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THEORETICAL/CRITICAL ESSAY ARTICLE

The Influence of Vedanta on the Writings of Emerson: A Philosophical Inquiry

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Abstract

This article explores the insights of Vedanta in the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Vedanta proclaims that the ultimate reality is within us. The Vedanta propounds for the philosophical explanations of the Vedas. The absolute reality that Vedanta projects as Brahman is essentially inward, and the entire phenomenal manifestations are just the reflection of that ultimate reality. Every phenomenal manifestation is the qualitative growth of the absolute one. The ultimate reality rules everything that exists in the material world. In this way, Vedanta believes in unity between God, man and nature. These essentials of Vedanta have their influences on Emerson's writings. His essays and poems talk about this cosmic unity. His concepts of Over-Soul and the self-reliance remain as the metamorphosis of the philosophical insights of Vedanta. His poem "Brahma" exactly reflects the impacts of Vedanta because the poem views an individual in an eternal divine form. Therefore, Emerson proves to be an American rishi (sage) in Concord who accordingly elaborates and qualifies the Vedanta with new insights. This article is exploratory and interpretive. It tries to correlate the concepts, ideas and essence of the Vedanta in the writings of Emerson. This study, in this way, makes a philosophical inquiry of Emerson's writing with the perspective of Vedanta.

Keywords: Brahman, Over-Soul, self-reliance, transcendentalism, Vedanta, Upanishads

Introduction

This article explores the basic assumptions of Vedanta in Ralph Waldo Emerson's writings. The quest of Vedanta is for the ultimate truth. All the Upanishads project the philosophical explanation of the Vedas. The word "Veda" means knowledge. The Upanishads epitomize the knowledge of Vedas. Because of this reason, they disseminate the philosophical part of the Vedas. In this sense, the knowledge that the Upanishad propounds is Vedanta. Mittal explains that "the word 'Anta' in the 'Vedanta' means 'theory'. And thus Vedanta means the theory of Vedas" (23). Upanishads systematize the philosophical crux of Veda, and "the term *Vedanta* (=Veda+anta end:

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“end of the Veda,” i.e., the goal or terminal development of Vedic thought). . .” (Campbell 19) stands for the philosophical ideas of Vedic system. It also projects that there is always a single truth that is the absolute one, and the entire perishable manifestations emanate from the imperishable one. The absolute one, *Brahman*, resides equally in all beings. It means we all are divine, and the divinity is within us. The ultimate goal is the realization of that divinity with self- evolution. These insights of Vedanta have a great impact on Emerson's writings.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was a great American poet, and known as the pioneer of the American transcendentalism. In nineteenth century, transcendentalism flowered as a religious and cultural, philosophical, and a literary movement in the works of “a small group round Emerson in Concord, Massachusetts” (Manning 154). It is hard to point down the exact definition of this movement because the movement transcended the geographical limitations while borrowing and synthesizing the ideas from various religions and philosophers throughout the world. That’s why, Emerson rightly defines the movement as “a little beyond” (qtd. in Myerson xxv), which signifies the essence of the movement. The greatness of Emerson lies as a great synthesizer while reinterpreting the ideas that influenced him. Nevertheless, the impacts of Eastern mysticism and notably Vedanta provided the basic moves and vibes for his writings. Philip Goldberg exactly points that Emerson read the sacred texts of India and the Vedic impacts on him are notable (26). Therefore, his writings fundamentally reveal his belief and faith in God, man and nature. The great unity between these three (God, man and nature) is the essential philosophical speculation of Vedanta. Emerson’s essays like “Over-Soul,” “The American Scholar,” “Self- Reliance,” and the poem “Brahma” all enrich this concept of cosmic unity, leading us beyond the realm of mind and senses. The quest of reality beyond the phenomenal existence is the grounded beat of Vedanta in these works. This article explores the rhythms of Vedanta in these essays and the poem.

