

The Upanishads— what are they?*

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The *Upanishads*¹ are perhaps the most famous of the sacred texts of India. Only the *Gita* may presumably dispute this place. Besides being acknowledged as sacred and thus surrounded by an aura of religious authority, they are also the fountainhead of one of the major schools of Indian philosophy usually designated as Vedanta. The history of the discovery of these texts along with that of their translation and publication is well known. But what is perhaps not so well known, except amongst the very specialized scholars of the subject, is the history of the texts themselves and how they have come to be known and designated as the *Upanishads*. Even amongst the specialists, the awareness of the problem and the issues related thereto is only marginal. It would be no exaggeration to say that the tradition concerning what are regarded as the *Upanishads* is largely accepted uncritically and repeated as read or heard from the so-called 'authorities' whom, in the context of the Indian tradition, one has learnt not to question.

The number of texts constituting the *Upanishads* is not exactly settled and most scholars make a distinction between the major and the minor *Upanishads*. Yet, the dominant tradition in India treats them as a part of the *Śruti*, that is, as an integral part of the *Vedas* without noticing the incompatibility between the two contentions. If they are an integral part of the *Vedas*, how can there be a distinction of major and minor between them or a dispute about their exact number? It may be urged that the situation with respect to the *Vedas* is no different, as the status of one of the *Vedas*, that is, the *Atharva-veda* is not generally regarded as equal to those of the other *Vedas*. Even amongst the other three, there *is* what may be called an order of priority or hierarchy amongst the *R̥g*, *Yajur* and *Sāma* in that order. Even if this be conceded, it would be accepted that there is, in the case of the *Vedas*, such a thing as a closure of the canon which does not seem to have been the case with respect to the *Upanishads* as they continued to be composed long after the Vedic corpus was finalized. Everyone talks about the *Allohpanishad*, but no one seems to see the significance of it. If one could think of writing such an *Upanishad*, then obviously the *Upanishads* could not have been regarded as an integral part of the *Vedas*, as everyone seems to take for granted today. The same is

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true of the 'sectarian' *Upanishads*. The very fact that they continued to be written is ample proof that no one thought of the *Upanishads* in the same way as they thought of the *Vedas*.

It is, of course, a matter of dispute even within the tradition as to what is to be regarded as *the Veda* in the strict sense of the term. The dispute concerns the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Āraṇyakas*, besides the *Upanishads*. But whether the former two are regarded as an integral part of the *Vedas* or not, they did not continue to be composed beyond a certain period which was reached very early in the tradition, a situation far different from that of the *Upanishads* which continued to be composed till almost the thirteenth century. It may, therefore, be safely surmised that the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Āraṇyakas* were treated as having reached a finality within the Vedic corpus in the sense that nothing more could be added to them, a situation which was absent in the case of the *Upanishads*. To provide a spurious continuity with the Vedic tradition and treat them as an integral part of the Vedic corpus, all such *Upanishads* as were written later were ascribed to the *Atharvaveda*, thus indirectly confirming the slightly inferior status which had been given to it from the very beginning as compared with the other three *Vedas*, which have been distinctively referred to as *Trayī*.

In fact, though the term *Upanishad* is found even in the *R̥gveda* as a title in Hymn No. 145 of the tenth Mandala, it was not regarded so sacred or sacrosanct as not to be used in profane contexts. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* uses it in the sense of secret weapons to destroy the enemy and Vatsyayana's *Kāmasutra*, according to Keith, uses it in an analogous manner also. If the fact of this usage is taken into account along with the continuing production of *Upanishads* as late as the end of the thirteenth century or even the first half of the sixteenth century, depending upon the date assigned to the commentary of Lakshmidhara on *Saundaryalahari*, the *Śākta Upanishads* seem, by common consent, to have been written very late. Yet, if the *Upanishads* not only continued to be composed but also to be accepted and included in the orthodox canon, then they cannot be regarded as *Śruti* in the same sense as the Vedic *Samhitās* or even the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Āraṇyakas*.²

In fact, even in traditional times, that is, the period of the Vedic *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Āraṇyakas*, it was not clear as to what is to be considered as an *Upanishad* and on what grounds. True, the so-called eleven major *Upanishads* have continued to be accepted as a part of the authoritative Vedic corpus from almost the very beginning of the tradition. But even with respect to these, it is not clear why they have been traditionally so accepted or, in other words, what have been the grounds of their acceptance. It is well known, at least amongst the specialists, that many of these *Upanishads* are not independent works but selections from existent texts. But if that is so, someone must have made the selection and presumably, there must have been some basis for the selection that was made. It is not quite clear what was the basis of the selection or why, during this long period of time since the first selection was made, no one has made a different or alternative selection.

