever there is here. That is what they call the real.62

In Kausātaki Upanishad there is a similar conversation between Ajatasatru and Balaki. In Chhāndogya Upanishad Udalaka Aruni thus explains to Swetaketu on sleep:

Understand from me, my dear, the condition of sleep. When a person here sleeps (svapiti), as it is called, then, my dear, he has reached Being, he has gone to his own (svamapita). Therefore they say of him “he sleeps”; for he has gone to his own.63

Description of four states of the self, the waking (jāgarita sthāna), the dreaming (svapana sthāna), deep sleep (sushupta) and the final stage of bliss (turiya) is found in the Upanishads. In Māndūkya Upanishad the states of the soul are
explained by comparing it with the syllable AUM. The first three states are represented by the syllables (mātra) – ‘A-U-M’ and turiya is the fourth syllable-less state. turiya is the state of perfect bliss enjoyed through the union with the ultimate. Still in sushupti one attains only a temporary union with the self.64

Brahman as the subtle and all inclusive cosmic energy is explained in the Katha Upanishad. The dialogue between Yama and Naciketas explains the vision of the one in the many and the eternal in the changing world of relativity. The Keśa Upanishad describes Brahman as the underlying energy – the sākshi-bhūtin – self witnessing all the physical, mental, and vital activities.65 This Upanishad mentions the gods winning victory over the demons. The Gods who thought that it was their might that helped them win was convinced of their folly and limitations with the omnipotent and omnipresent Supreme energy appearing before them in all its glory and radiance. With the Gods of fire, water, and air having failed to burn, wet or dry the Supreme energy which appeared as an apparition, Indra approached it only to see it disappeared. The anecdote ends with Uma discoursing to Indra and other celestials that the apparition was Brahman, the Supreme energy manifesting in everything worldly and that all energies are the expressions of this one unified undifferentiated energy that harmonizes all the seeming contradictions with its complementariness. As R. D. Ranade says:

This parable tells us that all physical as well as mental power is to be regarded merely as a manifestation of the power of Brahman. We thus see how the philosopher of the Kenopanishad arrives cosmologically at the conception of an unmanifested power which lies at the back of the so-called manifest
powers of nature and mind, and which must therefore
be understood as the primary reality.\textsuperscript{66}

To bring the primary energy content in oneself into communion with the
universal energy was the much sought after goal of the ancient sages. In fact they
were the seekers of unity, the state wherein there is no \textit{dvaita} or duality and
everything dwells in the bliss of non-duality or \textit{advaita}, enjoying the nectar of
the ultimate harmony or the creative unity.

Along with teaching the idea of ultimate unity, Upanishads also deal with
means of attaining this unity or \textit{Y\=oga} with the Ultimate or realizing the nature of
\textit{Brahman} as pure consciousness. The first step in this \textit{s\=adhana} or the preparation
for a higher life is the development of coherence or \textit{samsiktata} in all aspects of
life, physical, psychic, intellectual and spiritual. Because only a coherent mind is
fit for attaining perfect knowledge. The \textit{R\=shis} or the seers advocated \textit{y\=oga} for
developing this coherence or \textit{samsiktata}. Indeed the attainment of this coherence
is the main subject matter of the ancient Indian lore in totality. \textit{Viv\=ekach\=ud\=ama\=n\=i}
of Sankara prescribes a life of total restrain and \textit{yoga} to develop coherence. It
thus says:

\begin{quote}
\textit{v\=acham niyachh\=atmani tam niyachha}
\textit{buddhau dhiyam yachha cha buddhis\=akshi\=in\=i}
\textit{tam ch\=api p\=urn\=atmani nirvikalpe\=c}
\textit{vil\=apa s\=antim param\=ambhajasva}.
\end{quote}

Restrain speech in the Manas, and restrain
Manas in the Buddhi; this again restrain in the
witness of Buddhi, and merging that also in the
Infinite Absolute Self, attain to supreme peace.\textsuperscript{67}

The mind which is coherent or \textit{samsikta} is highly intelligent, intuitive and all-
knowing that it knows the far and the near, the subtle and the gross. This status of
A supreme knower possessing *jnānadrushti* of the highest level is attainable through *yōga* that leads to *samādhi*, the state of complete concentration. *Samādhi* means perfect equilibrium of the mind and intellect or the state of complete concentration wherein all the mental energy is cohered. Sri Aurobindo explains the various stages through which *ātman* attains the complete coherence or the state of pure divine existence.

