

The Paradigmatic Shift of Knowledge in the *Mundaka Upanishad*

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Abstract

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This article explores the dynamics of the esoteric (para) and exoteric (apara) knowledge that the Mundaka Upanishad proclaims in its mantras. The domain of Vedic knowledge is exoteric, and the Vedic sacrificial rituals are always for earthly glories and satisfactions. Therefore, their main quests always remain for the external manifestations. Unlike this, the Vedanta refers to the philosophical part of Veda. It mainly concerns for cosmic speculations, and aims to realize the transcendental ultimate reality. In this way, the Upanishads which form one of the tripartite pillars of Vedanta postulates that the absolute reality pervades within us and outside in the real world. Their speculations are to realize the ultimate reality that rules the entire cosmic manifestations. Therefore, the Upanishadic knowledge is esoteric (para vidhya). This great dichotomy between the exoteric and esoteric makes a clear shift of knowledge from the Vedic outwardness to Vedantic inwardness. In this context, it is the Mundaka Upanishad that is the pioneer to make a canonical shift of knowledge from Vedic apara to the Vedanta's para. This article makes an exploratory and descriptive analysis of the theories and ideas developed in the Mundaka Upanishad that reveal how it makes a clear canonical shift of knowledge from the Veda to Vedanta. It equally sheds light on the implications of the theories and ideas of para and apara knowledge in teaching and modern pedagogy.

Keywords: apara, atman, brahman, para, vedanta, yoga

Introduction

The *Mundaka Upanishad* belongs to the Atharvaveda, one of the four Vedas. This Upanishad epitomizes the philosophical dimension of Vedanta. A new reading of this Upanishad reveals that this

great text of religious philosophy makes a paradigmatic shift from the Vedic *apara* (perishable/exoteric) knowledge to the Upanishadic *para* (esoteric). The term “Mundaka” derives from the root “mund” which means shaved head (Radhakrishnan, 2016, p. 668). It also signifies to erase, which means that the Upanishad provides the knowledge quite relevant to *Sanyasi* (hermit) that erases or cuts away the ignorance. The *Mundaka Upanishad* is composed in poetic metrical form, and the verses are structured in the form of *mantras* (formulas). The *mantras* are loaded with elevated ideals of philosophical teaching, meditation and spiritual guidance for inner evolution, highlighting the importance of *para* as well as the grand project of *apara* knowledge. It consists of three parts (mundaka). Each of them consists of two sections. Among the three, the first deals with the subtle gradation, categorization of *apara* and *para* knowledge, and at the same time a grand explanation with the lofty dimensional approach of *para* knowledge that leads us from the phenomenal world to the world of ultimate reality. The second section deals with the nature of ultimate reality which the Upanishad names as *Brahman*, and it also expounds the philosophy of Vedanta (The theory or the philosophy of the Veda). The third section directs us from this phenomenal manifested reality to the realm of ultimate reality—the absolute *Brahman*.

The Upanishad expounds the theory of knowledge as *para* and *apara*. *Para* is the higher level of knowledge and *apara* is the lower level of knowledge. *Apara* deals with the knowledge of the manifested reality, the world that we see. And the Upanishad categorizes the Veda along with its eight limbs in the domain of lower knowledge (*para*). The higher knowledge is the knowledge of transcendent *Brahman* that requires an evolution of a quest within. This *para* knowledge leads to the realm of transcendent reality far beyond this phenomenal world. Therefore, this article explores the issues of *apara* and *para* knowledge that the *Mundaka Upanishad* proclaims in its *mantras* focusing on these research questions: What are the basic differences between *apara* and *para* knowledge? How do the *para* and *apara* knowledge relate with each other? How does this Upanishad bring a paradigmatic shift from the Vedic outwardness of *apara* to the Upanishadic inwardness of *para* knowledge? Why is it essential to relate the Upanishadic knowledge with teaching and modern pedagogy?

This new exploration of the dynamics of knowledge strengthens the perception to view beyond the polarity. This article aims to realize the knowledge in its totality by disregarding the fact that one is better than the other. The knowledge in its integrated form is the perfect way to realize the dimensions of the world because to realize the aspects of *para* and *apara* is to perceive the fountain of the genuine truth in totality.

