Metaphysics in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka

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It is not so easy to give a definition to the term metaphysics. Generally metaphysics means the theory of being. It is an enquiry into the nature of reality. It mainly deals with soul and universe. It investigates the nature of reality, its relation to the universe, nature of the universe, etc. Its result may be monism, dualism or pluralism. Monism reduces all the dualities and pluralities to one eternal reality. It seems to be the most accepted view regarding with the metaphysics in the Vedas.

Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka belongs to Ṛgveda and it is the continuation of Śāṅkhāyanabrāhmaṇa. This Āraṇyaka is divided into fifteen adhyāyas, and each adhyāya constitutes some khaṇḍas. Totally there are fifteen adhyāyas and one hundred and thirty seven khaṇḍas in this. Chapters first and second concerned with the sacrifice 'mahāvrata'. Chapter three to six constitute the great Kauṣītakībrāhmaṇopaniṣad. Chapter three is an exposition of the evolution of man from mortal world to Brahma with a conversation between sage Āruṇi and Citra Gārgyāyana. Chapter four is an exposition by sage Kauṣītakī of Prāṇa as Brahman or the highest truth. In chapter five, God Indra instructs king Pratardana, who approached him for the knowledge of what is best for man. In addition, to him Indra imparts the knowledge, the true nature of intelligence and speech leading to knowing of soul. Chapter six is a philosophical discussion between Bālāki and king Ajātaśatru of Kāśi on the nature, understanding and realization of Brahman, the ultimate reality.

Chapter seven and eight constitute the 'Saṃhitopaniṣad'. They consist of the Vedic symbolisms referring to speech, division of time, syllables, meters, sounds, breath, the Vedic texts, etc. Chapter nine deals with the superiority of the breath, 'Prāṇa' over other faculties of man while. Chapter ten elaborates internal Agnihotra, which leads to the realization of the self.

The eleventh chapter describes the creation of man and his constitution, and the signs and dreams portending his death. In chapter twelve, there is a description of the preparation of an amulet from the bilva tree, which vouches for the wearer all protections and ensures destruction of his foes. Chapters thirteen and fourteen consists of the highest Upaniṣadic teachings, such as self-sacrifice, Brahman and the ultimate identity of self with Brahman and the greatness of the Vedas. The last chapter states the teachers of the tradition of Āraṇyaka.

Now, to start with, the Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka regards Ātman as the only one reality. In the thirteenth chapter of Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka it is stated that, 'All is this Ātman, that art thou, Ātman should be realized as I am Brahman. This Ātman is Brahman, etc. Whatever in this universe is Ātman. Ātman is also the individual soul. Ātman is called as Brahman'[12]. This is the monism enlightened in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka. In its investigation it also refers to the nature and definition of Ātman, nature of the Prāṇa, the organs, the subjects, etc.

The enquiry into the nature of self is one of the basic aspects of philosophy. Self is the reality which is described by various terms such as Puruṣa, Ātman, Brahman, etc. in philosophy. Puruṣa is the reality, which dwells within the body of creatures in the form of the consciousness principle[3]. The word 'Ātman' originally meant 'breath' and then came to be applied to what ever constitutes the essential part of anything, more particularly of man i.e. his Self or soul. The word 'Brahman' seems at first to have meant 'prayer', being derived from the root 'bṛh' meaning 'to grow' or 'to burst forth'. Later the term used to denote the supreme self [4]. Brahman is the ultimate source of universe while Ātman is the inner self of man. The terms Puruṣa, Ātman and Brahman, each one has different connotations in different contexts in philosophy but all of them refer to the ultimate reality.

