

The Twelve
Principal Upanisads
Vol. I.

Dr. E. Roer

THE TWELVE PRINCIPAL UPANISADS

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THE TWELVE PRINCIPAL UPANISADS

(IN THREE VOLUMES)

*Text in Devanāgarī; and Translation with Notes in
English from the Commentaries of Saṅkarācārya
and the Gloss of Ānandagīrī*

VOLUME I

ĪSA, KENA, KĀṬHA, PRAŚNA, MUṆḌAKA, MAṆḌŪKYA,
TAITTIRĪYA, AITEREYA AND SVETĀSVATARA-
UPANIṢADS

BY

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WITH

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE English translation of the Twelve Principal Upaniṣads with notes from Śankarācārya and the Gloss of Ānandagiri are now issued with text in Devanagari in three separate volumes. The first contains Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Prasna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitereya, and Śvetāsvatara-Upaniṣads. The second volume with Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad and the third with Cāndogya and Kauṣītaki-Upaniṣads are in the Press.

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T. P. H.

PREFACE

THE chronology of the Old Testament has influenced almost all the speculations of Oriental scholars in regard to the possible date of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*. It is very difficult to say anything with positive confidence on this subject, but this much is certain, that the *Upaniṣads*, at least the ten principal ones, are not in any way posterior to the *Vedas*. The argument that a philosophy like that embodied in the *Upaniṣads* cannot exist side by side with the nature-worship of the *Vedas*, loses its force when the *Suktas* of the *Veda* are regarded as symbolic only of those esoteric truths which were taught through the *Upaniṣads* to the select few. Symbology helps the solution of many a riddle over which philology has either sat in despair or which it has understood only to misunderstand. The history of all the great religions of the world shows, that there is nothing inconsistent in the possible existence of a sublime philosophy with the empty formalities of popular religion. And this circumstance in itself is an indirect argument against the later origin of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads*.

Veda means knowledge, and *Upaniṣad* means both the exoteric philosophy of *Brahman*, the *Advaita*, and sittings for the discussion of that philosophy. The *Upaniṣads* are aptly called the *Vedānta*, the end of the *Veda*, that which is reserved for those who have freed themselves from the useless bonds of formal religion. The *Veda* consists of three parts: *Mantra*, *Brāhmaṇa* and *Upaniṣad*, including the *Āraṇyakas*. The *Mantra* portion contains hymns addressed to various powers, all symbolic of important truths intended, on the one hand, to teach the religion of faith and forms to the ignorant, and the philosophy of sublime unity to the initiated, on the other. The one is the *Karma-mārga*, the religion of *forms*, and the other is the *Jñāna-mārga*, the religion of philosophy or knowledge. There is a way between the two, leading from *Karma* to *Jñāna*, called *Upāsana*, or the invoking of any particular power of nature. This is different from the general *Karma-mārga*, inasmuch as *Karma* does not mean anything performed with a special aim and for a special purpose. *Karma-mārga* is only the general religion of faith which leads to *Upāsana* and *Jñāna*. The word *Karma* should in this place not be confounded with that philosophical law of necessity which is called by that name.

The *Upaniṣads* teach the philosophy of absolute unity. By unity is meant the oneness of the subject, all experience of objective existence being regarded as in and of it. Experience implies consciousness, and

consciousness, apperception or "pure reason." is the only reliable, self-illuminated, absolute factor of our knowledge. All else is but mere representation in and through the mode of this consciousness. The world of being is nothing, considered apart from consciousness which, in its turn, is entirely independent of experience. It cannot in any manner be negated, for the very negation implies its existence. This is the realm of the absolute, ever-existent, *Brahman*, an abstraction appropriately expressing this idea of unity in duality, being a term expressive of the whole of that which can be none other than a compound of Thought and Being.