Review of Literature

The *Mundaka Upanishad* from the very beginning has remained as a storehouse of knowledge. It has attracted multiple points of view and perspectives because the *mantras* from this Upanishad are loaded with multiple insights and demands new interpretations. Therefore, this Upanishad remains as the gem of one of the schools of Hindu philosophy known as Vedanta. In it, we trace the paradigmatic shift of knowledge from exoteric (lower) to esoteric (higher). Supporting this concept, Easwaran (2007) opines that the demarcation of higher and lower knowledge leads us beyond the gross realities to the domain

where knowing, being, becoming are united (p. 183). This notion highlights the dimensions of *para* and *apara* knowledge that the *Mundaka Upanishad* deals with. However, Easwaran overlooks the paradigmatic shift of knowledge between the Vedic and Vedantic domains in the Upanishad, which is the main issue of this study.

The knowledge that this Upanishad exposes leads the entire humanity to a plenum of light. Highlighting the significance of esoteric aspects of Upanishadic knowledge, Mascaro (1965) writes:

The composers of the Upanishads were thinkers and poets, they had the vision of the poet; and the poet knows well that if the poetry takes us away from a lower reality of daily life it is only to lead us to the vision of a higher reality even in this daily life, where limitations give way for the poet to the joy of liberation. (p. 11)

The knowledge that the Upanishad postulates is always for the sake of humanity. But it is only the *Mundaka Upanishad* that makes a clear cut explanation of esoteric and exoteric knowledge. By realizing this essence of knowledge, one can have the spiritual evolution in life.

The Vedic scholar Olivelle (1998) notes that the *Mundaka Upanishad* rejects Vedic ritual practices. He views this Upanishad attacks anything of the Vedic rituals. It distinguishes the lower religious documents from the higher class of philosophical texts that propose higher knowledge of *Brahman* as the absolute reality. It teaches this level of knowledge as Vedanta by making a distinction between Veda and Vedanta (p. 434). Olivelle highlights the importance of the *Mundaka Upanishad* as a landmark in its arena. However, he also fails to make an explanation of how the knowledge brought a paradigmatic shift of knowledge from *apara* to *para*.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* also talks about the concept of totality. It holds the value that real knowledge shines in the integration of perception and realization. This is essential in teaching and learning practices. Mehta (2017) writes that this Upanishad proposes the processes of seeing and listening by which integration is possible. To make an inquiry of genuine knowledge, how to listen and see are the prerequisites. Knowledge is the total sum of listening and seeing. Listening with interpretation and seeing with evaluation can be the background to discover the truth (p. 116). The above view talks about greater aspects of the *Mundaka Upanishad*. However, it also overlooks the demarcation of *para* and *apara* knowledge that the Upanishad postulates.

The above commentaries by Easwaran and Mascaro detect the dynamics of esoteric and exoteric knowledge. Olivelle's comments reveal the projection of higher knowledge while Mehta sees the integrating aspects in the knowledge of this Upanishad. However, they overlook the departure of knowledge from Vedic outwardness to Upanishadic inwardness. Moreover; this Upanishad foreshadows the teaching pedagogy which is relevant in the modern context. These underlying ideas invite a systematic exploration in this Upanishad.

Methodology

This study applies the qualitative approach which, according to Kumar ((2014), explores diversity, emphasizing the description and interpretation (p.14). This study applies the textual analysis method

to explore, interpret, and describe the words, symbols, and concepts loaded in the *mantras* from the Upanishad to establish it as a milestone of knowledge. It designs in the co- relational research because it shows the positive correlation between the *apara* and *para* knowledge, analyzing how these two categories of knowledge in their perfect integration ultimately lead to the realization of the absolute reality. It also makes comparisons and explanations of these two categories of knowledge, analyzing the *mantras* from the *Mundaka Upanishad* as the primary source of ideas. Related criticisms, reviews, and philosophical issues become the secondary sources to establish the argumentations.

Analysis and Interpretation

The Upanishad builds up the dynamics of the knowledge. Therefore, the following sections reveal the postulation of the theory and definition of *apara* and *para* knowledge in the *Mundaka Upanishad*. This study systematically analyzes and interprets them, showing their dichotomies and amalgamation. Then, it leads to a systematic exploration how the harmony between these two aspects of knowledge brings a new perception about the truth.

Vedic *Apara* to Vedantic *Para*: A Paradigmatic Shift in Knowledge

The *Mundaka Upanishad* makes a clear demarcation between the Vedic externalization and Upanishadic internalization concepts. The Vedic rituals and sacrifices were performed only for the worldly ends and earthly material glories, and their basic goal was the “maintenance of the cosmos at its optimum level of status quo” (Hamilton, 2007, p. 19). They thus focused on the external aspects of reality. The Vedic sacrifices were addressed to maintain cosmic continuity, not the speculation of inner reality. On the other hand, the optimal goal of Upanishads is for the cosmic speculation of Oneness. They also focus and clarify how that Oneness radiates the entire creation. In this way, the Vedic knowledge is exoteric (lower/*apara*) related to rituals and sacrifices for earthly ends, satisfactions, and glories, while the Upanishadic knowledge is esoteric (*para*|higher) that is for spiritual illumination and evolution within to realize the transcendent reality. The lower knowledge (*apara*) just shows the breadth and quantitative development that never takes us nearer to the inward ultimate reality. The *aparavidya* (lower knowledge) is accumulated; it is not direct realization. In this regard, it is knowledge of the immanent, while the *paravidhya* (higher knowledge) is the direct realization of the sacred knowledge.