Review of Literature

Emerson’s connection with the Eastern philosophy led to the movement of transcendentalism. As a transcendentalist, his writings transcend geographical confinements. In this regard, the impact of Vedanta on Emerson is pervasive. Swami Madhurananda talks that the crux of Vedanta philosophy, the Bhagavadgita, becomes the primary source of inspiration for Emerson. He also opines that it was Carlyle who gave the Gita to Emerson, and that the great Vedanta book inspired the whole Concord movement (26). If it is so, it is sure that Emerson’s writings undoubtedly speak the influence of Sanskrit Vedanta in English. Franklin Edgerton also supports this idea of Vedanta’s influence on Emerson. He is of the view that the Vedanta philosophy influenced not only Emerson, but the whole American and European literature of nineteenth century (2: 5). Then, we can simply imagine how pervasive the Vedanta was in the writings of Emerson. Likewise, according to Fisher Samuelson and Reninger Vaid, Vedanta postulates that the self as the spark of cosmic consciousness remains within us. The universal *Brahman* (the ultimate reality) dwells as the prime mover in the self. This idea becomes one of the great influences for Emerson (33). The Vedanta philosophy that underlies the philosophy of Upanishads contemplates upon the nature along with its relationship with God, the world and the nature. This idea of integration holds a great value in the writings of Emerson as they focus that an individual is the part of universal reality.

Emerson’s affinity with the Vedanta needs a systematic exploration because he lived his life as the Boston Brahmin and an American yogi. Leslie Perrin Wilson beautifully explicates how Emerson’s writings as the representatives of the

transcendentalism speak the total voice of the different philosophies from the different arenas including the Vedanta:

Among the Many foreign authors who influenced the transcendentalism were German Kant, Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Schelling, Goethe, and Novalis; the English writers Coleridge, Carlyle, and Wordsworth; Plato and Neoplatonic writers; Swedish mystic Swedenborg, and the eastern writing of Confucius and sacred texts of Visnu Purana and the Bhagavadgita. (10)

If *Visnu Purana* and the Bhagavadgita have their influences on Emerson, then it is certain that Emerson speaks the voice of Vedanta. The Bhagavadgita is the crux of Vedanta. All the entire philosophical speculations of Upanishads find their perfect blending in this sacred book, and *Vishnu Purana* provides a good explanation of Vedanta.

Philip Goldberg, a Vedantic scholar, traces how deeply Vedanta influences the philosophy of Emerson. It becomes so wonderful to see how Emerson submerges in the Vedanta. There are still who ignore the impact of Vedanta on him. It would be injustice to his writings. So, Goldberg opines, “Others, familiar with Vedantic texts and therefore able to recognize their flavor, conclude that Indian philosophy did not just spice up Emerson’s philosophical soup, it was a prime ingredient, if not the stock that held it together” (33). The Vedanta, the culmination of Indian philosophy, becomes “prime ingredient” as the “philosophical soup” in the writings of Emerson. Thus, this paper is justifiable to taste the influence of Vedanta as the prime ingredient that adds the unique flavor in his philosophy.

Statement of Problem

Emerson projects the ideas of Over-Soul, Self-Reliance, and the cosmic unity in his works. These concepts foreground the insights of Vedanta. In this sense, his writings reflect the influences of Vedanta. Thus, this article attempts to answer the following research questions: How can we relate Emerson’s concept of Over-Soul as the metamorphosis of *Brahman* as proclaimed by Vedanta? What is the relation between Vedanta’s voice *tat tvam asi* (you are that) and the Self-Reliance? How do Emerson’s essays and poems reflect the tenets of Vedanta when they propound the ultimate truth that forms merely go on changing, but eternity that remains within the forms is beyond decay?

Delimitation

This article only aims to explore the voice of Vedanta in Emerson’s essays namely “The American Scholar,” “Over-Soul,” “Self-Reliance,” and his poem “Brahma.” Thus, the article does not discuss other works of Emerson as the source of primary concepts while exploring concepts of Vedanta in the writings of Emerson.

Methodology

The present study has applied the qualitative approach to research. So, this article has made a philosophical investigation on Emerson’s writings from the perspective of Vedanta. Thematic analysis has remained the major method to explore the ideas and themes of Vedanta on Emerson's writings. The ideas and themes have attained new interpretations that add the in-depth perceptions to the related area. The above selected essays and poem become the primary source of concepts. Their related criticisms, reviews, and commentaries have been considered as the secondary sources. Besides, the related commentaries and ideas from various critics and philosophers have

been considered to justify the propositions. This article intends to explore the insights of Vedanta on the writings of Emerson that qualifies the knowledge.

