THE HUMAN SOUL (*jīvātma*) AND ITS ULTIMATE GOAL (*mokṣa*) IN THE CONTEXT OF TAITTIRĪYA UPANIṢAD (3.10.5) : A STUDY IN AN ASPECT OF HINDU ESCHATOLOGY

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

This research was stimulated by pastoral concerns regarding the high rate of suicide in the South African Hindu community. On the one hand it was found that traumatized individuals contemplating suicide were woefully ill-equipped with helpful religious guidelines and on the other it is known that the primary and authoritative scriptures of Hinduism possess a wealth of information that can promote healing. This work uses the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (3.10.5) to address this challenge.

The early Vedic writings are not systematized nor are they fully explicable except through commentaries. This research surveys the early Vedic and Upanisadic writings in order to show the literary, social and philosophical conditions under which the texts were produced. The Taittirīya Upanisad is the culminating part of several strands of thought that emerged from the earlier Taittirīya School. In order to interpret the text of this Upaniṣad it was necessary to link its key concepts with other Upaniṣads of this period. Further interpretations emerged from later Upaniṣads. These texts were viewed in the light of several commentators – Shankara (medieval period), and Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan of the Neo-Vedanta movements.

In the early Vedic period the soul is a metaphysical entity. Upon death it is judged and in accordance with its good or bad actions, heavenly rewards or the punishments of hell are meted out to it. Heaven and hell are final eschatological goals for the soul in the Vedic period.

In the later Vedic or Upanisadic period it is found that heaven and hell are temporary eschatological goals. The ultimate goal becomes Liberation which implies the cessation of duality and the realization of non-duality. Correspondingly the Taittirīya Upaniṣad defines the soul in a manner in which its components have the potential to achieve this later goal. Here the soul is a formulation of five sheaths : body, vital energy, mind, intellect and bliss with an immortal consciousness as its focus. Functioning under the effects of ignorance each sheath binds the soul

to suffering and rebirths either on earth or on other planes (heaven or hell). However, each sheath also possesses an intrinsic capacity to liberate the soul from suffering. This work explores these negative and positive capabilities of the sheaths and points out the path by which the soul's divine potential may be realized. The ultimate healing or liberation occurs when the 'focus-consciousness' of the soul is intuitively realized. This consciousness is one with the universal consciousness. This achievement produces the 'liberated soul' who experiences ecstasy at this knowledge of oneness.

This research also points out that the Neo-Vedanta movements, unlike their medieval counterparts, have a life-affirming and positive social attitude that seeks to draw from ancient texts for the purposes of healing and social upliftment.

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TRANSLITERATION

अ a	आ ā	इ i	ई ī
उ u	ऊ ū	ऋ ṛ	ॠ ṝ
ऌ ḷ	ए c	ऐ ai	ओ o
औ au	अं aṁ	अः aḥ	

क् k	ख् kh	ग् g	घ् gh	ङ् ṅ
च् c	छ् ch	ज् j	झ् jh	ञ् ñ
ट् ṭ	ठ् ṭh	ड् ḍ	ढ् ḍh	ण् ṇ
त् t	थ् th	द् d	ध् dh	न् n
प् p	फ् ph	ब् b	भ् bh	म् m
य् y	र् r	ल् l	व् v	
श् ś	ष् ṣ	स् s	ह् h	
ळ् ḷ	क्ष् kṣ	त्र् tr	ज्ञ् jñ	

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Aitareya Upanisad	.....	Ai.Up.
Atharva Veda	.....	AV
Bhagavad Gītā	.....	BG
Brahma Sūtras	.....	BS
Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad	.....	Br.Up.
Chāndogya Upaniṣad	.....	Ch.Up.
Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Vol.1	.....	CW1
Vol.3	.....	CW3
Vol.6	.....	CW6
Vol.7	.....	CW7
Kaṭha Upaniṣad	.....	Ka.Up.
Kena Upaniṣad	.....	Ke.Up.
Maitrī Upaniṣad	.....	Mai.Up.
Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad	.....	Man.Up.
Paingala Upaniṣad	.....	Pai.Up.
Praśna Upaniṣad	.....	Pr. Up.
Rig Veda	.....	Rg V
Sama Veda	.....	SV

Subāla Upaniṣad -	.....	Sub.Up.
Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad	.....	Sv.Up.
Taittirīya Upaniṣad	.....	Tait.Up.
Upaniṣad/s	.....	Up./s.
Vedānta Paribhāsa	.....	VP
Vivekachudāmaṇi	.....	VC
Yajur Veda	.....	YV

PREFACE

This research was primarily motivated by pastoral concerns regarding the high rate of suicide and death anxiety prevalent among South African Hindus. Upon close scrutiny of this problem over twenty years it was felt that the persons concerned were woefully ill-equipped to understand their samsaric existence and the immense potential for hope and courage that is to be found in the Vedanta. This work explores some solutions to this problem from the perspective of the Taittiriya Upanisad.

It must be stated that this study is the product of an intense and systematic search carried out under the able guidance of several teachers. Firstly, I must record my profound appreciation to my revered *guru*, Sri Swami Shivapadananda (1938-1994), the second President of The Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa for his unfailing guidance and inspiring Upaniṣad classes which I had the privilege of attending for the last twenty years. These classes served to make clear abstruse metaphysical, theological and philosophical points. Without this insight this study would have been impossible. Furthermore, the researcher is a practising Hindu, and the literary texts and personal dimensions are so intimately interwoven that they have merged into an inseparable amalgam. This has been a journey of personal transformation as much as it has been a process of literary exploration into ancient texts.

Over the last three years I received inestimable help, encouragement and intellectual stimulation from my supervisor Professor F. Edwards of the Department of Divinity, Rhodes University. I am thankful for her professional guidance at all times. She has been responsible for some of my new insights into the ancient texts.

My interaction with Professor B. P. Gaybba, Head of Department, Divinity, Rhodes University, has been rewarding. He has stimulated me into approaching the texts with the necessary academic tools.

I should not fail to thank Dr T. Naidoo, Acting Head of Department, Science of Religion, University of Durban-Westville, who 'pushed' me into this research. His encouragement is appreciated.

The writer had innumerable opportunities to interview people with suicidal tendencies and death anxiety. This was done as part of a larger counselling session. Without these interviews this study would not have materialized.

I am thankful to Miss Amritha Devi Juguth, Secretary of the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, for her untiring labour of having typed the entire manuscript.

Swami Saradananda.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and motivation

1 Introduction.

The Hindu is taught by tradition and belief to trace the original source of his religious life to the dim prehistoric past of the Vedic age. The Vedas, which comprise a vast body of texts, was written over a protracted period by *ṛṣis* or seers of spiritual truths. These Vedas stand as the primary source and supreme authority of Hindu beliefs.

The present-day religion, philosophy, ritualistic practices, civic conduct and even social relations of a Hindu are guided largely by secondary scriptures (*smṛtis*), that is, mythologies and epic literature. Even these secondary sources are based upon the sacred sanction of Vedic authority. Manu, the most well known lawgiver of ancient India, has explicitly mentioned that the *smṛtis* should be considered as an elaboration of the Vedas. It is a recognized rule of procedure that whenever there seems to be a difference between the Vedas (*śruti)* and the *smṛti* literature, the *śruti* has to be upheld as the supreme authority and the *smṛti* has to be interpreted in consonance with that.

Modern Vedic scholars, both of the East and the West, have made serious endeavours to bring out translations and commentaries of these *śruti* texts. While some authors, for example, Vidyaranya (2.8.6), have kept to the traditional mode of exegesis and belief, others, like Vivekananda and Radhakrishnan (2.9) have departed from this agelong tradition and opened up new vistas of thought. The pursuance of both these interpretations have their value.

One of the major problems facing Hindu theology and philosophy today is whether it is to be reduced to a cult (traditional or modern), restricted in scope and with no application to the present realities or whether it is to be made alive and real, so as to become what it should be; one of the

formative elements in human progress. All signs indicate that the future is bound up with the latter alternative (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 64).

1.1 Setting of the problem.

The South African Hindu community has been settled in South Africa for the past 134 years (1860-1994). Observations indicate that this community has an unusually high rate of death anxiety and suicides. Studies (1.2) indicate the following as the community's sources of information on dying and death:

1.1.1 The original group of Indians who came to S.A. as indentured labourers were educationally disadvantaged. They, however, brought with them a plethora of traditional beliefs gathered from their native villages and towns in India. These beliefs include the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as well as a knowledge of traditional rituals for funerals. In the early days Hindu scriptures, even in the Indian languages, were scarce. The community was more engaged in economic survival rather than a serious quest for material (traditional or scriptural) on dying and death.

1.1.2 When scriptures became available there was an emphasis on secondary scriptures. Mythological works and epics became popular and in effect they moulded religious belief and conduct. It must be pointed out that these secondary scriptures are an extension, amplification and illustration of the spiritual truths declared in the primary source of the Vedas. With an overemphasis, or perhaps all the emphasis, on secondary scriptures and without authorative primary sources at hand there developed an unholistic view of death and dying. Often there were conflicting or widely differing views on the subject.

1.1.3 Owing to the apartheid laws India discontinued diplomatic, trade and people-to-people links with South Africa. In effect this meant the non-availability of religious books and audio-visual material from India. It also implied that religious leaders and preachers from India could not come to South

Africa. Despite these rules there was the rare visit from some lecturer or other. Fortunately, some such lecturers were well conversant with primary scriptures and the strands of primary information cherished by the community came as a result of such visits.

1.1.4 South African Indians enjoyed the privilege of going to India while the reverse was not easily possible. A few self-sacrificing individuals went to India and after training returned as monastic members of Neo-Vedantic movements to continue religious work in S.A. This effort has played a positive role in correcting the primary-secondary scripture imbalance.

1.1.5 Hindus generally enjoyed close social bonds especially in the earlier days when the joint-family system was still in vogue. This meant a good attendance at graveyards, crematoria and the succeeding days of death rites. Often the family priest or the elder conducting the ceremony would speak on death, though much of the discourse would include traditional data rather than primary information.

1.1.6 Devotional singing at weekly intervals in temples as well as at homes on some auspicious days have become common. A number of these songs, usually compositions of saints or bards, have a philosophical content regarding life and death. Nevertheless, such songs, however long, could only contain the gist of a subject and never a lucid elaboration of a theme.

1.2 Disparities in eschatological beliefs.

From the foregoing observations it became evident that the South African Hindu community is largely without a holistic view of dying and death.

This researcher has had innumerable opportunities over the last twenty years to interview Hindus regarding their eschatological beliefs (1.1). A major portion of the interviewees included men and women with terminal illnesses, people with suicidal tendencies and the aged.

In these observations the empirical variables were complex. The community comprises four major linguistic groups : Hindi, Gujerati, Tamil and Telegu. The Hindi and Gujerati speaking Hindus originally came from North India. Their eschatological beliefs are derived from Sanskrit and Hindi sources (e.g. Bhagavad Gita, Puranas and the Ramayana of Tulsidas). The Tamil and Telegu speaking Hindus originated from the southern parts of India and their eschatological beliefs are derived from Tamil and Telegu sources (e.g. the songs of the Saiva saints and Tyagaraja). Empirical analysis of eschatological beliefs relating to the above groups would indeed be extremely complex but a general consensus indicates the following :

1.2.1 A majority of the people said: "It (death and the hereafter) depends on my *karma*." By this they expressed their belief in fate. Upon elaboration the answers were often a poor explanation of *karma*. Even with this limitation most people expressed a desire to bring the knowledge and experience of death into life.

1.2.2 Another category of people said: "I will leave it to God." While such people did not seem to experience an absence of God they were however not clear as to how such a surrender to the Supreme worked or was possible.

1.2.3 Some indicated that they would be going to heaven. From the merits of their good deeds, fasts and prayers, they felt that they would secure a place in heaven. The descriptions of 'heaven' were often those depicted in the secondary scriptures. It was their wish to live with their ancestors, and perhaps later with their own immediate family, forever in the presence of their deity.

1.2.4 A small percentage of people (mostly young men) refused to accept death. They claimed an interest in the realities of life and not in the notions of metaphysics. They nevertheless expressed a wish to know more about expanding their human potential to bring about a life free from suffering.

1.2.5 Most of those coming from Neo-Vedantic backgrounds said: "I will become one with God." It is imperative to mention their belief that they would 'experience' this state after their (physical) death.

They preferred this state to self-preservation. Not a single individual, either from this group or from any of the abovementioned categories, expressed a knowledge of the *jīvanmukta* (one liberated from fear and mortality while living). It was therefore impossible for them to aspire for this ideal.

1.2.6. A few individuals feared a 'bad time' in the hereafter. Their feelings of guilt surfaced and they felt that 'a bad past produces a bad future'.

1.2.7 The last group confessed ignorance in the matter but mentioned their anxiety to overcome their fear of old age and death.

1.3 Pastoral response to eschatological disparities.

The high rate of death anxiety and suicides have produced a pathological condition within the Hindu community. The urgency to address this issue cannot be overstated.

This researcher is of the view that this pathological condition, apart from its debilitating socio-economic and political elements, has been precipitated by the lack of a comprehensive view of dying and death based on an authorative primary source of Hinduism. The present study seeks to fill the existing gaps of knowledge utilizing religio-cultural tools akin to the community's psyche and grasp. While this study cannot claim to be a comprehensive work on this aspect of eschatology, it is expected, at least, to make one of the many approaches more vivid and hopefully useful, namely the understanding of the *jīvanmukta*.

Furthermore, experience has indicated that pastoral guidelines should lean more on the genuine needs of the community rather than on unalloyed scriptural technicalities.

1.4 Reasons for the selection of Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.10.5.

1.4.1 Tait. Up. 3.10.5, belonging to the Taittirīya School of the YV, is a primary and authorative source of eschatological data in Hinduism.

1.4.2 The text is considered to be the culmination of many attempts at describing the soul and its eschatological goals in the Vedic and Upanishadic periods. As such it offers large scope to study the evolving soul (*jīva*) with its aspirations and eschatological destinies as well as its ultimate goal, *mokṣa*.

1.4.3 Here we have an opportunity to study the nature of the soul which is a psycho-physical combination of five sheaths (*pañcakośas*) : the body, vital energy, mind, intellect and the bliss sheaths with the immortal *ātman* (consciousness) as its divine focus. The sheaths (*kośas*) may be analysed, individually and collectively, so as to locate 'eschatological elements'. Such elements, it is believed, when understood and utilized, unlock the soul's potential not only for a better life but also for its journey to *mokṣa*.

1.4.4 The text also indicates the state of the *jīvanmukta*. The *jīvanmukta* ideal is one of the fundamental conclusions of the Ups. This ideal has immense potential in pastoral work in that it links man and God in a most positive and holistic way. The Upanishadic seers indicated that serious candidates after this state would be gifted with an irreversible expansion of spiritual awareness (*karmamukti*).

1.4.5 Since Tait. Up. 3.10.5 is located within the body of the major Tait. Up., a large number of commentaries, traditional and academic, have been written on it. This gives wide scope for indepth research in this field.

1.5 Methodology.

1.5.1 This study surveys the vast body of Vedic and Upanishadic literature with the view of locating Tait. Up. 3.10.5. within its context and showing its significant position in *śruti* literature.

The major Ups. have different approaches to Truth. These approaches are briefly analyzed with the view of showing, by way of comparison, the unique approach employed in the Tait. Up. with reference to the *pañcakośa* model and the *jīvanmukta* ideal.

The text of the Tait. Up and its fundamental concepts has been commented upon by several interpreters. This study seeks to survey the basic concepts and literature produced by such individuals, viz. Shankara (medieval period), Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan (modern-period). Some modern indologists like Max Müller and Deussen have made valuable literary contributions in important areas of this study. Their interpretations, wherever necessary, are also incorporated into this research.

In approaching the text the researcher is aware, from a long attendance at Upanishadic studies lasting nearly twenty years, that students find it extremely difficult to comprehend subtle concepts (like *jīva* and *mokṣa*) if the evolution of these concepts are not traced to their earliest forms and the literature surrounding this evolution is not analyzed and placed in context. The survey of such literature is a dire necessity and it invariably adds not just a background to the text but also lends meaning, directly and indirectly, to the seminal concepts of this study.

1.5.2 The rudimentary concept of the *jīva* develops in the early Vedic period. During this period the *jīva* has different eschatological goals which include post-death stages of going to other spheres (*lokas*). This study establishes an understanding of the *jīva,* its journey to such eschatological goals and the nature of these goals as they appear in the early Vedic period.

1.5.3 The early concept of the *jīva* and its eschatological goals evolve into their final form in the later Vedic (Upanishadic) period. Of all the major Ups. the Tait. Up. 3.10.5. gives us a clear analysis of the ultimate concept of the *jiva* and its final goal (*mokṣa*). Here the *jīva* appears as a formulation of five sheaths (*kośas*) with the *atman* (consciousness) as its focus. Through ignorance lodged at each of these five sheaths the *jīva* is bound to the world (*saṁsāra*) with its inherent suffering. Total emancipation lies in understanding these *kośas*, one by one, and ultimately transcending them. The concluding process is reached by intuitively knowing the *ātman*. This study then makes a careful analysis of the five sheaths with the intention of showing both their capacities viz., that of bondage and liberation. The *jīva's* divine potential is only realized when the *jīva* utilizes these liberating forces for its ultimate emancipation.

1.5.4 This research then seeks to understand the concepts of *mokṣa* and the *jīvanmukta* (one liberated from *saṁsāra* while living). This aspect of this work points out the benefits of such a state which comprises the ideal in Hindu spiritual life.