The Veda falls in the domain of *apara* because it seeks for outwardness. The quest for inward reality that rules and governs us is the direct apprehension of the ultimate reality that is imperishable (*akshara*). This is the major and fundamental quest of Vedanta. The teacher of this Upanishad (Angirasha) also makes his pupil (Saunaka) realize the greatest prospect of Vedanta that the ultimate reality within is also the highest reality that remains outside. The teacher here is perhaps focusing on the categorizations of *apara* and *para* knowledge that lead a journey from Vedic “polytheistic outwardness” to Upanishadic “monistic inwardness” (Raju, 1977, p. 199). Polytheistic outwardness seeks to know the manifested and phenomenal world. Unlike this, this Upanishad projects that one single reality pervades the entire creation. The dualities of the phenomenal world vanish in that Oneness. This is the crux of Vedanta. Here, the *Mundaka Upanishad* becomes a hallmark for Vedanta—a paradigmatic shift from the Vedic canon

to Upanishadic Self-realization. The *Mundaka Upanishad* as its name suggests starts itself with a very simple, but a deep question. The pupil, Saunaka, asks his teacher Angirasha, "O venerable one, what is that by the knowledge of which this whole world becomes known?" (1. 1. 3; Deussen trans, 2010, p. 572). From the question itself, the seeker wants a qualitative and holistic approach to seek the ultimate One. The seeker wants to realize only the part, from which the whole is known. Then the teacher gives a convincing answer that expands the zenith of knowledge categorically:

And he (the teacher) said to him (the student) "One should know two sciences (or kinds of knowledge), that is what those who know Brahman say, namely: the higher and the lower.

The lower is the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samveda, Atharvaveda, the science of (properly) pronouncing the letters (of the Vedic texts) (Siksa), the lore of cult, grammar, vocabulary, prosody, astronomy.

But the higher knowledge is that through which that imperishable one (aksaram) is known; . . . (1. 1. 4, 5; Deussen trans, 2010, p. 572)

The teacher categorizes the quality of knowledge. He quantifies the knowledge to know about the Veda and its six limbs of study areas. Especially, the Veda and the subject matter of the external worldly affairs are in the domain of lower knowledge that the teacher labels as *apara* that is perishable. The Vedic outwardness simply focuses on material glories and the earthly ends. The contrast described above is the crux of internalization of the Vedic sacrificial tradition into the Upanishadic speculation of the eternal reality. The *apara* (lower) knowledge is only the quantitative knowledge. It only deals with horizontal growth. It is related to the breadth of knowledge. The Vedic branches of knowledge of the outward and manifested approach, according to Hamilton (2007) "directed towards the external world are simply transposed to an inner understanding of the world" (p. 30). Here, it justifies that the prevailing Vedic externalization of the knowledge is the way for Upanishadic internalization.

The teacher may be saying that if the approach is not sacred and qualitative, then it becomes an indirect one. Only the deep insight that creates the evolution within oneself can lead us from gross world to the reality of spirit where the consciousness dwells. Only in the deepest subatomic level, the knower and the known are merged. Thus, going beyond the outwardness to monistic inwardness becomes the central theme of the *Mundaka Upanishad* that makes a paradigmatic shift.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* projects the concepts that the ultimate reality, impersonal absolute *Brahman*, can be only realized with the esoteric (*para*) knowledge. The *Brahman*, a neuter term, has its roots in "brh" which means, "to grow, to burst forth" (Radhakrishnan, 2016, p. 52). It is the eternal reality that precedes the phenomenal manifestations, and is simply the One. It is a concept and a state of realization, and is not to be defined within a fixed framework. The definition of *Brahman* does not deserve its significance because to describe what it is not adds the value to it. It is pervasive and omnipresent cosmic power which radiates everything. Zimmer (2011) deeply describes its nature:

Brahman, then, the highest, deepest, final, transcendental power inhabiting the visible, tangible levels of our nature, transcends both the so called "gross body" (*sthula-sarira*) and the inner world of forms of experiences the— notions, ideas, thoughts, emotions, visions, fantasies, etc.—of the "subtle body" (*sukma-sarira*). As the power that turns into and animates everything in the microcosm as

well as in the outer world, it is the divine inmate of the mortal coil and is identical with the Self (*atman*)—the higher aspect of that which we in the West style (indiscriminately) “the soul.” (p. 79)

The above explanation of *Brahman* as the supreme and ultimate reality shows that it remains in every phenomenal manifestation. It is the inner controller; the prime mover. We are the microcosm of that macrocosm. So, the greater Upanishadic formula (mantra) "*tat tvam asi* (that are thou)" (Huxley, 1947, p. 8) resembles the idea that the personal self is simply the spark of that eternal impersonal *Brahman*.

The absolute, impersonal *Brahman* is the ultimate truth beyond any metamorphosis. It transcends the definition because it is formless, but remains within the form being the prime mover. The formless absolute one is eternal. Therefore, it is "beyond space, time and causation" (Chetanananda, 2011, p. 19). It is beyond any image, but the image derives from it. The *Mundaka Upanishad* states:

That which cannot be seen, nor seized, which belongs to neither this social order nor that, which has no eyes nor ears, no hands nor feet; the eternal, the all pervading, the infinitesimal, the imperishable, that it is which the wise regard as the source of all that exists"(1.1. 6; Muller trans, 2000, p. 47).

The stage of immersing this personal Self into it is the silence of supreme bliss. To realize this stage of formless as well as manifested *Brahman* that is in forms, a special gradation and categorization of knowledge is a must. Only the *Mundaka Upanishad* intensifies “the *Brahman* expands (manifests itself) by means of concentration” (1. 1, 8; Muller trans, 2000, p. 47). In this way, this Upanishad expounds the knowledge to realize the ultimate reality.

Another point needs a consideration here. The Vedic sacrifices and ritual practices were addressed to natural (atmosphere) Gods, terrestrial and celestial ones. Macdonnel et al. (2014) classify that Dyaus, Mitra, Varuna, Surya, Pushan Savitr, and the Ashvins are celestial gods. Indra, Rudra, Apam -napat, Vayu, the Maruts, Parjanya, and Apas are the atmospheric gods. Prithivi, Soma, and Agni are terrestrial deities (p. 20). It shows that the Vedic cannons were polytheistic in nature. The common belief was that there was a reciprocal relationship between the man and the deities. The devotee performs the sacrificial acts called *yajna* to invoke the deities, and it was a two-way function of giving from the devotee's side and getting from the side of benevolent gods. These practices, in a sense, maintained cosmic order. It was a great celebration between humans and nature. Later on, it was named as *dharma*. The function to maintain *dharmic* rituals and sacrifices were known as *Mimamsaka*. However, the important aspect of these Vedic rituals and sacrifice involve a threefold cosmic processes—human, divine, and cosmic. In these processes, all three aspects god, man and nature along with the universe are correlated. According to Panikkar (1994), this is cosmotheandric. He writes, “God without man is nothing, literally "no-thing." Man without god is exclusive a "thing", not a person . . . while the world, the cosmos, without man and god is "any-thing," without consistency and being; it is sheer unexisting chaos" (p. 73). What a threefold cosmic order has been maintained! This communion is maintained in *yajna*, a sacrificial ritual. In this way, the Vedic quest was outwardness to maintain a cosmic integration, order, and unity.

Unlike the Vedic cosmotheandric concept, the quest of Upanishad is mainly inwardness from the outer reality to the inner ultimate One. The *Mundaka Upanishad* while categorizing the aspects of knowledge reveals that higher knowledge (*paravidhya*) becomes a revelation, and becomes a direct and

personal means of realization, while the lower one is attained by ordinary means. The purpose of higher knowledge is to realize the imperishable One (*aksharam*) as stated in the *Mundaka Upanishad*:

. . . But the higher knowledge is that through which that imperishable one (*aksharam*) is known; that which is invisible, ungraspable, devoid of pedigree (*agotra*), Which is colorless, devoid of eyes and ears, devoid of hands and feet, Which is eternal, all penetrating, omnipresent, which is hardly knowable, that is unchangeable, Which is viewed by the wise as the womb(source) of beings. (1.1, 5, 6; Deussen, 2010, p. 572)