Take, for example, one of the oldest *Upanishads*, the *Aitareya*, which forms a part of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* and must have been selected out of it to be treated separately for certain purposes. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the second *Āraṇyaka* are usually known as the *Aitareya Upanishad*. Yet, in none of these chapters is the word *Upanishad* anywhere mentioned, nor does it refer to itself as *Upanishad*. This would have little significance if there is no statement to this effect in any other part of the *Āraṇyaka*. But, the third *Āraṇyaka* starts by proclaiming itself to be an *Upanishad*. It says clearly "अथातः संहिताया उपनिषत् ।" Moreover, the fifth paragraph of the second chapter of the third *Āraṇyaka* starts with the statement "अथ खल्वियं सर्वस्य वाच उपनिषत् । सर्वा ह्येवेमाः सर्वस्य वाच उपनिषद् इमां त्वेवाचक्षते ।" which is translated by Keith as follows, 'Now comes this Upaniṣad of the whole speech. All these indeed are Upaniṣads of the whole speech, but this they so call.' It is strange that in the face of this clear-cut statement within the *Āraṇyaka* itself, the *Aitareya Upanishad* is not usually taken to include the third *Āraṇyaka* which proclaims itself to be such and includes chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the second *Āraṇyaka* which says nothing about itself being an *Upanishad*. Keith is aware of the difficulty and in fact entitles his discussion of the issues as 'The three Upaniṣads of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*.'³ He writes, 'Book III bore the special title of *Samhitā Upaniṣad* which is given to it in Śaṅkara's commentary and which it claims for itself by its opening words.'⁴ But the so-called *Samhitā Upanishad* has almost never been treated or listed separately as an *Upanishad* nor been regarded as important by anyone. And this in face of the fact that it proclaims itself as an *Upanishad*. The same is true of the so-called *Mahāaitareya Upanishad* which is supposed to consist of *Āraṇyakas* II and III and would thus include the portions which proclaim themselves as *Upanishads* in this *Āraṇyaka*. First, there is a dispute about what this *Mahāaitareya* actually includes. As Keith writes, 'the term *Mahāaitareya* or *Bahvṛca-brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad* though it sometimes applies to both *Āraṇyaka* II and III, sometimes is confined to *Āraṇyaka* II.'⁵

The very fact that the usage of the term was so fluctuating proves our point that the criteria for what was to be considered an *Upanishad* were not fixed. Still, it is surprising that what proclaimed itself as an *Upanishad* should have been the subject of controversy, a situation that casts grave doubts on the veneration and infallibility with which *Śruti* is supposed to have been regarded in the orthodox Indian tradition. It should be noted that if the term *Mahāaitareya* is confined only to *Āraṇyaka* II, it would still exclude the self-proclaimed *upanishadic* portions of the *Āraṇyaka*, while if it is supposed to include both *Āraṇyaka* II and III, we will have to face the problem as to why it has not usually been commented upon or treated or listed as a separate *Upanishad*. And, why should we accept that 'there is no doubt that the term *Aitareya Upaniṣad* especially belongs to II, 4-6',⁶ as Keith contends? Surely, if we accept the texts to be integrated wholes, it would be more logical to expect that the meaning of chapters 4-6 cannot be understood except in the context of what has gone before and what comes later in the *Āraṇyaka*.

Of course, Keith argues that the doctrines developed in chapters 1-3 of

Āraṇyaka II are different from those developed in chapters 4-6 and that the latter are a further development of the doctrine. And, according to him, the doctrine contained in chapters 1 and 2 of *Āraṇyaka* III is a step backward from the one contained even in chapters 1-3 of *Āraṇyaka* II. But if this is the case, and here he seems to agree with what Śaṅkara and Śāyaṇa have to say on the subject, then the whole sequence of the *Āraṇyakas* has to be rearranged if they are to be meaningful from the philosophical point of view. Or, at least the selection that we are to make regarding what is to be regarded as significant in the *Aitareya Upanishad* has to be arranged differently from what tradition has handed down to us until now.

