THE PRIMACY OF CONSCIOUSNESS - THE JURISDICTION OF TAITTIRĪYOPANIṢADIC SCHEMA

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Introduction

The article discusses the conceptualizations on consciousness in the Taittirīyopaniṣad in the framework of philosophical deliberations of the Advaita Vedānta in its immediacy of experience basis. Consciousness has to be understood as the Reality itself and whatever is regarded as the consciousness in empirical terms requires a reconciliation to the subjective level. With reason as ultimate proof and direct experience as its basis it has to be accepted without doubt as the ultimate. Whatever comes in the empirical level and felt as absolute is under the pretext of Māyā only. To lift the veil of Māyā, Advaita Vedānta exhorts the spiritual seeker to take the testimony of the scriptures (Vedas) and illumined souls, use reason, reflection, and meditation, and attain direct experience. These are the compasses, maps, and sails needed to steer successfully to the highest union with Brahman. One must transcend the effects of Māyā in order to know the nature of its cause. The Upaniṣads, the ultimate source of knowledge on Reality discloses that Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, is pure consciousness (Prajñānam Brahma)[1]. But, so long as this empirical world of multiplicity exists for us, consciousness remains a mere philosophical concept with different categories.

Consciousness

Consciousness is not observable and quantifiable; hence it is out of the scope of science. Therefore, either science should enlarge its scope or it can be studied in the discipline called 'Spiritual Science' or 'Meta Science'. 'Consciousness' is the other name for the 'Self'. We give it the label 'consciousness' in order to distinguish it from all that which doesn't have 'consciousness,' i.e. which cannot think, judge, remember, analyze, focus, decide and do such other mental, intellectual or emotional activities. Each one of us is an individual 'Self'. Consciousness has a moral dimension. All our actions or efforts have some motives underlying them and we employ some means to reach our goals or to attain certain ends. Motives determine our attitudes and outlook and influence our behaviours that are related to Values or ethical principles. In other words, Consciousness has another aspect, namely 'Conscience'.

It can be contended that tradition as an essential prerequisite that argues for consciousness being essentially concealed within the five sheaths and that it manifests itself into the fabric of the world without being affected to the slightest by this manifestation. Pañcakośas or the five sheaths, conceal within this consciousness and this can be understood during the unfolding of the veil on Ātman. These sheaths are only conceptual ones and do not have any clear demarcations but act as a medium for attaining Real Knowledge. The theory of Pañcakośas is the core of the Taittirīyopaniṣad and it contains elaborations on consciousness.

Pañcakośas

The idea of Pañcakośas is clearly discussed in the Brahmānandavallī Chapter of Taittirīya Upaniṣad which is a part of the Taittirīya Samhita of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda and in which a particular chapter itself discusses the ways and means to achieve Brahman or unveil the veil on this. It gives a detailed description of the dimensions of human personality or the dimensions of the Self. It shows ways to assimilate new experiences while traversing each horizon of our consciousness and getting expanded in that process into the realm of the actuality of Consciousness. The Pañcakośas

constitute the very structure of the sthūla śarīra, the sūkṣma śarīra, and the karanaśarīra. The Consciousness is beyond the five sheaths, which is Pure Consciousness or Sat-Cit-Ānanda or Brahman Itself, the Ultimate Reality. The five kośas are namely the Annamayakośa, the Prāṇamayakośa, the Manomayakośa, the Vijñānamayakośa and Ānandamayakośa. These kośas which are made up of

1) The five jñānendriyas that give knowledge of external objects,

2) The five karmendriyas that lead to action,

3) The five prāṇas, 4)The five "subtle elements",

5) The four aspects of antahkaraṇa- Manah, Buddhih, Ahamkāra, Citta

6) Avidyā, 7) Kāma and 8) Karma

These eight collectively constitute what is called the puryaṣtakam, also called the liṅgaśarīra, and the kāraṇaśarīra which is the vehicle of the higher mind. The Ātman is beyond the Pancakośas. The sthūlaśarīra is the Annamayakośa (made up of food or that which constitutes the gross body). The Sūkṣmaśarīra is made up of the Prāṇamayakośa (made up of energy or that which constitutes the subtle body). The succeeding Manomayakośa constitutes the instinctive sheath, or the perceptual body) and this is followed by the Vijñānamayakośa which is the cognitive enterprise or is the conscious body). The Kāraṇaśarīra is the Ānandamayakośa (blissful, the transcendental body). This is the subtlest of all.