All Vedic gods disappear in this exploration. These *mantras* propagate the monotheistic trend, believing that the whole phenomenal manifestations are the derivatives of that imperishable One that the Upanishad named as *Brahman*. It has existence in itself, but without a fixed identity. This cosmic manifestation is the spark of *Brahman* as the Upanishad says, “As the spider sends forth and draws in its thread, as plants grow on this earth, as from every man hairs spring forth, so does everything arise here from the indestructible” (1.1, 7; Muller trans, 2000, p. 47). This outward reflection can be perceived by the lower knowledge because it is gained from the operation of the mind. It is always gradually collected, synthesizing with different processes that the mind undergoes. The higher knowledge is never a quantitative expansion. Knowledge in its higher level remains as it is, but the qualitative difference lies in an awakening, in the exploration, in an evolution, in an inwardness to realize the ultimate reality that dwells within. To know this absolute reality of the imperishable One, the higher knowledge that gives the perception of whole is a must. Reality is “not the faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude” (Foucault, 2010, p 42). The perception of the reality and reactivation of the attitude as a whole is the hall-mark of higher knowledge. Then only the quest from the outwardness to the inwardness takes its course that this Upanishad postulates for. Thus, the knowledge of immanent is in the domain of *para*, and *apara* seeks the transcendental knowledge.

The Vedanta makes a quest for the ideal stage of transcendence. It talks about the four stages to transcend this phenomenal world of *apara* into the *para*. The first is the *shravana* which is the study of the scriptures, and keep learning by what the *guru* (teacher) says. The second is the *manana* which means reflection meditation. This is a continuous one-pointedness on *Brahman* that has been heard and learned from *shravana*. The seeker remains unaffected by physical impediments, and thinks constantly on that ultimate reality. The last one is *nidhidhyasanam*, which is an intense focus on inner vision with a deep concentration. The thought process is suspended by merging personal consciousness into the *Brahman*. Then the final one is the perfect stage that is known as *Samadhi*, in which the “distinction between the onlooker and the thing looked upon (the subject and object) disappear. The consciousness of the devotee has transformed itself into the substance of the Self. . . it has taken the form of Self (*Brahman*)” (Zimmer, 2011, pp. 432-33). It is the absolute stage of transcendence, and falls in the domain of *para* knowledge.

Upanishadic Inwardness: A Way to Monism

The *Mundaka Upanishad* categorizes the knowledge. However, the question is whether we should

discard the *apara* (lower) knowledge for the higher (*para*). The Upanishad also previews the interconnection between the individual and the universe, the relationship between the whole and the part, subject and object and their relationship with the transcendental imperishable *Brahman*. It expands the Vedic cosmotheandric concept. The Upanishad guides the personal self to be merged into the cosmic consciousness, just like the moment the river merges into the sea, it becomes larger. Only the forms and names vanish, but the reality becomes the greater one. To become a greater consciousness, the inward journey starts from the outward one. While the Upanishad makes a distinction between the lower and higher knowledge, at the same time it reveals the secrecy that the lower knowledge with a sacred approach is the step for the higher one, because they both emanate from the same reality. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says: "This is that truth. The works which the sages saw in the hymns are variously spread forth in the three Vedas. Perform them constantly, ye lovers of truth. This is your path to the world of good deeds "(1. 2, 1; Radhakrishnan trans, 2016, p. 674). In this way, the Vedic exteriorization leads to the journey towards internalization.

The ceremonial sacrifices guided with motives bears no value, but the spontaneity of service sugbufues value. When the server loses himself, then it results in true service. Then the lower knowledge stands as a greater step to perceive the higher knowledge. The ego annihilates when the pure motives shine. One becomes simply a consciousness at this stage. There is no existence of duality. Since these entire worldly manifestations of the One are the derivatives and reflections of the same ultimate reality, one should also be familiar with the perishable form of that imperishable One. The knowledge of the immanent form leads to the transcendent formless aspect of the imperishable One. Mehta (2017) views the *apara* as the knowledge of the immanence, while *para* leads to the higher transcendental knowledge (p. 121). This gradation shows the *apara* as the knowledge to know the worldly ends, and the *para* as the knowledge to have an inward quest where the divine spark of that ultimate formless *Brahman* remains and dwells. Both of the categories of knowledge are related to each other. Both of them are the means to attain reality. In this way, "And so the Lower and the Higher have reference to the end. It is in terms of the end that knowledge is called either Lower or Higher" (Mehta, 2017, p. 121). How beautifully the means and ends are conjoined here for the illumination of the ultimate reality!

