

CHAPTER – IX

GENERAL ESTIMATE AND CONCLUSION

The present thesis incorporates various aspects of different branches of Indology and highlights the contribution of some of the minor Upaniṣads of AV, to the Sanskrit literature. The Upaniṣads are the perennial sources of wisdom, which impart us knowledge. They imbibe in them the secret treasure of divine mystery. Since earlier days, the Principal Upaniṣads are considered to be ten:

ईश-केन-कठ-प्रश्न-मुण्ड-माण्डूक्य-तित्तिरी ।

एतरेयं च छान्दोग्यं बृहदारण्यकं तथा ॥

Śaṅ comments upon 11 Upaniṣads including Śvetāśvatara. According to Radhakrishnan the principal Upaniṣads are eighteen and he adds Subāla, Jābāla, Paiṅgala, Kaivalya and Vajrasūcikā to the above list. Vadekar and Limaye also consider the number of principal Upaniṣads to be eighteen and add Śvetāśvatara, Kauṣītaki, Maitrī, Bāṣkalamantra, Chāgaleya of Śaunaka and Jaiminīya *Upaniṣads* to the list of 10 major Upaniṣads.

Apart from these major *Upaniṣads*, there came by tradition, a lot more other *Upaniṣads* assigned to different Vedas on the basis of their Śāntipāthas or the colophon. It was surprising that though AV was not admitted in the beginning as an authentic Vedic Saṁhitā, a large number of the *Upaniṣads* are assigned to the AV. It was only later on that the AV is considered to be the fourth Veda.

The AV tradition has to its credit, Muṇḍaka and Praśna *Upaniṣads* which can be placed in the *Upaniṣadic* period 900 BC-750 BC and Maṇḍūkya after that i.e. between 750-550 BC. Later on as much as 68 *Upaniṣads* were listed under AV. It is difficult to assign a particular date to these minor *Upaniṣads* due to lack of strong internal and external evidences. Shende, Farquhar, Deussen, LP Pandey, S. G. Desai, etc. have tried to provide us approximate date of some minor *Upaniṣads*. I have selected eighteen minor *Upaniṣads* for study, representative of different categories viz. Vedānta, Yoga, Samnyāsa, Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta and their approximate dates can be fixed between 200-1400 AD as per the views of different scholars like Shende and various observations there on.

I have also studied the published commentaries on these minor *Upaniṣads* and have given the relevant views of the commentators like Śaṅkarānanda, Nārāyaṇa Saraswatī and Upaniṣad Brahma Yogī etc. The commentaries of these three scholars are commendable as they shed light on various metaphysical topics in the present thesis.

The titles of these 18 minor *Upaniṣads*, their linguistic style, the Guṇa

(excellences), Rīti (style), Alaṅkāra (figures of speech) and Chanda (metres) are discussed briefly. It is observed that these *Upaniṣads* follow the Vaidarbhī-style of diction, although some examples of Gaudī and Pāncālī style are also found. Moreover, we not only find Philosophical concepts depicted in these *Upaniṣads* but poetic beauty also. Alaṅkāras like Anuprāsa with all its varieties among the Śabdālaṅkāras and Arthālaṅkāras like Upamā, Upameyopamā, Rūpaka, etc also enhance the beauty of these *Upaniṣadic* texts. Most of the *Upaniṣadic* writers have accepted Anuṣṭup as the prominent metre excluding some verses which are in Upajāti, Vasantatilakā and Sārdūlavikrīḍita metres. Moreover the *Upaniṣads* mainly advocate Śānta Rasa and the Bhāva of Bhakti to present their preachings.