1.5.5 In the *jīvas'* evolutionary journey from the early Vedic period to the Upanishadic period there are certain distinct features which may be mapped out. This spectrum of evolution is compared to the range of eschatological beliefs held by the modern Hindus in South Africa. This process forms a gauge which may be used to compare one's own evolutionary process with the process and ideal laid down in the early *śruti* texts (6.4).

1.5.6 The texts of the primary sources and other relevant literature were read in Sanskrit and etymological analyses of key words in Sanskrit are utilized (2.7.3).

CHAPTER TWO

Literary works : ancient, medieval and modern

2.1 Hinduism - Early History.

Hinduism grew and developed in the sharply demarcated Indian sub-continent bounded on the north by the world's largest mountain range – the Himalayas, which, with its extension to the east and west, divides India from the rest of Asia and the world. The Himalayan barrier, however, was at no time an insuperable one, and at every period both settlers and traders have found their way over the high and difficult passes into India, while the inhabitants of India have carried their religious beliefs and commercial endeavours beyond her frontiers by the same route. India's isolation has never been complete.

Indian history and culture, at one time, was supposed to begin with the Rg Vedic culture and the Aryans in India in the second millenium B.C. This *terminus a quo* of the study has been pushed up by another millenium with the discovery of the Indus Valley civilization which dates back to 3000 B.C. To the archaeologist this is known as the Harappa culture. Harappa is taken from the modern name of the site of one of its two great cities, on the left bank of the Ravi, in the Panjab. Mohenjo Daro, the second significant city was on the right bank of the Indus, some 250 miles from its mouth.

Several brilliant attempts have been made to piece together the strands of the Harappan culture but the efforts still lack the comprehensiveness desired by the historian. However, from existing archaeological evidence we glean that the Harappan culture was theocratic in nature (Basham 1954 : 14 ; Puri 1971 : 8).

The socio-religious aspects in the life of the Harappan people are marked by the worship of gods and goddesses with some sort of an aristocratic or hierarchic set up. It is proposed by

Marshall (in Puri 1971 : 9) that the essential features of the Hindu religion, as we know it today, were probably present in Mohenjo Daro. If this assumption is correct then it may be said that the people of the Indus Valley were the progenitors of Hinduism. However, Marshall's view is yet to find full acceptance. Archaeological evidence of the Harappan culture, viz. inscriptions on steatite seals, on small copper plaques, and on a few pieces of pottery, still baffle scholars, despite repeated attempts to decipher them. The question relating to the origins of Hinduism in the Harappan culture deserves a more thorough examination (Puri 1971 : 9).

While the Harappan culture indicated a high watermark of civilization from the socio-economic, political and even religious points of view it went through a period of rapid decline which perhaps was the outcome of a convergence of causes including acts of nature. The Indus floods and attacks by ravaging marauders may have precipitated its end. The fleeing settlers of the Indus Valley then lived in scattered villages in the Panjab and Sind. Most historians are of the view that without the foregoing information on the Harappan culture any attempt to survey the early religious history of India would be inaccurate.

Among the many people who entered India from about 2000 B.C. was a group of related tribes calling themselves Aryas, a word generally anglicized into Aryans. The Aryan invasion of India was not a single concerted action, but one covering centuries and involving many tribes, perhaps not all of the same race and language. The incoming Aryans not only fought the local village inhabitants of the Panjab and Sind but also intermarried with them and remained, largely in nomadic fashion, in these areas. There must have been an interfusion of beliefs.

The Aryan priests had perfected a poetic technique, which they used, for the composition of hymns that were sung in praise of their gods at sacrifices. These hymns were carefully handed down by word of mouth to succeeding generations of Aryans and early in the first millenium B.C. were collected and arranged in different forms. These were not committed to writing, but

now they were looked on as so sacred that even minor changes in their texts were not permitted, and the priestly schools which preserved them devised the most remarkable and effective system of checks and counter checks to ensure their literary purity.

While it is believed that the art of writing was widely known in India the hymns were rarely written, but, the brilliant feats of memory of many generations of *brāhmins* and the sanctity which these hymns were thought to possess made them survive through many difficult periods for nearly three thousand years (Basham 1954 : 30). This collection of hymns is the Vedas, the most sacred of the numerous sacred texts of the Hindus.

2.2.1 Vedic Literature - A Survey.

The word *'Veda'* literally means knowledge and supreme knowledge too. There are certain distinctive features about the use of the word. It does not denote any single book; it denotes an entire literature, and a literature which is strikingly extensive from the standpoints of chronology, geography, and authorship. The composition of the various texts which constitute the Vedas was spread over many centuries and over different localities, and is ascribed to many generations of poets, priests and philosophers. However, ancient tradition connected with the genesis of the Vedas does not warrant the use of such words as 'composition' and 'authorship.' For it is traditionally claimed that the Vedas are *apauruṣeya*, that is to say no human agency was responsible for their creation (Dandekar 1978 : 13).

For Vivekananda the Vedas did not necessarily mean a set of books or scriptures. They meant the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons at different times. Just as the law of gravity existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so it is with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the father of all spirits, were there before

their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them ... . The discoverers of these laws were called *ṛṣis* (sages) (CW1 1984 : 6-7). The position of the various *ṛṣis* associated with the 'authorship' of the Vedas is restricted to being only the channels through which divine revelations were received. Etymologically considered *ṛṣi* means one who intuitively 'sees' or 'discovers' knowledge. Sayanacarya, for instance, states that God created the whole universe out of the knowledge of the Vedas (*yo vedebhyaḥ akhilam jagat nirmame*). This indicates that the Vedic knowledge existed even before the manifestation of the universe (Prabhavananda and Manchester 1969 : 25).

The claim that the Vedas are *apauruṣeya* (of divine origin) has naturally given rise to another claim, that of *veda prāmānya*. This means that the Vedas are free from all limitations and deficiencies usually associated with a human agency.

The Vedas are also called *śrutis* (from *śru*, to hear) because they were 'heard' or revealed to the *ṛṣis*. The word *śruti* is also interpreted as "the rhythm of the infinite heard by the soul" (Dandekar 1978 : 13). *Śruti* also denotes the primary source of Hinduism as compared with *smṛtis* or secondary sources.

While the foregoing forms the fundamental understanding of the 'Veda' there is however a secondary meaning which is literary in scope. Sayanacarya defines 'Veda' as 'a book which reveals the knowledge of supernatural methods (*alaukika upāya*) for the achievement of the desired object and avoidance of the undesirable' (Sharvananda 1936 : 4).

Vedic literary history is usually divided into four main periods : the *saṁhita*, *brāhmana*, *āraṇyaka* and the *upaniṣad* periods. Broadly speaking these periods represent a homogeneity in so far as the contents of the above literary collections are concerned. They do not strictly represent a chronological development.

Reference may also be made of another feature of the Vedas, which is important from the point of view of Vedic literary history. This concerns the emergence, in the course of time, of various Vedic *śākhās* (branches) which have sponsored their own recensions of the different Vedic texts.

2.2.2 The early collection of Vedic texts (Saṁhitās).

When the Vedic Aryans settled in their new homeland and established their dominions, a sense of security and prosperity gradually grew among them. They had ample time for leisure. One thing they undertook to do in this new place of life was to collect, revise, add to, and systematically (at least by their standards) arrange their stray and scattered *mantras*, which had been handed down to them by the early Vedic seers.

The word '*mantra*' denotes, on the one hand, the prayers addressed to the various divinities of the Vedic religion of the classes within the community of the Vedic Aryans, and, on the other, the formulas and incantations connected with the non-priestly classes . *Mantras* also signify hymns. It is that which saves one who reflects upon its meaning (Grimes 1989 : 200).

Most of these *mantras* were now brought together and two great collections (*saṁhitās*) resulted : the Rg Veda Saṁhitā (or the Rg Veda) and the Atharva Veda Saṁhitā (or the Atharva Veda). Since the word '*saṁhitā*' means 'collection', it is essential to presuppose a former state of stray and scattered *mantras*.

Eventually two more collections were also made, the Sama Veda Saṁhitā and the Yajur Veda Saṁhitā. These four *saṁhitās* are commonly referred to as the four Vedas (Dandekar 1978 : 14).

2.3.1 The Rig Veda (Rg V).

The Rg V of 1028 *sūktas* (hymns) must have been composed at least between 1500 and 900 B.C. (Basham 1990 : 7). These hymns, which are made up of varying numbers of *mantras* in the form of *ṛks* (metrical stanzas) are distributed in ten books called *maṇḍalas*. The arrangement of the *maṇḍalas*, each of varying length, was governed mainly by the principle of homogeneity of authorship. Among the classes of the Vedic Aryans certain families had already acquired some measure of socio-religious importance. The *mantras*, or hymns, which the progenitor and the members of any of these families claimed to have 'seen' were collected in the book of that family. The nucleus of the Rg V *maṇḍalas* two to seven is formed of six such family books, which are respectively ascribed to the families of Gṛtsamada, Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Atri, Bharadvaja, and Vaṣiṣṭha. The eighth *maṇḍala* largely belongs to the Kanvas. The ninth *maṇḍala* is governed by the principle of the homogeneity, not of authorships but of subject matter, for all the *sūktas* in this *maṇḍala* relate to *soma* (an intoxicating beverage used during sacrificial rites). The first and tenth *maṇḍalas* each of which has 191 hymns, are miscellaneous collections of long and short *sūktas*.

It must be noted that in the tenth *maṇḍala* of the Rg V we find several important philosophical hymns : Puruṣa Sūkta, Nāsadiya Sūkta and Prajāpati Sūkta. The famous Gāyatrī Mantra, ascribed to Viśvāmitra, occurs in the third *maṇḍala*. These hymns also have a philosophical content.

Within a *maṇḍala*, the *sūktas* are arranged according to the subject matter. That is to say, the *sūktas* are grouped according to the divinities (*devatās*) to whom they relate, and then these divinity groups are arranged in some set order. Within a divinity group, again, the *sūktas* are normally arranged in the descending order of the number of their stanzas.

In the whole of the Rg V there are only metrical passages; there is no prose portion. Most of the verses are composed in simple metres : three or four lines of eight syllables, with an occasional four syllables extra, and four lines of eleven or twelve syllables. However the eighth *maṇḍala* has a few complicated metres (Raja 1937 : 21). Internal literary evidence indicates that the second to seventh *maṇḍalas* form the oldest substratum of the Rg V; later come the *sūktas* of *maṇḍalas* eight, nine, one, and ten, in that order, though there is overlapping of literary material. It is certain, however, from language, style, and content, that many of the *sūktas* of *maṇḍala* ten were composed centuries later than some of those of the earliest books (Basham 1990 : 8).

Wilson (in Griffith 1976 : vi) is of the view that the hymns of the Rg V, except in their rhythm, and in a few rare passages, appear singularly prosaic. He feels that their chief value lies not in their fancy but in their facts, social and religious. Cowell (in Griffith 1976 : vi) states that the poetry of the Rg V is singularly deficient in that simplicity and natural pathos or sublimity which we naturally look for in the songs of an earlier period of civilization. The language and style of most of the hymns is artificial. Occasionally we meet with fine outbursts of poetry, especially in the hymns addressed to the dawn, but these are never long sustained and as a rule we find grand similies or metaphors. Griffith feels that the worst fault of all in the Rg V is the intolerable monotony in a great number of hymns, a monotony which reaches its climax in the ninth *mandala* which consists mostly of invocations to Soma or the deified Soma beverage. The greatest interest of the Rg V is, in fact, historical rather than poetical (Griffith 1976 : vi).

Basham, however, contends that though the hymns of the Rg V form the oldest literature of India they are in no way archaic or primitive. They were composed according to strict metrical schemes by sophisticated priests with already developed conventions of poetics and a theology that, if varied and sometimes apparently self-contradictory, was far removed from the simple

worship attributed by some earlier scholars to primitive humans. Basham points out that the injust appraisal of the Rg V stems largely from Max Müller, whose ninteenth century standard edition of the Rg V was freely used by subsequent scholars (Basham 1990 : 10).

This study purposely looks into some of the literary features of the Rg V. Hindus believe that the texts, in terms of style and language, contributed not only in the way of being a repository of their sacred beliefs but also as a suitable vehicle for the effective oral transmission of these *sūktas*, from generation to generation. It is beleived that when writing was unknown, it is evident that the Aryan priest used the 'monotonous' rhythm of these hymns to develop the capacity for auditory memory to an amazing degree.

2.3.2 The Atharva Veda (AV).

In contrast to the Rg V, the AV is essentially a heterogeneous collection of *mantras*. A distinctive feature of the AV is the many names by which it has been traditionally known. All the names are significant, and together give a full idea of the nature, extent, and content of this Veda.

"Atharva Veda' means 'the Veda of the Atharvan'. Originally the word *'atharvan'* meant a 'fire-priest'. The fire-cult played an important part in the daily lives of the ancient Indians and the AV was the regular manual of the fire-priest (Winternitz 1977 : 119-120).

The name *atharvāṅgirasah* seems to have preceeded AV and is indicative of the dual character of the Ātharvanic magic : the wholesome, auspicious 'white' magic of the Atharvans and the terrible, sorcerous, 'black' magic of the Angirasas both of which form the chief contents of the AV. The later name AV is merely an abbreviation of the 'Veda of the Atharvans and Aṅgirasas.' The substitution of Bhṛgu for Atharvan in the name Bhṛgvāṅgirasah is presumably the result of the dominant role played by the family of the Bhṛgus in a certain period of India's cultural history.

Several other names of the AV were also in vogue (Dandekar 1978 : 16 ; Winternitz 1977 : 120).

Nine branches of study (*śhākās*) of the AV are traditionally known, but the *saṁhitās* of only two *shākās,* the Śaunaka and the Paippalāda, have been preserved.

The Śaunaka Saṁhitā of this Veda has always been in common use. It consists of 730 *sūktas* divided into twenty *kāṇdas* (books). About five-sixths of the *sūktas* which are called *artha sūktas*, contain metrical stanzas, whereas the remaining *sūktas,* which are called *paryāya sūktas*, contain *avasānas* (prose-units).

Unlike the Rg V the arrangement in the AV is not governed by consideration either by authorship or of subject-matter. Dandekar (1978 : 17) is of the view that the AV shows considerable looseness in matters of metre, accent, and grammar, presumably because it was not subjected, as the Rg V was, to deliberate revision and redaction. Deussen (1987 : 15) however feels that with the passage of time from the Rg V. to the AV there was metrical negligence which was responsible for the loose arrangement of the AV not only in terms of its language structure but also its contents. For this reason, it is believed that the AV had to struggle long before gaining recognition especially among the Vedic bardic families.

The contents of the AV are remarkably diverse in character. There are in this Veda charms to counteract diseases and possession by evil spirits (*bhaiṣajyāṇi*). This Veda also gives us an account of the type of medicine used during that period. There are also prayers for health and long life (*āyuṣyāṇi*); for happiness and prosperity (*pauṣṭikāṇi*). There are also spells pertaining to the various kinds of relationship with women (*strikarmāṇi*). Another significant section of this Veda contains hymns which concern themselves with matters involving the king (*rājakarmāṇi*), and others which are intended for securing harmony in domestic, social, and the political spheres (*sāmmanasyaṇi*).

As for black magic (rites to produce hostile results), the AV abounds in formulas for sorcery and imprecation, for exorcism and counter-exorcism .

Polarity may be said to be one of the most striking features of the AV; for side by side with the incantations for sorcery and black magic, it contains many valuable theological or philosophical hymns which represent the beliefs of the time, more so of the common people. In this context we find cosmological hymns which anticipate the Ups. – hymns to Skambha, the 'Support', who is seen as the first principle which is both the material and efficient cause of the universe, to Prāṇa, the 'breath of life', to *Vāc* the 'Word', etc. (Zaehner 1982 : vii).

Winternitz (1977 : 129) draws our attention to the point that the real importance of the AV lies in the fact that it is an invaluable source of knowledge of the popular faith in numberless spirits, imps, ghosts, and demons of every kind, and of the black magic, so eminently important for ethnology and for the history of religion. It is essential that we see these forces at work in the evolution of religion in India especially in the pre-Upanishadic period.

2.3.3 The Sāma Veda (SV).

The SV is a collection of *mantras* prescribed for chanting at various *soma* sacrifices by the *udgātṛ* (singer-priest) and his assistants. The primary meaning of *sāman* is probably 'propitiatory song', 'a means for appeasing gods and demons.' The word *sāman* also occurs in the sense of 'mildness, soothing words.' In another sense it is rhythmical speech (Winternitz 1977 : 168).

Though called SV, it is not strictly speaking a collection of *sāmans* (also meaning chants). The SV is essentially a derivative production in the sense that most of its *mantras* are derived from the Rg V. Three distinct stages may be inferred in the evolution of this Veda. There is a specific *mantra* taken from the Rg V in its original form. This *mantra* is taken into the SV with a

view to its being made the basis of a proper *sāman*. The only change that is effected in this process concerns the development of the accents for chanting. In this second stage the *mantra* is called *sāmayoni mantra*.

The SV is actually a collection of such *sāmayoni mantras*. The total number of *mantras* in this Veda, excluding the repeated ones, is 1549, all of which except 78 are taken from the Rg V. A number of these verses are addressed to gods like Agni, Indra and Soma.

For practical use at the time of rituals the *sāmayoni mantras* are transformed into chants or 'ritual melodies' called *gānas*. This is done by such devices as the modification, prolongation, and the repetition of the syllables occuring in the *mantra* itself, and the occasional insertion of additional syllables known as *stobhas*. These *gānas* represent the third and final stage in the evolution of the SV (Dandekar 1978 : 18).