In the physical consciousness *Atman* becomes the material being, *annamaya purusha*.
In the vital or nervous consciousness *Atman* becomes the vital or dynamic being, *pranamaya kosa*.
In the mental consciousness *Atman* becomes the mental being, *manomaya purusa*…
In the consciousness proper to the state of pure divine existence, *Atman* is *sat purusa*, the pure divine self.
Man, being one in his true Self with the Lord who inhabits all forms, can live in any of these states of the Self in the world and partake of its experiences.
He can be anything he wills from the material to the all-blissful being. Through the *Anandamaya* he can enter into the *chaitanya* and *Sat purusha*.

The state of the soul then is known as *samādhiprajña*. *Samādhi* is attained through *dhrāṇa* and *dhyāna*, the two main steps in the practice of *yōga*. *Yōga* itself being the state of communion with the universal spirit or if to quote Einstein that “super-personal content” whose “overpowering meaningfulness” is most important, its two steps *dhyāna* and *dhrāṇa* bring the *dhi* or intellect into the highly balanced state or *samādhi*. This balanced state of intellect, mind and consciousness is the *samādhiprajña* wherein the three parts of the process of
dhyāna cease to have their separate identity in total bliss. Here the three separate entities in the process of dhyāna or meditation like dhyāta or the seeker, dhyéya, the sought after and dhyāna, the very process of seeking fuse together and what remains is only the eternal, pure light or consciousness which is undivided (akhaṇḍa). When triputi or the three petals in the process of dhyāna whither what emerges is pure enlightenment or what is called akhaṇḍabōdhaśatṛta or undifferentiated consciousness, a state encompassing everything as its undifferentiated parts, where time and space themselves with all their infinity are parts of this undifferentiated whole. This is the state of Unity where the individual consciousness gets itself in total identity with the universal or cosmic consciousness i.e. the Brahman or in which the Atman realizes itself as the Brahman. This state is variously designated as Purusha, Brahman, Chaitanya, Chit, Samvit, Atman etc. Samādhi is thus the state in which mind becomes one with the pure soul or Atman or the mind ceases to exist for the māya to influence. Here the philosophy comes almost in agreement with modern science both in means and end. It is interesting to not that modern science instead of using the term ‘observation’ uses ‘participation’ because it says that to know the secret of any universal phenomenon one should be a participant rather than observer of it. Experience rather than experiment is recommended. However both could still not be equated due to some fundamental differences. The Upanishads say that when the mind attains complete equanimity the supreme self pervades the mind and the individual soul gets in unity with the supreme. Thus says Katha Upanishad

The journey of life can be safely completed, and the Supreme world of Vishnu reached only if one keeps a watchful control over the senses. The body is like a chariot to which the senses are yoked like horses. The mind is like the reins, which enable the charioteer,
viz., the understanding, to hold the horses, i.e., the senses in check. The Soul rides on the chariot, and the road is the world of objects over which the senses move. If the reins are not held firmly and wisely, the senses, like vicious horses, will get out of control, and the chariot will not reach the goal, but will go round and round in births and re-births. If the man is wise, and controls his mind, his senses will be like good horses driven by a good driver.69

The Upanishads thus prescribe discipline to steady the mind. References to several steps of yōga recommended for balancing the mind are found throughout the Upanishads. Śvētaśwatāra Upanishad tells that the body is the lower stick and meditation on prāṇava the higher stick. Rubbing the two sticks one is to churn out the fire of the ultimate hidden in man.

By making one’s own body the lower friction-stick
And the syllable Om the upper friction- stick,
By practicing the friction of meditation (dhyāna),
One may see the God (deva) who is hidden, as it were.70

There are verses in this Upanishad which explain the different steps of prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dārāṇa, dhyāna and finally samādhi.71

The first thing the Upanishads prescribe for attaining samādhi is faith which is true knowledge. The Katha Upanishad speaks on the faith of Naciketas who approaches Yama seeking the supreme knowledge. Mundaka Upanishad speaks of the path for attaining Brahman thus:

This Soul (ātman) is obtainable by truth, by austerity (tapas)
By proper knowledge (jñana), by the students life of chastity (brahmacharya) constantly (practised)
Within the body, consisting of light, pure is He whom
the ascetics (yati) with imperfections done away,
Behold.\textsuperscript{72}

Upanishads thus recommend certain ethical disciplines like truthfulness, ascetic life, right insight etc to realize the Brahman. They are considered essential prerequisites of upāsana, the means for realizing Brahman. Only through upāsana one can realize the essential identity with the universal self. Upāsana or dhāyana, an important phase of yōga is recommended by Upanishads, more frequently by Svētāśvatāra Upanishad. Through yōga one can realize the Brahman in oneself.