Vedanta and the Realization of Ultimate Truth

Unlike other systems of Hindu philosophy, the *Uttar Mimansa* or the Vedanta system is speculative in its nature. It provides the deep insights about the cosmic reality and the nature of creation. Its major quest, thus, is for the ultimate reality. The Vedic system was polytheistic, but the Upanishadic was monotheistic in nature. Because of this reason, the Upanishadic canon really adopted the inwardness point of view for the exploration of the ultimate reality. It provides the qualitative knowledge of the Vedas which is later on popularized as Vedanta. It attempts to explore the manifested world as the reflection of the inward reality that is within us. The Upanishads have this common view that there is a single reality. In this sense, the knowledge that the Upanishad disseminates is Vedanta. It crystallizes the ultimate reality as one, a unifying force, and that eternal reality is *Brahman*. This is a neuter term, but has been much discussed from the Upanishadic period (tentatively about 3000 years ago) to the present. In this context, Christopher Isherwood beautifully summarizes the entire philosophy of Vedanta. He summarizes that the philosophy of Vedanta deals with mainly three themes. First, human is inherently divine. Second, humans should make their aim to realize the divinity that is within us. Third, all religions speak essentially the same truth (1). These three propositions bring the real essence of Vedanta as they represent the entire philosophical speculations of Upanishads.

The Vedanta projects that the entire phenomenal worldly manifestation is the immanent form of the nonqualified *Brahman* that is transcendental. There are eleven principal Upanishads that make the greatest quest that the absolute reality *Brahman* is within us being the prime mover. The spark of that reality, *paramatman* or *Brahman* when conjoined with body becomes the *jivatman*. The power that causes the world of becoming is "the divine inmate of the mortal coil and is identical with the self (*atman*)" (Zimmer 79). It means the *Brahman* in the embodied form becomes the *Atman*. The word *Brahman* has its roots in "brh" that means to grow, "to burst forth" as described in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*, "He declared: "I will be many, I will propagate myself" (Deussen trans 238). So, its nature signifies that it remains in every creature. All this creation is just the qualitative growth of *Brahman*. It is the matter of explanation in Vedanta which is beyond any definition and any demarcation, but rules the entire creation. Zimmer rightly explains the nature of *Brahman* that the Vedanta speculates:

Brahman as the charm, or sacred magic formula, is the crystallized, frozen form . . . of the highest divine energy. This energy is perennially latent in man, dormant, yet capable of being strived to creative wakefulness through concentration. . . . Brahman, in other words, is that through which we live and act, the fundamental spontaneity of our nature Brahman properly is that which lies beyond the sphere and reach of intellectual consciousness, in the dark, great, unmeasured zone of height beyond height, depth beyond depth. (Zimmer 79)

These powerful lines reveal the fundamental nature of the ultimate reality. It is energy, a consciousness, and a power that drives the creation and its creatures. To perceive the existence of that inner drive is the realization of the ultimate reality. However, the human's gross reason and sense cannot gauge it. Vedanta explains the way to perceive and realize it. The realization is a perfect sublimity, a bliss and eternity. It is a matter of great mystery in such a way that it goes beyond worldly creation. Its transcendent form is the goal of ultimate realization. When it radiates the divine energy, it is known in the

immanent forms. Thus, it is the first cause of the creation. It determines the entire causations, and precedes them. The universe resides in it and it is in the universe.

This mystical speculation of *Brahman* brings a completely monistic idea that there is a single reality, and that is the absolute One. The phenomenal becoming is just emanated from it. The *Chandogya Upanishad* brings out the heart of the matter of Vedanta:

This (world), my dear, was only the Being, in the beginning, the only one without a second. It is true that some say that this (world) was only non-being in the beginning, only one without a second; (according to them) out of this non-being, the Being was born.