These technicalities in the sound modulation of the *mantras* certainly required skilled teachers and competent pupils for their oral transmission. It is difficult to say to what extent the *mantras* have been effectively transmitted.

In order to see meaning in the SV, Winternitz (1977 : 169) points out that an etymological analyses of these *mantras* is insufficient. One has to be a student of the history of music as well.

2.3.4 The Yajur Veda (YV).

Yajur Veda is derived from the roots *yaj*, to sacrifice and *vid*, to know. This Veda is essentially ritualistic in character and in many respects it is regarded as the first regular text book on Vedic ritual as a whole. It deals mainly with the duties of the *adhvaryu* (fire-priest), who is responsible for the actual performance of the various sacrificial rites. It may be mentioned at this

stage that while the SV represents a very early stage in the history of Indian music, the YV marks the beginning of Sanskrit prose.

Tradition speaks variously of the YV having 86 or 101 *śākhās*. For our present purpose we may consider only its two main recensions, the Kṛṣna Yajur Veda and the Śukla Yajur Veda.

Dandekar (1978 : 19) is of the view that the difference between these two recensions lies not so much in their content as in their arrangement. Griffith (1957 : xix) however, feels that owing to a schism among its earliest teachers and their followers, this Veda was divided into two distinct collections and called – probably from the names of the *ṛṣis* who are respectively their reputed compilers – the Taittirīya and the Vājasaneya or Vājasaneyi; the former and older work being also known by the title Kṛṣna Yajur Veda. The *mantras* (mostly derived from the Rg V) and the *yajus* (sacrifical formulas in prose) and their exegetical portions (*brāhmaṇas*) which explain the application of the rituals, are mixed up together. This fusion of prayers, rituals and the methods of application make many portions of this Veda perplexing, difficult to comprehend. To the untrained person interpretation is obscure, dark. Hence the name Kṛṣna (meaning 'dark'). Śukla (meaning 'bright') is the name given to the second division of the YV. Here the texts are revised, systematic and clear (Griffith 1957 : xx). The meanings are transparent or 'bright', hence *śukla.*

For the purpose of this study we shall focus upon the name 'Taittirīya' which is variously explained. In Vedic mythology there is the legend which narrates how Yājñavalkya, who had developed differences with his teacher Vaiśampāyana, 'vomited' the Veda which he had learnt from his teacher; how, at the instance of Vaiśampāyana, his other pupils, assuming the form of *tittiri* birds, consumed the 'vomited' Veda; how consequently, the Veda so recovered by the *tittiri* birds was called the Taittirīya Veda; and how finally, Yājñavalkya secured from the Sun-god another Veda which came to be known as the Śukla or bright YV. It is also suggested that, on

account of the interspersion in it of mantras and the Brahmana portion, the Kṛṣna Yajur Veda appears variegated like the *tittiri* bird.

Whatever we may read in the above myth it has certainly played a part in interpreting the word 'Taittirīya'. For Capra (1983 : 51) "mythical language is much less restricted by logic and common sense. It is full of magic and of paradoxical situations, rich in suggestive images and never precise, and can thus convey the way in which mystics experience reality much better than factual language". Dandekar (1978 : 20) however feels that the most satisfactory explanation of 'Taittirīya' seems to be that of an ancient mystic (*ṛṣi*) called Tittiri who was traditionally regarded as the seer of this Veda.

2.4 The Brāhmaṇas.

It was inevitable that in the Vedic society there should arise distinct classes of priests, whose main occupation was to officiate at the various sacrifices in different capacities, such as *hotṛ, adhvaryu, udgātṛ* and *brahman.* It was also inevitable that these priests should produce manuals dealing with the different aspects of the theory and practice of sacrifice. These manuals are the Brāhmaṇa portion of the Vedas (Dandekar 1978 : 22).

Dasgupta (1992 : 13) states that these works are full of dogmatic assertions, fanciful symbolism and speculations of an unbounded imagination in the field of sacrificial details. He further asserts that the sacrificial ceremonials were probably never so elaborate at the time when the early Vedic hymns were composed. When the collection of hymns were being handed down from generation to generation the ceremonials became more and more complicated. Thus there came about the necessity of the distribution of the different sacrificial functions among several distinct classes of priests each, group of which developed a specific way of interpreting the text.

Speaking of the Brāhmaṇas, Macdonell (in Dasgupta 1992 : 13) says that they reflect the spirit of an age in which all intellectual activity is concentrated on the sacrifice, describing its ceremonies, discussing its value, speculating on its origin and significance.

While Dasgupta (1992 : 13) stresses that in the Brāhmaṇas free speculative thinking was subordinated to the service of the sacrifice, resulting in the production of the most fanciful sacramental and symbolic system, unparalleled anywhere but among the Gnostics, Radhakrishnan departs from this view and gives a mystical interpretation to the Brāhmaṇa texts. For Radhakrishnan it is not the mechanical performance of a sacrificial rite (however fanciful) that brings about the desired result, but the knowledge of its real meaning. Many of the Brāhmaṇa texts are devoted to the exposition of the mystic significance of the various elements of the ritual. By means of the sacrificial rites the priest 'sets in motion' the cosmic forces dealt with and obtained from them the desired results. Ritualistic religion is subordinate to knowledge (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 46).

In the literary history of Hinduism, the Brāhmaṇas are considered vital because they represent the earliest attempts to interpret the Vedic *mantras*. They also mark the beginnings of Sanskrit prose. The Brahmana text preserved many ancient legends and they also contain the seeds of the future development of several literary forms and works, and of various branches of knowledge.

Moreover, the Brāhmaṇas contain an exclusive and comprehensive treatment of Vedic sacrificial ritual and thus constitute a highly authoritative source of information of perhaps the most significant period in the religious history of India. It is the Brāhmaṇas which have prepared the background for the philosophical aspirations and knowledge of the Ups.

2.5 The Āraṇyakas.

The Brāhmaṇas shade off imperceptibly into the Āraṇyakas. Actually there is a kind of continuation of the Brāhmaṇas, textually as well as conceptually. They mark the transition from the ritualism of the Brāhmaṇas to the mysticism of the Ups.

While, on the one hand, most of the texts of the Āraṇyakas form the concluding portion of some of the Brāhmaṇas, on the other hand, some of the Upanishadic texts are either embedded in or appended to them. The Āraṇyakas which are esoteric, seek to present the true mystique of the ritual by glorifying the inner, mental sacrifice as against the external, material aspect of it (Dandekar 1978 : 26). The inner mental world of the human person is not a static alternative to the external one. The Āraṇyakas give an esoteric meaning to the Brāhmaṇa rituals. Therefore in the Āraṇyakas we notice a shift of attention from the external world to the 'inner' world of human beings. The Āraṇyakas represent this transition.

The study of the Āraṇyakas was traditionally restricted to the solitude of the forest (*āraṇya*). That is why they came to be called Āraṇyakas (forest books). Dasgupta (1992 : 14) feels that these works were probably composed for old men who had retired into the forest and were thus unable to perform elaborate sacrifices requiring a multitude of accessories and articles which could not be obtained in forests. Radhakrishnan (1990 : 47) however, sees the possibility that certain sacred rites were performed in the seclusion of the forests where teachers and pupils meditated on the significance of these rites.

Special mention must be made of the fact that the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka is a direct continuation of the Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa of the Taittirīya School. The first six books of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka supplements the treatment of Vedic rituals in the Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa. Its next three books constitute the Tait. Up., while its tenth and last book is known as the Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad.

2.6.1 The Upaniṣads - A Definition.

The Ups. are called the Vedanta, as most of them constitute the concluding portions of the Veda, and also their knowledge represents the aim or goal of the Veda. The Sanskrit word *anta*, like the English 'end', may be used to mean both *'terminus'* and 'aim'.

In the etymological sense the term *'upaniṣad'* is to sit (*sad*) close by (*upa*) devotedly (*ni*), and is indicative of the manner in which the doctrines embodied in the Ups. were learnt at first by pupils in small conclaves sitting near their respective teachers. The expression which thus means 'a session' came to be applied in the course of time to what was taught at such sessions (Müller 1975 : ixxx ; Madhavan 1952 : 55).

Since the Ups. are regarded as teaching the highest truth, they could be imparted only to those who were competent to receive and benefit by them; and such competent pupils could be only a few at any given time (Mahadevan 1952 : 55). The seers adopted a certain reticence in communicating the truth. They wanted to be satisfied that their pupils were spiritually and not carnally minded (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 19). It is for this reason that the Ups. themselves refer to their teachings as being 'secret doctrines' (Tait. Up. 1.12.6). Consider also the following verse (Sv. Up. 6.22) :

vedānte paramaṁ guhyam purākalpe pracoditam

nāpraśāntaya dātavyam nāputrāyāśiṣyāya vā punaḥ

"This highest mystery (also secret) in the Vedanta which has been declared in a former age should not be given to one whose passions are not subdued nor again to one who is not a son or pupil."

Deussen (1987 : 3) also feels that a further reason for the Ups. being referred to as a 'secret doctrine' is that their teachings, when placed in incompetent hands could easily be

misinterpreted. The knowledge was held and imparted only by competent teachers (*gurus*) who identified the right pupils (*śiṣyas*) as worthy recipients of such transcendental wisdom.

In the medeival period Shankara interprets the expression '*upaniṣad*' to mean that which 'destroys' ignorance, or what 'leads' to the highest truth, *brahman* – a meaning which may be etymologically incorrect, but which, nevertheless, correctly defines the scope and aim of the Ups. (Mahadevan 1952 : 56).

The modern Neo-Vedantic movements have given a radically different interpretation to the concept of the Ups. Words like *'paramaṁ guḥyam'* (supreme secret), used in the above passage (Sv. Up. 6.22), take on another dimension. The word *'guḥya'* which means 'secret', also refers to a 'cave'. Hence another meaning is that these truths are hidden (as in a cave). In all probability '*guḥya*' (secret) is derived from '*guha*' (cave). In other words these truths are not apparent. As such every effort must be made to make them easily available to all. Vivekananda, for example, saw his life's mission as being to bring out the gems of spirituality stored up in these books and in the possession of a few only, hidden, as it were, in the monasteries and forests, and from the still more inaccessible chest – the incrustation of centuries of Sanskrit words, and to make them the common property of all (CW3 1979 : 290).

2.6.2 The Upanisads in the context of Vedic literature.

Though it is generally believed that the Ups. are usually attached as appendices to the Āraṇyakas which are again attached to the Brāhmaṇas, yet it cannot be said that their distinction as separate treatise is always observed. Thus we find in some instances the subject which we should expect to be discussed in a Brāhmaṇa are introduced into the Āraṇyakas and some Āraṇyaka material are sometimes fused into the great bulk of the Ups. Dasgupta (1992 : 28-29)

therefore feels that these three divisions of the Vedic literature gradually grew up in one process of development and were probably regarded as part of one literature in spite of the differences in their subject matter.

There are over two hundred Ups., including some recent works. The Muktikopaniṣad gives a traditional list of one hundred and eight Ups., of which ten belong to the Rg V, nineteen to the Śukla YV, thirty-two to the Kṛṣna YV, sixteen to the SV, and thirty-one to the AV; but even out of these, many texts are called Ups. only by courtesy. Usually thirteen Ups. are regarded as the principal Ups. They are traditionally connected with one Vedic *śākhā* or the other (Dandekar 1978 : 2). The Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Chāndogya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Kauśītaki and Kena Ups., from their literary structure and characteristics, as well as from their contents, are quite certainly assigned to an earlier chronological group of Ups.

2.6.3 Some characteristics of the Upanisads.

If we survey the Ups. as a whole there are certain characteristic features which emerge. Hume feels that they discuss a variety of philosophical doctrines, a number of which are not in the same stage of development. The heterogeneity and unordered arrangement and even apparent contradictions of the material make it difficult, indeed impossible, to set forth a systematic exposition of a single system of philosophy (Hume 1991 : 70).

Prabhavananda and Manchester (1969 : 40) however feel that the concepts in the Ups. may be linked into an essential homogeneity. They point out that there is a distribution of emphasis of different concepts in different Ups. They further state that one Up. may emphasise certain ideas, or a certain view, more than the rest, or may specialise as it were in a particular topic; but such distinctions are accidental, and never important. The partitions between the Ups. might therefore, for all practical purposes, be completely done away with.

Another important feature of the Ups. is that their authors were essentially mystics and the style, symbolism and imagery that they employed in writing the Ups. comprise a language typical of the early mystics. The mystic as a rule, cannot wholly do without symbols and images, inadequate to their vision though they must always be. The mystic's experience of the transcendent reality must be expressed if it is to be communicated. However, mystics claim that such experiences are inexpressible except in some indirect way. Something or some hint or a parallel is necessary to stimulate the dormant intuition of the reader in order to enable him or her to get a glimpse of what is beyond the senses (Underhill 1974 : 79).

The mystic authors of the Ups. were concerned with reporting insights which came to them intuitively and not with making these insights superficially coherent. They were not builders of theological or philosophical systems but recorders of experience. One must be prepared therefore, for apparent inconsistency. The authors may initiate a concept, become temporarily absorbed in another idea, and often revert to the original concept. Nowhere must we expect to find the whole truth gathered together once for all in an easy, triumphant, conscious formulation (Prabhavananda and Manchester 1969 : 40). Homogeneity in developing a concept to its ultimate end can only come by skilfully drawing the many relevant strands together and then assembling them in a coherent formulation keeping in mind the spirit of the Ups.

2.6.4 The Taittiriya Upanisad.

The Tait. Up. occupies an important place in the corpus of Vedic literature. It is a part of the YV. This Veda has been handed down to us, generation after generation, in two recensions : the Taittirīya and the Vājasaneyī. The Taittirīya recension is the older and more important of the two. It contains a Saṁhitā, a Brāhmaṇa and an Āraṇyaka. The seventh, eighth and ninth chapters of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka constitute this Up.; and these chapters are respectively known under

the titles Śikṣāvallī, Ānandavallī, and Bhṛguvallī. The Śiksāvallī deals with phonetics and pronunciation. The Anandavalli and Bhrguvalli deal with the knowledge of the ultimate Reality (*brahman*).

The Bhṛguvallī unfolds a scene in which the son Bhṛgu approaches his father Varuṇa time and again in quest of the highest truth (*brahmavidyā*). The father, who is a *ṛṣi* imparts to Bhṛgu the knowledge of the soul (*jīva*) which is made up of five sheaths (*pañcakośas*) with the *ātman* (consciousness) as its divine focus.

Since the teacher-pupil (*guru-śiṣya*) relationship forms an important element of the Upanishadic literature, as it indeed does in the Bhṛguvallī, it would be useful to focus upon its essential features.

The Ups. themselves declare, "Approach the teacher with humility and a desire to serve." (Mun. Up. 1.2.12). We also learn, "To many it is not given to hear of the *ātman*. Many though they hear of it, do not understand it. Blessed is he who, taught by a good teacher, is able to understand it." (Ka. Up. 1.2.7).

The function of the *guru* (or a knower of *brahman*), as Hinduism views it, is twofold. The *guru* should explain the scriptures, the spirit as well as the letter; but what is more important still, he teaches by his life – by his little daily acts, by his casual words, sometimes even by his silence. To be near him, to serve and obey him in humility and reverence is to become quickened in spirit. The teacher-pupil relationship is not just a mechanism to inform the intellect of the pupil. It must purify and enrich the soul on its journey to *mokṣa* (Prabhavananda and Manchester 1969 : 29). For Radhakrishnan (1991 : 20) there is a certain core of certainty possessed by the teacher which is essentially incommunicable except by a certain way of life. The attitude embodied in this teacher-pupil relationship is indeed an intrinsic part of the knowledge itself.

This study should not fail to point out that the status of the *guru* was not the monopoly of men alone. Women also held this role in the Vedic society and this tradition has continued even to the present day. Some women seers like Lopāmudra, Viśwavārā and Ghoshā composed hymns that form an integral part of the Vedic canon (Altekar 1982 : 26).

In Sanskrit there are at least five words to denote a teacher or a master. They are *āchārya, upādhyāya , guru, purohita* and *dīkshitā*. Each of these five words indicates a different type of relationship between the student and the teacher. The last two of the five words mentioned above, viz. the *purohita* and the *dīkshitā* denote persons who help and guide devotees while they perform Vedic rites, ceremonies and sacrifices. Similarly the first two are said to be those who are qualified to teach the scriptures. An *āchārya* is one who teaches all the four Vedas and who is qualified to initiate his pupils into the secret teachings of the scriptures. He is not permitted to receive any renumeration from his pupils. He therefore has no self-interest in teaching. An *upādhyāya*, on the other hand, is that teacher who is qualified to teach a part of the Vedas or the *vedangas* in return for some payment in cash or kind.

From the above definitions it can be seen that the *guru* is a different individual other than the above four. The main qualification to become a *guru* is the ability to remove the darkness – both intellectual and spiritual – from the pupils' minds. To become a *guru* in the real sense the individual should have transcended his or her physical, vital and mental sheaths and be operating from the purified *vijnānamayakośa* or the subtler *ānandamayakośa*. It is to such a selfless *guru* that a pupil is asked to sacrifice his all (Shubhanarayanan 1975 : 36-3 7) (6.5).

2.7.1 Sanskrit : a vehicle for the transmission of religious concepts.

Hindus have always claimed a divine origin for the Sanskrit language. The Vedic chanters and grammarians, who upheld the doctrine of absolute monism, in dealing with the nature of words ultimately discovered *brahman* as the essence of *vāc* (speech).