Definition of Ātman in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka

The term 'Ātman' is mentioned in several chapters in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka, especially in those chapters which constitute the Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad. The third chapter provides the term 'Satyam' to define Ātman. The term Ātman is given as an answer to the question 'who art thou'? Then again raises a question, 'who am I'? then answers it, by saying the term 'satyam' which means truth. It is other than Gods and prāṇas, it is

'sat', the being. It is Gods and prāṇas. It is called by the one term 'satyam'. All this is it. This same reality is termed as Brahman. The fifth chapter of Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka provides a term 'prajñātman', the intelligent self. Here Prāṇa is said as the intelligent self. It is endless, unaging and immortal[5]. The thirteenth chapter of Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka defines Ātman as Brahman, without predecessor, without superior, without other, immediate and without an exterior[6]. Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka defines the reality by different terms in different chapters. But all definitions defines one and same reality.

Nature of Ātman in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka

The term 'Ātman' is defined as endless, immortal. These are not only its definitions but also its nature. Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka explains the nature of Ātman in such a way that, 'It is other than devas and prāṇas, it is being and it is devas and prāṇas'[7]. These two contradictory statements reveal the real nature of Ātman. For an ordinary person Ātman is different from devas and prāṇas, but a learned person knows that Ātman is the reality behind devas and prāṇas. So he sees Ātman everywhere. Ātman is limitless and all pervading. It is the power behind all those things in this universe. It again holds that, 'whatever in this world are Ātman and all that is what I am'[8]. Here the unity of the ultimate source of universe and the inner self of man is very clear.

In Chapter five Ātman is described as devoid of qualities, without actions, etc. It is stated that, 'prajñātman becomes not greater through a good deed, nor less through an evil deed'[9]. So the actions and qualities deal only with organs and body. Ātman is beyond all these. Ātman is mentioned as the self luminous source, which is behind the prāṇas, organs and subjects[10]. In chapter six Brahman is stated as the supreme source behind the natural powers such as sun, moon, etc. The same supreme source enters into the body from hair to nail[11].

Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka tells to make offerings to Brahman whose body has been prepared for indifference to desire. He drives repeated death away. The self is to be seen, to be heard, to be thought, to be meditated on. The studies of the Vedas, studentship, ascetism, faith, sacrifice, etc. are prescribed as the means for self realization[12].

Prāṇa

'Prāṇa' is a very important term treated in the Vedic literature. Specifically speaking, Āraṇyakas provide a detailed account of the nature and significance of Prāṇa. Here the term Prāṇa is used in different meanings such as sense organ, sum total of senses, breath, air, etc. In Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka the absolute or Brahman is substituted by the term 'Prāṇa'. For instance, it is said: 'Prāṇa is Brahman says Kauṣītakī', 'Prāṇa is Brahman says Paingya', 'Prāṇa is prajñātman'[13]. The description of Prāṇa in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka is seems to be greater than that of the number of elaborations on Ātman.

Faculties of the body and their subjects

In Indian philosophy organs or faculties of body are known by the term *'Indriyas'*. They are the faculties of the body which help in the attainment of knowledge of subjects. The classification and number of the *Indriyas* varies from one philosophy to another. The philosophy of Advaita accepts two types of *Indriyas*; five *jñānendriyas* and *five karmendriyas*. Ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose are the five *jñānendriyas* and speech, hand, leg, organs of evacuation and generation are the *karmendriyas*[14]. The philosophy of Sāṃkhya accepts eleven *Indriyas*; five *budhīndriyas*, five *karmendriyas* and mind which is both a *budhīndriya* and a *karmendriya*[15]

In Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka the faculties of body are not entitled as *Indriyas* and they are not classified into any separate groups. Chapter five provides a list of faculties. They are speech, nose, eye, ear, tongue, mind, hands, body, organ of generation and legs. These all are commonly called as *prajñāmātrās*. Subjects of these faculties are names, odour, forms, sounds, taste, thoughts, action, pleasure and pain, enjoyment and off springs, and walking respectively. These subjects are commonly called as *Bhūtamātrās*. The *Bhūtamātrās* are dependent on *Prajñāmātrās*. There is no division of this union, just as the circumference of a wheel is placed upon the spokes and they are placed upon the nave. So the *Bhūtamātrās* are placed on the *Prajñāmātrās*, and the *Prajñāmātrās* are placed on Prāṇa.