As oil in sesame seeds, as butter in cream,
As water in riverbeds, and as fire in the friction-sticks,
So is the Soul (ātman) apprehended in one’s own soul,
If one looks for Him with true austerity (tapas)\textsuperscript{73}

Among the different types of upāsana it is ōmkāra upāsana that is mostly recommended to attain Brahman. ōm is referred as the symbol of Brahman. Maṇḍūkya Upanishad calls the self itself ōm.

\begin{verbatim}
hari ōm. ōmityētadaksharam idam sarvam
tasyōpavyākhyaṇam bhūtam bhavad bhavishyaditi
sarvamōmkāra ēva. yacchanyāt
trikālātiṃ tada-pyōmkāra eva cha\textsuperscript{74}
\end{verbatim}

Everything is the letter ōm. Its clear explanation is that the past, the present and the future are all ōmkāra. Even what out-step
these three i.e. the past-present-future continuum are all ēmkāra.

Verily everything, the Upanishads say, is encompassed by the infinity that is ēmkāra. It is ātmā as well as the brahman and is calm, blissful and the undivided whole that sheds one’s mundane feeling which is dualistic. Meditating on ēm which is undivided and infinite one crosses the world of divisions, dualities and dimensions and gets into unity and perfect wholesomeness. It is the beginning, the middle and the end, all fusing together into the whole which is without beginning and end.

sō ayamātmadhyaksharamōmkarō
adhimātram pādāmātra mātrāścha pāda
akāra ukārō makāra iti.\textsuperscript{75}

This atman resides in the three-phased syllable ēm.

These three phases are akāra, ukāra and makāra.

These three letters a, u and ma (A U M) pronounced in combination as Ėm is the generalized symbol of all nāma and rūpa or sounds and forms. The first sound A represents the beginning, U the middle and M the end. According to Māṇḍūkya Upanishad, A or akāra is the fully awakened consciousness and light (jāgarasthaṇō vaiśvānaro akāra pratḥama mātra.\textsuperscript{76} “The letter A is the least differentiated of all sounds. Therefore Krishna says in the Gita aksharāṇām akārōsmī – I am A among the letters”.\textsuperscript{77} He who realizes akāra as ādimatwa (being first) obtains verily all desires.

The sleeping state, the brilliant, is the letter U, the second element, from utkarsha (‘exaltation’) or from ubhayatva (intermediateness)
The deep-sleep state, the cognitional, is the letter M the third element, from miti (‘erecting’) or from apiti (‘immersing’)

The fourth is without an element, with which there can be no dealing, the cessation of development, benign, without a second.

Thus ēm is the Self (Ātman) indeed

Besides, all articulate sounds produced manifest as Ēm i.e. A-U-M which begins with the root of the tongue and ending in the lips. “Throat sound is A, and M is the last lips sound and the U represents the rolling forward of the impulse which begins at the root of the tongue till it ends in the lips”. Ēm thus represents the whole phenomenon of sound manifestation and is the fittest symbol of the Brahman or truly symbolic of God. It is the Brahman, the Akhanda-Satchidānanda, the undivided Existence-Knowledge-Bliss the Ēm represents. The upāsana or meditation on ēm helps the seeker gets one with the Brahman.

The effect of Ēmkāra-upāsana is explained in the Praśna Upanishad where Satyakama’s teacher tells him that

just as a snake is relieved of its slough, similarly is the man who meditates on ēm relieved of his sins, and, by the power of his chants, is lifted to the highest world where he beholds the person who informs the body, and who stands supreme above any living complex whatsoever.

The Śvetāśvatāra Upanishad also recommends the practice of yōga for realizing the unity. In fact there are many verses in the Upanishads which explain the different stages of yōga like the āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dhāraṇa, dhyāna and samādhi. Yōga helps one shed all egos and separate identity, come into
communion with the entirety and see oneself in everything and everything in oneself. All the infinity both of time and space is in him; he is the entirety condensed.

According to *Maṇḍūkyakārīka* of Gaudapada, unity can be realized only through the complete annihilation of the mind. The world is only a creation of mind due to the operation of *māya* or force. *Yōga* is therefore prescribed as the means to steady the mind and annihilate it so that one could be free of the power of *māya*.

\[
\text{manasō nigrahāyatta}
\]
\[
\text{mabhayam sarva yōginām}
\]
\[
\text{dukha kshaya prabōdhaścā-}
\]
\[
\text{pyakshayā śānthirévacha}^{81}
\]

*Omkāra upāsana* as well as the *Yōga* thus help one communion with the ultimate reality which is the beginning and end combined, i.e. the infinite differently called in the Upanishads as the *Brahman, Bōdhā, Ānanda, Chaitanya*, etc.

\[
\text{chaitanyādāgatam sthūla-}
\]
\[
\text{sūkshmātmaṇiśvalam jagat.}^{82}
\]

Universe, both subtle and gross source off the undifferentiated consciousness.