But, dear one, how could it be so? How could the Being or the existent be born out of the non-being or the non-existent? On the contrary, therefore, O dear one, there was the Being in the beginning, only one, without a second.

The same being intended: "I will be many (manifold). I will propagate myself, . . . (Deussen trans 162-63)

As we cannot separate breath from life, in the same way, *Brahman's* fullness cannot be gauged, because it can develop, grow and procreate into infinity, and dwindle into nullity. Prior to the phenomenal existent was a pure being, the *Brahman*, without a second. Out of it, many forms of becoming emerge. It is just the being, from which every becoming is possible. This clear demarcation between the nature of being and becoming is the fundamental voice of Vedanta. However, all diverse antagonistic and even irreconcilable aspects of the universe come out of the same being, *Brahman*. That is the mystical nature of absolute reality.

The Upanishadic lores explore the essence of *Brahman*. The main speculation is that there is one ultimate reality that they name *Brahman*. These beautiful verses (*mantras*) from the *Kenopanishad* here dig out the essence of *Brahman*:

That which is not expressed through speech but that by which speech is expressed: that, verily, known thou, is *Brahman*, not what (people) here adore.

That which is not thought by mind but by which, they say, the mind is thought (thinks); that, verily, know thou, is *Brahman* and not what (people) here adore. (Radhakrishnan trans 582-84)

These mystical lines explore the true reality of the *Brahman*. It is a mystery beyond the level of transcendence. The entire cosmic manifestations go on the course determined by it because it remains as a prime controller of everything that exists. It is the breath of life, yet it is not breathed by life. Therefore, Vedanta's quest is to realize that ultimate reality that guides us. The Vedic polytheism that is directed to outwardness shifts to quest the monistic inwardness. That is the crux of the philosophy of the canon of Vedanta. The inward realization becomes dominant in Vedanta.

The quest of Vedanta is that the reality that is the absolute one remains in us being the prime mover. The world of becoming exists when the spark of that *Paramatman* or *Brahman* conjoins with the body being the *jivatman* (embodied soul). The great quest of Vedanta is to realize the ultimate reality within us. The Upanishadic canon explores the great relation between the *paramatman* and *atman*. The word "Atman" is derived from the root "an" which means "to breathe". So, the word signifies the breath of life. It is identified with the soul, self, prime mover, or inner controller that drives every creature. It is the embodied spark of the eternal reality, and is beyond the body and its gross senses. The popular expression from the *Chandogya Upanishad* consists one of the basic principles of Vedanta when it identifies this *atman* with *Brahman* or *Paramatman*: "Believe me my dear, this universe consists of what that finest essence is, it is the real, it is the soul, that thou art (*tat tvam asi*), O Svetaketu" (Deussen

trans 170). The great expression that thou art (*tat tvam asi*) is the central voice of Vedanta. This great expression identifies the inner self with the cosmic self. This is the culmination of internalization of Vedic philosophy in the Upanishadic canon. The Upanishads explore *Brahman* is distinct from all immanent things that go on this manifested level. Martin J. Denys describes its true nature when he says, “*Brahman* is not this and not that, *neti, neti*. But *Brahman* is also deeply identical with all things and with all selves and with you yourself, and that thou art, *tat tvam asi*” (18). The transcendent reality rules us being the immanent. This is the essence of Vedanta.

The *Mandukya Upanishad* also expounds the great essence of Vedanta. It conjoins this embodied soul with the cosmic soul as it says, "All this, verily, is *Brahman*, but *Brahman*, is this *Atman* (the soul)" (Deussen trans 605). This great expression centralizes the entire voice of Vedanta that the phenomenal reality causes because of the inner reality. Similarly, the *Brihadrankya Upanishad* holds another great saying of Vedanta, “I am *Brahman*” (Deussen trans 413). The Upanishad further goes on to the ultimate realization of this *Brahman* in the form of *Atman* that is here within us, “The self itself, indeed, should be seen (in its true nature), should be heard about (from the scriptures) and should be thought up, should be reflected upon; O Maitreyi; he by whom this self is seen, heard, thought about, and know,—by him is this whole world known” (Deussen trans 502). The entire discussions lead to a single conclusion that the eternal reality is within us, but the quest should be to realize that eternity. This is another great voice of Vedanta.

