

## GOD IN THE UPNISADS

We have traced briefly the development of the idea of God in the R̥g Veda bearing in mind that God was conceived through the manifestations as personalities of the *perfections* of the Divine. The figures of Varuṇa, Indra, Agni, Pūṣan, Prajāpati, Viśvedevāh, Rudra, Maruts and others, signified the several powers of the One Divine. In this connection it is but right to point out that the Deities were such as suited the several seekers who apprehended the glory of each of these<sup>1</sup>.

The Upaniṣads only drew out of the R̥g Vedic literature fundamental principles, and are more philosophical and less symbolical, though this symbology is not wanting as in *Brhadāraṇyaka* and *Māndūkya* Upaniṣads and othes. The symbology is however, very much less in evidence than in the supra-mental poetic expressions of the Vedic seers and the Brāhmanas.

Each of the Upaniṣads or sections of the Upaniṣads in the longer ones, intimated on or more perfections or knowledges of Brahman, the One God manifest in various ways, who has become all things, so to speak , and is their indwelling self.

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<sup>1</sup> When there had happened the three divisions of Gods Viṣṇu Trivikrama was the one who passed beyond the three. It only means that planal differences are the determining factors in the progressive understanding..

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The nature of God as the ultimate cause and creator, and how the world came into being, are beautifully explained in the *Chāndogya* and *Taiṭṭrīya* Upaniṣads. The indwelling nature of the Divine Lord is explained in the Antaryāmi Brāhmaṇa of the *Brhadāraṇyaka*. The omnipervasiveness of the Lord

is expounded in the *Īśa*, the indescribable power of the Divine knowledge. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* reveals the lordship of the Divine over mutable and immutable nature.

The Self is the most important fact in reality. The Self is the thing by which every other thing in the universe lives and moves and has its being. The teaching that “Not for the sake of the wife dear, but For the sake of the Self is the wife dear”<sup>1</sup> expounded by Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyi reveals the fullest value and worth of the experience of Brahman as self.

Brahman verily was in the beginning, one only (*Bṛh. Up.I.iv.11*). All the gods and all the powers are subordinate to Him. The gods, Agni and Vāyu are incapable of burning or blowing off even a straw thrown before them by Brahman (*Kena up. 14 to 23*). Even Indra had to return defeated by its power. He was the first to see and know him as such, and hence he became foremost amongst the gods. Thus the seer of Brahman was equal to or greater than all the gods<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Bṛh Up.II.iv.* and elevation of our knowledge of Divine Powers which finally possesses the three planes.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛh Up.III.i.1-3; III.ix.13.*

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This One Being is the One of the many gods numbering 3306 and this Being is called Brahman by Yājñavalkya (*Bṛh.Up.III.ix.1-9*). This is the fullness *pūrṇa*, the whole which is the self of all. From it fullness *pūrṇa*, into it all fullness is withdrawn and yet fullness remains (*Bṛh Up.V.i*). This Person is the Seer who cannot be seen the hearer of all hearing who cannot be heard. He is the thinker of thinking who could not be thought. This is His transcendence and power. The evolution of the several elements and things, sheaths and powers, are dealt with in order to show that the Upaniṣads seer had sought to penetrate into the inner core of the real which he had already divined as the Spirit, the Universal which has become the individual many, who, so to speak, is the soul and self of all

things, the Lord and creator and dissolver of all things, in which everything rests supported by His infinite power. But He is beyond all perceptive and inferential faculties. Even imagination cannot know Him But this Being is not a mere Void, A *śūrya*: on the contrary it is the fullest reality, the only substance so to speak of the world and all. The Upaniṣads have to be construed as one whole, despite the fact that the instructions and explanations are given from variant points of view, points of view which do into collide or thwart the understanding. The cosmological and the psychological proceed on convergent lines till they are found to meet in the unity of the Self, the Brahman, the One which is the self of the many.

