

## **Philosophical Reflections on Perennial Wisdom: An Insight in to the Oneness of Reality- A Special Reference to Vedas**

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### **Abstract**

Essence of perennialism wisdom can be traced in the Vedic and Upanishad thoughts. It reflects that Oneness and unity are the different shades of same truth. The realization of oneness is the core philosophy of Indian philosophy. Perennial wisdom is a reflective spirituality that visualizes reality as the Absolute or one in every sphere of life. The central idea of perennial philosophy is that Divine Truth is one, timeless, and universal, and the different religions through different languages expressing that one truth. As this single reality reverberates through all times and places in human history and is manifested in different civilizations. This article tries to find out the universal oneness through the philosophical enquiry into the ideals of Vedas and Upanishads.

**KEYWORDS**-Perennialism, perennial insight, Mundaka uanishad, Advaitic monism

Indian philosophical system emphasizes the tradition of totality and investigation into the insight of life. Instruction of perception and spiritual vision combined with rational investigations, logic and epistemology with the acceptance of life is the core of Indian philosophy. So Indian philosophical systems basically represent 'a way of life', an approach to spiritual realization rather than a mere 'view of life'. Naturalism and spirituality is the essential features of Indian philosophy. Through spiritual knowledge one can transform the worldly affairs of matter to realize the oneness of reality. Spirituality is the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. Spirituality is a type of religious transformation which aims to recover the real nature of man, which finally realizes the perennial wisdom in mind. This essence of Indian philosophy is better known as Darshana. The word Darshana derived from the root 'drs' which indicates 'over and above the ordinary perception'. It is a direct or immediate realization of truth - a tattva darshana. So Darshana denotes a system of philosophy, which enquired in to the truth or reality.

Perennial essence of universal oneness can be traced in the Vedic literature and later in the Upanishad. It can be in the form of the Absolute reality, which is the impersonal expression of Brahman. This expression is the feeling of oneness. This absolute oneness of Perennial wisdom can be attained through direct insight into the nature of reality.

“For the one who knows,  
In whom all beings have become self,  
How can there be delusion or grief  
When he sees oneness?”<sup>i</sup>

Indian philosophy is highly spiritual and its very essence always fought for truth and against error. By birth itself a man has a spirit of flame, it is always burning to reach it zenith. Throughout the life every human being has one aim. i.e., to seek their own jewel. This jewel by its true nature is eternal, blissful and pure. Indian systems called this as self or atman. Identification of self or atman is the level of highest stage. To get this realization one has to pass through the various steps of knowledge.

“Tasmai sa hovaca: dve didye veditavye iti ha sma

Yad brahmavido vadanti, para caivapara ca”<sup>ii</sup>

Mundaka Upanishad distinguishes two kinds of knowledge – (1) higher Knowledge and (2) lower knowledge. Higher knowledge is the knowledge of the supreme self, which is beyond duality. Lower knowledge is the knowledge of the phenomenal world. In reality it is ignorance, for it does not lead to the Highest Good. Higher knowledge is the perennial wisdom through which the imperishable Brahman is attained. Shankara explains the perennial wisdom through the actual realization of the subject matter taught in , ie., Vedas. It primarily means the experience of the Imperishable Brahman taught in the Upanishads. Ramnuja recognizes the practical function of knowledge. It is subservient to action. The self apprehends cognitions in order to react to their objects. It does not apprehend them for their own sake. This cognition enables the knowing self to react to their objects.<sup>iii</sup>

One of the specialties of Indian philosophy is search for our insight. The insight figuring out the practical knowledge of human being. This practical knowledge or higher knowledge is the realization of wisdom of oneness or perennial wisdom. If the spiritual motives dominate in man, they always search for the highest truth. One can attain the practical wisdom through different yogas.

- Karma yoga
- Jnana yoga
- Bhakti yoga
- Raja yoga

Each yoga or path ends with the realization of universal oneness. Ie., to realize our own reality- absolute. The insight or vision of human being leads to flame our self with reality. This shows the perennialism or oneness with reality.

The philosophic attempt to determine the nature of reality may start either with the thinking self or the objects of thought. In India the interest of philosophy is in the self of man. Where the vision is turned outward, the rush of fleeting events engages the mind. In India ‘Atmanam Viddhi’- know the self is the essence of spirituality and starting point of inner wisdom in human being. Within man is the spirit that is the centre of everything.

Experience the perennial wisdom in Vedas can be traced in the form of monistic idealism. The term monism itself leads to the universal oneness. In Indian philosophy there are 4 types of monistic idealism.