When the end is fixed, the seeker becomes a *jnani* (a person with the wisdom of pure awareness), and gains insights into everything that s/he sees, feels, and perceives around. That imperishable One becomes perishable in this context because the visible is created out of invisible, the perishable is the reflection of imperishable as stated in the Holy Bible: "so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible"(Hebrew 11:30). The Upanishad too exposes the transcendental nature of imperishable and the invisible One from where the manifestations occur. It is the unmanifest that sustains the manifest. In the manifest, the unmanifest is immanent. This is the stage where the imperishable *Brahman* is realized. The *Mundaka Upanishad* confirms this truth:

This is the truth; Just as out of the blazing fire. The sparks, alike in essence, arise a thousand fold so also, O dear one, out of the imperishable the manifold beings arise forth and they again enter or merge in the same.

Out of it originates the breath, the mind and all the senses, out of it originates the breath, the mind and all the senses, out of it arise ether, wind and fire and the water and the earth which beats everything. (2.1. 1, 3; Deussen trans, 2010, p. 577)

The Upanishad in the Mundaka II, section one, describes how the whole creation is the immanent form of the same transcendental One. The Upanishad then lists out everything that is manifested from the imperishable one remains in the domain of *apara* knowledge just like “life, mind, all sense powers, space, air, light, water, and the earth, the support of all” (2.1.3; Muller trans, 2000, p. 50). It brings a sense that the polytheistic concept of Vedic rituals leads to the monistic concept of the Upanishad. The polytheistic concept believes in different forms of gods while the monistic concept of Upanishad proclaims that all the visible things are the results of the One. The One is the greater concept Upanishad propagates for. The imperishable One is "transcendent and yet immanent. All and dwelling in the hearts of all" (Hill, 1928, p. 64). The One is both manifested and unmanifested. The knowledge of outward manifestations then surely leads to the realization of the One. This is the way the *apara* leads to the *para* knowledge.

The radiance of energy or consciousness is transcendental, but every beginning starts from there. The *Mundaka Upanishad* exposes that the world of becoming is simply the derivatives of the archetypes as postulated by Plato who views that "forms are primary, while the visible objects of conventional reality are their direct derivatives" (Tarnas, 2000, p. 6). The projection of the Upanishad is very close to Plato's viewpoint. It presents a quest to go beyond the derivatives too when they are perceived and known by the lower knowledge. While postulating a concept of the imperishable *Brahman*, it brings one of the loftiest concepts in the entire Upanishadic lore:

That which is evident (visible) and yet concealed
dwells in the cavity (of the heart)—a great place,
in which is fixed (as spokes) that which lives and breathes
and shuts the eyes,
know ye what is higher than it, as what is and is not
transcending knowledge, the highest of creation,
that which is blazing forth like a flame
that which is the subtlest of the subtle;
on it rest the worlds and those who reside in those worlds,
the imperishable one, the Brahman
it is the breath, speech and mind;
it is the truth, the immortal one
that indeed, O dear one, you should hit as the target. (2. 2. 1, 2; Deussen trans, 2010, p. 580)

The imperishable One is the formless *Brahman*. In its transcendental form, it is subtle and the essential One. But it is immanent in its manifested forms. Therefore, lower knowledge is essential to know the manifested and immanent forms of the ultimate reality. The higher one leads beyond the parameters of logic and experiences, and transcends the duality.

It also shows that the outward mentation of a part never brings us to the realization of the *Brahman*.

On the other hand, only the mentation of the whole enables us to establish a communion with the manifest. One should realize that all is whole and whole is in all. All phenomenal processes come to a halt. No communion and duality remain at this stage; only the concentration of the One remains. Only the transcendent becomes immanent. The seeker becomes the One. As “the subtlest of the subtle,” the ultimate formless *Brahman* transcends space and time.

The imperishable *Brahman* that is the great beyond dwells in creation being the prime mover which is the *atman*. The *atman* as the spark of *Brahman* is then known as “the divine inmate of the mortal coil and is identical with the self (atman)” (Zimmer, 2011, p. 79). It is the deepest reality. It is the *Brahman* within creatures. When the oneness of these two is realized, one is released from metempsychosis. For it, the knowledge of higher reality (*para*) that is in the Upanishad is a must. The *Mundaka Upanishad* states:

Taking as the bow the great weapon of the Upanishads, one should place in it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Drawing it within mind engaged in the contemplation of that *Brahman*. O beloved, know that imperishable *Brahman* as the target . . . where the arteries of the body are brought together like the spokes in the centre of a wheel, within it (this self, moves about) becoming manifold. Meditate on *aum* as the self. May you be successful in crossing over the farther show of darkness. (2.2. 3,5; Radhakrishnan trans, 2016, pp. 683-84)

