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An overview of Chāndogya upaniṣad in the light of Mādhvabhāṣya

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Abstract

Upaniṣads are the vital part of Indian philosophical tradition. Upaniṣadic teachings have wide range of acceptance in the modern era also. Generally, most studies focus on the philosophical aspect of upaniṣadic interpretations. Their interpretations also embedded with other two aspects viz., Mystical and Theistic. But the fact is, these are interrelated and no one can separate these aspects. That means one becomes relevant and meaningful, only if the other two aspects are taken into consideration. The pioneers approached the Upaniṣads in rational and logical way and their method of teaching upaniṣadic expressions are entirely different from the modern aspect. Their methodology includes with three parts viz., Anubhava, Ācāra and Vicāra. The upaniṣadic philosophy is purely theistic and realistic in nature. They are the perennial sources of infinite spiritual knowledge. There are ten major upaniṣads (mukhyopaniṣads) viz., Isāvāsya upaniṣad, Kenopaniṣad, Kaṭopaniṣad, Praśnopaniṣad, Muṇḍakopaniṣad, Māṇḍūkyaopaniṣad, Aitareyaopaniṣad, Brhadāranyakopaniṣad and Chāndogya upaniṣad. Infact there are one hundred and eight upaniṣads are available. A few more such from the same, Svetāśvetara and Kauṣītaki are also important. So many ācāryas wrote commentaries on principal upaniṣads. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, Śrī Raṅga Rāmānujācārya and Śrī Madhvācārya are famous among them. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya has written commentaries on the ten principal upaniṣads. Rāmānujācārya has not written commentaries on upaniṣads. He made his discussions views on key passages of upaniṣads in his text 'Vedārdhasāra Saṅgraha'. From the side of Viśiṣṭādvaita, A scholar named 'Śrī Raṅgarāmānujācārya' has written bhāṣyas on the mukhya upaniṣads. Śrī Madhvācārya has written commentaries on all the ten Upaniṣads. He has made his discussions on the interpretation of vital upaniṣadic expressions in his other famous works viz., Sūtrabhāṣya, Anuvyākhyāna, Tatvanirṇaya and Tatvodyota. This paper is made as an overview of the Chāndogya upaniṣad, which is treated as one of the major upaniṣads, It is implanted in the Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa of Sāmaveda (Tāṇḍya school) and includes largest compilations of philosophical expressions. This article mainly focuses on how Madhvācārya has interpreted Chāndogya upaniṣad. In brief the central teaching of each upaniṣad, his interpretation of vital key passages, symbolisation of philosophical expressions etc. are taken into consideration.

Keyword: Chāndogya upaniṣad, Madhvācārya, interpretation methodology, harisarvottamatva, Nārāyaṇatva, Viśiṣṭādvaita etc.

Introduction

Chāndogyopaniṣad belongs to Sāmaveda and it is a part of Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa. The last eight chapters of Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa are known as Chāndogya Upaniṣad. It is dated to have been composed by the 8th to 6th century BCE. The text has eight lectures or chapters named 'prapātakas', with different number of Khāṇḍas or volumes. The volumes of the same are a collection of bunches of themes and stories. Each volumes have different number of versus. The first chapter consists of 13 volumes, the second one has 24 chapters, the third chapter constitutes 19 volumes, the fourth with 17 volumes, the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth have 24, 16, 26 and 15 volumes respectively. These sections follow a systematic study of Ātma Vidya. In the first five chapters a number of upasanas (Udgitopāsana, Sāmopāsana, Madhu vidya, Samvarga vidya, Prāṇa vidya, Panchāgni vidya and Vaiśvānara vidya are ascribed. The meaning and the vitality of Gāyatri mantra are well explained. The main feature of the same is the style of narration of episodes and the discussion which later derives vital doctrines. The sequence of Jābāla satyakāma, Upakosala and Jānuśruti occur in the early chapters. And the episodes of Uddālaka and Śvetaketu, Nārada and sanatkuṁāra, Prajāpati and Indravirocana occur in later adhyāyas. The upaniṣad mainly give much emphasize on ethics. Some virtues like non-violence, ascetism, alms giving are highly recommended in this upaniṣad.