Before leading to the conclusion, a few aspects need a special consideration here. The exploration of *Brahman* even leads to the fact that the *Brahman* in the multiple forms rules the entire cosmic manifestations. The whole manifestation is the reflection of that absolute reality. The great scripture of Hinduism, the Bhagavadgita, summarizes all these voices of Vedanta. It is a dialogue between Sri Krishna, the lord of the title, and a young warrior prince Arjuna. Sri Krishna reveals the profound truth to Arjuna in the battle field when the prince is not ready to fight in the battle. Fritjof Capra explicates that the central point of Sri Krishna's spiritual instruction is the central key concepts of Hinduism and Vedanta. Sri Krishna explores the idea that the multitude of things and events that surround us are but different manifestations of the same absolute eternal reality. This reality is called *Brahman*, and it is the unifying concept (99). The crux of Vedanta is the exploration to inwardness for the realization of the ultimate reality (*Brahman*) that dwells within us being *Atman*. Shankara while writing the *Brahmasutras* as the basis of entire Vedantic tenets concludes, “the Brahman is to be realized by all as the *atman* . . . that the Brahman is the self -same *Atman* of all men; . . . the Brahman is the Universal *Atman* residing in all the *atmans* . . . that the Universal *Atman* is different from the individual *atmans*; that is both identical with and different from, them . . .” (qtd. in Raju 236). It clarifies that *Brahman* is identical with *Atman* in its nature, but in forms the individual *Atman* is just the spark from the great universal *Atman*. These great speculations of Vedanta reverberate in the writings of Emerson.

Vedanta and the Writings of Emerson

Emerson remains as a precursor among the American transcendentalists because his powerful words make him a highly readable literary figure. Moved greatly by his faith in God, man and nature, he was deeply inspired by Indian scriptures especially, the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita and *Vishnu Purana*. Robert Godon writes that his central message is to attain the purpose of life with the spiritual inner transformation by realizing the divinity (qtd. in Goldberg 33). This insight that shines through his studies makes the idea clear that he speaks the voice of Vedanta. It is clear that he is a

transcendentalist. The movement was a syncretic one. Emerson was a great synthesizer who reinterprets the ideas of Vedanta in a new perspective.

Emerson makes great efforts to maintain the agglutinative relationship among the individual, the god, nature and even the social institutions. In his essay, "The American Scholar," he is influenced by Vedanta with a touch of novelty so that he seems a *rishi* (preacher) of the Upanishad in Concord. He talks about the world and individual as the manifestation of the ultimate reality that rules the entire creation. He also establishes the identity of an individual simply as an attribute to the absolute reality. In his essay "The American scholar," he exactly speaks the ideals of Vedanta:

. . . there is One Man—present to all particular man only partially, or through faculty, and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man

Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. The planter, who is man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushes and his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into farmer, instead of Man on the farm. (*An Emerson Reader* 171)

In the above lines, we just hear the reverberations of the *Chandogya* and the *Brihadaranakya* Upanishads. The insights of Vedanta like *tat tvam asi* (you are that) and *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman, the ultimate reality) find their perfect explanations with new insights and realization. Emerson assures that the infinite truth—god or *Brahman*—is also in man, and how simply an individual becomes the creator of his/her own world just being the manifestation of the absolute spirit. Emerson just uplifts the individual, giving the divinity. He says about the presence of "One Man" in each and everything. It means he talks about single reality from which all the phenomenal manifestations come in existence. The spirit of Vedanta that projects *Brahman* as the universal source from which everything emanates finds a new perspective here.

Emerson qualifies the insights of Vedanta because the above discussion clarifies that the hierarchies and distinction among men proves worthless because the same divinity rules each and every individual. Only in form one differs from other, but in essence everything is same. In this way, one is divine. The simple thing is one just needs to awake the self because the underlying principle in Vedanta and Emerson is "to see through the surfaces of familiar world to the wondrous redemptive reality beyond, . . . but sadly hidden by the mask of appearance" (Ruland and Bradbury 120). Emerson always frames an individual and his ability in the universal context. The movement one goes beyond the "mask of appearance," one realizes the divinity.