As found in the earlier *Upaniṣads*, these minor *Upaniṣads* of AV also deal with the Philosophical concepts like the Stages of human life, Yoga, Mantra, Bhakti, Praṇava (Aum), etc. These minor *Upaniṣads* depict both the aspects viz. of Pātāñjala Yoga and Haṭha-yoga. I have classified the data into two: non-theistic *Upaniṣads* and theistic *Upaniṣads*. The non-theistic *Upaniṣads* are briefly stated along with the concept of Saṁnyāsa as depicted by these *Upaniṣadic* texts. It is found that the minor *Upaniṣads* deal with the concept of Saṁnyāsa in detail compared to that of the major *Upaniṣads*. They mainly follow the Manu and Yājñavalkya Smṛtis for depiction of different stages of life. But in the later *Upaniṣads* we find a clear mark of demarcation between the last two stages viz. Vānaprasthāśrama and Saṁnyāsāśrama. The duties of each are clearly defined. These later *Upaniṣads* deal with the fourth stage of life in detail for the first time, which is their unique contribution. The five theistic *Upaniṣads* viz. Sūrya, Sītā, Kṛṣṇa, Annapūrṇā and Dattātreya glorify the respective deities as the Highest or Supreme Power. Sūryopaniṣad along with glorifying the deity also present physical traits and iconographical peculiarities of the Sun-God. The Sītā and Annapūrṇā *Upaniṣads* eulogize the respective Goddesses as Śakti endowed with the divine powers.

Kṛṣṇa is praised as the Para Brahma as found in the Harivaṁśa and Bhāgavata purāṇa. The Dattātreya *Upaniṣad* states different mantras having Bija, Kīlaka, in glorification of Guru Dattātreya, which is a novel feature for any *Upaniṣad*.

These *Upaniṣads* also provide the social, historical and geographical data of those times. We find the reference to the Varṇāśrama system and some rules to be followed by the people of different castes and āśramas. The historical data comprise of the information of some historical personages referred to in the minor *Upaniṣads* of AV undertaken for study, like Atharvan, Angiras, Atri., Yājñavalkya etc.; while the Geographical data consists of the references to some Indian cities and towns like Banaras, Kurukṣetra, Gokula and Vṛndāvana mentioned in these 18 minor *Upaniṣads* of AV.

These *Upaniṣads* also depict some of the prominent Mythological deities like Agni, Brahma, Visnu, Siva, Rudra, etc. as discussed in the earlier texts.

We find references to other sciences in these 18 minor *Upaniṣads* of AV like Physiology, Education, Psychology and Ethics and Morality. The minor *Upaniṣads* also refer to some aspects of human anatomy. We find several references to the concept of education in these minor *Upaniṣads* for e.g. the qualifications of a teacher, the eligibility of a student, the teacher-student relationship, etc. Unlike the major *Upaniṣads* the minor *Upaniṣads* do not directly specify the qualifications for a teacher but incorporates all the above ideals under one simple and deeply significant form or address 'Bhagavān'.

Like the major *Upaniṣads*, the minor *Upaniṣads* of AV portray mind as the means to obtain the Supreme Reality as well as identify it with Supreme Brahman. Following the therapeutic method of AV, these minor *Upaniṣads* also employ therapeutic measures to cure ailments with the help of mind. This is the significant contribution of the minor *Upaniṣads*. Several moral and ethical concepts, virtues and vices discussed in the earlier texts are also discussed in these minor *Upaniṣads* of AV.

The comparative study of the topics dealt in the minor *Upaniṣads* like Cosmological Ontological, Epistemological and concept of Mokṣa, with the Prasthānatrayī i.e. Vedas, major *Upaniṣads* and BG is also presented here. Some of the major Cosmological, Ontological, Epistemological concepts are similar to those found in the earlier *Upaniṣads*. Relevant citations from the Prakaraṇa or Bhāṣya literature of Śaṅkarācārya and have also been incorporated. It is observed that these minor *Upaniṣads* only add some minor details mainly found in Dharma Śāstra literature as well as in Haṭha-Yoga.

Thus from the present study, it is clear that the minor *Upaniṣads* do not apparently contribute to the metaphysical science in details. They are replete with several references to other branches of Indology like Education Psychological, Ethics and Morality, Physiology etc.

In the words of N. J. Shende¹, "The Atharvanic tradition was greatly respected as it had saved the orthodox religion from its utter destruction and had helped to the establishment of the new religion on the sound basis. We can thus appreciate the growth of the Atharvanic *Upaniṣads* in this light."

Thus the authors of these texts have attempted, carried forward the torch of *Upaniṣadic* light and preserved the literary and Philosophical heritage of India.

¹ Shende N. J.- The Religion and Philosophy of AV, page 228