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The sixth, seventh and eight chapters are the cream of philosophy. It is in the sixth chapter, the famous Mahāvākya 'Tat tvam asi' is mentioned. The seventh chapter discusses Bhūmopasana and the eight chapter discusses Dahara vidya.

A systematic careful reading of upaniṣads consists of two factors, viz; (a) vital doctrines are made through the method of meditation. (b) There is a pivotal doctrine which is transcendent of three structures of world i.e. Adhibhūta, Adhyātma and Adhidaiva. Upaniṣadic philosophy is both theistic and realistic in nature. This dual aspect of Upaniṣads are clearly brought out in the bhāṣyas of Śrī Madhvācārya. The synthesis of spiritualism and theism is very much present in his commentaries. Through this article, an attempt is made to interpret the central teaching of chāndogya upaniṣad in the light of Mādhvabhāṣya. The method used to study the topic are analytical and descriptive in nature. And purely based on textual study on the basis of primary and secondary sources.

Chāndogya Upaniṣad based on Mādhvabhāṣya

According to Madhvācārya, the deity of chāndogya upaniṣad is lord Hari, the ṛiṣis are Hayagrīva and Ramādevi.

हयग्रीवोद्गीतवाक्यै रमादेवी रमापतिम्। (cha upa 1-1-1-)

Two main doctrines Harisarvottamatva (supremacy of Hari) and Vāyu jīvottamatva (supremacy of Mukhyaprāṇa among the jīvas).

a. First chapter

The first chapter describes the Udgītopasana. The meditation upon Supreme God is described here and the same is attributed as Udgīta. Udgīta is one of the five sāmans. In this upāsana, one should meditate upon the supreme God present in Udgīta Sāman. His attributes such as protector, regulator, omniscient, supreme etc are referred to him. The syllable 'Om' or Praṇava depicts the pivotal purport of the Vedas. The Supreme God is the superior one among all others (abhimāni deities such as Prithvi, ap etc). Hence he is termed as Udgīta, the supreme one. He is present in the Mukhyaprāṇa. Hence Mukhyaprāṇa is also known as Udgīta. In order to figure out the superiority of Mukhyaprāṇa, an episode is narrated. The gods acquired desired strength after meditating upon Udgīta during their war against demons. Their first perception was the supreme God is present in the Nāsikya vāyu and meditated him. Then the asurās affected nāsikya vāyu with evil power. Hence one should smell both good and nasty smell. After that they meditated upon the Udgīta i.e., the Supreme entity or God present in the Vāk. This time the demons got defeated by the power of udgīta. By this story element, it is more clear that Udgīta is present in the mukhyaprāṇa.

उद्गीताख्यस्य विष्णोर्विशिष्टप्रतिमा वायुरेव। (Ma; bh 1-1-14)

Later stated about sages including Angiras, Brihaspati etc are the real names of Mukhyaprāṇa. The vitality of the three syllables included in the the term 'udgita' namely Ud, gi, and tha are well explained in his bhāṣya. The puruṣa present in Āditya is beautifully described. While interpreting the phrase 'kapyāsam puṇḍarīkam the viśeṣaṇa 'kapyāsa' means 'the lotus stalk that sucks the water' that is to say the that is still fresh. It is somehow hot to give correct interpretation to the term 'kapyāsa' and some commentators done the same as the seat of a monkey. The Puruṣa present in the eye is also ascribed mentioning the colour of the eye Shades.