The problem is not confined to the *Aitareya Upanishad* only; it simply highlights the problem which is endemic to almost all the *Upanishads*. Take, for example, the *Īśā Upanishad*, which is supposed to be an integral part of the *Sukla Yajurveda*, *Vājasaneyī Mādhyandina Saṁhitā* itself. It is supposed to be the fortieth chapter, the last one of the *Saṁhitā*. But as even a cursory glance would reveal, it has no connection with the other thirty-nine chapters nor any continuity with them. The *Īśā Upanishad* has nothing to do with Yajna with which the rest of the text is directly concerned. Keith has rightly observed, "...the *Īśā Upanishad* has succeeded in obtaining entry as a book [x1] of the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*, with which it has nothing really to do..."⁷ But if an extraneous text can smuggle itself into the Vedic *Saṁhitā* and manage to pass itself as an integral part of the *Saṁhitā*, what happens to the much-vaunted sacrosanct character of the Vedic texts whose transmission through an infallible oral tradition is praised by scholars and laymen alike? Further, if all this is true, how can one accept their so-called revelatory character which gives them the aura of supernatural authority? If the text could be tampered with, it could not have been regarded as a revelation by those who tampered with it. The *Upanishads* are now regarded by most people as revelatory in the same sense as the Vedic *Saṁhitās*. In that case, either an exception will have to be made in the case of the *Īśā Upanishad* or the revelatory character of the *Sukla Yajurveda*, of which it forms an integral part, will have to be regarded as dubious.⁸

There is another problem to which not much attention has been paid in the literature on the subject. Unfortunately, the *Yajurveda* itself is divided into two parts called the *Sukla* and the *Kṛṣṇa* or the White and the Black *Yajurveda*. Now there is no counterpart of the *Īśā Upanishad* in the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda*, not even with a variant reading. It may be said that the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* which constitutes the so-called *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* has no parallelism with the text of the *Sukla Yajurveda* except that in both the *Saṁhitās*, unlike the *R̥gveda* and the *Sāmaveda*, the name of the *ṛṣi* with whom the *mantra* is associated is not given. But if the two are so different, what is the point of calling them by the same name? It only misleads us into thinking that there are four *Vedas* when, in fact, there are five. Either we should treat the two *Saṁhitās* of the *Yajurveda* as completely different in essentials and deceptively unified by the accident of a common name, or some parallelism between

the two has to be established in significant detail.⁹ If the latter course is adopted and if the *Īśā Upanishad* is accepted as an integral part of the *Sukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā*, then we shall have to ask the question why there is no parallel to *Īśā Upanishad* in the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Saṁhitā*.

The *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* which consists of the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* has another peculiarity which has not been noticed. The *Saṁhitā* has three separate *Upanishads* embedded in it, some of which are supposed to be an integral part of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* and others a part of the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*. The *Taittirīya Upanishad* is supposed to consist of parts 7, 8 and 9 of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* while the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad* is supposed to be part 10 of the same *Āraṇyaka*. On the other hand, the *Kāṭhaka* or *Kaṭha Upanishad* is supposed to be a part of the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, a situation different from the diverse *Aitareya Upanishads* which all form part of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* only.

The *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* itself is supposed to have another *Saṁhitā* called the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* which has an *Upanishad* attached to it called the *Maitrāyaṇa Upanishad*. But then what is the relationship between the *Taittirīya* and the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitās*? Is it that between two recensions occasioned by the fact that it was handed down in two different schools or is the difference a deeper one as, say, between the *Kṛṣṇa* and the *Sukla Yajurveda*? Whatever the case, it should be noted that the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* has no *Brāhmaṇas* or *Āraṇyakas* associated with it, but only an *Upanishad*. This raises doubts about the theory that each Vedic *saṁhitā* has its own *Brāhmaṇa* and *Āraṇyaka* and the *Upanishads* are embedded in either of them. The *Sāmaveda*, of course, is not supposed to have *Āraṇyakas*, but still it has *Brāhmaṇas* associated with it. The *Maitrāyaṇa Upanishad*, then, will have to be understood on the pattern of the *Īśā Upanishad* which managed to get itself incorporated as an integral part of the text in the *Sukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā*. While there is little dispute about the antiquity of the *Īśā Upanishad*, almost everyone thinks that the *Maitrāyaṇa Upanishad* is a later work both in terms of its style and content. Keith writes, "...in the case of the *Maitrāyaṇīya*, which Max Müller wrongly believed early in date, the language is obviously closely allied to classical Sanskrit, which it follows in the introduction of greater development and complexity of style."¹⁰ Deussen, on the other hand, tries to account for the spuriously archaic character of this *Upanishad* which misled Max Müller into thinking that it belonged to an earlier period. According to him:

The orthographic and the euphonic peculiarities of this *Śākhā* recur in the *Upanishad* which, on that account, preserves an ancient appearance. But this character of the *Upanishad* which is not, indeed, itself ancient or archaic but on the contrary which is contrived to have been archaic had misled Max Müller (with whom L.V. Schroeder agrees) to ascribe this *Upanishad* to 'an early rather than to a late period'. The numerous quotations literally borrowed not only out of *Chāndogya*—and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishads* but also out of *Kāṭhaka*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Praśna*...and indeed,

out of still later other copious literature...makes the late character of the work indubitable....¹¹

It is strange that a *Śākhā* which possesses a Vedic *Samhitā* itself should commit a forgery and try to pass on a Upaniṣad as belonging to that *Samhitā* when it does not belong to it. If Deussen's phrase 'which is contrived to have been archaic', 'which we have italicized in our quotation, is taken seriously, it would cast grave doubts on the so-called role of the *Śākhās* in preserving the sacred texts intact. Rather, the evidence points to a competition amongst the *Śākhās* in which one staked claims to antiquity and tried to win by all means, fair or foul. The claim in this case does not appear to have succeeded for Śaṅkara did not consider the *Upaniṣad* important enough to write a commentary on it.

But then even when Śaṅkara has written commentaries on some *Upaniṣads*, they are alleged to be only spuriously ascribed to him. Potter, in the third volume of his *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies* devoted to Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and his pupils, treats only the commentaries on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Taittirīya*, *Chāndogya*, *Aitareya*, *Īśa*, *Kaṭha*, *Kena*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna* and *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads* amongst those allegedly attributed to him. Even amongst these, only the commentaries on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chāndogya*, *Muṇḍaka* and *Praśna* are supposed to be authentic. He argues:

... the following may without question be accepted as the work of the author of the *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*: the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣadbhāṣya*, the *Taittirīyopaniṣadbhāṣya*, and the *Upadeśasāhasrī*. There seems no real reason to question the inclusion of the *Aitareyopaniṣadbhāṣya*, the *Chāndogypopaniṣadbhāṣya*, the *Muṇḍakopaniṣadbhāṣya* and the *Praśnopaniṣadbhāṣya* on this list. Beyond this point, however, is only speculation.¹²

If we accept the distinction which Potter seems to be making here, then we can be sure about Śaṅkara's *bhāṣyas* only on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Taittirīya Upaniṣads*. As is well known, 'The most careful work on the criteria for deciding which works are Śaṅkara's has been done by Paul Hacker, with application by Sengaku Mayeda.'¹³ But, firstly, most of the *Upaniṣads* ascribed to Śaṅkara have not been examined for their authenticity according to Hacker's criteria and, secondly, even when some alleged work has been found to be correct with respect to Hacker's criteria it has not been accepted as Śaṅkara's by many scholars, including Potter himself. Śaṅkara's alleged *bhāṣyā* on *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, for example, is a case in point. Potter, after conceding the argument that this *Upaniṣad* fulfils all the criteria proposed by Hacker, still refuses to accept its ascription to Śaṅkara. He writes, 'Vetter, Hacker and Mayeda all utilize Hacker's criteria. Hacker finds no serious discrepancy between the style of this work and that of Śaṅkara's genuine works. . .'¹⁴ But, 'Despite these considerations, I retain serious doubts about

the work's authenticity.'¹⁵ One way out of this difficulty would be to regard Hacker's criteria as necessary, though not sufficient conditions for accepting the genuineness of any work alleged to be ascribed to Śaṅkara.