Emerson also notices that external limitations of body, senses, even society, and institutions impede humans to realize the reality within. He proclaims in "The American Scholar" that the ultimate goal of the individual is to realize "the one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although in almost all men obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth and utters truth, or creates" (*An Emerson Reader* 175). However, *maya* (divine illusion) that germinates out of ego degenerating humanity to realize the highest spiritual reality. Establishing identification with the gross body, the divine illusion *maya* makes us oblivious of the true reign of the self. Emerson beautifully presents the power and the nature of divine illusion in his poem "Maya." He writes:

Illusion works impenetrable,
Weaving webs innumerable,
Her gay pictures never fail,
Crowds each other, veil on veil,
Charmer who will be discovered,
By man who thirsts to be deceived. (qtd. in Rosen 150)

We start to believe in pseudo reality as if that is each and everything and all. Since we are embroiled in the worldly affairs by the divine illusion, the real world remains beyond us, and the unreal becomes the real one for us. The veil has to be transcended in order to have the realization of the truth. Only the real *jnana*, the wisdom of pure awareness and *yoga* (the method to unite this mind with the cosmic mind) can lead us beyond the parameters of *maya*. This concept of *maya* is the leitmotif of Vedanta in Emerson. Thus, the realization of self and its internalization, the central message of Vedanta, becomes the dominant voice in Emerson's writings. This is because it is often seen that there is a bond that joins man, nature, and the supreme reality at once. An individual can leap up onto a higher plane because all the components are directly handed to a person by the higher and the larger supreme entity.

Emerson believes that everyone is capable of realizing the highest reality intuitively. Likewise, by transcending the boundary of time and space for the subjective experience, human being perceives the genuine truth. He realizes that the entire cosmic manifestations are the microcosms of the macrocosmic divinity as fundamentally expressed in the *Chandogya* and the *Brihadaranyaka* Upanishads, and the great idea like, "tat tvam asi" and "I am *Brahman*". This Upanishadic concept that one's own inner capabilities can discover the moral truth in nature is immensely liberating. The dogmatic doctrine simply remains as the bondage. To break free from them, one needs to realize the inner divinity that rules us. He establishes this truth of direct relationship with absolute reality in his essay "Nature." He writes, "The foregoing generation beheld God and nature face to face. We –through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" (qtd. in Wilson 4). The ideal aspect of Vedanta is found in Emerson's words that assert there is nothing between the realm of absolute reality and the world of human beings. We are all at once divine. In this regard too, he becomes a Vedantic, a *rishi* in Concord who explains the insights of Vedanta with a new outlook.

In the essay "The Over-Soul," Emerson speaks fundamentally the truth of Vedanta. He postulates the concept of Vedanta that there is an essential unity among all creations that are guided and originated by a supreme mind or Over-Soul. He holds an unshakable faith in the essential unity of all creations with the Over-Soul. More than that, the Over-Soul is a cosmic entity where man, god and nature conjoin, mingle, and merge. In this way, this concept of "Over-Soul" propounded by Emerson remains as a metamorphosis of the *Brahman* and *Atman* of philosophy of the Upanishad or Vedanta. Emerson, who was deeply inspired by the tenets of Vedanta, writes in his essay "Over-Soul":

. . . . that great nature in which we rest as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that unity, that Over-Soul, within which everyman's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart of which all conversation is the worship. . . . We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Mean time within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every point and particle is equally related; the eternal one. (qtd. in Wilson 4-5)

The "eternal one" is the exact reverberation of the eternal formless *Brahman* that the Vedanta postulates. The unity with the Over-Soul, perhaps, reflects the concept of *Atman* that is emanated from absolute *Brahman*. When the spark of *Brahman* conjoins with the material existence and guides it, it is named as the *Atman*. The divine spirit, the Over-Soul, dwells as a prime mover and as an inner controller in each and every creature of the nature. It is also beyond a fixed definition and explanation. It is omniscient, omnipotent, and super supreme from where everything radiates and fuses into it as

beautifully expressed in the *Taittiriya Upanishad*: "That where from beings are born, thanks to which once born they live, and wherein when they die they penetrate—that you must desire to know. That is *Brahman* (qtd. in Tola and Dragonetti 89). These lines from the Upanishad really match with the lines from Emerson's essay "Over-soul". The concept that *Brahman* as the foundation where the every manifested thing rests has the similar voice that is explored in the concept of over soul propounded by Emerson.