b. Second chapter

The second chapter literally deals with Samopāsana which means the meditation upon the Supreme God and it is designated as Sāman. Sāman has five aspects viz. Himkāra, Prastava, Udgītha, Pratihāra and Nidhāna. The Supreme God Viṣṇu is present in his five forms such as; Pradyumna, Vasudev, Nārāyaṇa, Aniruddha and Saṅkarṣaṇa. The two more are: Varaha and Narasimha. He is also present in the five worlds. They are Prithivi, Agni, Antarikṣa, Āditya and Dyuloka. While practicing Samopāsana, one should meditate upon the supreme entity in these five forms as present in these five places. Furthermore, the meditation upon the Supreme God who is present in the seven aspects of the Sāman in the seven dimensions of Vāk and Āditya is explained. The five aspects of the Sāman including Hinkara. Prastava etc., are already mentioned. Ādhi and Upadrava are two more. Later, the meditation upon the Supreme God in different Sāmans is described. These Sāmans are Gāyatra, Rathantara. Vāmadeva, Brhat. Virūpa, Vairaja. Śakvari, Revati, Rajana and Sarva Samans. Various purposes served by the meditation of different Sāman to different sections such as gods, manes etc., are fantastically described. Three aspects of Dharma are also mentioned.

- Sacrifice. Study of Vedas, and Alms giving
- Austerity
- Living in the house of the teacher for the whole life observing him, and celibacy

All these lead to the Virtuous destiny. And one should observe the daily oblations namely; Prātaḥ savana, Madhyandina savana. and Sāyam savana are described.

c. Third chapter

This chapter includes the Madhuvidya. In Madhuvidya there occurs a metaphor of honey. The Supreme God present in Āditya is conceived in the form of honey. That means, the Supreme God Viṣṇu is honey itself. Dyū i.e. his consort Lakṣmi is cross beam, i.e.; Antarikṣa i.e. Vayu. is honey comb, the rays i.e., Vasu, Rudra etc., present in the rays are the bees. The entire Veda and its entire area are considered as a flower and as nectar. The gods pondered over the Vedas and the Supreme God Narayana was the honey in it. Lord Viṣṇu himself taught this Madhuvidya to Virinca (Brahma). Virinca taught it to Prajāpati, and later, he taught it to Manu and his descendants. The three forms of the Supreme God named Nārāyaṇa. Vasudeva and Vaikuṇṭha are designated as Jyoti.

1. The Supreme being treated as Jyoti is the same one who is present in the jīva in his heart. Hence, one should meditate upon this Supreme God designated as Jyoti. The next upāsana described is the meditation upon the Supreme entity present in pralaya jala. In, the passage 'Sarvam khalvidam Tajjalan iti. sānta upasita 'points out the central theme made in the Nāsadiya sūkta of the Rgveda. The term 'Tajjalan' has to be interpreted and understood as Tat i.e., Brahman, Jale, ('Sarvam khalvidam Tajjalan iti. sānta upasita, 3-2-1) i.e. in pralaya water. The next important point is the description of sacrifice of a man's life. (The first twenty-four years of the human life span are Prātaḥ savana, the upcoming forty-four years are Mādhyandina savana and the last forty-eight years are Sāyam savana. The collection of the ethical virtues like Tapas. alms giving, uprightness, non-violence and truthfulness are termed to be Dakṣina. The ending portion provides an interesting description of the sṛṣṭikrama (process of creation). Before creation there

was only Asat i.e., Nārāyaṇa, from this Sat (Vāsudeva) manifested for creation.

Later the 'Asat' Nārāyaṇa, co-habited with Lakṣmi. Then occurred the 'Brahmānda'. It was in the form of an egg and it lay for a year. Then it burst out, then two shells came out. one is silver and the other is gold. The Silver shell contained five substances including Prthivi etc. seven worlds. The Golden shell had upper worlds and then the mountains, clouds, rivers and ocean occurred. Then arose Āditya the God termed present in the Sun. When Āditya arose, the recitations including Gayatri etc. Also created arose. One who meditates upon Āditya and consider him as Brahman, will obtain all auspicious things.