Guru Sree Narayana says further:

\[
\text{ānanda evasti bhāti}
\]
\[
\text{nānya kaśchidadō akhilam}
\]
\[
\text{ānandakhanamnyanna}
\]
\[
\text{vinānandēṇa vidyate.}^{83}
\]

What exists is only *ānanda* or ultimate bliss.

There is nothing else. Therefore everything is *ānanda* in its solidity. There is nothing but *ānanda*.
sarvamhi satchidänandam
nēha nānāsthī kinchana 84
Everything is satchidananda or the knowledge-absolute-bliss.
There is nothing as difference or many.
manasaivānudrushedhyam
nēha nānāsthī kinchana
mrutyō sā mrutyumapnōti
ya iha nanēti paśyati. 85
That there is nothing as differences should be understood.
One who, missing the sight of unity, sees only differences,
would whirl through the cycles of death, i.e. from death to death.
Brahman or ānanda or the ultimate bliss is thus the starting and finishing point of
all the universal entities. ānandam brahma – ānanda is Brahman, says Taittariya
Upanishad. Therefore the Upanishad says:
ānandādhyēva khalvimāni bhūtāni
jāyate, ānandéna jātāni jīvanti
ānandam prayantyabhisamvisānti.
Or
Everything is born of ānanda
Everything abides in ānanda
Everything returns to ānanda. 86
Hence the upanishadic call to know and experience this ānanda or bliss wherein
one feels oneself as the universal whole, wherein there is no difference, where all
the seeming differences drop off to experience an unbearable ecstasy in a
creative unity.
End Notes

1. Chhandogya Upanishad, 8.7, 4.4.1 - 4.15.6.
3. Atharva Vêda, XI. 5, 17.
4. Munçaka Upanishad, 1.2.5;
9. Ibid., p. 67.
13. Kausîtaki Upanishad, 4.20; Hume Op. Cit, p.334. This intuitive vision sounds almost like the creative insight which according to the modern scientists leads one to the understanding of the truth concealed in all the material and metaphysical phenomena. Many revolutionary discoveries, scientists acknowledge, appeared first to the consciousness as an imaginative insight and it is this insight they call creativity. “The movement of insight in which Newton suddenly realized that the moon is falling, even though it never reaches the earth, was evidently quite different from the ordinary process of discursive thought, in which one step follows another more or less logically, over a period of time. Rather, it was an extreme example of something that everybody experiences when he is thinking about a problem containing a number of contradictory or confused factors. Suddenly, in a flash of understanding involving in essence no time at all, a new totality appears in the mind, in which this contradiction and
confusion have vanished. This new totality is at first only implicit (i.e. unfolding) through some mental image which, as it were, contains the main features of the new perception spread out before our “mental vision.” Perception involving this display, which is inseparable from the act of primary perception itself, is what may be called imaginative insight or creative imagination. David Bohm, *On Creativity*, p. 54.

14. *Aitareya Upanishad*, 5.3
17. *Dhyānāsloka* of *Bhagavad Gītā*

18. But in the Upanishads physical was only epiphenomenon of the soul or the consciousness. Even though in the initial stages the universal soul or Brahman was looked as the binding element of all existence in the world, later the individual soul and the universal came to be identified as one which projects the world of differences out of the mind which is the seat of Māya or the force of Brahman.

40. *Māṇḍūkyakārīka*, 162,163
41. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, p. 36.
43. This is the theory of apparent change or false transformation. It is necessary to distinguish between actual and apparent change. Actual change is *parināma*. In *parināma* when a thing is destroyed, it does not disappear completely. For example when a rope is pulled to pieces it remains as fibers. In apparent transformation or *vivarta* the disappearance is complete. When the illusion of the serpent is overcome there will be nothing of it left.
45. *Ibid*. 171
47. Sankaracharya, *Ātmabōdha*, 19;
50. Māndūkyakārīka. 7, 8, 9.


65. It would be interesting to draw a parallelism between Sākshi-bhūtin and the sub-conscious mind referred to in modern psychology. Psychologists cite many cases to prove the existence of an ever alert sub-conscious mind as in case of an anesthesia administered person who on becoming conscious recollects everything while he underwent an operation. This is because the absolute exists in man as the witnessing self, constantly awake.


67. Sankaracharya, *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi*. 371

(Translated to Malayalam by Siddhinathananda Swami, p. 205)


70. *Śvētāśvatāra Upanishad*, 1. 13.
71. Ibid, 2. 8,15.
72. Mundaka Upanishad, 3.1.5.
74. Māṇḍūkya Upanishad. 1.
75. Ibid. 8.
76. Ibid. 9.
82. Sree Narayana Guru, Darśanamāla. 2.1.
83. Ibid, 2. 9.
84. Ibid, 2. 10.
85. Bruhadāranyaka Upanishad. 4. 4. 19.
86. Taïttarīya Upanishad. 3. 6.