#### 1. Non- dualism or Advaitism

2. Pure monism
3. Modified monism
4. Implicit monism

Philosophy proceeds on the facts of experience. Logical reflection is necessary to ascertain whether the facts observed by one individual are accepted by, and are only subjective in their character. The philosophy of Advaitic monism is based on the data of psychological observation. The activities of the self are assigned to the three stages of waking, dreaming, & dreamless sleep. A dream states an actual concrete world is preached to us. We do not call the world real, since on waking we find that the dream world does not fit in with the world. Waking reality is a relative one. It has no permanent existence, being only a correlate of the waking state. In dreamless sleep we have a cessation of the empirical consciousness. Monistic conception is also capable of developing the highest religious spirit. Only prayer to God is replaced by contemplation of the supreme spirit that rules the world.

The Upanishad carried out the perennial element, which recognise only one spirit- Almighty, infinity, eternal, incomprehensible, self- existent, the creator, destroyer of the world. The sources of man's spiritual insight are two fold: objective and subjective. The objective element is the visible infinite are taken up in to the spiritual whole. These two current thought of subjectivism and objectivism leads to oneness. "all this universe is the Eternal Brahman , this self is the Eternal Brahman, and the self is four fold" <sup>iv</sup>. The objective side of reality is called Brahman and subjective side of reality is called Atman. These are the cosmic and psychic principles. In higher level they are identical with each other. Ie., Brahman is Atman. Brahman is the transcendent conception of God, it is infinite and beyond the finite. When one recognized their Atman or the innermost individual self, he himself to be realizes that the individual become the part of the whole Essence, ie., Brahman. This is the identification of subject- object reality. Ie., realization of Brahman- Atman. This identity of subject- object is not a vague hypothesis, but necessary the implication of all relevant thinking, feeling, and willing. This is identification of oneness with reality. At this stage, the human self cannot think, conquer and love nature, were it unthinkable, unconquerable and unlovable. At this oneness level the soul become the part of Brahman. The soul has no individual identity. It is vitalized and directed by the spirit. From the beginning of reflection this oneness of subject and object, the existence of one central reality, pervading and embracing all, has been the doctrine of the devout. Religious mysticism and perennialism says that "that thou Art" or "Tat tvam Asi". This is the philosophy also seen in the non- dual schools such as the Advaita Veanta, Brahman is identical to the Atman, is everywhere and inside each living being, and there is connected spiritual oneness in all existence.

It is clearly in Mandukya Upanishad, the shortest of all the Upanishads, which is assigned to Atharvaveda that the Human being has there common states of consciousness. Ie., waking consciousness, dreaming and dreamless sleep. There is also a fourth stage turiya meaning 'the fourth' is the pure consciousness. It is the hypo- metabolic state of "restful alertness". Turiya is the highest stage that underlies and transcends the other three stages of consciousness. At this stage everyone enjoys a blissful awareness or insight during the meditation of Turiya, which is known as Amatra, meaning immeasurable or measureless .

‘ Turiya is not that which cognizes the internal objects, not that which cognizes the external objects, not what cognizes both of them, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non-cognitive. It is unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without any distinctive marks, unthinkable, unnameable, the essence of the knowledge of the one self, that in to which the world is resolved , the peaceful, the benign, the non- dual, such , they think, is the fourth quarter. He is the self; He is to be known.’<sup>v</sup>

Advaita Vedanta also mentions three stages of consciousness, namely waking or Jagrat, dreaming or Svapna, deep sleep or susupti, which are empirically experienced by human beings and these, corresponds to the three bodies of doctrine.

1. The first state is the waking state, in which we are aware of our daily world. This is called gross body.
2. The second state is the dreaming mind. This is called subtle body.
3. The third state is the state of deep sleep. This is the causal body.

Like Mandukhya Upanishad, Advaita also posits the fourth state called Turiya, which describes as a pure consciousness, and this is the back ground and transcendental state of all the other three state of consciousness. This final transcendental state is the state of liberation. Ie., in this state one can experiences the infinite state or Ananda and non-different or Abheda, that is free from the dualistic experience. It is the highest stage to realize the oneness of reality, which is measureless, neither cause nor effect, all pervading, without suffering, blissful, changeless, self luminous, real, immanent in all things. One who experienced the highest Turiya stage of self- consciousness have reached the pure awareness of their own non- dual self as one with everyone and everything, for them the knowledge, the knower, the known becomes one, they are the Jivan mukta. This highest stage of Brahman realization is the Ananda stage or Blissful stage, which is realized in the turiya state. The one who experience this level, he realizes that he become the part of Brahman. In Brahadaranyaka Upanishad explains the great Mahavakya ‘ Aham Brahmosmi’ means ‘I am of Brahman’ or ‘ I am the Infinite reality’. It is the all encompassing existence with reality where the ego dies. So In order to reach this higher level of transcendence, one has to pass his lower grade to higher level.