To the Vedic *ṛṣis* words were not mere sounds as they ordinarily seem to be. They have a subtle and intellectual form within. The grammarians proceeded still further, and on minute examination of the internal phenomena of words grasped the remotest form of sound (*śabda brahman*), i.e. the eternal *verbum*, the original indivisible sound, which manifests outwardly and at the gross level by letters and words. We are told that it requires a good deal of spiritual insight to have a glimpse of this *śabda brahman* (Chakravati 1978 : 324-325). The entire Vedic literature is considered sacred on the foregoing account.

2.7.2 Problems with oral transmission.

Originally Vedic texts were not committed to writing. By a process of oral transmission *brāhmins* handed them down from generation to generation. This painstaking process had to be done with scrupulous accuracy. It would be unwise to state that the intensity of this accuracy was sustained considering the constant movement of the Vedic Aryans and the appearance of invading tribes into the whole of Northern India. Researchers looking at this situation identify two major problems. The first being defects in oral transmission and the second, which is not less serious, is that Sanskrit was not a static language; even key words took on new concepts with the passage of time.

While the *brāhmins* placed immense stress on the correct pronunciation of words it is difficult to say if the lengthy period of oral transmission is error-free. Consider, for example, the

following important words of this study – their closeness in pronunciation and difference in meaning :

brahman - the absolute

brahmā - name of the creator God

brāhmin - a member of the priestly order (also *brahmana*)

brāhmaṇa - a Vedic text

It certainly requires some training in Vedic Sanskrit to identify and distinguish the differences in such cognate words and even solecisms in Vedic texts.

However, from empirical data Basham contends the view that there were many defects in oral transmission. He points out that European scholars as early as 1780 persuaded *brāhmins* in Calcutta to divulge the oldest of these texts, the Rg V. It was done with immense difficulty on account of orthodox rules not permitting such a divulgence to foreigners. But once the text was made public other *brahmins* from other parts of the country followed them. When versions had been collected from various parts of the country it was found, to the great surprise of scholars, that the text as transmitted in Kashmir was scarcely different from that transmitted in Tamil Nadu. The Rg V had been passed on orally for nearly three thousand years, with hardly an error. The study also observed that the *brāhmins* who had memorized it had only the vaguest notion of its meaning, because its language is so archaic that it is almost unintelligible to one unacquainted with Vedic Sanskrit (Basham 1990 : 7). A number of other Vedic texts had gone through a similar process. Some texts, it is believed, were obviously lost.

2.7.3 Some difficulties with Sanskrit etymology.

One of the most important, though much neglected, branches of technical literature in Sanskrit is lexicography. Sanskrit lexical literature is so vast, and the published works so few, that a student of etymology, especially one who wishes to study the evolution of words and solely from Sanskrit lexicons, can hardly gather sufficient knowledge of the history of words from the material now available (Patkar 1978 : 326).

While the Vedic texts contain some elements of etymology it is evident that scholars even in the pre-Christian era had difficulty in interpreting words. The earliest gloss on the Rg V, the Nirukta of Yaska, generally dated in the sixth century B.C., shows that even then there were doubts about the meaning of many words. The much used standard commentary of Sayana, written in the fourteenth century, shows that much of the original meaning had been forgotten (Basham 1990 : 9) (1.5.6).

Vedic etymology has always been supplemented by Sanskrit grammar. A combination of these two linguistic tools led to many clues as to the origin and meaning of many words. While this study would not venture into such a linguistic study it would be useful to mention one important source of Sauskrit grammar.

The earliest extant systematic treatment of grammar is Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī which contains 3,995 *sūtras* (formuli) on grammar. Historical sources indicate that Pāṇini lived in the fifth century B.C. This date places him at a crucial point in the history of Sanskrit literature. There were, however grammarians before Pāṇini. He mentions by name many of his predecessors and hints at the existence of many more. Thus he testifies to considerable grammatical activity having taken place before him. Pāṇini deals with both Vedic Sanskrit grammar and later Sanskrit (classical) grammar. His emphasis is however on the latter. Large numbers of scholars,

ancient and modern, have drawn various types of word meanings from Pāṇini (Vrat 1978 : 312).

To the above sources of Sanskrit etymology it would be unjust to leave out the monumental research conducted by some modern philologists like Max Müller. With uncommon labour these researchers have given us useful insights into some of the fundamental words occuring in the Vedic texts.

Let us look at the evolution of some words appearing within the ambit of this study :

brahman : *'brahman'* meant originally the hymns, sacrificial addresses and incantations of the Vedas and, further, the mystical power latent in them, but it was finally taken among the *brāhmins* who respected the Vedic rituals, as the usual term for the fundamental principle of the universe. The word in time lost its original meaning and in the Upanishadic period became a technical term used only for the Absolute (Nakamura 1990 : 105).

ātman : This word requires some close examination. It is next in importance to *brahman* only, and the two together may be called the main pillars on which rests nearly the whole of the edifice of Hindu theology and Indian philosophy. The etymology of *ātman* is somewhat obscure. Müller is of the opinion that it belongs to a pre-Sanskritic, though Aryan, stratum of Indian speech.

In the early Vedic texts *ātman* originally meant 'breath'. Later it was employed derivatively in the sense of 'vital force', and further became a word meaning 'one's self'. In the Upanishadic context it generally means the immortal consciousness which is the substratum of the

individual and is identical with *brahman* (Müller 1971 : 70 ; Nakamura 1990 : 105).

A survey of Sanskrit etymology also indicates words with suggested meanings (*vyaṅgyārtha*). This is specially relevant with regard to the Absolute. Words like *brahman* and *ātman* are not bound to concepts alone. They are meant to transcend concepts. In fact they are only suggestive of an indescribable Absolute.

The writers of the Vedic literature utilized words in three fundamental ways :

mukhyārtha - words with primary meaning.

lakṣyārtha - words with secondary meaning.

vyaṅgyārtha - words with suggested meaning. In this type of meaning, the primary meaning stands as a stepping stone to it. The primary meaning suggests, or hints to the mind what the meaning is, but this meaning is not necessarily related or connected to the primary meaning. For example, by saying that the hermitage is in the Ganges (in the seventh case ending *gangāyam goṣaḥ*), the idea is to convey that it is cool and holy (Grimes 1989 : 405). The Upanishadic writers are thus fond of the *vyaṅgyārtha* style.

The foregoing information on the various elements of Sanskrit constitute relevant points for the critical examination of Sanskrit literature.

2.8 The Relevance of Shankara.

Shankara (788-820 A.D.) belonged to the unbroken line of Vedic monks (*sannyāsins*). After training from his *guru*, the erudite Govindapada, he spent the remaining part of his brief life in intense literary and missionary activities. These activities appear at a significant period in Hindu history and may be categorised as having three fundamental values : historical, literary and philosophical.

Shankara's historical value lies in the fact that he emerged at a time when Buddhism was still flourishing in India and Hinduism was on the decline. The survival of Hinduism depended, at least from a literary point of view, on the recapturing of the original Vedic and Upanishadic texts which were either being lost or diluted under the influence of Buddhism and other religious cults .

Shankara's literary abilities were amazing. He wrote elaborate commentaries on the major Ups., the Brahmasutras and the Bhagavad Gita which constitute the three main literary pillars of Hinduism (*prasthāna trayi*). Apart from this he also produced a number of guide-books, both in prose and poetry, for a clearer understanding of his seminal doctrine, viz. that of non-dualism (Advaita).

Shankara's literary works are characterized by an unflinching logic which leads him to the supra-rational (and not to the irrational). He commences his argument with the notion that the essence of reality must be its absoluteness. Reality must remain ever the same, unconditioned by time, space and causality. It follows from such an argument that the human intellect, conditioned and varied as it is, has not the remotest chance of ever comprehending it in its entirety. Hence intuitive revelation is the only source of knowledge regarding the ultimate Reality of the universe. Yet, Shankara fully appreciates the value of reasoning in an inquiry into the nature of Reality. He says that in matters of philosophical inquiry, unlike discussions on *dharma* (duty), perception,

inference and other human levels of evidence are as indispensable as the *śruti*. Only such arguments are to be tolerated as are not independent of the *śruti* but supplement it. Not for a moment, however varied the interpretations may be, does Shankara depart from being loyal to the primary texts (*śruti*) (Bhattacharya 1953 : 237).

As one of the most important medieval commentators on primary Hindu texts Shankara's views or findings can be summarized as follows (Bhattacharya 1953 : 243) :

2.8.1 Knowledge or consciousness-absolute is the supreme Reality and is called *brahman*. It is one, indivisible, without a second, having in itself no differences (*bheda*).

2.8.2 The *jīva* is essentially the same as *brahman* and it is therefore self-illumined, unlimited, and ever free. Its limitations and all its consequent effects are due to *upadhis* or conditions which are created by ignorance (*avidyā*) and as such are unreal. On the elimination of *upādhis*; the apparent duality at once ceases, and the *jīva* no longer retains a separate identity. The sense of ego-consciousness is bondage, that of universality is freedom. To be *brahman* is not the extinction of the individual, rather it is an expansion of individual awareness into the infinitude of *brahman*. The *jīva* is always *brahman*. During bondage the *upādhis* screen the truth; in the state of freedom (*jīvanmukta*) this truth shines forth as *brahman* - as what it always is; nothing new happens.

2.8.3 *Brahman* simply appears as the world (including *jīvas* as well) through *avidyā*. The world has a phenomenal reality but no reality of its own. *Avidyā* too is no entity separate from *brahman*, but is indefinable and relatively real. From the standpoint of the Absolute it does not exist.

2.8.4 *Mokṣa* is attained by the knowledge (*jñāna*) of the absolute identity of the *jīva* and *brahman* (*tat tvam asi*). Mokṣa is nothing but the realization of this identity. Such a realization is possible even in this body, that is, even while living (*jīvanmukta*)

2.8.5 Eternal bliss (or *brahman*-consciousness) can never be a result of work. The Advaita holds that *jñāna* is the only means to realize the *ātman*. As *mokṣa* is the very nature of the *ātman*, it is not an experience which is to be brought about through work *(karma)*. What stands in the way of realizing *mokṣa* is nescience. Knowledge (*jñāna*) alone can remove this impediment. The path of knowledge consists of hearing (i.e. study, *śarvana*), reflection (*manana*), and meditation (*nididhyāsana*). The ascertainment of knowledge of the non-difference of the individual soul (*jīva*) from *brahman*, with the aid of the *mahāvākyas* like 'That thou art' (*tat tvam asi*) is *śravana*. To understand through reasoning that the meaning of this teaching has every possibility to be realized is *manana*. When by *śravana* and *manana* the mind has gained conviction, it dwells constantly on the non-dual *atman*. This is *nididhyāsana*.

In Shankara's Advaita, *jñāna* is the only means to realize the *ātman*. Selfless work (*karma*), devotion *(bhakti)* and contemplation (*yoga*) are not direct means for the ultimate realization. They only assist in the development of *jñāna*. Hence they can only be regarded as supplementary practices in the journey to *mokṣa* (Br. Up. 2.4.5 ; Shankara on Br. Up. 2.4.5).

2.8.6 Shankara wrote an elaborate commentary on the Tait. Up . The above formulation of his seminal concepts appear in one way or the other in his interpretation of these texts as they indeed appear throughout his commentaries on the other Ups. and his other works. However, the application of Shankara's fundamental concepts to the *pañcakośa* model has certainly illumined many dark areas of exploration and strengthened the overall position of the Advaita as this study indicates. Besides approaching the *pañcakośas* and the *jīvanmukta* from the viewpoint of the *śruti* texts Shankara also expounds these subjects in his Vivekachudāmaṇi (*Crest Jewel of Discrimination*).

Shankara established monasteries and trained monks for the furtherance of his mission. Over the years several eminent monastic members of the Shankara Order wrote learned

commentaries on Shankara's works. Of significance is Vidyaranya (1377-1386) whose philosophical treatise, the Pañchadaśi, has become well known as an Advaita Vedantic text incorporating discussions on the *pañcakośas* and the *ātman-brahman* relationship (1).

Shankara's monastic institutions influenced Hindu thought for a protracted period – between the eighth and seventeenth centuries, until the emergence of Neo-Vedanta which made some changes in his teachings. However Shankara's philosophy continues to influence modern Hinduism in some way or the other.

2.9 Modern interpreters and translators.

The scientific study of Indian literature starts from 1761 when India suffered a political defeat at the hands of the British. Warren Hastings, the then Governor-general of India, found it necessary for purposes of administration to study the old Indian law books. In 1785 Charles Wilkins published an English translation of the Bhagavad Gita and William Jones worked on several translations including that of Sanskrit drama. Thus the above English scholars were naturally the first to make Europe acquainted with the religious literature of India. Thereafter German scholars took the lead. Fredrich Schlegel's, *The Language and Wisdom of the Indians* (1808) generated the initial interest among German scholars. August Wilhelm von Schlegel became the first German professor of Sanskrit in 1818 in Bonn. He edited the Bhagavad Gita in 1823 (Radhakrishnan 1940 : 247).

While these literary activities were gaining ground and a new avenue of literary expression was being unfolded, Hinduism itself was beginning to experience a regeneration. With the appearance of Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) there followed a long line of social, cultural, religious and political leaders, men and women of thought and action, who were constantly reinterpreting

the Vedic and Upanishadic texts to meet the challenges of contemporary issues. Their spirit of work and literary output may best be captured in Radhakrishnan's (1990 : 145) words :

> *"Loyalty to our particular tradition means not only concord with the past but also freedom from the past. The living past should serve as a great inspiration and support for the future. Tradition is not a rigid, hide-bound framework which cripples the life of the spirit and requires us to revert to a period that is now past and beyond recall. It is not a memory of the past but a constant abiding of the living Spirit. It is a living stream of spiritual life."*

Noted among these modern interpreters are Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Aurobindo. With the exception of Ramakrishna the others have voluminous literary works to their credit.

2.9.1 Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and the development of Neo-Vedanta.

With the coming of Sri Ramakrishna, (1836-1886) and Swami Vivekananda (1863- 1902) we see the emergence of the Neo-Vedanta movement. By Neo-Vedanta is meant the new Vedanta as distinguished from the old traditional Vedanta developed by Shankara.

The gems of Neo-Vedanta, as also the rationale and beginning of its practical application, are to be found in the life and teachings of Ramakrishna. It was left to his disciple, Vivekananda, to develop them into the philosophy of Neo-Vedanta and lay the foundations of practical Vedanta. For Chatterjee (1963 : 260), "We do not deny that the fundamental principles on which Neo-Vedanta and its practical application rest may be traced to the Vedas and the Upanisads. But it was Sri Ramakrishna who demonstrated and synthesized them through his manifold spiritual experience." The mystical and intuitive experiences recorded in the Vedas and Ups. were reauthenticated and given a new focus in the life of Ramakrishna. However , while Ramakrishna did not leave behind any literary legacy, Vivekananda was an accomplished orator and prolific

writer. His speeches, literary works, letters and poems form eight substantial volumes of *Complete Works*. For Nivedita these volumes represent "what is not only a gospel to the world at large, but also to its own children, the Charter of the Hindu Faith. What Hinduism needed, amidst the general integration of the modern era, was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which she might recognize herself. And this was given to her, in these words and writings of Swami Vivekananda (CW1 1984 : ix).

The Neo-Vedanta is also Advaita (non-dualism) in as much as it holds that *brahman*, the ultimate reality, is one without a second. But as distinguished from the traditional Advaita of Shankara, it is a synthetic Vedanta which reconciles several theories of reality (Chatterjee 1963: 260) . Nivedita states ,"It must never be forgotten that it was the Swami Vivekananda who, while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita Philosophy, as including that experience in which all is one, without a second, also added to Hinduism the doctrine that Dvaita (dualism), Vishisht Advaita (qualified non-dualism), and Advaita (monism) are but three phases or stages in a single development, of which the last-named constitutes the goal" (CW1 1984 : xv).

According to Shankara's Advaita, the world is a false appearance (*mithya*) projected by *māyā* on the one hand, and perceived by us on the other, on account of our ignorance (*avidyā*). This ignorance is a natural principle (*bhava-rūpa*) in so far as it conceals the reality of *brahman* from our view (*avaraṇa*) and constructs, instead the appearance of a world of many objects (*vikṣepa*). Therefore the world has no place in *brahman*, the absolute Reality; it is not a part, aspect or manifestation of *brahman*, though it apparently exists and is sustained by *brahman*. It does not exist anywhere except in *brahman* – not, however as a quality, adjective or appearance of *brahman*. The relation between *brahman* and the world is neither positive nor negative, but only apparent and, therefore strictly speaking, no relation at all. However the world has an empirical existence in so far as it is perceived by us. It has also an objective

existence inasmuch as it exists out there and is not like a fiction or subjective fancy of our mind, although it cannot be called real in the same sense in which the eternal and absolute *brahman* is real. While *brahman* is present everywhere in the world, we in our ignorance fail to see the one omnipresent *brahman*. Through ignorance we see diversity, names and forms (*nāma-rūpa*), a world of many gross and subtle objects, bodies and minds exist as a matter of fact and is perceived by us. Therefore it cannot be called unreal in the sense of being mere negation or nothing or a void. At the same time being impermanent and under the force of constant change, it is rejected by *brahman* and cannot be called real either. Strictly speaking the world never exists in *brahman* and never will. This comprises the metaphysical status of the world in Shankara's Advaita.