The Lord is the self of all, of all things that exist, earth, water, fire and air, of mind, knowledge, moon and sun and stars, in fact of everything (*sarvabhūtām*). “He who dwells in the earth and is within the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth and who rules the earth within, He is thy self, the ruler within, the immortal” (Br̥h Up. III. Vii 3-22). “That person is without internal organs pure with contact” (*Mund.UP.II.i.2*), ‘He is the one God hidden in all beings, dwelling in all beings, the perceiver, the only One, free from qualities” (*Śvet. Up. VI. 8*). “He who has become all Beings” (Īśa. Up. 7) “He of whom the unevolved is the body, He is the inner self of things” (Subāla. UP. VII). He is Truth, knowledge, Infinity. He is knowledge, Bliss is Brahman. (Br. Up. III. X. 28). He is Ānanda<sup>1</sup>. By His light all this is lighted (Kaṭha Up. II.v.15). This indeed is the great self, the strong, the giver of wealth, undecaying, undying, immortal, fearless. He is one seer, the nourished, the all-vifier, the one whose most excellent form is experience able through His grace (prasād). The Lord is master of miracles of wonders<sup>2</sup>. He is the best<sup>3</sup>, the supreme<sup>4</sup>, greater than the great<sup>5</sup>, higher than whom nothing is at all. He is qualities except in the sense of having transcendent form and Being, effulgence, without equal or superior<sup>6</sup>, the support of all, who grants all desires, the Object

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<sup>1</sup> *Taitr. Up. Bhṛguvalli* 6 Ānando Brahmeti vyjānāt. Ānandāddheva khalvimāni bhtāni jāyanti. Ānandena jātāni jīvanti. Ānandam prayantya hisamvisantīit.

<sup>2</sup> Īśa.4-5: Śvet, III.19; Br.Up.IV.iii.33.Mund.II.ii.1

<sup>3</sup> Kaṭha II.Śvet.1.7; III.7.7.Maitri V.2

<sup>4</sup> Kaṭha II.20.Śvet.III.9

<sup>5</sup> Kaṭha III.II.Mund.III.ii.8; Śvet.12

<sup>6</sup> Śvet.VI.8

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of desire, and the adorable Being<sup>1</sup>, whose form is most excellent<sup>2</sup>, from whom all evil recedes<sup>3</sup>, un-pierced by evil<sup>4</sup>, the remover of evil<sup>5</sup>. All these descriptions must be understood to pave the way towards the apprehension of the fullness and the perfect nature of the object, which removes it from every effort to step it down to the market place of social life. The transcendence of the Divine is the promise of progress to humanity; the trust in that Being which is impelled by the religious instinct and the faith in its power and wisdom all reinforce the consciousness of the aspirant and seeker after liberation. It is also clear that our future is not merely a promise to be kept in heaven. It is even here, that we can enjoy the delight of communion with the religious object. Mystic feeling of 'pantheistic' oneness or unity is realized with such tremendous vividness that no one thereafter hates his brother man, for he finds that there is nothing to hate, and everything to love. The Seer of the Īśa amongst others points out the fruits of discovering the omni pervasiveness of the Divine Lord to be the utter giving up of hatred and sorrow and delusion. The love that flows from man to man is the love of the self as Yajñavalkya says. For the reciprocal function of the Divine in religious consciousness is the prasāda that is evoked by the surrender and praise and meditation on the Lord in all as all-self. Thus the Rg Veda says, "Verily I speak and say what shall be welcome to gods and men; whomsoever I love I make

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<sup>1</sup> Śvet. VI.18.

<sup>2</sup> Īśa.16

<sup>3</sup> Ch.VIII.iv 1-2&VII.

<sup>4</sup> Īśa.8

strong. I make him a Brahman and make him a prophet and a wise man.” (Rg Veda X.125.5)

*Aham eva svayam vadāmi*  
*Juṣtam devebhir atam mānuṣebhiḥ |*  
*Yam kāmāye tam tam ugram kṛṇmi*  
*Tam brāhmaṇam tam ṛṣim tam sumedhām ||*

It is also clear from the Rg Veda that God was worshipped as feminine too as Aditi<sup>1</sup>, the mother of the Ādityas.

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<sup>1</sup> Aditi in Yajus V. (Krishna) is designated *Viṣṇu – patni* IV.iv.12(Taittiriya) cf.Sri Aurobindo (Arya II. P.601) writes (Kenopaniṣad) “The gods of the Upaniṣads differ in one all important respect from the gods of Rg Veda, for the latter are not only powers of ONE, but conscious of their source and true identity; they know the Brahman, they dwell in the supreme Godhead; their origin, home and proper plane is the super conscient truth.. But in the Upaniṣads the Brahman idea has grown and cast down the gods from their high pre-eminence so that they appeal only in their lesser human and cosmic workings”. (The Upaniṣads does not assert their universality but only their incompleteness and inferiority)

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