Superiority of Prāṇa

Superiority of the Prāṇa over the faculties of the body is described in several chapters of Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka. In chapter four Prāṇa is said to be Brahman. The First khaṇḍa of this chapter figuratively introduces Prāṇa as

a king. Other faculties of the body such as mind, eye, ear, etc. are described as his servants. They always do works for him even if he doesn't ask them. The mind is described as his messenger, the eye as his protector, the ear as his proclaimer, and the speech as his tire woman. It is also mentioned that these all are doing their works for Prāṇa[16]. The Khaṇḍa two again states Prāṇa as Brahman and also other faculties such as speech, eye, ear and mind are doing works for Prāṇa even if he doesn't ask them[17].

The Khaṇḍa fourteen of the same chapter provides an imaginary story in order to prove the superiority of Prāṇa. Speech, sight, hearing, mind and Prāṇa leave the body to prove their superiority to each other. When they left, the body fell like a wood. They re-enter one by one but the body lay still even on the re-entry of speech, sight, hearing and mind. When Prāṇa re-entered the body arose[18].

Relation and Co-ordination among Ātman, Prāṇa, Organs and Subjects

Chapter five of Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka is composed as a philosophical discussion between Indra, the teacher and Pratardana, the student. Here Indra provides the knowledge of the ultimate reality, Ātman which illumines all those things in the universe.

Indra describes the relation among the Ātman, Prāṇa, organs and subjects. Even though there are different organs for knowing things, Prāṇa is important. Without organs one can live but without Prāṇa no one can live. So Prāṇa is the intelligent self[19]. After the verbal instruction Indra explains it by various illustrations. At first they two goes to a man who is in deep sleep. Then Indra says, Now the man is absorbed in Prāṇa. Then all the organs with their subjects enter into it. When the man awakes, as from blazing fire sparks go forth in all directions, so from this self all the Prāṇas go forth, from the Prāṇas the devas (organs) and from the devas the worlds (subjects)[20]. Indra again gives an example of a man, whose death is very near. Then people around him say his mind has departed, he hears not, he sees not, etc. Now he is absorbed in the Prāṇa, the intelligent self and organs with their subjects enter it. When self departs from body all these will depart[21].

Then Indra describes the relation among self, Prāṇa, organs and subjects. Having mounted by Prāṇa, who is the self, the organs find their

subjects. Without self organs cannot find their subjects[22]. Later Indra gives a beautiful pictorial description to explain the relation among the self, Prāṇa, organs and subjects. Prāṇa is the intelligent self, it is joy, immortal. It is not increased by good deeds and not decreased by bad deeds. Who desires to uplift himself, him it uplifts. This is the guardian of the world. This is the king of the world; this is the lord of the world. This is Indra's self[23]. This description highlights the idea that the self has no function or action but it is the reality, the lightning power behind the organs and subjects.

Conclusion

In different chapters Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka describes the subjects such as philosophy, ritualism, symbolism, etc. While examining the metaphysical relevance of Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka, Kauṣītakī Upaniṣad seems to be sound. It directly provides answers to the questions such as Who art Thou? What is the Reality? What is its nature? etc. Ātman is answered for the first question. Then the unity of self is described. The term 'Satyam' is used to denote the reality. The Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka defines Ātman as Brahman. In different chapters it describes the nature of Ātman. Whatever in this world is Ātman and all that it resides in the inner self. Unity of the ultimate source of outer world and inner self is mentioned. Ātman neither becomes greater through good deeds nor becomes less through bad deeds. Ātman is devoid of action and qualities. It is self luminous and the source which is behind the Prāṇas, organs and subjects. It is the supreme source behind the natural powers sun, moon, fire, etc. The same reality enters in to the body from hair to nail. Ātman is regarded as the ultimate reality and the unity of Paramātman (Universal soul) and Jīvātman (Individual soul) is clearly explained in Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka.