Moving onto the soul (*jīva*) Shankara says that the *ātman* is identical with *brahman*. Individuals are apparently composed of the *pañcakośas*. But these *pañcakośas*, like every other material object, are merely an illusory appearance perceived under the influence of ignorance. When the individual perceives that the *pañcakośas* are illusory, the reality that remains is the *ātman* which is nothing other than *brahman*.

The soul (*jīva*) appears as the limited, finite self on account of its association and identification with the body, gross and subtle, which is a product of ignorance. When through the influence of beginningless ignorance, this appears, the soul is in bondage (*saṁsāra*). In this state it forgets that it is really *brahman*. It behaves like a finite, limited, miserable being which enjoys transitory worldly objects; it is pleased to get them and depressed to lose them. It identifies itself with the finite *pañcakośas* and thinks of itself as the ego (*ahaṁkāra*). This limited ego of the *pañcakośas* has a fragmentary nature which opposes itself to the rest of existence and more importantly towards the all-pervading *brahman*. Shankara sees in this arrangement of fragmentation the causes of all conflict between man and man.

In contrast to the above traditional view of Shankara we shall now consider the later developments that occur in Neo-Vedanta which is represented by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan, etc. Chatterjee (1963 : 265) records the formation of Neo-Vedanta as follows:

> *"We shall see that the main outline of this new Vedanta was drawn by Sri Ramakrishna and it was Swami Vivekananda who filled it in with elaborate reasoning so as to work up a philosophy proper. It has been very aptly said that Swami Vivekananda is a commentary on Sri Ramakrishna. But the commentator with his giant intellect and profound understanding made such a distinctive contribution that his commentary becomes itself a philosophy, just as Shankara's commentary on the Vedanta- Sūtras (Brahma Sutras) is by itself a philosophy."*

Ramakrishna approached Reality along numerous paths (including that of Islam and Christianity) and had varied spiritual experiences. He discovered that though these experiences differ in their specific forms and characters, yet they all relate to the same Reality and reveal only different forms and aspects of it. These experiences being equally direct and genuine, he was convinced that reality has many aspects, forms and characters, and also that in one aspect it is formless and characterless, beyond description and any human comprehension. This is an experimental verification of the truth expressed in the Rg V (1.164.64) : "Truth is one, sages call it by various names". Ramakrishna lived in an age in which India and the world was torn by conflicts of ideologies and doctrines, theologies and philosophies, and the relation between any two religious sects or communities was embittered by intolerance, jealousy and contempt of each other. The Neo-Vedanta that he propounded was a serious endeavour to end these conflicts and to pave the way for inter-sect and inter-religious dialogue and reconciliation.

Firstly, Ramakrishna teaches that *brahman* and its power (*śakti*) are not two different realities unrelated to each other, nor are they different realities or existences inseparably related to

each other as substance and quality. They are only two aspects of the same reality or two states of the same thing and, therefore, non-different (*abheda*). Just as the same serpent sometimes crawls and sometimes remains motionless so the same reality when motionless is called *brahman* and when moving (i.e. creating, preserving and destroying the worlds or *lokas*) is *śakti*. This implies that *brahman* or the Absolute in one aspect is indeterminate and an impersonal Being (*nirguṇa brahman*) as the Advaita of Shankara holds, and in another is determinate and a personal God (*saguṇa brahman*) as affirmed by the dualist schools. It implies also that the personal Gods (*devas* or incarnations) are not an illusory appearance or a lower form of *brahman*, the Absolute which is really indeterminate and qualityless, but only appears as determinate and qualified when associated with *māyā* (or perceived through ignorance or *avidyā*).

Secondly, in keeping with the different approaches to the one Reality, Ramakrishna taught that the same *brahman*, nameless and formless, is the God of the philosopher (*jñāni*) as much as the *ātman* or pure self is the God of the *yogī* or the Personal God is there for the *bhakta* or the individual with a devotional temperament. Just as the same water of the ocean is congealed into the form of ice by extreme cold and is dissolved into formless water by the heat of the sun, so Reality has two interconnected aspects : it takes on form and shape for the devotee and is formless and nameless (impersonal) for the *jñāni* and *yogī*. This means that the absolute Reality may be formless or it may have forms, so that the worship of the forms of God has not less value and validity than the worship of the formless *brahman*.

Thirdly, Ramakrishna speaks of the seven psychic centres in the human body and the seven levels of consciousness connected with them. Here he teaches that when the mind rises to the sixth level, we have the experience of the forms of God, but when it comes up to the seventh level, it is absorbed in *nirvikalpa samādhi* transcending the level of names and forms. It is a state

of pure consciousness in which *brahman* as existence-consciousness-bliss (*sat-cit-ānanda*) is completely unified with *śakti* or the divine power and nothing physical or mental exists. This implies that the individual perceives different revelations of reality from different levels of experience and that at the highest level there is a 'dissolution' of the whole world of objects in one universal consciousness.

Ramakrishna further points out that this universal consciousness (*brahman*) has become all this (*prakṛiti* - including the *pañcakośas*). Just as we leave behind us all the steps of a stair-case in order to mount the roof of a building and, on reaching it, find that the entire stair-case is built of the same material as the roof is made of, so we realize *brahman* by following the negative path of withdrawal from the world (*neti-neti*), but on realization find that *brahman* is present everywhere in the world (as also in the *pañcakośas*). So the negation of the world for Ramakrishna, is only an incomplete process. Its process must be completed and the ultimate realization related to the world. The affirmation, in the light of the ultimate realization, is that the world is divine. For Vivekananda (1992 : 132) "Vedanta does not in reality denounce the world. The ideal of renunciation nowhere attains such a height as in the teachings of the Vedanta. But at the same time, dry suicidal advice is not intended; it really means deification of the world – giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us – and to know what it really is. Deify it; it is God alone." In support of this Vivekananda quotes the *śruti* text : "Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord" (Īśā Up. 1). It may be concluded that in this school of Neo-Vedanta, the world of objects is not totally negated in *brahman* . It is not as in Shankara's Advaita it is, that *brahman* alone is real and the world is false or illusory, but that in a sense the world also is real (Chatterjee 1963 : 269). Vivekananda affirms the world from the position of the divine : "This Absolute has become the universe by coming through space, time

and causation. Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen; and when It is seen on the lower side It appears as the universe." (Vivekananda 1992 : 108).

Apart from different interpretations of some *śruti* texts the journey from Shankara's Advaita to the Neo-Vedanta of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is indeed a movement from a life where individual salvation was paramount to a life-affirming ideal in which the concerns of the world were real. This shift in interpretation has had tremendous effects in relation to the spiritual quest of the Hindus. Under this new interpretation the *pañcakośas*, the *jīva* and the *jīvanmukta* ideal become more meaningful as this study would indicate.

At this stage it must also be mentioned that although Vivekananda did not write commentaries on the *śruti* texts he was nevertheless well acquainted with them. His greatest relevance to this study lies in the fact that he preached a life-affirming philosophy and departing from the age-old tradition of communicating in Sanskrit he used modern English as a vehicle to spread his message. As a result of this he sheds extraordinary light on sophisticated Sanskrit words such as *prāna*, *manas*, *nāḍīs*, etc. Not only is he able to translate these words into their appropriate English form but his intuitive insight made these terms explicit in terms of the comments he made on them. Furthermore Basham (1968 : 212) sees Vivekananda as an important figure in world history "in that he, more than any other teacher in the India of his time, taught his fellow Indians how to assimilate the old with the new " (1).

2.9.2 Aurobindo and Neo-Vedanta.

Appearing next in the line of Neo-Vedanta teachers was Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872 - 1950). Linking Aurobindo with the earlier Neo-Vedanta development Diwakar (1976 : 10) states :

"Aurobindo's approach was more along the lines of Ramakrishna's teachings than any other school of thought current in those days. The difference however is obvious. Aurobindo had a vast background of knowledge and experience of western thought and religion that Ramakrishna lacked. But in his instinctive sympathy with all that is high and noble in Indian spirituality, in intuitive appreciation and realization of it, and in the adoption of a truly spiritual and synthetic attitude toward all religious and human endeavour in that field, Aurobindo is nearer to Ramakrishna than all other thinkers and reformers ... his (Ramakrishna's) conduct was based on Vedantic as well as Tantric truths and he looked upon all human beings as equal and thus worthy of respect."

Another important feature that characterizes Aurobindo's speeches and writings is the application of his expansive intellect to matters that are profound and subtle. However, erudition, intellect and scholarship had never by themselves charmed Aurobindo. Referring to the 'profound and abiding' influence of Ramakrishna on Aurobindo, Diwakar (1976 : 10) states that he had found in the person of Ramakrishna 'solid gold, naked spirituality shorn of all intellectual embellishment'. Aurobindo was first and foremost a man of intuition, a mystic, and only secondly an intellectual of uncommon worth.

Like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, it must be pointed out that Aurobindo also drew his inspiration from the *śruti* texts. He believed that the Vedas and Ups. are of the same origin –'the revealed word'. He accepts and upholds this ancient tradition.

Aurobindo has not written a commentary on the Tait. Up. In many respects a good deal in his philosophy and teachings is a 'development and an elaboration of the truths that are adumbrated in this ancient text' (Pandit 1988 : 119). His *The Life Divine* provides valuable insights into the nature and workings of the different *kośas*.

Aurobindo makes constant reference to the 'Supramental Vision'. He commences his exploration of this vision by quoting Tait. Up. (3.4.1), "He discovered that the mind is *brahman*". For Aurobindo, "mind is no independent and original entity but only a final operation of the

Truth-Consciousness or Supermind, therefore whatever Mind is, there Supermind must be. Supermind or the Truth-Consciousness is the real creative agency of the universal Existence. Even when Mind is in its own darkened consciousness separated from its source, yet is that larger movement always there in the workings of Minds" (Aurobindo 1989 : 174). Aurobindo's works reveal that the mind is potentially divine. The Supermind is latent in the ordinary mind. The Supermind , may be developed by *tapasyā* or "an overpassing of the hold of the bodily nature on the consciousness or else a supernormal energizing of the consciousness and will to gain some spiritual or other object " (Pandit 1988 : 153).

The supramental vision is a global vision. It is the development of the mind to the extent that it "cuts off little bits which it puts up against one another; it is the mental capacity that regathers everything in a single beam ... . The Supermind sees not only the whole world of things and beings in a single vision, which gathers up all the beams without opposing anything, but it sees the viewpoint of each thing, each being, each force – it is a rounded view which does not end in a central point but in myriads of points". Aurobindo refers to this experience as "A single innumerable look ..." (Satprem 1970 : 236).

Aurobindo asserts that man is already in an evolutionary process. He sees this process as having two component parts : the first is the nature of evolution (i.e. the what, when, why and who of the grand mystery of evolutionary existence) and secondly the practical side or the means that promote this evolution. Existence is a mystery, a philosophical problem, to human beings alone. Therefore its solution may only be searched for at the human level. Many solutions have been suggested and tried during the long course of human history. In Aurobindo we find yet another approach to the truth. Aurobindo's teaching in this respect, called Integral Yoga, aims at being a synthesis of all *yogas,* especially of the three most important ones, viz., *jñāna*, *karma*, and *bhakti.*

The *jīva* in its evolutionary process is far below the status of a divinized being. The *jīva's* instruments for the attainment of his spiritual objects are undeveloped and therefore insufficient. The *jīva* has its own powerful urges towards the enjoyment of sense-objects. This weakness, which for Aurobindo is the 'weakness of will', allows strong attachments to develop between the *jīva* and the outer objects. This attachment is the cause of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, and so many other dualities. The mind which is caught between dualities, has only partial knowledge. This fragmentary knowledge leads to pain and suffering (*saṁsāra*). But through Integral Yoga the mind can be trained to rise above human frailties, to a poise which is beyond dualities. Aurobindo is of the view that man must free himself first and then work for the spiritual emancipation and progressive evolution of the human race. He taught that *mokṣa* and absorption into the absolute *brahman* are not the final goal of spiritual life. He believed that realization must lead to the divinization of the entire *jīva* i.e. matter (*anna*), life (*prāna*) and mind (*manas*) and the higher mental faculties. This can be done if the Supermind is realized and its vast potential invoked for this purpose (Diwakar 1976 : 194).

2.9.3 Radhakrishnan's role in Neo-Vedanta.

Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) was the next major interpreter of the Neo-Vedanta. He was an idealist philosopher who believed in metaphysical truths. He felt that these metaphysical ideas are founded on a basic awareness which cannot be established by scientific measurement or rational logic. Experience is not limited to sense awareness. Verification need not be direct. Truth exists by its own majesty and its language is silence; but hard metaphysical thinking gives to religious thought dignity and strength, articulates ultimate presuppositions about the world and restores spiritual wholeness to human beings (Gopal 1988 : 300).

Radhakrishnan was a creative philosopher with a gift for literary vigour. Throughout his major works – *Indian Philosophy, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, An Idealist View of Life*, etc. he postulates a life-affiriming philosophy (Radhakrishnan 1940 : 58).

Special mention must be made of Radhakrishnan's commentry on the 'Principal Upanisads'. In this volume he translates and comments on the texts of eighteen major and minor Ups. These commentaries are profound as they are extensive in their scholarship. While leaning heavily on Shankara's commentaries he also includes vital interpretations from some major dualist philosohpers like Ramanuja and Madhva. Apart from the Hindu schools of thought he is equally at home with other eastern traditions and western philosophers. He felt that "the pursuit of religious truth together would lead ultimately to mutual transformation within an overall partnership" (Gopal 1988 : 384). His commentaries on the Ups. are thus laden with quotations from Zarathustra and Buddha, Plotinus and St John, Eckhart and Rumi. Consider, for example, his commentry on Tait. Up. (3.6.1) in which he discusses the ascent of reality from matter to God in the context of the *pañcakośas*. He expounds the above texts by also quoting Aristotle and Buddha but what is of ontological interest is that in his commentary on Tait. Up. 3.6.1 he links the *pañcakośas* to the following experiences of Augistine (Radharkishnan 1990 : 557 ; Pusley 1952 : 105) (*kośas* in parenthesis inserted by Radhakrishnan) :

> "*Step by step I was led upwards, from bodies (anna) to the soul which perceives by means of the bodily senses (prāna); and then to the soul's inward faculty which is the limit of the intelligence of animals (manas); and thence again to the reasoning faculty to whose judgement is referred the knowledge received by the bodily senses (vijñāna). And when this power also within me found itself changeable it lifted itsef up to its own intelligence, and withdrew its thought from experience, abstracting itself from the contradictory throng of sense-images that it might find what that light was wherein it was bathed when it cried out that beyond all doubt the unchangeable is to be preferred to the changeable; whence also it knew that unchangeable; and thus with the flash of one trembling glance it arrived at That which is (ānanda).*"

Radhakrishnan is keen on seeing the meeting points in various theologies and philosophies. He is certainly in tune with the spirit of harmony and globalization and he is a pioneer in interpreting the East to the West.

2.10 Other important translators and commentators within the context of Neo-Vedanta.

This study should not fail to mention the names and efforts of such scholars as Max Müller and Paul Deussen. Max Müller's *Sacred Books of the East*, which is essentially a philological approach to the texts, was the forerunner to many current indological works. Later indologists like Zimmer and Coomaraswamy prefered a philosophical and idealistic approach. Paul Deussen's translations of the Ups. and scholarly works on Indian philosophy have become classics. The need however, is to have a holistic approach – the capacity to use several disciplines within the overall framework in order to read the texts more accurately.

The creative spirit certainly permeates the Neo-Vedantic movement. As and when new interpretations of the Neo-Vedanta emerge in terms of various approaches to the *śruti* texts they open up yet other avenues of knowledge .

CHAPTER THREE

The *jīvātman* and its eschatological goals in the early Vedic period.

3.1 Early Vedic theism.

The Indo-Aryans, being placed in the midst of the grandeur of nature, turned poetic in expression. The towering snow-peaks of the Himalayas, vast green meadows, gigantic rivers, boundless seas and the appearance and departure of seasons produced an effect on the early Aryan mind turning him into a poet, a sage, a seer. Nurtured amid such environments, the Aryan must have been developing, from a very early period of his life, a spiritual temperament and a deep introspective mind which made him distinct in character.

In this pre-Vedic period these poetic insights, simple as they may seem, were stirred by some of the aspects of the natural phenomena. Animated by these thoughts the Vedic poets spoke not only of rain (Indu), but of a rainer (Indra), not only of fire and light as a fact, but of a lighter and burner, an agent of fire and light, a Dyaus and an Agni (Müller 1971 : 35). Behind each of the natural phenomena the Aryan found an expression or an emblem of some spiritual being which was worshipped with awe and reverence.

Mitra (the sun), Varuṇa (the god of the ocean or blue sky), Prithvī (the earth) and Agni (fire) – all these are pre-Vedic deities who were worshipped with simple or complex rites from the most ancient period of Aryan history.

The worship of animals, birds and reptiles is also evident in the early Vedic period. This has led to the belief that the Vedic poets with their gifted insights were living side by side with persons who were rank animists and fetishists.

Thus on the one hand we find a rich polytheism and on the other we see a sub-level of

fetishism. Macnicol (1968 : 9) sees in these early developments the emerging outlines of a full-orbed theism.

3.2 The nature of the Vedic gods.

It is difficult to settle the exact nature of the gods. In the Rg V they are represented as human in form and they possess various attributes that connect them to their respective natural phenomena. They have arms and noses and jaws (limbs that are often referred to in Vedic poetry). They travel in chariots drawn by animals. They wear ornaments and carry arms.

In a careful analysis of the gods it would be unjust to associate them with natural phenomena alone and pass the Āryans off as nature-worshippers. Such an evaluation of the gods would be too hasty and in fact limited.