Hacker's criteria are primarily substantive and doctrinal rather than formal or linguistic in nature. And though they have been applied only to determine the genuineness of ascription of any work to Śaṅkara, they or any of their variants could also be used to determine what is to be regarded as an *Upaniṣad*. At places, Śaṅkara himself is supposed to have used such a criterion. For example, chapter III of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* which proclaims itself as the *Samhitā Upaniṣad* is not regarded as an *Upaniṣad* because it is not concerned with the doctrine of the Ātman and with those who seek freedom through knowledge. The difference between the three *Upaniṣads* of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* derives from their being concerned with different types of persons who desire different things. 'There are three classes of men, says Sāyaṇa in the Introduction to Book III, those who desire immediate freedom through knowledge of Brahman, and accordingly find it by aid of Book II, 4-6, those who desire to become free gradually by attaining to the world of Hiranyagarbha, for whom II, 1-3 is intended, and those who care only for prosperity, for whom the third *Āraṇyaka* serves.'¹⁶ This certainly makes some sense but it still fails to answer the question why, if it is all a question of graded desire or aspiration, the third *Āraṇyaka* comes *after* and not *before* the second. Surely a discussion of the means for the fulfilment of desire for prosperity should precede those that deal with gradual and immediate liberation. Also, as the third *Āraṇyaka* calls itself an *Upaniṣad*, it is clear that at that time at least, the term '*Upaniṣad*' was not confined only to those texts or treatises which dealt with matters which according to a Śaṅkara or a Deussen they should be exclusively or essentially concerned with.

Even if we take the content-criterion seriously and seek to apply it to what are usually regarded as *Upaniṣads* we would still have to do a lot of pruning. Both the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya* have large parts which have little to do with doctrinal matters relating to Ātman or Brahman. In fact, they remind one more of the *Brāhmaṇas* or the *Āraṇyakas* which have never been treated as *Upaniṣads* by tradition. True, there are portions of these texts which are preeminently *upanishadic* in the technical sense of the term, but then they should be delinked from the other parts which are not ostensibly such and treated separately as the *Upaniṣads* proper. In fact, large portions of the early parts of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* could be treated as an *Āraṇyaka* only and not as an *Upaniṣad*. The same could be done with the *Chāndogya* even though *Sāmaveda* is not supposed to have an *Āraṇyaka* of its own. In fact, Keith does remark that 'the first two sections of the work are of the *Āraṇyaka type*'¹⁷ but does not see the implication of what he has said. Instead of suggesting that hence they should not be treated as part of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* proper, he ascribes the reason why they are not regarded as *Āraṇyakas* to the general fact that 'texts attached to the *Sāmaveda* generally do not bear that name'.¹⁸ But Keith knows very well that even when a text has both *Āra-*

nyakas and *Upanishads*, it is not always the case that what traditionally forms a part of one could not, with more justice, be treated as belonging to the other. The same is true even of the *Brāhmaṇas* which sometimes have a portion which should go to the *Āraṇyakas* or even to the *Upanishads* and vice versa.

The problem arises because everybody has treated the traditional classification as sacrosanct forgetting that the person who did the classification in the past might have made a mistake or that his criteria might have been different from ours or overlapping and even conflicting. The latter seems more often the case and, if so, what we need to do is to disentangle the situation and not continue as helpless victims of what someone did in the past.

Most of the *Upanishads* are not *independent* works but *selections* made out of a pre-existent text which is explicitly referred to at the beginning of the *Upanishad* concerned. Then the obvious questions are, who made the selection and what were the criteria for the selections? Further, if the selections were made from a pre-existent text, can they be understood by themselves without reference to the text in which they were embedded and of which they formed an integral part? On the other hand, if once the idea of making the selections was accepted, why were alternative selections not attempted? The acceptance of a particular selection for millennia seems strange indeed, specially when they gradually replaced the real functioning authority of those very texts from which the selections had been made for at least one of the most important spiritual and intellectual traditions of the country, that is, Vedānta.

These questions have hardly been raised by scholars who have paid intellectual attention to these sacred texts of the Hindu tradition. To give but one example, Arun Shourie, whose book *Hinduism: Essence and Consequence* is a fairly detailed study of the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma-Sūtras* and the *Gīta*, and was published as recently as 1979, does not show even an awareness of the issues involved in the questions we have raised.¹⁹ Nor, for that matter, does Karl H. Potter whose third volume of the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies*²⁰ is devoted specifically to Advaita Vedānta up to Śaṅkara and his pupils and was published as recently as 1981.