The concept of "Over- Soul" unites an individual with the divine because Emerson views that "all spiritual being is in man" (qtd. in Wilson 66). This concept moreover holds unity of the cosmos as the *Katha Upanishad* expresses, "what is here, is also there, what is there is also here" (Deussen 292). This synthesizes the perceptions of Vedanta and Emerson's voices as well because manifested pluralities and the real One are identical. Moreover, the base of Vedanta's influence on him comes out when he sees an individual in the absolute divine form, deriving one's existence from the supreme reality. He speaks the voice of Vedanta in his poem "Brahma" as he writes:

If the red slayer thinks he says,
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,
They know not the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far of forgot to me is near,
Shadow and sunlight are the same,
The vanished gods to me appear;

And one to one are the shame and fame. (*An Emerson Reader* 274)

The poem is almost a direct transcript from the *Katha Upanishad* which says, "If the killer thinks that he kills, if the killed thinks he is killed, they do not understand; for this one does not kill, nor is that one killed" (Muller trans 8). Does not it claim that we are immortal? Yes, Emerson when speaks the insights of Vedanta realizes we are divine; eternity lies within us. These above lines from the poem "Brahma" find their exact resemblance with the verse of the Bhagavadgita where it has proclaimed about the eternity of the *Atman* that remains in us as an inner controller:

Who believes him a slayer,
And who thinks him slain,
Both these understand not:

He slays not, is not slain. (Edgerton trans 1:19)

When there is the realization that the form goes only changes, but the mover or inner controller is uncreated and eternal, how can anyone slay him? Or does not one transcend the death? So, one who realizes that one is *tat tvam asi* (you are that) or I am *Brahman* does not entangle in metempsychosis. One is liberated. In the realm of *Brahman* or Over-Soul, there is perfect unity; even life and death reconcile with each other because every duality merges into the One, the eternal truth.

In his essay "Self- Reliance," Emerson projects the grand concept that one should realize his own ability to understand and evaluate the potentiality by acting according to it. One should go beyond the constructed truth, belief and customs, rites, values and norms, and the tutelage of society as well as the established institutions. Only an independent individual combined with the real spirit of action and wisdom can have an understanding of the world, about the place of oneself in the entire universe and about the universe itself. One can perceive the reality in the context of universal reality. The perfect harmony of the *Karma* (action), *Bhakti* (Devotion) and the *Jnana* (*shankhya*, wisdom) can connect a person with the divinity. This is another great insight of Vedanta to realize the inner potentiality in perfect harmony. For this union or *yoga* with the comic

mind, self-reliance is the most essential that directly relies upon trust in oneself. This entire concept is revealed in the essay "Self-Reliance" when he writes:

The magnetism which all originates action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self-trust. . . what is aboriginal Self on which a universal reliance may be grounded? . . . The inquiry leads us to that source, at one the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. (*An Emerson Reader* 219)

Self-reliance, in this way, leads to the inner evolution. Then only an individual is able to perceive anything in the context of totality where one can realize the divinity of the absolute reality within. The reliance upon the self opens the way to the self-realization because it is always activated, and leads towards the eternity. This is the insight of Vedanta that finds its culminations in the Bhagavadgita when Sri Krishna teaches *Karmayoga* (The Yoga of Action) to Arjuna.

Emerson instigates deeply for making of oneself that reflects the voice of *Karmayoga* where Sri Krishna postulates the idea of *niskama karma* (selfless action) without wishing for consequences the action bears. The *Karmayoga* is not the renunciation of action, but it is renunciation in action. It eliminates the ego-centric actions. Then only human can reach to a stage known as workless that "is only through work for worklessness is not inaction but action that bears not fruit" (Hill 60). This idea is reflected in Emerson's essay on "Self-Reliance" where he appeals "to insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation" (*An Emerson Reader* 229). So, one should go beyond the pseudo reality and make believe, and create a perception to realize the whole, rejecting the polarities and dualities that go here in life.