Raja (1936 : 28) is of the view that the safest interpretation would be to assume that the Vedic poets were aware of certain forces, invisible and incomprehensible to ordinary men, and that in describing the gods they were symbolically trying to represent these forces in the light of natural phenomena known to ordinary men. The contents of the Vedic hymns lend themselves to the interpretation that metaphysical realities were related to natural elements.

The Vedic poets 'saw' the gods and they described what they saw. Only an individual who could 'see' the gods is called a *ṛṣi*. The experience of the Vedic poets is such that their communion with the gods is a distinct spiritual experience. Vedic poetry indicates that they were not just describing the physical attributes of a mountain or river but something more subtle.

The Sanskrit word for 'gods' utilized in the texts is *'devas'*. By definition the *devas* are immortals (*amarāh*), the evershining ones (*devāh*), heavenly beings (*tridaśah*), the knowing ones (*vibudhāh*) and gods or deities (*surāh*) (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 30).

To the above category of gods it is necessary to add another development in the Vedic texts.

Ordinary mortals, who by dint of Vedic sacrifices and austerities, may also be elevated to the level of the gods. This status is achieved by the accumulated merits gained by such practices.

Although the gods are essentially the object of experience of a few gifted *ṛṣis*, still they are not absolutely beyond the experience of ordinary mortals. Ordinary people could experience the 'efforts' of the gods; only they cannot see them in their real nature.

The gods play an important part in the day-to-day lives of ordinary men. They may be invoked for various purposes through *mantras* composed by the *ṛṣis*. The essential feature of the Vedic religion is this constant interaction between the gods and men.

3.3 The three planes of existence and the three classes of gods.

We notice that the *ṛṣis* of the Rg V looked upon the 'universe' as possessed of three separate yet interconnected strata or planes of existence. The top-most plane is called *dyuloka* or the celestial sphere; next comes the *antarikśaloka*, the sphere of intermediary space; the third is the *bhurloka* or the terrestrial sphere.

In these spheres there are three presiding deities : Sāvitri or Sūrya (the sun) is the god of the celestial world; Indra (the god of the atmosphere) is the deity presiding over the intermediary space; and Agni (fire) is the god of the terrestrial sphere. These main gods were again subdivided into various categories to take charge of the various functions pertaining to their sphere (Sharvananda 1936 : 7-8).

Yama, the Vedic god of death, belongs to the intermediary sphere. He and his abode (*yamaloka*) are located in the 'southern' end of this sphere. *Yamaloka*, for the practical purposes of the worshippers, is also called *pitṛloka* (sphere of the ancestors).

Raja (1936 : 27) translates the three *lokas* as being earth, atmosphere and heavens. He is of the view that the Vedic *ṛṣis* did not use these terms as being visible regions of the world. The

spheres were only designated so due to the absence of better metaphysical terms.

In developing the *lokas* into their fuller and indeed their later meanings Raja states that the earth, the atmosphere and the heavens (sky), as seen by us, are only different regions of what is called *prithivī* (earth) in the Rg V. Beyond the earth the next higher plane of existence (*antarikśaloka*) is a finer aspect (more subtle dimension) of the universe of which its essential nature is what is meant by the term 'waters' (*āpah*). In later Hindu theology and philosophy, this 'waters' is the second of the five elements of creation (*pañchabhūtas*) and in later mythology this is called the heaven (*svargaloka*) with Indra as the chief god.

The next higher plane is *dyuloka*, also referred to as *svarloka*, of which the essential subtle feature is lustre (*tejas*); in later philosophical developments this corresponds to the third element of the *pañchabhūtas*, fire; in mythology this may correspond to *vaikuṇthaloka* where Vsnu presides.

3.4 The journey from polytheism to monism.

Before evaluating the role of Yama it would be essential to survey some important theistic patterns in the Rg V. Such an exercise would in fact enhance the overall concept of Yama.

The Rg V is strikingly polytheistic in its early phase. However, from the textual point of view, it is evident that the Rig Vedic *ṛṣis,* while contemplating upon the nature of the various gods, caught a glimpse of an infinite entity that unites these gods at the fundamental level. They termed this seminal concept *'āditi'* which became the 'mother of all the gods', the substratum from which all the gods emerged. The root meaning of *'āditi'* is 'unbroken', 'indivisible' or 'infinite'.

This discovery led to another significant understanding of the gods. At the fundamental spiritual level they are all one but at a functional level they differed in nature and attributes. They

worked in an interconnected manner from their different planes (*lokas*). This fundamental interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena, natural and spiritual, and the intrinsically dynamic nature of reality forms the essence of the Vedic world-view.

Another important development that occurs in the Rg V is that each god is taken individually and elevated to the level of the highest Being. While one god occupies this topmost position the other gods are subordinated. This process is repeated with respect to various gods. Max Müller termed this process 'henotheism' (Müller 1971 : 40). The understanding of henotheism is to be found in the Rg V (1.164.46) itself :

Indram mitram, varunam, agnim āhuh

atho divyah sa suparno garutmān;

ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti

agnim yamam matariśvānam āhuh

"They call that Reality by the names of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, as also the luminous Garutmān; Truth is one, but sages call it by various names such as Agni, Yama, Mātariśvān."

Thus another important facet of the Vedic theistic paradigm was complete: the process of worshipping one God with innumerable interconnected manifestations. This paradigm took on yet another dimension, viz., the transcendent and immanent nature of God. In the *haṁsāvati* verse of the Dadhikravan Hymn (Rg V : 4.40.5) the *ṛṣi* unfolds an omnipresent vision of God :

"As light he dwells in the luminous sky; as Vāyu (air) he dwells in the mid-space; as a hotṛ (fire) he exists in the sacrificial altar; as a guest he exists in the house; (as life) he exists in man; as divine Law (rita) he exists (everywhere); as the Supreme Entity he exists. He shines in sacrifices, in the sky, in water, in light, in mountains and in Truth."

Here the *ṛṣi* synthesizes all the gods or divinities stationed in different *lokas* into a single Principle. Sayana (in Sharvananda 1936 : 14), commenting on this, draws our attention to the fact that the verse stresses the identical unity of the human soul, the gods and the supreme Being.

These foregoing Vedic texts carry the earliest seeds of a monotheistic interpretation of Hinduism. But the Rg V is also noted for being the source of a monistic philosophy (Müller 1971 : 41). In the 'Hymn of Creation' (Rg V 10.129.2) we observe :

"That one breathed breathlessly by itself, other
than it there nothing since has been."

This sublimation of all the gods into a single Principle and ultimately to see this Principle as the 'one without a second' – the fundamental spiritual unity of the universe, gave rise to the doctrine of 'the *ātman* is *brahman*' in the monistic sense. *Brahman* is the ultimate ontological reality for the Vedic monists.

3.5 The *jīva* in the early Vedic period.

Etymologically considered the word *jīva* is derived from *'jīv'*, which means 'to continue breathing'. Other names for it include *'bhokta'* (experient) and *'karta'* (agent). The descriptive word *'puruṣa'* has become common. It is explained as *'puri-saya'* or 'what lies in the citadel of the body' (Grimes 1989 : 156).

In the Rg V the word *ātman* is used in different senses. In some places it means 'breath' which is so closely linked to *jīv*. In a funeral hymn addressed to Agni we find the following lines (Rg V 10.16.3 ; Müller 1971 : 72-73) :

"May the eye go to the sun, the breath (ātman) to the wind."

There is also evidence in a number of places in the Rg V where *ātman* means immortal Self. Let us, for example consider the following passages (Rg V 1.164.37) :

> *"Am I really this (physical) body, that I know not ?*
> *For I am not of clear mind and wander about being*
> *in doubt and bondage."*

In the very next verse (Rg V 1.164.38) the same devotee says :

> *"The immortal residing within the mortal in the same place and having got the physical body, sometimes goes to upper regions and sometimes to lower. Both of these (i.e. body and ātman) always remain together and move about together. People can recognize one of them, the other is not recognized."*

Again we read (Rg V 1.164.30) :

> *"The immortal jīva, though associated with the mortal (body), moves about with its cause while enjoying the fruits."*

Thus we may conclude that in the early Vedic period the *jīva* is a complex entity. It is a body-mind entity with desires and a nature to enjoy the fruits of its actions. It also has an inherent capacity to go to 'higher' or 'lower' regions. The focus of this entity is the immortal *ātman.*

3.6 Yama and eschatology.

The god of death in the Rg V and indeed in the other Vedas and secondary scriptures of Hinduism is Yama. In the early Vedic period he is quite a minor god with only a few hymns addressed to him. In the AV (18.3.13) we find the following passage on Yama :

> *"Worship the son of Vivasvata, the gatherer of men,*
> *with oblations, he who was the first of the mortals*
> *to die, he who first entered this world."*

This is a very significant passage indicating that the son of Vivasvat was a mortal at first, but was the first to die and enter the other world (become an immortal presumably) and that he then became a gatherer of people, i.e. of departed souls; afterwards he was accorded divine honour, i.e. oblations in sacrifices (Bhattacharji 1970 : 48).

Yama's career of apotheosis is recorded in a variety of ways in Vedic literature. It is evident that Yama was an ordinary mortal. Such mortals are raised to the status of gods by the process of going through Vedic sacrifices (*yajña*) and austerities (*tapasyā*). This journey is always fraught with some struggle with the established gods. Yama, having wrested power and authority, elevated himself to the status of a god who by nature became one of the immortals. His immortality was *a fait accompli* in the later Rig Vedic period and it is significant that Yama figures most prominently only in the tenth book of the Rg V and this book was compiled last.

That Yama was the first to die and create a new path and abode (*loka*) for departed souls is evident from the funeral hymn addressed to Yama in the Rg V (10.14.1-2) :

> *"Honour the King with thine oblations, Yama,*
> *Vivasvat's son, who gathers men together, to*
> *travel to the lofty heights above us, who searches*
> *out and shows the path to many. Yama first found*
> *for us a place to dwell in : this pasture never can*
> *be taken from us. Men born on earth tread their*
> *own paths that lead them whither our ancient*
> *ancestors (fathers) have departed."*

It is essential to make a comment on the word *'pitṛ'* which is frequently used in the texts. Several translators have translated it as 'fathers'. While this is a literal translation a more encompassing and useful translation would be 'ancestors'. We may build on this meaning by quoting the AV (5.5.13) which says *'yamah pitṛnamadhipatih'*, 'Yama is the overlord of the

ancestors'. Thus *'pitṛ'* would mean 'ancestors under the command of Yama'. This fuller definition is vital in understanding early Vedic eschatology.

Yama was invoked at Vedic sacrifices. He is invited to come to such sacrifices accompanied by the ancestors in order to bestow benefits to the worshippers (AV 18.35.25). Apart from Yama the ancestors are also invoked for preparing a path and a post-death region (*loka*) for the worshipper (AV 18.34.25). Yama is also besought for happiness and long life and even immortality (Rg V 10.14.14). All such prayers presume a kindly, benevolent god who has passed over to the other side of death and is also occupied with providing the living with longevity and the dead with proper food and shelter. The dead are his companions, whom the living place in his care, trusting him for their well-being in the other world.

3.7 The *loka* of Yama.

When death is about to occur the soul is encouraged by the living (Rg V 10.14.7)

> *"Go forth, go forth upon the ancient pathways*
> *whereon our ancient sires have gone before us."*

This prayer is said for two reasons. Firstly the devotee wants the soul to proceed 'upwards'. Secondly he does not wish the *jīva* to be 'earthbound' in the sense that it would linger in a diseased body (AV 18.4.55-56). The soul is asked to leave behind sin and evil and 'bright with glory wear another body', depart (Rg V 10.14.8.). The living seem to have an intimate connection with the process of dying. Furthermore, they are present at the death bed and offer what they consider encouragement to the *jīva*. The experience of dying and death is very much a part of life. Besides 'the ancient pathways', which are mentioned in various ways in the Vedas, the texts also alludes in a variety of ways to *pitṛloka* – the abode of Yama. *Pitṛloka* is also referred to as *Yamaloka* with the former term being in more common use. It is amply evident that this

loka is a metaphysical entity located in one part of the vast intermediary sphere (*antarikṡaloka*). Its exact location in this sphere is metaphysically described as being in the 'southern' part. The devotee is even asked to face this 'southern' direction when addressing prayers to the ancestors and Yama (Rg V 10.15.6). We are also told that this *loka* is a place for rest. It is adorned with days and beams of light and waters (Rg V 10.14.3) :

> *"Matali prospers there with Kavyas, Yama with*
> *Angiras' son, Brihaspati with Rkvans."*

Matali is a kind of divine being, identified by some commentators with the god Indra whose charioteer was Matali. Kavyas are a class of pious souls of ancient times. The Angirases were the first to perform sacrifices and Rkvans were celestial singers. Thus we find this *loka* inhabited by a variety of *jīvas* each of whom seem to preserve their individuality (Griffith 1976 : 538). Upon arrival at this *loka* the *jīvas* undergo a process of judgement followed by reward or punishment. Of rewards we do not have many records in the early Vedic period, only that the blessed live on with Yama in bliss. The *vasa* cow (a wish-fulfilling metaphysical entity) provides happiness to the *jīva* in Yama's kingdom (AV 18.1.34). The *jīva* is asked to enjoy its fill in this *loka* where it can live unharmed (AV 18.4.31-32).

The above is a view of life for the blessed. While we do not see a clear development of the doctrine of *karma* at this early stage of Vedic history we are however told that the unfortunate *jīvas* are punished. In the initial stage of Vedic literature, i.e. Saṁhitā and early Brāhmaṇa periods, the reward and punishment appear to be final – thus judgement, too, is executed once and for all. Perhaps the only reason one can presume for this final judgement is that this stage precedes the rise of the doctrines of *karma* and reincarnation. It is important to note that at this stage 'immortality' meant that the *jīva* would live 'eternally' in *pitṛloka*. It is only in the

Upanishadic period that we learn that the 'immortality of *pitṛloka*' is only a time span of considerable length and never eternity in the real sense of the word.

After judgement is meted out the good and bad *jīvas* are separated. Bliss or suffering follows. But whereas the pleasure was provided by Yama himself for the good souls, punishment to evil-doers was executed by his agents. Evil spirits dwell with the spirits of the wicked dead (AV 18.2.28), and evil spirits are enemies of men (AV 8.6.5). However, hell as a concept is not found explicitly in the early Vedic literature, except in a few references (Bhattacharji 1970 : 66). The AV (11.4.36) mentions *narakaloka* (hell) but there is no clear reference to hell until the later Upanishadic period. In this respect some of the early eschatological elements of the Vedic period remain vague and nebulous. At a later date more sophisticated and vivid images of hells emerge.

3.8 The evolution of the *jīva* : the implications of sacrifice (*yajña*) and knowledge (*jñāna*).

Mention has been made of the soul's journey to *pitṛloka*. This goal is accomplished largely through Vedic sacrifices and the propitiation of Yama at such sacrifices. Yama is certainly a god pleased by sacrifices (Rg V 10.14.13). The Rg V itself, however, shows us a path beyond *pitṛloka*. The next sphere, *dyuloka*, is attained not by sacrifices alone but by knowledge. This distinction features in a powerful way in Vedic mythology and its analysis is necessary to understand the *jīvas* journey to yet another eschatological goal, *dyuloka*.

The sacrifice in Vedic mythology is represented by the bull, *vṛishabha* (lit. the sprinkler of waters). This brings into prominence the characteristic feature of *antarikśaloka* and therefore *pitṛloka* which are composed of the subtle essence of water and which are achieved through sacrifices. *Jñāna* is represented by the horse. We find Dadhyach (a *ṛṣi*) imparting spiritual

knowledge, the *madhuvidyā* (lit. honeyed knowledge), with a horse's head. The Ashwins who possess the horse are also possessors of this knowledge.

There is also a hymn addressed to the horse Dadhikravan. At the conclusion of this hymn comes the statement, "May he (Dadhikravan) make our mouths fragrant or sweet; may he prolong the days we have to live" (Rg V 14.29.6). The sweetness of the mouth is *madhuvidyā* (honeyed knowledge which obliquely refers to wise speech as well). Following this we have the famous stanza in which the horse is described as *'hamsaḥ śuchih'*, the 'swan of heaven' or the 'sun of heaven' (Rg V 4. 40.5 ; Griffith 1976 : 227). The horse, Dadhikravan, through spiritual knowledge, is elevated to the highest heaven.

Raja (1936 : 32) interprets *soma* as being connected with the gods of ritual and sacrifice (Yama, Indra etc.) and *madhu* as being associated with the gods of knowledge (Surya etc.).

It is only through spiritual knowledge that the *jīva* attains the highest sphere the essence of which is lustre (*tejas*). Dadhikravan having this knowledge and having attained this eschatological goal is referred to as the *'haṁsa'* (swan) homed in lustre' (Rg V 4.40.5).

In *dyuloka* the *jīva* retains its identity and becomes 'immortal'. It is only much later in the Upanishadic period that we also learn that the *'dyuloka* immortality' has its limitations. *Jīvas* live in this sphere for a protracted period enjoying bliss and lustre. But this state, though lengthy, is also impermanent. Thus the Vedic literature refers to two paths : *pitṛyāna* (the southern path to the ancestors and Yama) and *devayāna* (the northern path to the gods in the highest heaven).

