

The Concept of Mind in Upanishads

A Transcendental Thesis

Nature of Self or *Ātman*

- The self is consciousness
- The self is a transcendental reality

- The epistemic exercise aims to explain
 - *the psychological* and
 - *the moral*

The psychological aspect of the self

– **Consciousness**

- *Brahman* or self-effulgent being
- *Prakash-swarupa*
- **Immortal, eternal and infinite**
- Ultimate metaphysical principle of the universe

– **Mind**

- As a coordinator of the sense organs

Atman and Brahman

Relationship

- Atman is conscious, immortal, eternal & infinite
- Not located in space and time
- Not be understood in terms of any binary categories
- Not identical with human bodies
- **Atman is a *transcendent* being.**

Brahman as an ultimate reality

- Is hidden
- Not directly given to our sense experience
- The ardent epistemic exercise is to know – *thou art that (tat tvam asi)*
- ***The essential identity between jiva (individual being) and the ātman***

The Harmony

- The harmonious co-existence between the finite and the infinite (*between the jiva and atman*)
- We need to **realize** this harmony.
- Realization signifies the *act of knowing*
- *There must be a desire to know (jiñāsa)*

Brahman and the field of knowing

- ***Ksétṛa*** (the field) ***ksétṛajña*** (the knower of the field)
- ***Jagat*** as the manifestation of the **Brahman**
- Hence it is finite and represents a finite field of knowing
- ***The infinite possibilities of knowing.***

amṛtasya putraḥ

- **Jiva** as the son of immortality
- **Ātman, manas and śarira** (soul, mind and the body)
- **Indriyas** (sense organs) coordinated by the mind

Śrira – the body

- It is the totality of sense organs
 - **Gross and subtle sense organs**
 - **Thinking, experiencing, remembering and knowing**
 - **One needs to understand the true nature of these *indriyas***
 - **Body is not the instrument of pleasure and lust , rather for *spiritual realization*.**

***Atamn-Brahaman* Coordination**

- ‘The finite mind is capable of receiving the experiences but cannot conceptualize them without the soul which is the seat of thinking and the other creative activities.’ (Pradhan 2008: 55)

Allegory of Chariot in *Kaṭhopanīsad*

- In famous allegory of the chariot, the soul is the owner of the chariot, the intellect the charioteer, the mind the reins, the sense organs the horse and the body the chariot.’ (Pradhan 2008: 56)

Dualism and Beyond

- The Upanisadic mind is not spiritual as in Descartes and other dualists thinkers. Here the mind is a subtle organ of the physical type and is taken as a part of the subtle body (*sûkṣma śarira*).

- The soul is categorically different from body and the mind, it being of the nature of consciousness (*prajnanam Brahman*)
- The mind is proximate to the soul but it cannot be identified with the soul. Therefore, the mind must remain within its physical limits, though it can aspire to get closer to the soul. (Pradhan 2008: 56)

***Pañcakośas* (five sheaths)**

- Annamaya Kosa (the bodily sheath)
- Pranamaya Kosa (the sheath of life)
- Manomaya Kosa (the mental sheath)
- Vijnanamaya Kosa (the sheath of consciousness)
- Anandamaya Kosa (the sheath of bliss)
 - In *Taittiriya Upanisad*, part II. (**Pradhan 2008: 56-57**)

Evolutionary process

- From the body life evolves, from life the mind, from mind consciousness, from consciousness the supra-consciousness state of bliss.
- *In this scheme of things neither the body, nor the mind, nor the atman can be dissociated from one another. (Pradhan 2008: 57)*

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