Annamayakośa

The outermost the sheath is called the sheath of food, or Annamayakośa. This is the gross, physical body. This is the sheath of the physical self, named from the fact that it is nourished by food. It consists of five elements namely Earth, Water, Fire, Air, and Space. This is normally nourished by the gross food that is consumed and is matter in the form of physical body sustained by intake of food. It includes five organs of perception (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch), and the five organs of action (comprehension, locomotion, articulation, excretion, procreation). The Taittirīyopaniṣad draws the attention on the teaching of the teacher

Varuṇa, who is the father of Bhrgu and is guiding the son as student in his search for Reality. The son asks the father on the indubitable question of the most fundamental stuff of the universe from which all creation has come. The father leads him on through hints to perform tapas for inward search to find out an experimental answer to the question. The son goes into tapas and comes back to the father with an answer that this entire universe is made up of Anna or Matter. 'Anno brahmeti vyajānāt....' [2]. Everything in the universe is made up of Anna, comes out of Anna, is sustained by Anna and dissolves in to Anna. The Father is very satisfied to find that the son has been able to arrive at one common principle of the external universe. This is Matter which constitutes the aspect of our physical personality and is therefore called Annamayakośa. Annamayakośa is the first layer of the covering of self by not-self. It is unconscious.

Prāṇamayakośa

Prāṇamayakośa , separate from Annamayakośa, is subtler than it which constitutes the life force or the prāṇic sheath composed of prāṇa, the vital principle or the force that holds together the body and the mind. Its physical manifestation is the breath. It is the sheath of the vital airs completely enclosing and filling the Annamayakośa. The Prāṇa in combination with the five organs of action constitutes the Prāṇamayakośa. Varuṇa then follows to say that this is not the true self and he advices his son to do penance. He says: ' My dear son, there is something more subtle than what you have discovered, please go on and carry on with your search. Bhrgu after a long penance comes back and reveals what he had experienced: Oh ! father it is the Prāṇa 'the life energy, from which even the gross Annamayakośa comes out ' Prāṇo Brahmeti vyajānāt....' [3]. The body may be there but without life or prāṇa it is gross or useless. This prāṇa is the fabric of this universe both inside and outside our body. A uniform harmonious flow of prāṇa to each and every cell of the Annamayakośa keeps them alive and healthy. Prāṇa has the capacity to move in to different areas of the body. The Annamayakosa is an effect of the Prāṇamayakośa. It gets life by the prāṇa entering into it and engages in all kinds of actions. prāṇa is the life

of beings and the Universal life. Whatever happens in the Annamayakosa is wrongly identified as belonging to the Ātman by reason of its being pervaded by the prāṇamayakośa which is effect of Vāyu, and totally unaware and dependent. There are five type of vāyus collectively called Pancavāyu, namely Prāṇa-Apāna-Udāna- Samāna and Vyāna.

Manomayakośa

Manomayakośa belongs to the organs of knowledge and the mind which is the cause of the sense of the "I" and of the "mine" and of the varying conceptions. It creates difference of names etc., because organs of knowledge are dependent on and determined by the mind which is of the nature of determination and doubt. In the third time also Varuṇa displays dissatisfaction on the ultimacy of the thought as comes from the manomayakośa. Bhrgu is now guided to go back for Tapas and he returns after a penance and says: Oh ! My Guru, I realize that the mind is the source of everything 'Mano brahmeti vyajānāt'[4].This is the concept of one's personality where in the mind carries on its different functions such as perception, memory, bhāvanā, ego etc.. Manomayakośa is our mental and emotional library, the subtler layer of our existence. Hence the statement 'you are what you think you are, which Bhrgu realized as the basis of not only his own individuality but also as the basis of the entire creation. Manomaya or mental sheath is powerful because bondage and liberation depend on the mind which produces attachment binds a man and which by creating aversion for them liberates him from that self-made bondage, which fuelled by various vāsanas burns out the world created and expanded by the mind.

Vijñānamaya kośa

Vijñānamayakośa also belongs to the Buddhi with the organs of knowledge and its actions having the characteristics of an agent. The Vijnanamayakosa is the cause of samsara. After understanding the Mind Bhrgu reports to the father Varuṇa about his discovery of Vijñāna: 'Vijñānam brahmeti vyajānāt....'[5] Now, through long and intensive tapas, Bhrgu realizes that it is all the Vijñāna or knowledge from which the entire creation has happened and that could be the final reality. It is the intellectual sheath

consisting of intellectual functions such as discriminative knowledge, which depends upon the distinction of subject and object. Vijñānamaya means composed of Vijñāna, or intellect, the faculty which discriminates, determines or wills. This knowledge sheath cannot be the supreme self for the following reasons; according to Varuṇa since it is subject to change, is insentient, is a limited thing and is not constantly present it is not the absolute self.