One possible reason for this may perhaps lie in the usual contention that the *Upanishads* are the last part of the *Vedas*, a situation epitomized in the tradition by calling the philosophy embedded in them as Vedānta and treating the *Brahma-Sūtras* as their summary. But as most students of the subject know, or should know, this is not always the case. The *Aitareya Upanishad*, one of the oldest, forms part of the middle of the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*. The *Kena Upanishad* is a part of the *Jaiminiya Upanishad-Brāhmaṇa* and occurs as its tenth chapter followed by two more chapters, the eleventh and the twelfth. The *Taittirīya Upanishad* occurs as part 7, 8 and 9 of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, but it is followed by part 10 which is treated as a separate, independent *Upanishad*. It is called the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad* and is not only far longer than the *Taittirīya* but also different in content and spirit. But it is doubtful that it is on this ground that it has been treated as a separate *Upanishad*, for even those that are treated as one *Upanishad* do not display a unified charac-

ter within themselves. The first part of the *Taittirīya*, for example, has little relation with the other two.

The *Kāthopaniṣad* which also belongs to the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* seems to stand almost in a class apart, for though it does occur in the eighth *Aṅvāka* of the eleventh *prapāṭhaka* of the third chapter of the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, it only occurs in an attenuated seed form and not in the independent, full-fledged form in which it is found in the text bearing that name. According to Keith, 'it is really a rewriting, from a philosophical as opposed to a ritual point of view, of the story, found in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, of Nachiketas and the winning of boons from Death by him.'²¹ But this only establishes the lineage of the *Upanishad*; it does not tell us wherein it is embedded. And in case it is not so embedded in its full form, it would share this characteristic, among the major *Upanishads*, with Śvetāśvatara which, however, is more the work of a single author and cannot be ascribed, according to Deussen, to 'any Vedic School furnished with *Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇas*.'²² The *Kāṭha*, on the other hand, definitely belongs to a school which is designated by the name, *Kāṭhaka*. The *Kāṭhikas* are supposed to have a *Samhitā* of their own,²³ though Deussen considers it more as an 'extensive *Brāhmaṇa*-work'.²⁴ In any case, whether it is regarded as *Samhitā* or a *Brāhmaṇa* it consists of 'an admixture of *Mantras* and *Brāhmaṇas*', running 'in general, parallel to the *Taittirīya Samhitā*'.²⁵ But if it is so like the *Taittirīya Samhitā* in its admixture of *Mantras* and *Brāhmaṇas*, it is difficult to understand why Deussen refuses to call it a *Samhitā*.

In the case of all these terms, their reference is not indicated as clearly as one would like it to be done for intellectual purposes. One can, of course, accept an extensional definition of the terms or tell oneself that the situation is the same with all definitions which are not stipulative in character. Even with extensional definitions, one would have to have a closed universe to feel completely secure as any new member would raise the difficulty of ascriptive classification once more. On the other hand, stipulative definitions may show unwelcome implications leading to a situation requiring us to change the stipulation. Yet, even though there may be some problem or other with all terms, we bear with the situation only when it does not lead to cognitive difficulties which we regard as serious or if they do not lead to intellectual confusions which are harmful in their consequences. The situation with respect to what goes by the name of the Vedic corpus is such that it leads both to cognitive difficulties and intellectual confusions which need to be rectified. As is well known, even the tradition does not agree whether the *Upanishads* or the *Āraṇyakas* should be counted as an integral part of what is to be considered as the *Vedas*.²⁶ But why the *Brāhmaṇas*? And, if the *Brāhmaṇas*, why not the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upanishads*?

