

SYNOPSIS

IMPORTANCE AND METHODOLOGY

The modern age is an age of scientific progress and scientists try to approach the different problems or to explain them from a scientific point of view. It is quite understandable that the scientific approaches or explanations may be known to some or some may not be known to many. It is also a common experience that a very common man is not generally interested in the scientific explanations of the things he does every day or the things that take place around him every day. In the society there is also another group of people who is sceptic or have a keen desire to understand even the very ordinary and common things in life around them, viz., belief, conventions, customs or accidental happenings etc. from a scientific point of view, or from the extra- superstition point of view. This may get an expression either in an absolutely scientific way or from a religious point of view. In the latter case, it may be expressed by saying "favour" or "grace" of a spiritual person or the deity. And this grace may be in the form of a blessing or a boon. A deity or person is pleased with a devotee and being pleased he grants a boon to him or her that his/her wish will be fulfilled. Sometimes the displeasure of the deity or a person leads to the curse. Sometimes the curse is disguised in a boon and when the displeasure is rectified then after the curse is revised into the boon.

(ii)

The idea of 'Varadāna' (boon) is met with in the Vedic, Epic, and Purāṇic and classical literature. From the study of the ancient Indian literature it appears that the boon may be a result either due to the grace or the blessing of a deity or a person and the devotee asks for his/her desired object. Sometimes the devotee leaves the desired object to be chosen to the deity or the person concerned for himself/herself. Sometimes these factors may be in permutation and combination.

In the upaniṣads we come across many stories, myths and legends. Some of which have a boon as the motif or a starting point for the development of the story and expounding the philosophical doctrines.

There are works like " stories and Dialogues " The book is a collection of ~~the~~ some stories from the upaniṣads in which Diwakar summarises the theme of the stories. Still the stories remained to be studied as Diwakar have not studied them from the point of view which we have under-consideration. Moreover a well-known scholar late P.B. Gajendragadkar² deals with the Isa and Ken Ups. He has explained these Ups. with the help of the five commentators but he has not dealt with the story element and the boon bearing.

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1. Diwakar R.R. "Stories and dialogues from the upanishads; pub. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.
 2. Gajendragadkar P.B. "The Ten Principal Upanishads" Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

(iii)

Thus it may be observed that the Upaniṣads have been studied by different scholars from several points of view, e.g. philosophical, educational, social etc. but the study of the boon-based stories in the Upaniṣads is a desideratum. The scholars have touched these stories in the above said point of view but they have not examined the stories from the point of view which are under consideration. Hence it is proposed to study the problem of the boons and stories connected there with an analytical and critical point of view in the present thesis. The selection of the topic provides the reader a full idea in which the vedic people lived and moved, progressed and formed their clear, constant principles and how they were well-advanced in the spiritual life.

Herein the stories from major and minor upaniṣads are taken up for study. The present study reveals that a boon is utilised for several purposes in the upaniṣadic stories, e.g., The main purpose of the boon based stories is to expound the philosophical doctrines. Once the ṛṣi or the person concerned has arrived at the question comes naturally how to attain it and so the path, the ways and means to realise the Brahman, rituals, tapas etc. which can be considered the secondary purposes, are stated in the stories. Similarly the moral and ethical values are taught in these stories. The teaching of the Brahman as the highest knowledge may help an aspirant

to proceed on the spiritual path while doing a detailed discussion of the Highest Truth, the Upaniṣads show how the purity of mind, restraint over body and mind, sanctity, cleanliness, tapas had effect on every thought in the life of an aspirant. All these qualities play an important role in spiritual progress.

In these stories the technique of dialogue is used to develop and explain the philosophical thoughts. The genesis of the boon-motif is traceable to Saṁhitās and Brāhmanas. The boon-motif is found in Purāṇic religion and literature also. For the proper understanding of this concept and to understand its origin, growth and development we have taken into consideration relevant portions of Saṁhitās, Brāhmanas, Epics and Purāṇas even though our prime emphasis is on the Upaniṣads.

The relevant upaniṣadic portion is also examined in the light of the interpretations of the five great ācāryas, viz. Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbārka and other commentators and ancient ~~and ancient~~ as well as modern critics.

The study is presented in the following five Chapters:-

Chapter I : Concept of Boon (Vara) :-

It discusses the meaning of the word 'vara' from Saṁhitās to Purāṇas.