d. Fourth chapter

In this chapter Raikva teaches Samvarga Vidya to Jānasruti. Gautama accepts Satyakāma as his disciple and then Satyakama becomes the Guru of Upakosala. The fact of Mukhyaprāṇa which paves the path to Liberation or to the Supreme God is especially pointed out in this chapter. The pivotal teaching of Samvargavidya is that Vāyu is the absorbent of all things. Among Adhidaiva. Vāyu is absorbent and among Adhyātma, Prāṇa is absorbent one. That is why he is named as Samvarga. Infact, he is the food of the Supreme God. There are five adhyātma are Anna and the Supreme God is Annādi. Hence it is advisable that. the food should not be denied to anyone. In this chapter, there is a purport phrase 'Soham Asmi sa evaham asmi' which is interpreted by Madhva as there is no difference between the different forms of the Supreme entity present in different places. In this chapter, there is also a description of Acirādi path, which is considered as a part of mukhyaprāṇa. It aids to achieve liberation. Later, Vāyu is ascribed as Yajna, he purifies all. Then, the three Vyāhritis namely; Bhuh, Bhuvah and Svaha are highlighted as the essence of the three Vedas.

e. Fifth chapter

The fifth chapter begins with Prāṇavidya. To glorify and to depict the superiority of Mukhyaprāṇa, a story episode is narrated. The next vital theme is Pancāgnividya. The Supreme God Nārāyaṇa present in Dyuloka, Vasudeva present in Parjanya, Sankarṣaṇa present in Prithivi, Pradyumna present in Puruṇa, Aniruddha present in Yoṣa i.e. these five together constitute Panchagni. The gods offer Jiva as sacrificial material in these. The Jiva (s) offered as oblation is later born as men and women. They live a full life. When these jivas die, these are offered in the fire. In this other context, the Pitriyāna and Devayāna paths are ascribed. And they also, stated that those jivas with good conduct will be born again in good classes and of bad conduct in bad classes of beings. The five great sins or Mahāpāpa are also mentioned in this chapter viz. stealing gold, drinking wine, dishonouring teachers' bed, Brāhmaṇahatya and associating with the persons who indulge in these are mentioned here. Then comes Vaiśvānaravidya. Prachinaśāla, Satyayajna etc.

f. Sixth chapter

This chapter contains the famous passage which comes under 'Mahāvākya' 'Tat tvam asi' and the nine examples that depict the purport of this passage. It begins with a dialogue between Uddālaka and Śvetaketu in an interesting manner. Uddālaka had sent Śvetaketu to Gurugraha in order study the Vedas. After studying the same for 12 years he returned home. He was very proud of his study and he had a bad thought that he

knew everything. Then his father asked him whether he knew that cream principle by knowing which everything is known. Śvetaketu was ignorant of it and requested his father to teach it. His father explained the same 'by knowing one that is the central entity, everything else is known' by four examples:

1. By the knowledge of a clay the knowledge of all entities of clay can be known, because of similarity. similarly, by the knowledge of Brahman the knowledge of all others can be known due to similarity.
2. Like, by the knowledge of one small ball of gold, all the items made of gold is known through because of similarity. Likewise, by the knowledge of Brahman one can easily avail the knowledge of all because of similarity.
3. Like, by the knowledge of one nail cutter, all item made of iron can be had due to similarity. similarly. By the knowledge of Brahman, one achieves knowledge of all because of similarity.
4. The words except Sanskrit words are produced. As a result of sense of speech. But the words in Sanskrit, such as Mrittika are considered as eternal. Therefore, words in Sanskrit are Pradhāna (primary) and others are derived as apradhāna; Later the purpose to observed by them is served by the knowledge of Sanskrit words. Likewise, the knowledge of Brahman makes the knowledge of all others.