There may be substantive reasons either way, but they have to be spelt out and brought into the open. Perhaps, the line of division falls between those who opt for what is called the *jñāna pakṣa* (ज्ञान पक्ष) of the Vedic corpus and those who opt for the *karma pakṣa* (कर्म पक्ष). The traditional debate

between the Mimāṃsaka and the Vedāntin seems to support this. But this would be to assume that the hard core of the Vedic corpus, that is, the *Mantras*, have meaning *only* in the context of the sacrificial ritual adumbrated in the *Brāhmaṇas* on the one hand and the *Śrauta-Sūtras* on the other. This obviously is not the case, as to do so would not only be to do violence to the innumerable *Mantras* of the *Ṛgveda* which have no necessary relation to any specific sacrificial ritual but also to adopt an ultra-operational theory of meaning of both observational and theoretical terms which has proved inadequate even in the context of modern science.

Besides the generalized problem referred to above, the problem with respect to the *Upanishads* has other dimensions which have been mentioned earlier in the course of this article but not discussed seriously until now, by major scholars in the field. Until questions have not been raised about what the *Upanishads* are, one may remain satisfied with what tradition has handed down to us in this regard. But once the question has been raised, we cannot close our eyes to the arbitrariness of the way in which what are now known as the *Upanishads* have come to be so known. And once the 'accidental arbitrariness' of the selection presently designated as *Upanishads* is realized, the way is open for a new selection based on explicitly formulated criteria or even a number of selections made for different purposes based on different criteria.

It may be objected that all the texts which are known as *Upanishads* at present are not selections out of pre-existent texts and at least in their case what we are suggesting has no relevance whatsoever. The *Upanishads* ascribed to the *Atharvaveda* all share this characteristic. Even such well-known *Upanishads* as the *Muṇḍaka*, the *Māṇḍūkya* and the *Praśna* do not belong to any *Brāhmaṇa* or *Āraṇyaka* or even *Samhitā*. Regarding the *Muṇḍaka*, Deussen says that it 'does not belong to a definite Vedic school but is as the name signifies, "the Upaniṣad of those who have shaved their heads clean"'.²⁷ In fact, all the *Upanishads* which are ascribed to the *Atharvaveda* have been done so in a residual manner. As Deussen remarks, 'when all these Upaniṣads were joined to the *Atharvaveda* the reason for it lay mostly not in an inner connection with the same but only in the fact that this fourth Veda, originally half apocryphal, was not preserved or protected like the three other Vedas through a competent surveillance by their Śākhās in the face of alien intruders.'²⁸ The *Atharvaveda* itself enjoys only a dubious authority, and the *Upanishads* linked to it may be supposed to share the same fate. In a sense this is true for, except for *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna* and *Māṇḍūkya*, hardly any of them enjoys any venerable authority in the tradition. Thus, the very fact that they are independent works seems to have militated against their being accepted as being authoritative. As for the exceptions, the *Praśna* in its frame of narration appears, according to Deussen, 'an imitation of Śatap. Br.10.6.1 ff, of Chand. 5.11.1 ff with the only difference that there in those passages... the six Brahmanas inquire of Aśvapati about one and the same common theme; while in the *Praśna Upaniṣad* everybody asks something different...'²⁹ As

for *Māṇḍūkya*, even though it is assigned to *Atharvaveda* it 'bears the name of a half-lost school of the Ṛg-Veda.'³⁰ Also, its importance is because it 'gave rise to one of the most remarkable monuments of Indian Philosophy, viz., the *Kārikā* of Gauḍapāda,³¹ a foundational work of Advaita Vedānta. It may be interesting to note that according to Deussen, all the four parts of the *Kārikā* are 'usually regarded as four *upanishads*' even though it is only the first which includes the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*. Deussen must have had some evidence for his assertion, but I have not been able to corroborate it from any other source. However, it confirms once again the arbitrariness with which a particular text or part of a text is called an *Upanishad* or regarded as one.