Prāṇa is another important philosophical term which is sometimes used as a substitute for Brahman and Ātman. Among the faculties of the body Prāṇa has a prominent place. Prāṇa is called as as *'jyeṣṭha'* and *'śreṣṭha'* (eldest and greatest). Prāṇa is figuratively described as a king and other faculties such as the ear, eye, hand, etc. as his servants. But Ātman is described as the reality behind all those aspects including Prāṇa. Realization of Brahman is prescribed to drive away repeated death. *Śravaṇa* (Hearing of Vedas), *Manana* (Reflection) and *Nididhyāsana* (Meditation) are said to be the steps to realize the reality. The knowledge leads to realization of Brahman which ensures *Mokṣa*, the eternal peace is the final and topmost message of Śāṅkhāyanāraṇyaka.

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Notes and references:

1. अथातो वैराग्यसंस्कृते शरीरे ब्रह्मयज्ञनिष्टौ भवेदप पुनर्मृत्युं जयति .... सर्वं यदयमात्मा स एष तत्त्वमसीत्यात्माऽवगम्योऽहं ब्रह्मास्मीति तदेतद्ब्रह्मापूर्वमपरमनपरमनन्तरमप्राह्यमयमात्मा ब्रह्म. ŚĀ,XIII.1.

2. पुरि शेते इति पुरुषःशरीरे पुरे शेते इति. Bhāratīya darśan śāstra ka itihās, p. 297.

3. Hiriyanna:Outlines of अद्वैत Philosophy, p.54.

4. स एष प्राण एव प्रज्ञात्माऽनन्तोऽजरोऽमृतो न साधुना कर्मणा भूयान्भवति नो ..... एष लोकपाल एष लोकाधिपतिरेष लोकेशः स म आत्मेति विद्यात्स म आत्मेति विद्यात्। ŚĀ,V.8.

5. तदेतद्ब्रह्मापूर्वमपरमनपरमनन्तरमप्राह्यमयमात्मा ब्रह्म सर्वानुभूरित्यनुशासनमिति ।ŚĀ,XIII.1.

6. यदन्यद्देवेभ्यश्च प्राणेभ्यश्च तत्सदथ यद्देवाश्च प्राणाश्च तत्सत्यम् । ŚĀ,III.6.

7. तदेकया वाचाऽभिव्याह्रियते सत्यमित्येतावदिदं सर्वमिदं सर्वमस्मीत्येवैनं तदाह तदेतदृक्श्लोकेनाभ्युक्तम्। ŚĀ,III.6.

8. स एष प्राण एव प्रज्ञात्माऽनन्तोऽजरोऽमृतो न साधुना कर्मणा भूयान्भवति नो एवासाधुना कनीयानेष ह्येव साधु कर्म कारयति तं यमेभ्यो लोकेभ्य उन्निनीषत एष उ एवासाधु कर्म कारयति तं यमधो निनीषत। ŚĀ,V

9. एवमेवैता भूतमात्राः प्रज्ञामात्रास्वर्पिताः प्रज्ञामात्राः प्राणेऽर्पिताः स एष प्राण एव प्रज्ञात्माऽनन्तोऽजरोऽमृतो। ŚĀ,V.8.

10. यो वै प्रालाक एतेषां पुरुषाणां कर्ता यस्य वैतत्कर्म स वै वेदितव्यः. यथाऽग्नेर्ज्वलतः सर्वा दिशो विस्फुलिङ्गा विप्रतिष्ठेरन्नेवामेवैतस्मादात्मनः प्राणा यथायतनं विप्रतिष्ठन्ते प्राणेभ्यो देवा देवेभ्यो लोकाः। ŚĀ,VI.19-20.