By these four instances the father taught his son that by knowing the ultimate knowledge one can achieve the knowledge of all other things and the knowledge of all other things is not as vital to have the knowledge of Brahman. Then, in order to teach Śoḍaṣa kala puruṣa, the father put Śvetaketu to observe fifteen days fasting. He illustrated to him that the Puruṣa consists of sixteen kalās. Then he explained about the deep sleep state termed as suṣṭi. During this deep sleep state, the jiva rests in God. Uddālaka told his son Svetaketu that when a person sleeps, then, he reaches the God termed as Sat. Similar to a bird tied by a string, after flying in different directions without finding a suitable place to take rest. Later by the illustrations of rivers and sea, the tree, the Nyagrodha fruit, salt in the water, the blind- folded person, a sick person, and the thief, the father tries to teach his son the difference between the God and jivas. Next is the expression 'tat tvam asi', here Madhva interprets it as 'atat tvam asi' brings out this difference. This purport, if read it correctly as 'tat tvam asi' then also it will convey bonding and difference (tadadhinah tvam asi) and similarity and difference (tat sadrisah tvam asi). Thus, the entire sixth chapter is intended to teach the difference between jivas and God and they are entirely dependent to each other.

g. Seventh chapter

This seventh chapter mentions about Bhūmavidya. It states that the God designated as Satya and Bhūma is considered as supreme and all other deities are considered as inferior to him. The doctrine of Viṣṇusarvottamatva is described here. In order to explain this doctrine of Viṣṇusarvottamatva the hierarchy of deities should be described first. This description of Devatātātmya begins with an interesting dialogue between Nārada and Sanatkumāra. The Supreme God treated as Satya is considered as the highest one. It is the Supreme God. He is knowledge and he is in the form of knowledge., He is Mati (the Thing of all thinking.) he is Sraddha (the ground of Faith), he is Kriti (the source of all activity,) he is Sukha (the ground of all happiness). He is Bhūma (he has

infinite attributes and has infinite bliss). He has to be understood as ultimate knowledge, Mati, Sraddha etc., and finally designated as Bhūma.

h. Eighth chapter

This chapter discusses about Daharavidya. The Daharavidya is a kind of the pleasures enjoyed by the liberated one and the Supreme entity present in arteries. Prajāpati instructing Indra and Virocana and the difference in the capacities of Indra and Virochana in understanding is narrated in the episodes of this chapter. The pivotal point of Daharavidya is the meditation upon the Supreme God who is present at the lotus of heart. In Brahmapura, means in the body, there is a small lotus, within this there is Akāśa. The Supreme God designated as Akāśa is present in this Daharākāśa at the heart. Dyu, Prithivi, Agni, Vayu etc., all are supported by him, who is present in Brahmapura i.e. within the body. He is not suffered by the old age, does not perish by death. His desires, perceptions and thoughts are always true. The desires of all are based on him. For those who go for final destiny, without knowing his satyakāmatva etc., and his other attributes, the worlds obtained through the sacrifice etc., will not last and they will not achieve anything. But those who depart knowing about him and his satyakāmatva etc., attributes will be able to move in all worlds without any pressures. This knowledge was taught by the God to Chaturmukha-brahma. He taught this to Manu and later Manu gave it to his progeny.

Conclusion

The upaniṣads are not just texts. They represent a key to the treasure of philosophical tradition. They are merely considered as written documents or ancient available treatises. They contain perceptions, intuitions and mystical experiences of great sages and seers. Their method of interpretation and teaching are entirely different from other philosophical works and unique in nature. The seers conveyed their mystical intuitive experience through their method of interpretation. Śrī Madhvācārya, likewise portrayed upaniṣadic doctrines in his Bhāṣyas. He never stucked at the three levels of reality. He literally considered Viṣṇu as the in depth meaning of the supreme knowledge. His method of interpretation even in Chāndogya Upaniṣad also, his methodology is overlaid with theism. It is not an unnecessary addition or substitution for the term of supreme entity. While interpreting chāndogya madhvabhāṣya, one can identify the place of Viṣṇu. He is attributed as supreme, perfect (paripūrṇa) and individual being. It is treated as the central metaphysical principal. Madhvācārya has interpreted the chāndogya upaniṣad in a rational way. And ethical and theistic principle are covered into the area in a very well pattern by keeping its own methodology.

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