When we analysis the Upanishad we find that it reflect on the central reality as an Infinite existence (sat), Absolute truth (cit) and Pure delight (Ananda). The real experience of Atman with Brahman is the ultimate aim of human beings. This is the stage to realize from unreal to the real. The prayer of every human heart is to lead the reality of unreal to real, from darkness to light and also from death to immortality.

Asato ma sad gamaya

Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya

Mrtyor ma Amrtam gamaya<sup>vi</sup>

The highest level of human being to achieve practical wisdom in life. i.e., to realize the empirical life is transient and to get rid of all the mysteries of life and achieve the identification of Atman with Brahman. There are different stages of self in the progressive development to achieve the highest grade.

1. The bodily self
2. The empirical self
3. The transcendental self
4. The absolute self

The Absolute self is the highest wisdom we can achieve. This is oneness with Brahman or absolute reality. One can experience bliss or ananda when one realizes that he become the part of Absolute. This is oneness or perennialism in the higher stage. Self is a living reality. Death does not touch it nor vice dissolve it. Permanence, continuity, unity, eternal activities are its characteristics. The true self is eternal. Self is the subjective side of reality.

Atman is the inmost individual being and Brahman is the inmost being of Universal nature, human self cannot think, conquer and love nature, were it unthinkable, unconquerable and unlovable. Nature is the object of a subject, quite rational and thoroughly intelligible, capable of control and worthy of love.

Supreme self or infinite Brahman realization is the identity of atman and Brahman. This highest realization is gained through true enquiry of self and get rid of the entire ego in oneself. This essence of higher level we have experienced through self realization. This realization is generally called oneness. According to Taittiriya Upanisad,

“ Vijnanam brahmeti vyajanat,

Vijnanadd hy eva khalv imani bhutani,

Vijnanena jatani jivanti, vijnanam prayanty abhisamvi santi”<sup>vii</sup>

In order to get the philosophical wisdom in life, man can pass the various spheres of life and he can travel through the different margas of life. Ending of each path or marga is to achieve a certain level of intellectual wisdom or philosophical wisdom in man. To get the philosophical knowledge Upanishad prescribed three margas.

1. Karma Marga
2. Jnana Marga
3. Bhakti Marga

One can get the highest knowledge through any one of these margas. Ie., insight or vision.

There are subtle element in each body.

1. The energy
2. The subtle body and the physical body

The energy in each individual is a part of the universal energy and is actually the real person. This is because, after death, the physical body decays, but the energy will remain. We called this energy the life principle in each of us or the self. The self developed contact with the world through the body and started enjoying the world and is the process, it forgot its real nature. In Indian philosophy the primordial energy is called OM. The real self or atman forgetting its true nature, then, becomes the ego, ahamkara or "I"-ness. The ego assumes its individual identity. Instead of the Universal energy, it becomes an isolated individual person. "OM is this imperishable word, OM is the universe, and this is the exposition of OM. The past, the present, and the future, all that was, all that is, all that will be, is OM. Likewise all else that may exist beyond the bounds of Time, that too is OM"

Aum ity etad aksharam idam sarvam,

Tasyopavyakhyanam,bhutam bhavad bhavidyad iti

Sarvam aumkara eva, yac canyat trikalatitam tad Apy <sup>viii</sup>

The ego or the false self is the one who suffers the pairs of opposites of happiness and sorrow, due to his false identity. If one can realize this, then he will find peace in himself. Death, disease, ill- fame, injury all affects the ego. The real self or atman witnesses all these and is not affected. Knowing one's true nature, knowing one's true origin and knowing one's true destiny would being happiness that does not end in sorrow. This stage of merging the ego with the Atman and merging of the atman with the universal self is called liberation.

The central idea of the Upanishad, which is a reconciliation and harmony of fundamental opposites, is worked out symmetrically. The basis of Upanishad is laid by the idea of the one and stable spirit inhabiting and governing a universe of movement and of the forms of movement. The higher knowledge of Upanishads is the unity and stability of higher truth and it contains all as well as inhabits all. The basis and fulfillment of the rule of life are found in the experience of unity by which man identifies himself with the cosmic and transcendental self and is identified in the self, but with an entire freedom from grief and illusion, with all its becoming. Vidya and avidya, Becoming and Non- becoming are reconciled by their mutual utility to the progressive self realization which proceeds from the state of mortality to the state of immortality.

## References

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