To cross the frontiers of polarities, the revelation of the *brahmavidya* (philosophical interpretation) and the *yogasastra* (the practical application of the *brahmavidya*) become essential that Vedanta postulates in its essence. Only with *yoga* and *shankhya* (knowledge), the divinity within can be realized. The *yoga* means "to yoke, harness, employ, set to work, co-ordinate, organize, and harmonize" (Frawley 208). Thus, it becomes a way to attain the divine state (*brahmasthiti*), and the bliss of God (*brahmanirvana*), making "contact with the Supreme soul and stabilizing the mind in easy communion with Him after steadying it first in consciousness of one's soul is called Yoga" (Hassija 367). Therefore, *yoga* yokes and controls our passions, which ultimately opens the passage from the pseudo reality into the realm of divinity, realizing that we are the reflection of the absolute reality. This ultimate influence of Vedanta reverberates in Emerson when he projects the idea of self-reliance.

Self-understanding or self-reliance can uplift a person to the realization of the higher truth where a person sees the one the ultimate reality in all beings though they are seen divided in this phenomenal world. So, each particular creation is simply the reflection of one single mind—the super mind, which is the other name of the ultimate One. The entire creation is the microcosm of the macrocosm. The whole can be known by knowing the particular self. It is only the omniscience of the absolute spirit, which enables us to have a direct realization of the self as explained in the *Chandogya Upanishad* "ta tvam asi: That art thou" (Radhakrishnan trans 462) and the *Mandukya Upanishad*: "All this is, verily, *Brahman*. This self is *Brahman*" (Radhakrishnan 695). This concept of self-reliance is mesmerizingly declared by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita, "He who sees the self, residing equally in all beings—the imperishable among the perishable—sees clearly (qtd. in Weber 26). "Self-Reliance" elaborates the

Vedanta's insights in a new way. It shows how the deep insights of Vedanta find their new explanations and exemplifications in the writings of Emerson. The more one reads the Emerson, the more one feels the American *rishi* preaches the insights of Vedanta in the new contexts with the touch of novelty.

Conclusion

Vedanta projects that the phenomenal manifestations reflect and resemble the absolute reality. It also postulates the ideas that the absolute reality, *Brahman*, remains as the inner controller and prime mover in each and every creature of this universe. It dwells as a spark in each and everything. The creatures get their existence because of the divinity that is within. Moreover, there is a single reality which is absolute, and the world is just a vast multifarious form of that single One. These ideations of Vedanta find their new explanations with a new plane and zenith in the literary works of Emerson. Since he is the pioneer of American transcendentalism, his main quest is to go beyond the parameters of these ordered thoughts and senses. His essays "The American Scholar" and the "Self-Reliance" project the idea that the divinity known as the ultimate one is within us. They speak the essential truth of *tat tvam asi* (you are that) and I am *Brahman*. This concept of a single unity is the realization of Vedanta. Moreover, his entire writings always postulate for the realization of absolute truth mystically and intuitively which is another fundamental idea of Vedanta. The Vedantic concept of self-evolution is strong in the essay especially "Self-Reliance." The ultimate truth of Vedanta, *Brahman*, finds its great confluence in the concept of "Over-Soul." The projections of both are simply for the single reality that guides the world and creatures, and it is immortal though the body and forms go on changing. The influences of Vedanta really become mesmerizing when they find their culmination in the poem "Brahma." The poem reveals the insight of the Vedanta that the immortality is within us. An individual is eternal in the divine form. We all are beyond decay. These great influences of Vedanta on Emerson's writings are not only merely in the names, but in the essence of explanations and ideas. It is really a moment of pleasure when the philosophy of Emerson rings the melodies of Vedanta in the fresh tunes. A new revisiting on his writings with the perspective of Eastern philosophy would be always fresh and rejuvenating.

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