3.9 Impermanent nature of *pitṛloka* and *devaloka.*

From the Vedic period to the time when Upanishadic developments were being established there appears a sharp distinction between knowledge (*aparāvidya*) and wisdom (*parāvidya*). Knowledge and it's result was given up as the goal of spiritual life. The journey to heaven was

unacceptable to the Upanishadic *ṛṣis* on account of its impermanent nature. They considered this journey an encumbrance in spiritual life. It was a greater involvement in pleasure and *saṁsāra.* By far the most scathing attack on selfish rituals and the attainment of heavens is to be met with in the Mun. Up. (1.2.7 and 10) :

> *"Unsteady, verily are these boats of the eighteen sacrificial forms, which are said to be inferior karma. The deluded who delight in this as leading to good, fall again into old age and death."*
> *"These deluded men, regarding sacrifices and works of merit as most important do not know any other good. Having enjoyed themselves in the high place of heaven won by good deeds, they enter again this world or a still lower one."*

Here we find the Upanishadic *ṛṣis* stressing three eschatological developments. Firstly, the temporary benefits of sacrificial forms. Secondly, the impermanent nature of heavens and thirdly the fact that after the *jīvas* stay in heaven it is reborn either on earth or on a lower plane. Even with knowledge of the heavens and the gods this cycle continues like a revolving wheel and is designated *saṁsāra.* The main problem encountered by theology and philosophy at this stage was to explore a new route to transcend the time, space and causation elements of *saṁsāra.* The Upanishadic seers see the answer to this quest, not in knowledge but in wisdom, in an intuitive experience of the immortal *ātman* which liberates the *jīva* from time, space and causation.

3.10 Distinction between knowledge (*aparāvidya*) and wisdom (*parāvidya*).

In the Mun. Up. (1.1.3) we find this question being raised by an earnest student to a *ṛṣi* :

kasmin nu bhagavo vijnāte sarvam idam vijñātam bhavati.

"What is that Reality, O blessed one, by knowing which we can know all that there is in this manifest universe?"

The teacher gives a significant reply (Mun. Up. 1.1.4) :

dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido

vadanti parā caiva aparā

"There are two vidyās, or sciences, to be acquired by man; so say the knowers of brahman. One is called parāvidya or higher knowledge (wisdom) and the other is called aparāvidya or ordinary knowledge."

The Ups. call for a study of both these branches of *vidyās*. The *aparāvidyā* consists of the study of the Vedas (including knowledge of the gods and sacrifices), phonetics, grammar, etymology, astronomy and in fact the entire spectrum of empirical knowledge.

What, then, was left to form the category of *parāvidya*? The teacher expounds this exclusive theme indicating the existence of a tremendous field of intuitive wisdom (Mun. Up. : 1.1.5) :

atha parā, yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate.

"That is parāvidya, or wisdom, by which that

imperishable (Reality) is (intuitively) realized."

The ultimate message of the Ups. is to seek an intuitive experience of the *ātman*. Herein lies the ultimate spiritual potential for the *jīvas* final liberation from *saṁsāra*.

CHAPTER 4

The five sheaths (*pañcakośas*) of the soul (*jīva*) : their eschatological significance.

4. Keynote of Taittirīya Upaniṣad.

One of the principle themes of the Tait. Up. is the *pañcakośas* and their relationship to the *ātman*. This theme with its complex interplay of eschatological elements must have developed in the Taittirīya School over decades or centuries until it crystallized in the formation that is evident in the Tait. Up. Not only is this theme the keynote of this Up. but it also forms one of the main approaches to *mokṣa* in the spectrum of early Vedantic development. Furthermore, any examination of this theme will also unlock a clearer understanding of several other soteriological formations that occur in the Ups. The Īśā Up., for example, carries in its opening verse the central message of all the Ups. : the universe (including the *kośas*) is permeated by God and one has to renounce self-will (ego) and its limitations in order to know this divinity. The Mun. Up., after classifying all knowledge into *parā*, higher, and *aparā*, lower, and describing all sciences, arts, literature, and all other empirical knowledge (in which may be included the knowledge of the *kośas*) as *aparā*, proclaims that one knowledge as *parā* 'by which the imperishable changeless reality (of the One behind the many *kośas*) is realized.' The Man. Up. surveys the whole of human experience through a study of the three states of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep, and reveals the *ātman*, the divine focus in man, as *turiya* or the 'Fourth' as it puts it, as pure-consciousness, eternal and non-dual (4.6.1).

The above approaches to truth have several elements which would enjoy greater clarity when viewed against the background of the *pañcakośa* model. The seminal value of this model cannot be over-emphasized.

4.1 The Upanishadic concept of interconnectedness.

The most important characteristic of the Upanishadic worldview is the awareness of the unity and the mutual interrelation of all things and events, the experience of all phenomena in the world as manifestations of a basic oneness. The entire phenomenon is viewed as having a central, still core, 'formless beyond form', but which manifests itself outwardly in a multiplicity of ways. While the centre is still and forms the focus of everything, the periphery, comprising a network of interconnected actions, is always dynamic (Capra 1985: 141). For Vivekananda , "one atom in the universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it." (CW3 1979 : 269). Individual events, as in the case of *karma*, or doctrinal concepts such as the *jīva* or *kośas*, derive their meaning and inherent nature from mutual dependence and are in fact nothing in themselves.

Yet another feature of the above paradigm is that its structures, or to be more accurate, even its microscopic areas and subtlest of dimensions are all very much conscious, alive. Many terms in the Upanishadic literature are laden with this 'aliveness' and have dynamic connotations. The word *brahman*, for example, is derived from the Sanskrit root *bhri* – to grow – and thus suggests an all-pervading reality that is dynamic and alive. The Ups. refer to *brahman* as 'unformed, immortal, moving' (e.g. Br. Up. 2.3.3), thus associating it with motion even though it transcends the subtlest wave of motion.

4.2 Microcosm and macrocosm.

The *ṛṣis* saw no sharp demarcation between the external objective world and the internal subjective world of man. In Vivekananda's view the first questions that arose in the human mind

were about the external world. As the questions went deeper and deeper, the external manifestations failed to satisfy the human mind, and finally the quest turned inward and the question was directed to man's own inner nature (which obviously participated in this exercise). From the macrocosm the question was reflected back to the microcosm; from the external world the question was reflected back to the internal. From analyzing the external world man is led to analyze the internal (CW2 1976 : 212). Thus, even from an analytical point of view, the macrocosm is inseparable from the microcosm.

However the fundamental point in the macrocosm-microcosm relationship is that whatever is to be found in the macrocosm is also to be found in the microcosm. While the elements of the macrocosm are expanded and large their microcosmic features are relatively small. Thus the total of all *jīvas* is the 'universal soul'; the 'universal soul' in its microcosmic dimension is the *jīva*. The universal consciousness (*brahman*) is a macrocosmic entity and its microcosmic feature in the *jīva* is the *ātman*. Thus man is a fragment of the macrocosm. Without an expanded consciousness he remains within the bondage of fragmentation. Liberated from such a fragmentation he realizes a universal oneness.

The *ṛṣi* in the Tait. Up. has skillfully used the concept of the *pañcakośas* to bring out the unity at both the 'micro' and 'macro' levels. This interplay between the 'micro' and 'macro' planes is an effective analytical tool found employed in many important Ups (e.g. Br. Up and the Ch. Up). In the Ups. the 'micro' is known as the *vyaṣṭi* aspect and the 'macro' as the *samaṣṭi* aspect of the holistic universe. By thus juxtaposing the 'micro' and 'macro' levels the Ups. emphasize the fundamental unity behind the manifest complexity.

4.3 Taitttirīya Upaniṣad 3.10.5.

After an elaborate discussion on the individual sheaths of the *jīva* the Tait. Up. then seems to cast a composite definition of the *jīva* and its ultimate goal (*mokṣa*) in a single text (Tait. Up. 3.10.5) :

sa ya evami-uit asmāl lokāt preya, etam

annamayam atmanam upasamkramya, etaṁ

prāṇamayam ātmānam upasaṁkramya, etaṁ

manomayam ātmānam upasaṁkramya, etaṁ

vijñānamayam ātmānam upasaṁkramya, etaṁ

ānandmayam ātmānam upasaṁkramya, imān

lokān kāmānni kāmarupy anusañcaran,

etat sāma gāyannāste

hā vu hā vu hā vu

"He who knows this (brahman), on departing from this world, proceeding unto that self which consists of food, proceeding unto that self which consists of vital energy, proceeding unto that self which consists of mind, proceeding unto that self which consists of understanding, proceeding unto that self which consists of bliss, goes up and down these worlds, eating the food he desires, assuming the form he desires. He sits singing this chant (saman) : Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful!"

Several major translators, commentators and essayists like Radhakrishnan, Hume , Gambhirananda, Mahadevan etc. have rendered the above text in a similar translation thus freeing this area from undue disputes. The opening line of this text is an assumption emerging from the

previous passage (Tait.Up. 10.4): the knower who intuitively knows *brahman* as existing uniformly in the human individual and in the sun, such a seer is identified with the all- knowing *brahman.* It is as a sequel to this macrocosmic assertion that the Tait. Up. (3.10.5) emphasizes the presence of *brahman* in the microcosmic areas of the *pañcakośas.* A knower of this all-pervading *brahman* is filled with wonder at this all-encompassing unity. He sings in mystical rapture :

"Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful!"

4.4.1 *Kośas*

'Kośas' literally means 'sheaths' or 'covering'. Just as a scabbard covers a sword so do the *kośas* covēr (or obscure) the *ātman.*

The word *kośa* does not appear in the text (Tait. Up. 3.10.5). In its place there is the constant use of the word *ātman.* We cannot deduce that the word *kośa* or its conceptual meaning was unknown in this stage of Upanishadic development for the word occurs in an earlier passage (Tait. Up. 1.4.1). The conceptual meaning is also brought out vividly in the Pai. Up. (2.5) of the YV.

The word *ātman* used throughout Tait. Up. 3.10.5 must be understood to mean *kośas* as the text comes within the ambit of an *anuvṛtti* (assumed, taken for granted on account of previous discussions). It would appear that the word *ātman* is purposely used in this text in order to show the interpenetrating nature of consciousness *(ātman)* within each *kośa.* At the fundamental level, that is, beyond the empirical workings of the *kośas*, the *ātman* forms the substratum of all the *kośas.*

The *kośas* have a twofold function. Firstly, as 'coverings' of the *ātman* they have their own focus of ego which generates desires for each *kośa.* Such desires like hunger, thirst, the

craving for various types of pleasures, etc., are considered to be manifestations of the ego and not the *ātman* which in fact transcends the entire working of the ego. These desires are *karma* generating agents which bind the *jīva* to *samsāra*. The ego is therefore an encumbrance for the attainment of *mokṣa*. This, however, is only one dimension of the *pañcakośa* model. It is a dimension which is often stressed leaving researchers with the notion that limitations are the only components of the *pañcakośas*. There could be nothing further from the truth. In another dimension of the *pañcakośas* there lies an unusual eschatological profile comprising a series of liberating mechanisms lodged at each *kosa* and which when invoked, individually and collectively, could transform the bound *jīva* into a *jīvanmukta*. It is in this capacity that we discover the supreme value of the *pañcakośas*. They contain an intrinsic key to unlock the soul's potential and lead it to total emancipation from *saṁsāra*.

The Ups. contain several interconnected models which reveal diverse pathways to the *ātman*. The *pañcakośa* model, apart from being a microcosmic formulation, is one which involves the entire psycho-physical being in a holistic sense. One cannot employ a fragmentary analysis and study each *kośa* separately. It is only with a *pañcakośa* topology that each sheath may be disentangled, observed, and studied.

4.4.2 Arrangement of the *kośas*.

The *pañcakośas* are analyzed as follows: the gross physical body or sheath, (*annamayakośa*), the sheath of *prāna* or vital energy (*prānamayakośa*), the sheath of the mind (*manomayakośa*), the sheath of the intellect (*buddhi, vijñānamayakośa*), and the sheath of bliss (*ānandamayakośa*).

These *kośas*, for the purposes of Vedantic classification, are divided into three categories (Pai. Up. 2.5) :

2.4.2.1 *Sthūla śarīra* (gross body) comprising the *annamayakośa.*

2.4.2.2 *Sūkṣma śarīra* or *linga śarīra* (subtle body) comprising the *prānamayakośa, manomayakośa* and the *vijñānamayakośa.*

2.4.2.3 *Kāraṇa śarīra* (causal body) comprising the *ānandamayakośa.*

Due to each sheath having a different degree of subtlety or 'density' the arrangement is such that as they proceed from the outer to the inner nature of man 'the succeeding one fills the preceding one' - *tena eṣa pūrnah.* (Tait. Up. 2.2.1) They are mentioned as one being inside the other like the segments of a collapsible telescope, the physical sheath being the outermost and the sheath of bliss being the innermost. The inner sheaths are subtler than the outer and as a fine substance permeates a denser one, so each 'inner' sheath permeates all the 'outer'. Thus, when it is said that the sheath of the vital energy is 'inside' the gross physical body, it actually means that the former is subtler than the latter and therefore permeates it. The *ātman* is infinitely subtle. It is completely detached from the sheaths while permeating them all (Nikhilananda 1968 : 91).

4.4.3 Meditation on the *pañcakośas* : techniques and reasons.

In the Tait. Up. there are repeated meditations on the *pañcakośas.* Meditation, in order to be successful, must have an intelligible technique, a direction and an ultimate purpose. The *pañcakośa* model fulfills these requirements, as we shall presently see, and establishes itself as one of the most important formulations for meditation in the *śruti* texts.

The Tait. Up. informs us that the *kosas* are to be meditated upon as having the images of birds. In the ancient Vedic fire sacrifices the altars were usually arranged in the form of a bird, such as a hawk, with outstretched wings. These physical altars must have mingled with the mystic insights of the seer resulting in a culturally accepted model for inner meditation (Tait. Up. 2.1.1 ; Radhakrishnan 1980 : 543).

The seeker of the *ātman* utilized these concentric bird images as the first set of psychological tools for his exploration. This symbolism has gained acceptance in the Upanishadic period for two main reasons. Firstly, it is a product of the fire sacrifices of the early Vedic period, which evidently, was a familiar sight to the Upanishadic seers. Secondly, the Upanishadic seers felt that gross sacrifices should lead to the process of penetration into more subtle levels of manifestation which implies a disengagement from grosser levels.

Each sheath takes on the image of a bird which in turn becomes concentrically arranged in the bird patterns with the *ātman* as its focus. The commentators have explained that these are but imaginary representations of the *kośas*.

The *annamayakośa*, for example, should be contemplated as the altar of the sacred fire in the form of a bird (Tait. Up. 1.2) . the head of the human physical body corresponds to the head of the bird, the arms to the outstretched wings, the middle portion to the trunk and the remaining portions to the tail.

After 'locating' the *annamayakośa* the aspirant is then advised to proceed on a journey of inward exploration in order to understand the remaining *kośas*. This process naturally involves a special capacity of discrimination (*viveka*) – the ability to differentiate one *kośa* from the other. The faculty of discrimination must be correctly applied to serve a specific end. Discrimination, for example, should not lead to an endless analysis of the *kośas*. Its function lies in a step by step

evaluation of each *kośa* and upon gaining an understanding of each *kośa* he should move on progressively to the *ānandamayakośa*. Ultimately, on receding behind these *kosas* he discovers and realizes the *ātman* which in turn sets him free from all the limitations of the *pañcakośas*. He becomes a *jīvanmukta*.

This form of meditation is also effective in another sense : on account of the ego man has the tendency to associate the *ātman* with one or more of the *pañcakośas*. The body feels that it is consciousness and is of paramount importance. The other *kośas* are associated with similar thoughts which are all manifold expressions of the ego (*ahaṅkāra*). The fundamental purpose of this meditation in so far as its technique is concerned is to make the meditator realize, on the one hand, that there is a constant separation between each *kośa* and the *ātman* and, on the other, that it is on account of the one *ātman* alone that all *kośas* function.

Furthermore, the kosas represent limited knowledge. The ātman is knowledge itself. Since limited knowledge, especially if it become solidified, is stubborn, persistent and difficult to dispel, the Vedantic teachers have used considerable time and literary effort to explain the limitations of each *kośa* and the need for the aspirant to realize these limitations in contrast with the unlimited nature of the *ātman* (Nikhilananda 1968 : 92 ; Shastry 1980 : 384).

The *pañcakośas* cannot be totally relegated to a position of being mere fetters that bind the *jīva* to *saṁsāra*. This view was emphasized in medieval Hinduism with the result that it produced a life-negating dimension to religion. Some of this thinking persists even to this day. However the Neo-Vedantic movements tend to have a life-affirming spirit and as such they emphasize the *mokṣa*-potential of the *pañcakośas*.

4.5 Upanishadic method for raising levels of consciousness.

The spiritual journey in the Tait. Up. is from the gross to the subtle. The commencement with the *annamayakośa* implies the pronounced 'outgoing' nature of the *jīva*. The Ka. Up. (2.1.1) mentions the limitations of this stage in contrast with the remaining journey to the *ātman*:

parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhūs

tasmāt parān paśyati nāntarātman,

kaścid dhīraḥ pratyag-ātmānam aikṣad

āvṛtta cakṣur amṛtatvam icchan

"The Self (ātman) cannot be sought through the senses. The Self-existent Lord pierced the openings (of the senses) outward; therefore man perceives (things) outwardly, but not the inward Self. A certain dhira (wise man) desirous of immortality, turned his senses (including the mind) inward and realized the inner Self."