The knowledge of the *Mundaka Upanishad* propagates that the embodied self (*atman*) is the *Brahman* itself. We are the macrocosm in the form of a microcosm. The great beyond remains within us, rules us, gives us consciousness being the prime mover, the inner controller. Thus, the main quest of Upanishadic notion is not to seek only the knowledge of the outer reality, but the realization of the ultimate reality that is within because "Atman meaning God within..." (Prabhavananda and Manchester, 1964, p. iv). This knowledge of inwardness can be only derived from the *Yoga* and *Shankhya*. *Shankhya* is the knowledge of imperishable or *Brahman*. It is a way for self-realization, and so is called *Brahmavidya* “the discipline of knowledge” (Edgerton, 1994, p. 4). The *Shankhya* of Upanishad should not be confused with the later philosophical system propagated by the great sage Kapila which deals with enumerated categories and the ways for the knowledge. Likewise, *Yoga* in the Upanishadic idea is the way that unites the self with *Brahman*. *Shankhya* leads for the ultimate reality. They become the ways to attain the divine state (*Brahmasthaniti*) and the bliss of God (*Brahman nirvana*), establishing communion with the cosmic soul.

The philosophy of *Yoga* plays an important role as it is the way to unite this individual consciousness into the cosmic one. It signifies “harnessing or applying oneself to” (Hiriyanna, 2000, p. 19). Derived from the root *yuj*, the word means “to bind together.” Thus, it is the way of linking or binding by eliminating our passions that ultimately opens the passage from our narrow personal ego into the realm of *Brahman*, the transcendental One. By crossing the frontiers of this phenomenal existence of senses, the project of *Yoga* is to merge or unite the personal self (*atman*) with the universal self. Hamilton (2007) opines that it is also a way to internal psychic control for harmony, order and an insight of integration (p. 107). *Yoga* has some methodological practices that the Upanishad does not talk about, which were later on systematized by Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutra* about second century B.C. *Yoga* leads to an evolutionary journey from here to there in the domain of ultimate truth— from *apara* to *para*.

The seeker in this process rises from the physical world to metaphysical world. There are eight steps in the methodological practices of *Yoga*. *Yama* is the first one, which makes the willpower strong, enlarging the inner motivation of human values. *Niyama*, the second step, is related to the self-discipline, and holds the value of purifying the mind and body. Then the seeker possesses genial feelings about others too. The third stage is *Asana* that is related to physical postures to control the flesh by opening the way to the fourth stage known as *Pranayama*. This stage focuses on the regularity of breath with an attempt to transform the vibrations of personal energy into the cosmic one. The fifth one is *Prathyahara*. This is the process of controlling sense and regulating them. So, there is the emergence of detachment from the phenomenal world to the attachment to the world of consciousness. The sixth one is the *Dharana*, which means the *Yogi* “becomes aware of the big picture and gain perspective” (Pattanaik, 2015, p. 114). A mystical awareness arises in this stage. *Dhyana* is the stage when the seeker becomes attentive to the *Brahman*, and realizes the oceanic feelings just like the stage *nidhidhyasanam* that the Vedanta postulates. The last one is the *Samadhi*, the stage of supreme Self-realization. The ego is annihilated; the duality vanishes, and the seeker becomes the *Brahman*. This is the evolution from the *para* world to the *apara* world of transcendence.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* also points that crossing over the farther shore of darkness, one needs the arrow sharpened by meditation. One should meditate to feel that one is the whole *Brahman*. More than that, the contemplation of *Brahman* is needed. It may be making a point that the mind should go beyond the manifested reality. There should not be distractions. The "*Vyavasayatmika Buddhir*" (Edgerton, 1994, p. 22), the mind with one- pointed fixed reason, is only the way to go beyond the mask and to separate real from the unreal. It is the imperishable knowledge of Upanishadic inwardness (*jnana|shankhya*) which distinguishes "between the *Atman* and *Anatman*, between the sentient and the insentient, between the eternal and changing" (Baba, 1988, p. 99). This is the transcendental, the real aspect of *para* (Higher) knowledge. Only this can be the way to transcend passion, *Vasana* and *Maya*, the divine illusion of this world. This is the inner quest that merges this mind with the supermind, this consciousness with the cosmic consciousness. The *Mundaka Upanishad* reflects this blissful stage:

Just as the rivers flow and disappear

In the sea, giving up their name and form,

So also, the wise man, released from name and form,

enters into the divine highest spirit (*purusa*). (3. 2. 8; Deussen trans, 2010, p. 586)

Do the above lines reflect the sense of annihilation or a state of perfection? Of course, they reflect the total stage of unity, perfection, bliss, and eternity. This merging is possible only when one knows the immanent *Brahman* is the manifested reality with the help of lower knowledge, *apara* knowledge. Then only the transcendent formless *Brahman* is realized with the *para* knowledge.