(v)

The Saṁhitās do present very few aspects of this concept of 'Vara'. We get some glimpses of the earlier interpretation quoted by the term 'Varam-Vṛṇṣva, Vṛṇute, avṛni, etc. in the Vedas . That is to say in the Saṁhitās the word occurs in its nominal and verbal forms. In this context the Brāhmaṇas and Āranyakas are very useful. From Brāhmaṇas and onwards we have stories connected with the Varadāna theme. They explain a short-story like description by denoting the term "Varam-Vṛnai" or other; over and above the occurrence of the nominal forms of the vocable Vara. The stories are told in a very brief form; they do not describe it thoroughly. Some of the stories from the Epics are taken into account to examine the nature, style and development of Vara (' O-dāna). The Purāṇas consist many ancient legends which are closely connected with Vedic Phenomena. That is why the Purāṇas are also taken into the consideration to examine the growth of the concept of Vara. The Purāṇas throw more light on the concept of Vara. All the Purāṇas are not taken up for the comparison but the five ancient e.g. Viṣṇu, Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa, Matsya, and Bhāgavata are taken while discussing the meaning of the vocable 'Vara' . Some of the stories are referred to in this Chapter. ,

Thus the Chapter studies the genesis of the concept of 'Vara' from the Vedic literature to the Purāṇic literature.

Chapter II :- Conspectuous and Brief Summary:-

Section I:-

Upaniṣads have propounded important metaphysical doctrines sometimes through stories which have a boon-motif. The Upaniṣadic seers adopt a conversational style while introducing the boon-motif for expounding the doctrines. This Chapter deals with the following dialogues:-

1. Chāndogya Upaniṣad 5.3.6
2. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 6.2.1-5
3. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 1.3.28
4. Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.1.
5. Katha Upaniṣad
6. Kausitaki Upaniṣad 1.1
7. Kausitaki Upaniṣad 3.1
8. Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad 1.2.
9. Rāmottaratāpini Upaniṣad.
10. Gopālottara tāpṇiyopaniṣad
11. Kaivalopaniṣad,
12. Maitreya of Sāmaveda Upaniṣad
13. Pranava Upaniṣad

Section II:-

Herein the contents of the above-mentioned dialogues are given. They deal with either Pañcāgnividyā or Paryanka vidyā or Brahma vidyā or other spiritual questions relating

to the soul or means for acquiring Brahman etc. In the dialogues the light is thrown on the two paths leading a man to ascend up or to descend down. Moreover the waking, sleep and deep sleep conditions are dealt in relation with the Ātman, the highest truth.

Chapter III - Characterization

In the stories under discussion the following characters are met with:-

1. In Chāndogya 5.3.6 - Śvetaketu , Āruni Gautama and Pravāhana Jaivali;
2. In Brhadāranya 6.2.1-5 Āruni, Śvetaketu, Pravāhana Jaivali;
3. In Brhadāranyaka 4.3.1 Janaka and Yājñavalkya;
4. In Kauṣitaki 1.1 Āruni and Citra Gārgyāyani;
5. In Kauṣitaki 3.1. Indra and Pratardan;
6. In Katha - Yama and Naciketas;
7. In Maitrāyani - King Brhadraṭha and Śākāyanya;
8. In Rāmottaratāpinī - Rāma and Śiva;
9. In Gopālottaratāpinī - Kṛṣṇa;
10. In Kaivalya - Śiva.

While discussing the delineation of these characters we have kept in mind the historical development or variation in the depiction of these Chapters from the Rgveda to the Purānas.

Chapter IV:- Philosophical Doctrines

In the dialogues are met with various descriptions of Brahman, the Brahmaloaka, the sacred places etc., views regarding the metaphysical, exohatological, Cosmological, psychological, ethical and moral problems, metempsychōsis and life after death, incarnation etc. These topics are examined here from a critical point of view.

Chapter V :- Commentators

In this Chapter the views of the following commentators, viz., Śaṅkarācārya , Rāmānujācārya, Madhvācārya, Vallabhācārya Nimbārkaācārya on the relevant passages are critically examined.

The First Section (A) of this Chapter consists of the interpretations of the relevant Śrutis according to the five ācāryas and also other commentators, where the bhāṣya or the ṭika of the great ācāryas is not available. It may be noted that the available commentaries on the relevant portion are consulted.

The Second Section (B) of the Chapter contains the study of the relevant passages and the BRS in comparison on the basis of commentaries of the ācāryas.