Ānandamayakośa

The fifth or the Ānandamayakośa is the innermost kośa and is the subtlest of all having close proximity to the Soul. It represents the modification of avidyā and appears as a reflection of atman composed of absolute bliss, as the feeling of joy produced by the seeing, getting and enjoyment of desired object. But it is contaminated by tamas or ajñāna. It is fully manifested in the dreamless sleep. Understanding that vijñāna is not absolute Bhrgu returns to the path of tapas and after a long time he discovers Ānanda as the Real Self: 'Ānando brahmeti vyajānāt'... [6]. Hearing this from his student Varuṇa tells this as the final truth. The Ānandamayakośa or "sheath made of bliss" (ānanda) is in Vedāntic philosophy the most subtle or spiritual of the five levels of embodied self. Ānandamaya means composed of ānanda, or bliss. Bliss or ceaseless joy not connected with body or mind. It is composed of Supreme bliss and is regarded as the innermost sheath of all. What stands within this sheath is Consciousness according to Taittirīyopaniṣad.

Consciousness in Advaita

Advaita Vedānta is considered as the culmination-point among all the Indian philosophical systems. Referring to the Upaniṣadic statements, the founder of this Vedāntic school Ādi Śankarācārya and his followers like Svām' Vivekānanda have lucidly elucidated on the concept of Consciousness or Self. According to Śankarācārya, Ātman or Brahman (Transcendental Self) has the nature of undifferentiated consciousness. Ātman is eternal, self-luminous, universal consciousness which shines by its own light and it reveals Jīva (Empirical Self) and all the objects which cannot

reveal themselves. It is devoid of enjoying nature (bhoktṛtva) and activity (kartṛtva); but it appears to be an enjoying and active agent owing to its limiting adjuncts. Ever-liberated Ātman is beyond space, time and causality which is non-dual and one (ekamevādvitīyam). The Absolute, Transcendental Supreme Self is the foundation of the empirical universe and the Supreme, infinite Brahman is the essence of Ātman. This kośa is a reflection of the three divine qualities of the Soul, namely Sat, Cit and Ānanda. Sat means that it believes in truthfulness and its eternalness. Cit means that it is alive and conscious and can therefore interact with various situations in an appropriate way. This characteristic separates the living and the non-living. Ānanda means that it is ever joyful- full of pleasure in itself. It does not need any outside stimulus to be cheerful, though if they are present the effect is only compounded. Being joyful is a prominent characteristic of this kośa. Since the Soul itself is a non-doer its qualities are manifest through this innermost kośa. The bliss sheath normally has its fullest play during deep sleep: while in the dreaming and wakeful states, it has only a partial manifestation. The blissful sheath (ānandamaya kośa) is a reflection of the Ātman which is bliss absolute. Cit Kośa (spiritual wisdom) and Sat Kośa (the final state of merging with the Infinite). Development of all the seven sheaths fully is necessary for man's complete. In Advaita Vedānta the Ānandamaya kośa is the innermost of the five kośas (Pañcakośas) or "sheaths" that veil the Ātman or Supreme Self. Unlike the next three more outer kośas, it constitutes the kāraṇa śarīra or causal body. It is associated with the state of dreamless sleep and samādhi.

The Upaniṣads conceive two grades of consciousness ' a lower realm characterised by state of being aware of an external object defined as: sentience and awareness and a higher realm of subjectivity. The Sanskrit word, Caitanya, means 'consciousness' or 'universal soul' or 'spirit' or 'intelligence' or 'sensation' It is the pure Consciousness or the cosmic intelligence, the consciousness that knows itself and also knows others. In the Upaniṣads, it is explained that the Ātman, the Self, manifests itself differently in the according to the dominant principle of the consciousness in the

individual being. These different forms of consciousness are- 1) Physical consciousness, 2) Vital consciousness, 3) Mental consciousness, 4) Supra-intellectual consciousness, 5) Blissful consciousness, 6) Consciousness in the form of infinite divine self-awareness and finally, Pure Consciousness. The essential nature of Brahman as revealed in intutiton is Caitanya (pure consciousness).

According to the Vedāntins the Consciousness termed Īśvara is Māyopahita-caitanya that is unscrupulously associated with the indescribable Māyā which is responsible for the functions of creation, preservation and dissolution of entire Existence, and is also Avidyopahita-caitanya that is associated with Avidyā which causes the wrong identification of Ātman with the body etc.; after negating both Māyā and Avidyā, that is, after all distinctions are obliterated, what remains is Pure Consciousness or Caitanya.