11. अथातो वैराग्यसंस्कृते शरीरे ब्रह्मयज्ञनिषे भवेदप पुनर्मृत्युं जयति तदु ह वा आत्मा द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्य इति तमेतं वेदानुवचनेन विविदिषन्ति ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा श्रद्धया यज्ञेनानाशकेन चेति. ŚĀ,XIII.1.

12. प्राणो ब्रह्मेति ह स्माऽऽह कौषीतकिः ।ŚĀ.IV.1. प्राणो ब्रह्मेति ह स्माऽऽह पैङ्ग्यः ।ŚĀ.IV.2. प्राण एव प्रज्ञात्मा.ŚĀ.V.8.

13. ज्ञानेन्द्रियाणि श्रोत्रत्वक्चक्षुर्जिह्वाघ्राणाख्यानि। कर्मेन्द्रियाणि वाक्पाणीपादपायूपस्थाख्यानि।Vedāntasāra, 63&75.

14. अथातो निश्रेयसादानमेता ह वै देवता अहंश्रेयसे विवदमाना अस्माच्छरीरादुच्च-क्रमुस्तद्वाक् पपात शुष्कं दारुभूतं शिश्येऽथैनद्वाक्प्रविवेश ....यत्रैते देवास्तत्प्राप्य यदमृता देवास्तदमृतो भवति य एवं वेद। ŚĀ,IV.14.

15. प्राणं प्रणन्तं सर्वे प्राणा अनुप्राणन्त्येवमु हैतदिति हेन्द्र उवाचास्ति त्वेव प्राणानां निःश्रेयसमिति।ŚĀ,V.2.

16. यत्रैतत्पुरुषः सुप्तः स्वप्नं न कञ्चन पश्यत्यथास्मिन्प्राण : ..... प्राणेभ्यो देवा देवेभ्यो लोकाः .ŚĀ,V.3.

17. यत्रैतत्पुरुष आर्तो मरिष्यन्नावल्यमेत्य संमोहमेति तमाहुरुदक्रमीच्चित्रं न शृणोति न पश्यति न वाचा वदति न ध्यायत्यथास्मिन्प्राण एवैकधा भवति तदेनं वाक् सर्वैर्नामभिः सहाप्येति .....स यदाऽस्माच्छरीरादुत्क्रामति सहैवैतैः सर्वैरुत्क्रामति।ŚĀ,V.3.

18. प्रज्ञया वाचं समारुह्य वाचा सर्वाणि नामान्याप्नोति प्रज्ञया घ्राणं समारुह्य घ्राणेन सर्वान्गन्धानाप्नोति प्रज्ञया चक्षुः समारुह्य..... प्रज्ञया मनः समारुह्य मनसा सर्वाणि ध्यातान्याप्नोति।ŚĀ,V.6.

19. यत्रैतत्पुरुष आर्तो मरिष्यन्नावल्यमेत्य संमोहमेति तमाहुरुदक्रमीच्चित्रं न शृणोति न पश्यति न वाचा वदति न ध्यायत्यथास्मिन्प्राण एवैकधा भवति तदेनं वाक् सर्वैर्नामभिः सहाप्येति .....स यदाऽस्माच्छरीरादुत्क्रामति सहैवैतैः सर्वैरुत्क्रामति।ŚĀ,V.3.

20. प्रज्ञया वाचं समारुह्य वाचा सर्वाणि नामान्याप्नोति प्रज्ञया घ्राणं समारुह्य घ्राणेन सर्वान्गन्धानाप्नोति प्रज्ञया चक्षुः समारुह्य..... प्रज्ञया मनः समारुह्य मनसा सर्वाणि ध्यातान्याप्नोति।ŚĀ,V.6.

21. न वाचं विजिज्ञासीत वक्तारं विद्यान्न गन्धं विजिज्ञासीत घ्रातारं .....एष लोकपाल एष लोकाधिपतिरेष लोकेशः स म आत्मेति विद्यात्स म आत्मेति विद्यात्। ŚĀ,V.8.