But whatever may be one's view regarding the three well known *Upanishads* of the *Atharvaveda* there can be little doubt that *Upanishads* which are really independent works are hardly regarded as of major importance by anyone and those that are so regarded are mostly not independent works at all but selections out of pre-existent texts made on the basis of criteria which seem neither clear nor uniform to our apprehension. An alternative selection made on the basis of clearly formulated criteria which are also philosophically relevant from the contemporary point of view may meet the current needs better than the one that was made long back with a view perhaps to meet the needs of those times.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The term '*Upanishad*' has usually been written without the usual diacritical marks except when used in quotations.
2. The situation is even more complicated by the fact that texts whose theme is not even remotely connected with what the *Upanishads* are usually supposed to be concerned with call themselves by that name. The latest to be published with such a title is *Vāstusūtra Upaniṣad* edited by Alice Boner, Sadāśiva Rath Śarmā and Bettina Bäumer, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1982.
3. A. B. Keith, *The Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, (Oxford Univ. Press, 1909), 1969, p. 39.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 39. Laxmaṇa Shastri Joshi treats the *Aitareya Upanishad* as consisting of *Āraṇyakas* II and III on the ground that Śaṅkara has treated them as such in his commentary on the *Upanishad*. But he does not discuss the points raised by Keith nor does he give any reason why the latter thinkers treated only the chapters 4, 5 and 6 of *Āraṇyaka* II as constituting the *Aitareya Upanishad*. See Lakshmaṇa Shastri Joshi, *Dharma Kośah, Upanishatkāṇḍam*, Vol. II; Part II, Wai, 1949.
6. See on this question the whole discussion by Keith, *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, pp. 39-52.
7. A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1925, p. 499.
8. Dr. R. C. Dwivedī, in a personal communication, informs me that 'chapters 28-39 of the *Śukla Yajurveda* are also supplement and later addition. If so, the situation even with respect to the *Samhitās* is far worse than is commonly imagined.
9. Normally, the distinction between the *Śukla* and the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* is drawn on the basis that while in the former the *Mantra* and the *Brāhmaṇa* portions are separated,

in the latter they are combined. But the more important question is not whether the two are separate or mixed, but whether they are the same or similar to a substantial extent. Unless they are two recensions of the same text, there is no point in calling them by the same name.

10. Keith, p. 500.
11. Paul Deussen, *Sixty Upanishads of the Veda*, translated by V. M. Bedekar and G. B. Palsule, Vol. I, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1980, pp. 328-9. Italics mine.
12. Karl H. Potter, *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies*. Vol. III, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1981, p. 116.
13. Potter, p. 115.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 309.
16. Keith, *The Aitareya Aranyaka*, p. 40.
17. Keith, *Religion and the Philosophy of the Veda*, p. 499.
18. Keith, *ibid.*, p. 499.
19. Arun Shourie, *Hinduism : Essence and Consequence*, Vikas Publishing House, Delhi, 1979.
20. Karl H. Potter, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies*, Vol. III, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1981.
21. Keith, p. 499.
22. Deussen, p. 301.
23. Keith, p. 499.
24. Deussen, p. 269.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
26. मन्त्रब्राह्मणयोर्वेदानामधेयम् ।
27. Deussen, Vol. II, p. 569.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 555.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 589.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 605.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 606.

The address of "I" : an essay on the subject of consciousness, "mind" and brain*

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By "Mind" we mean a totality of processes and phenomena whereby an organism is primed by stimuli in the external or internal environment to make adaptive responses for the sake of the protection and survival of the organism. The capability of organism for perception of environment and to recall, to identify, to learn, and to fix experience and exteriorise it constitute various basic processes. The speed, or rather the quickness, of cognitive mechanism and systematisation of experience is expressed by the word "intelligence". "Drive" states refer to the internal conditioning environment which influence the speed of processes to the point that patterns of resolvable sequences become identifiable. Internalised processes used to systematise memory or engrams of experience depending upon inhibition or potentiation of certain memories are recognised as repression, phantasy formation, inventiveness or other "creative" expression by which new correlations are brought into being which did not exist in the recorded past for the individual.

Consciousness refers to the dimension of reactivity and activity in which these processes exist between input and response. This refers to primordial substratum in which above processes occur as waves or perturbations.

We recognise this dimension to be associated with the whole organism. But we suggest that there exists an organ and a state of the body wherein above processes of "mind" are concentrated and realised and modified and integrated as the consequence of plastic alternations brought about by these processes, in actuality energy aspect of these processes.

We invoke the foundation on which the ensemble called "mind" can be assembled in a state of dynamic metastability. This is the location of the conscious (unconscious) sense of "I". There is no need to differentiate conscious and unconscious; qualitatively, the conscious and the unconscious are two ends of continuum of this dimension of living matter and are distinguished by the ease of recall of a stored image. Since awareness subsumes an agent which is "aware" of an object, all awareness arises by its interaction with the internal and external environment, hence it is necessary to postulate the sense

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