This Absolute is not the Unknowable of Agnosticism, nor the inexplicable atom of Materialism. Materialism is in fact out of question, inasmuch as the Absolute of the Upaniṣad is not a result of organisation nor a property of matter. It is something always independent of everything, and self-illuminated, self-subsistent. It is everywhere; but for it the world of experience is nowhere. But the Agnostic who stands half-way between Materialism and Transcendentalism identifies the Absolute with the Unknowable and makes it the source of all that translates itself into experience. This doctrine is entirely untenable, for that which is Unknowable is not the Absolute, but that which produces the various modifications and representations of it through experience. That something which IS and is not known *per. se* by the very law of consciousness not permitting such knowledge, is the Unknowable *par*

excellence. But to describe the fountain of knowledge, absolute consciousness, which is seen in daily individual experience, as the Unknowable or even the unknown would, at least, be a strange perversion of metaphysical language.

The effect of this philosophy on practical ethics is immense. Any system of ethics not based on some clearly demonstrated world-idea falls short of practical use, and is *pro tanto* a deviation from the path of adequately fulfilling the object of existence. The variety of experience is not real, nay even experience itself is nowhere from the point of the Absolute. To lead that life wherein the variety of experience does not affect either for weal or woe is the highest practical rule of conduct in accordance with the proper aim of existence. This does not imply entire inertia as some would understand it. The variety of experience *creates* distinction, and sets up false limits where there exist none. Pain and pleasure, good and evil, virtue and vice, merit and sin, are all conventions based on this variety of experience, and admitted for the sake of that experience. But in the Absolute no such distinctions are possible, and the highest bliss which cannot be described in words other than those implying negation of everything positive known to us, consists in forgetting the source of separateness and realising that unity which is the very being and nature of the cosmos. And more than this philosophy holds that the individual is a copy of the great cosmos and that through the unity

of the two in the Absolute there is always possible an easy way from the one to the other. When the sense of separateness is killed out, the Absolute in the individual, and the microcosm is at once understood as the macrocosm. Pain and pleasure, evil and good, are all merged in the unity of the Absolute where all is that indescribable something which is neither pleasure nor pain, but something supremely sublime and happy, so to speak. This process of killing out this idea of separateness is no inertia, so far as ordinary language is understood; and though it may not be that blind submission to the will of an anthropomorphic deity, it is certainly the highest possible activity and energy on a superior plane. It is not neglect of duty nor renunciation of the world either; it is mere forgetting of self and its environments. This is *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* in the popular sense is a something to be achieved, in the *Upaniṣad* it is already achieved, every being is one with the Absolute, is, in fact the Absolute; what is to be achieved is destruction of the sense of separateness, which being accomplished, *mokṣa* is easily realised. The disregard of this vital difference between the two ideas has led many Orientalists to regard the *mokṣa* of the *Vedānta*, and the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddhists, as something bordering on pure inertia or entire annihilation.

The illusion-theory is another puzzle in the way of many. Some try to set it down to later interpolation. That this is not so, will be evident from the text of the *Upaniṣads*; but a suggestion by the way may be

usefully given. Experience is endless, and this endless variety creates distinctions which lead to the sense of separateness. All that is illusion in the phenomenal, is only these distinctions or limitations and the sense of separateness created by them. The basis or substratum of the illusion cannot be said to be nothing nor something. It is as indescribable as the Absolute and is known to BE, though never apart from or outside of the Absolute.

Many students of Indian philosophy enamoured of the idea of *mokṣa* taught by it seek to achieve it by various processes, physical or mental, generally, known as *Yoga*. Those who do so without being fully saturated with the spirit and substance of the *Upaniṣads* merely take a leap in the dark and court certain death, spiritual as well as physical. The first requisite is proper familiarity with the first principles of *Advaita* philosophy (*Śravaṇa*); and entire love with them (*Manana*). Then follows that sublime state wherein the sense of separateness is being slowly forgotten. But even here nothing but strict practice of the noble virtues and perfect altruism will be necessarily required of the student.

M. N. DVIVEDI

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