For Advaita the form of an object that the mind assumes, after coming into contact with that object or enveloping it, is called Vrtti. The process of enveloping is called Vrtti-Vyāpti. Vyāpti is pervasion and the pervasion by the mind of a certain location called the object is Vrtti-Vyāpti. It is the awareness that the object is present there that illuminates the object which is due to the presence of the mind and it is called phala-vyāpti. The fact is that only because of the consciousness attending on the mind that the object is perceived. The object cannot be wholly material and there is no qualitative difference between the object and consciousness which consciousness by coming into contact with the object knows that the object is there which fact implies that consciousness is inherent in the object. This is the Viṣayacaitanya or the 'object-consciousness.' It implies that it is not the consciousness of the object but the object which is a phase of consciousness which prevails everywhere.

Pañcakośas and Consciousness

Pañcakośas or the five sheaths, hide within their folds the process of unveiling the Atman. The Tvam ("Thou")padārtha of the Mahāvākya Tattvamasi is determined by the analysis of Pañcakośas that are not the Āt-

man. The Śruti insists upon elimination of these five sheaths of the śarīras. The doctrine of Pañcakośas represents the hierarchy of human values and is held to be a useful springboard for a modern scientific understanding of cosmology and evolution. Ātman can be identified only by negation of the anātman. The Pañcakośas are anātman that hide the Ātman, these kośas or sheaths are required to be systematically removed. Their removal brings to fore a void which void is also required to be removed. The Advaita Vedāntin, prescribes the four traditional methods (sādhana catuṣtaya) that, when perfected, mark the qualifications of a ṛṣi:

- discrimination between the eternal and non-eternal;
- renunciation of the tendency towards sensual enjoyment;
- cultivation of the six treasures (tranquility, self-control, mental poise, forbearance, faith, and self-surrender); and
- Desire for liberation. Though all four qualifications work together as methods for refining, stabilizing, and elevating one's mind, for the sake of brevity, we will focus only on the first two.

Vedānta scriptures exhort aspirants to first hear the truth, then contemplate it, and finally meditate upon it by practicing this technique into spiritual practice of śravana, manana, and nidídhyāsana. . After removal of the five sheaths and the resultant void through the process of negation, what remains is the only Ātman - Brahman is the Blissful (Ānandamaya) Self.

Conclusion

Consciousness or spiritual energy is quite different from the material forms of energy manifested in the mundane world. The supramundane entity soul, self, spirit or psyche is eternally existent and conscient in its nature and acts and reacts to the stimuli and also thinks, feels and reaps the fruits of its actions. Hence, one should always endeavour to recognize one's own true identity i.e. divine, pure, conscient, infinitesimal point of metaphysical energy giving up identification with the physical or the material, then that paves the way towards perfection and by acquiring the completely

true knowledge of Self, Supreme Self and the Universe, one should approach to a holistic worldview.

Notes and References:

1. Aitereya Upaniṣad III.3
2. Taittirīya Upaniṣad II.1
3. Ibid - II.2
4. Ibid - II.3
5. Ibid - II.4

'You are what your deep, driving desire is.
As your desire is, so is your will.
As your will is, so is your deed.
As your deed is, so is your destiny.
[Brihadaranyaka IV.4.5]'

The Upanishads

Ten Principles For Self And Social Uplift

1. Patience - Having patience during happiness or misery, gain or loss, admiration or insult.
2. Tolerance - Being tolerant of the harm done to you by someone who is stronger or weaker than you are.
3. Control of Mind-Keeping the mind away from the bad thoughts and engaging it in the good thoughts.
4. Refrain from Stealing-Earn money only by just means. No illegal or immoral means be used. No stealing or roing nor accepting bribe.
5. Cleanliness-Keep inner cleanliness by shunning jealosies and grudges. Keep outer cleanliness by keeping air, water, food, body, clothes, places and paths clean. Outer cleanliness helps keeping the mind happy.
6. Proper use of Body-Engage body parts like hands, feet, mouth for a good cause.
7. Intelligence-Improve intelligence by eating right food, reading good books and keeping good company.
8. Knowledge-acquire as much knowledge as possible. Learn qualities and uses of all the things around.
9. Truth-Accepting what you know, saying what you accept and doing what you say.
10. Avoid Anger-too much anger should be avoided. Normal anger for a right cause may be justified.