Conclusion

The *Mundaka Upanishad* makes a point that both aspects of knowledge – *para* and *apara*—liberate us from passion, desires, and *Maya* (illusion). The harmony of these aspects leads to a new zenith of realization. The quest from the outer manifested reality to the inner essence can radiate the truth of

the cosmic creation. Thus, this Upanishad brings a paradigmatic shift in the explanation of knowledge, categorizing that the Vedic knowledge related to the sacrifice and rituals, is the *apara* knowledge. The Knowledge of Vedic canon always quests for the outwardness that focuses on cosmic order, integration, and *Dharma*. On the other hand, the Upanishadic knowledge propagates the *paravidya* which makes us realize the state of formless *Brahman*. It always leads us to the quintessence, giving an insight into cosmic speculation. It also makes us realize that the entire manifestation is the reflection of the same absolute reality. This is a great shift of knowledge from the Vedic outwardness to Upanishadic inwardness—from *apara* to *para*. One aspect of knowledge does not become complete without the other. The dichotomy of knowledge of *apara* and *para* in its perfect integration certainly rationalizes teaching and pedagogy. Thus, the projection of *Shrawana* (listening), *Manana* (internalizing), and *Nidhidhyasanam* (concentration) from the “Gurukul” remain as the warp and woof for teaching and latest pedagogy practised in “School”. Without seeing, knowing, and internalizing, the learning process never finds its real haven. In this regard, the essentials of *apara* and *para* knowledge postulated in this Upanishad spontaneously entwine with processes of teaching and modern pedagogy. Above all, the scheme from Vedic knowledge of exteriority to the Upanishadic knowledge of interiority in the *Mundaka Upanishad* proves to be seminal in the domain of Eastern epistemology.

Implication in Teaching and Pedagogy

The *Mundaka Upanishad* focuses on the total knowledge of seeing, knowing, and realizing the truth. Without these fundamentals, no equilibrium and integration in knowledge are possible for the real transformation. The dialogues between Angirasa, the teacher, and Saunaka, the pupil, reveal that the *apara* (exoteric) knowledge is the quantitative expansion of knowledge while the *para* is the qualitative one. One aspect is incomplete without the other. The Upanishad also focuses that the real interaction always constructs the truth. This dichotomy between the *apara* and *para* remains as the optimum level of critical pedagogy which aims for attaining the vibrations of humanity, fraternity, independence, and emancipation from the tutelage. If the knowledge of Upanishad goes side by side with the critical pedagogy, then it results in the real transformation in the teaching and learning process. Besides, the teaching process is the outcome of the teacher and students. The word “Upanishad” also signifies sitting beside the teacher and attaining the radiation of knowledge. This is the foundation of “Gurukul” (Upanishadic teaching and learning system) system where there is a great affinity between the teacher and the student which the modern school system lacks in more or less sense. If the modern “School System” blends with the Upanishadic “Gurukul” system, that would drive the entire teaching system, neither the teacher-centered nor the student-centered teaching system becomes fruitful, but the amalgamation of these systems leads beyond the zenith.

The *Mundaka Upanishad* focuses on the inner transfiguration with the light of knowledge. To attain this purpose, deeper interpretation is essential. Could not we apply the stages of *shrawana* (listening), *manana* (meditation and the process of internalization), and *nidhidhyasanam* (intense focus and concentration) in teaching and pedagogy? Of course, we can because “teaching is an act, while pedagogy is both an act and discourse” (Alexander, 2001, p. 540). The way the Upanishad dichotomizes and integrates

the polar of lower and higher knowledge justifies as if it is a classical, but an advanced version of teaching and modern pedagogy.

The *mantras* of the Upanishad provide a grand explanation along with the theorization of constructivism. Whitaker (2008) proposes the essence of constructivism and opines that we construct our realities every day. We discard some preoccupied ideas and reconstruct the newer ones. This is the constant process of shaping and reshaping our realities (as cited in Robyn, 2008, p. 14). If all the processes head towards shaping and reshaping the reality, then the aspect of the *apara* knowledge leads to the cognition of the phenomenal reality while the *para* knowledge leads to the total realization and internalization of the genuine reality. If this modern concept of constructing truth is introduced in the teaching system side by side with the dynamics of knowledge that the *Mundaka Upanishad* proclaims, then the real teaching and learning processes bear their fruits. And we would realize how affluent we are in knowledge handed down by our classical heritage.

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