Commenting on this passage Shankara feels that the Creator cursed or injured the senses by turning them outward, *hiṁsitavān hananaṁ kṛtavān* (Shankara on Ka. Up. 2.2.2). Radhakrishnan (1990 : 630) disagrees with this view and points out that such observations are disparaging to the legitimate use of the senses. Furthermore, they lend an unworldly character to our work. The Ups. call for the control and not the suppression of the senses. Yet this outgoing nature stands in radical contrast to an inner journey. Radhakrishnan (1990 : 630) suggests that we must bring about an inversion of the natural orientation of our consciousness. This does not make the process unnatural. In fact it is to discover another aspect of human potential.

Vivekananda (CW1 1984 : 131) makes an unusual departure from the traditional views by stating :

> *"Some say that by controlling internal nature we control everything. Others, that by controlling external nature we control everything. Carried to the extreme both are right, because in nature there is no such division as internal or external. These are fictitious limitations that never existed. The externalities and internalities are destined to meet at the same point , when both reach the extreme of their knowledge. Just as a physicist when he pushes his knowledge to the limits, finds it melting away into metaphysics, so a metaphysician will find that what he calls mind and matter are but apparent distinctions, the reality being One."*

This is one of Vivekananda's unique contributions to Neo-Vedanta. He was the first Hindu philosopher in modern times who accepted both the external and internal ways of investigation as equally valid means to the realization of the ultimate Reality. He not only saw no contradiction between them but found them complimentary (Jitatmananda 1986 : 59). The external method of investigation has found favour in particle physics to such an extent that some exponents of this branch of science have already developed a world-view akin to that of Vedanta.

Returning to the *pañcakośa* model we still notice that there must be some 'leap' from the external world of man to the first step of his inner being. The Ka. Up. (1.3.12) mentions reason (*buddhi*) as the impetus for this 'leap':

> *eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu gūdho 'tmā na prakāsate*
>
> *dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā*
>
> *sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ*

> *"This ātman (being) hidden in all beings, is not manifest (to all). But (It) can be realized by means of the sharp and subtle reason of those who have been trained to inquire into and realize subtle truths."*

The knowledge of the *ātman* is not apparent to all. This passage gives the reason for this as being *gūḍaḥ*, 'it is subtle, hidden'. It is a mysterious presence covered by the *pañcakośas*, a veritable 'imprisoned splendour' to borrow a phrase from Robert Browning's *Paracelsus*. Its infinite attractiveness is not realized at the surface experience of empirical thought. It is unknown at this level but may be attained by those whose reason is refined or purified (Shankara on Ka. Up. 1.3.12).

Apart from lauding reason as the principle agent that promotes this journey the same Ka. Up. (1.2.23) declares, "this Self cannot be attained by reason". Throughout this journey we confront paradoxes. When resolved they invariably point to a higher goal. Reconciling these Katha Upanishadic paradoxes Vivekananda states (CW7 1972 : 100) :

> *"Religion is above reason, supernatural. Faith is not belief, it is the grasp on the ultimate, an illumination . . . Stick to your own reason until you reach something higher; and you will know it to be higher, because it will not jar with reason . . . All religion is going beyond reason but reason is the only guide to get there. Instinct is like ice, reason is the water and inspiration is the subtlest form of vapour, one follows the other."*

On understanding the role of reason the Ka. Up. (1.3.13) then gives us another Vedantic key to unlock the process of subjective penetration:

yacchet vāk manasī prājñah

tat yacchet jnāna ātmani

jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet

tat yacchet śānta ātmani .

"Let the prājña (wise man) merge the speech in the mind, the mind in the intellect; let him merge the intellect in the cosmic mind, and (finally) merge that cosmic mind in the Self of peace (ātman)."

This concept of merging grosser realizations with subtler ones until the infinitely subtle *ātman* is reached is the Upanishadic technique to explore the subtle world of the human person. The Ups. do not give fine details of this process. For Dasgupta (1992 : 33) "this change of the mind from the objective to the subjective does not carry with it in the Upanisads any elaborate philosophical discussions, or subtle analysis of mind. It comes there as a matter of direct perception, and the conviction with which the truth has been grasped cannot fail to impress the readers".

In the concluding part of this meditation the *jīva* must go beyond all images in the mind, all workings of the intellect, and by this process of abstraction the *jīva* is rapt above itself and flows into God (*ātman)* in whom are peace and fullness. By shutting out all external sensory input and emptying it of all distracting thoughts, the mind is enabled to concentrate on its own subtlest dimension – the *ātman* (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 628).

4.6 The *annamayakośa.*

The physical body which may be perceived and analyzed by the five senses is the *annamayakośa* (*anna* meaning food). It is so designated because it is the product of food, lives on food, and dies without food. It is also said to be 'filled with the essence of food'(*annarasamaya*) (Tait. Up. 2.2.5).

4.6.1 Vedantic view of the *annamayakosa.*

The physical body is so predominant in our consciousness that it is often assumed to be the only body we have. The *sūkṣma śarīra* and the *kāraṇa śarīra* are largely ignored. Vedanta teaches that this sensate culture, in which the physical body is the focus is the cause of stagnation – an incapacity to explore and use the larger potential in man.

Being identified with the physical body the *jīva* experiences the external universe. This is the position in the waking state of human beings. There are , however, times when this experience is shut off. When the *jīva* recedes from body-consciousness in the dream sleep state the external universe is closed to its consciousness.

Shankara states, "Know this gross body to be like a house to the householder, on which rests man's entire dealing with the eternal world" (VC 90). Just as the physical body serves as the medium of waking experience, so does the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) serve as a medium of dream experience and the causal body (*kārana śarīra*) as the medium of dreamless sleep experience (Satprakashananda 1981 : 50).

According to the Vedantic classification the five organs of perception (*jñāna indrīyas*) (i.e. ears, skin, eyes, tongue, and nose) and the five organs of action (*karma indrīyas*) (i.e. mouth, hands, feet and the organs of evacuation and procreation), by which we deal with the external world, are evidently located in the physical body. But these bodily organs are not complete in themselves. They have their mental counterparts.

Shankara's view is that the physical body is composed of seven ingredients - marrow, bone, fat, flesh, blood, skin, and cuticle, and consisting of the following limbs and their parts - legs, thighs, chest, arms, the back and the head. He also adds that it is the seat of delusion in which the ego-sense of 'I and mine' are operative (VC 72-73). Shankara's classification is broad

and is only meant to serve as a means to locate and grasp the nature of the *annamayakosa.* It is not a study in anatomy.

It must be pointed out that there are times when Shankara speaks disparagingly about the physical body. This is his technique to jolt the aspirant's mind out of body-consciousness. The Ups. recognize the uniqueness of the human body and extol its spiritual features in several passages. The Ka. Up. (2.2.1) refers to the gross body as 'the city with eleven gates':

> *puram ekādaśa - dvāram ajasyāvakra - cetasah'*
>
> *anusṭhāya na socati vimuktaśca vimucyate.*
>
> *There is a city with eleven gates belonging to the unborn one of unwavering consciousness (ātman). He who meditates on Him grieves no more. Released (from the bonds of ignorance, desire, karma, etc.) he becomes free."*

The eleven gates of the *annamayakośa* are the two eyes, two ears, two nostrils, mouth the reproductive and excretory organs, the naval and the opening on the crown of the head (saggital suture). These orifices have a special relevance in this aspect of Hindu eschatology. It is said that the *jīva* upon attaining *mokṣa* departs from the orifice known as the *vidṛti* (corresponding to the anatomical saggital suture) leaving the physical behind. Souls (*jīvas*) that are yet to attain *mokṣa* depart from other orifices (Satprakashananda 1981 : 50 ; Radhakrishnan 1990 : 636). The BG (4.13) has enumerated 'nine gates'. The important point in this enumeration, be it eleven or nine 'gates', is to see the *ātman* as the focus of this 'city' of the *annamayakośa.* It is on account of the *ātman* that the body functions, just as the king's presence in his capital makes the city functional. The Ups. thus stress the unique qualities of the human body as an apt vehicle for *mokṣa* (Ai. Up. 1.3.3).

4.6.2 Location of the *ātman* in the *annamayakośa.*

From ancient times consciousness has been associated with the brain or the heart. Charaka and Susruta, the chief medical authorities of ancient India, regarded the heart as the seat of consciousness. Aristotle held a similar view. In the Yoga school as well as in the Tantric writings the seat of consciousness is the brain (Seal 1915 : 218-219). There are some differences in views.

The Vedanta is clear on this issue (Ka. Up. 2.3.17) :

aṇguṣṭhamātraḥ puruṣo'antarātma

sadā janānām hṛdaye saṅniviṣṭaḥ

ṭam svac charirat pravrhen muñjad

iveṣīkām dhairyena

tam vidyāc chukram amṛtam tam

vidyāc chukram amṛtam.

"The puruṣa (or ātman) the size of a thumb, the inner Self, abides always in the hearts of men. Him one should draw out (locate) with skill, from the body, (as one may do the wind from the reed). Him one should know as the pure, the immortal, yea, Him one should know as the pure, the immortal."

The Ups. are at great pains to explain that the *ātman* is not a gross entity located in the region of the physical heart. The physical heart is simply the centre of our being, the focal point of meditation, where the seat of consciousness (*ātman*) is located with reference to the structures of the *annamayakośa.*

4.6.3 *Annamayakośa* : physiological basis for *mokṣa.*

The Ups. and indeed later Hinduism are unanimous in stating that *mokṣa* is the privilege of human life. 'Man is well formed, indeed. Man is truly fit for righteous deeds.' (Ai. Up. 1.2.3) The Srimad Bhagavatam (11.9.29) urges man to utilize the human body for *mokṣa :*

> *"The wise man having after many births obtained this extremely rare human body, which though delicate is yet conducive to man's Supreme Good, should forthwith strive for moksa before the body, which is always subject to death, chances to fall away; for sense-enjoyment is obtainable in any body."*

While the Upanishadic seers and several subsequent teachers emphasized the value of the human body this area of interest is by no means exhausted. The horizons of knowledge have an unusual potential for expansion and with the passage of time even the human body becomes an object of review and re-evaluation.

Modern neurology has pointed out that from the stage of the higher mammals to man nature has been developing and perfecting the mechanism of a built-in equilibrium, thermostatic to begin with and homeostatic later. Walter (1953 : 16) draws our attention to the following observations in neurology :

> *The acquisition of internal temperature control, thermostasis, was a supreme event in neural, indeed in all natural history. It made possible the survival of mammals on a cooling globe. This was its general importance in evolution. Its particular importance is that it completed, in one section of the brain, an automatic system of stabilization for the vital functions of the organism - a condition known as homeostasis. With this arrangement, other parts of the brain are left free for functions not immediately related to the vital engine or the senses, for functions surpassing the wonders of homeostasis itself."*

After hinting at the above potential of the human brain Walter (1953 : 16) says that this potential is epitomized in a famous saying of the French physiologist Claude Bernard : *La fixite*

du milieu interieur est la condition de la vie libre. (A fixed interior milieu is the condition necessary for the free life).

Developing this theory further Walter (1953 : 16) states :

> *"Those who had the privilege of sitting under Sir Joseph Barcroft at Cambridge owe much to him for his explanation of this dictum and its application to physiological research. We might otherwise have been scoffers ; for "the free life" is not a scientific expression. He translates the sayings into simple questions and guided us to the answers.*
> *"What has the organism gained", he asked, "by the constancy of temperature, constancy of hydrogen-ion concentration, constancy of water, constancy of sugar, constancy of oxygen, constancy of calcium and the rest?" With his gift for quantitative expression, it was all in the day's work for him to demonstrate the individual intricacies of the various exquisitely balanced feedback mechanisms. But I recall in his manner a kind of modest trepidation, as if he feared we might ridicule his flight of fancy, when he gave us this illustration of homeostasis and its peculiar virtue :*
> *' "How often have I watched the ripples on the surface of a still lake made by a passing boat, noted their regularity and admired the patterns formed when two such ripple - systems meet; . . . but the lake must be calm . . . . To look for high intellectual development in a milieu whose properties have not become stabilized, is to seek . . . ripple- patterns on the surface of the stormy Atlantic." '*

Homeostasis as a fixed interior milieu is not an end in itself. It is just a prerequisite for life forging ahead to higher and higher physical and psychological evolutionary levels. The highest level to be reached is the perfect freedom of the human soul (*mokṣa)* (Ranganathananda 1987 : 219). Walter (1953 : 16) feels that the physical homeostasis of organic evolution is the physiological basis of *mokṣa* :

> *'And once again, as new horizons open, we become aware of old landmarks. The experience of homeostasis, the perfect mechanical calm which it allows the brain, has been known for two or three thousand years, under various appellations. It is the physiological aspect of all the perfectionist faiths - nirvāna, the abstraction of the Yogi, the peace that passeth understanding, the derided, "happiness that lies within"; it is a state of grace in which disorder and disease are mechanical slips and errors.'*

The above observations have been added to this research on account of the encouraging number of explorations now being undertaken with an inter-disciplinary approach. This permits new vistas of knowledge to open up on a single subject adding new light and indeed a fresh spirit to our existing knowledge. The *annamayakośa* may have a plethora of mysteries which we are yet to see.

4.6.4 *Annamayakośa* – an ephemeral object.

Dependent upon food for its existence the *annamayakośa* endures as long as it can assimilate nourishment. It obeys the laws of nature and exhibits ephemeral qualities pertaining to weight, colour, form, strength, etc. The Upanishadic teachers are at great pains to stress the transitory nature of the body in contrast with the self-existent and external nature of the *ātman.* As such they point out that the sensate individual, ignorant of spiritual values, identifies himself completely with the body; the book-learned consider themselves a combination of body, mind and the Self (*ātman*); but the sages endowed with discrimination, know the *ātman* as utterly distinct from the body, mind, and ego (Nikhilananda 1968 : 92). Thus we notice a progressive ontological development, the final phase of which lies in the concept of *mokṣa.*

Two distinct schools of thought have developed regarding the *annamayakośa.* Shankara and the proponents of medieval Hinduism have a strong tendency to speak disparagingly about the physical body. They consider it to be one of the main causes of misery and repeated births, and deaths (*saṁsāra*). Consider, for example, the following view of Shankara (VC 87) :

> *"This gross body is to be deprecated for it consists of skin, flesh, blood, arteries and veins, fat, marrow and bones, and is full of other offensive things."*

Understandably, Shankara uses this approach to wean the aspirant away from body-consciousness to a larger spiritual awareness. Critics, however, feel that he has been too harsh in

his judgement of the body. Furthermore, this posture has suffused medieval Hinduism with a sense of otherworldliness.

Vivekananda on the other hand departs from this long-standing tradition and in so doing he brings yet another dimension to Neo-Vedanta (CW6 1978 : 4) :

> *"I do not mean that those who want to search after truth through external nature are wrong, nor those who want to search after truth through internal nature are higher. These are two modes of procedure. Both of them must live; both of them must be studied; and in the end we shall find that they meet. We shall see that neither is the body antagonistic to the mind, nor the mind to the body, although we find many persons who think that this body is nothing. In old times, every country was full of people who thought this body was only a disease, a sin, or something of that kind. Later on, however, we see how, as it was taught in the Vedas, this body melts into the mind, and the mind into the body."*

Apart from Vivekananda many other eminent philosophers and theologians of the Neo-Vedantic era, like the seers of the Ups., have taken a more positive view of the *annamayakośa*. Its potential for *mokṣa* must be emphasized rather than its limitations for *saṁsāra*. The Neo-Vedantic approach lies in its life-affirming attitude.

4.7 The *prāṇamayakośa*.

Before attempting a definition of the *prāṇamayakośa* it is essential to know the meaning of *prāṇa*. Several translators have used different words in their endeavours to capture the spirit of '*prāṇa*' : vital force, vital air, life-force, bio-energy, etc. Read together these definitions give us a clearer picture of *prāṇa*. Yet, to these word-meanings, it is necessary to juxtapose the Upanishadic spirit of *prāṇa*. Here *prāna* is identified with *brahman*. This identification is there to show that *brahman* is the ultimate life-force which sustains everything. *Brahman* is the spirit of *prāṇa* and so no formulation of a meaning would be complete without this dimension in place.

For Vivekananda (CW1 1984 : 146-147) *prāṇa* is the vital force, the background energy of the universe which produces all other manifestations of energy and force. "It is the *prāṇa* that is manifesting as motion; it is the *prāṇa* that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is the *prāṇa* that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought down to the lowest force, everything is but a manifestation of *prāṇa*. The sum total of all the forces in the universe, mental or physical, when resolved back to their original state is called *prāṇa.*"

Prāna pervades all bodies from the unicellular organism to the cosmic body (*hiraṇyagarbha).* "He (*prāṇa*) is equal to a grub, equal to a gnat, equal to an elephant, equal to these three worlds, equal to the universe" (Br. Up. 1.3.22). Thus we find that *prāṇa* pervades the entire empirical universe. There is a mutual interdependence between the macrocosmic *prāṇa* and its microcosmic counterpart.

Applied to the individual, *prāṇa* is a more specific entity. It is limited to the shape of the human frame. It is an 'interdependent' energy, a vital force without which the body made of *anna*, food, dries up (Br. Up. 5. 12). *Prāna* is seen in this context not as *brahman*, but a more limited principle of life, since if food is not obtained, then the *prāṇa* departs from the body. There is also a mutual interdependence between food and *prāṇa* in the *jīva*. In fact food sustains *prāṇa.*

The Tait. Up. which uses the image of a bird to describe the physical body gives a similar account for the *prāṇamayakośa* (Tait. Up. 2.3.1). Commenting on this passage Shankara states that the *prāṇamayakośa* and the other three infilling *kośas* are not actually made up of a head and so on, yet as the molten metal poured into a mould takes the form of that mould, so the *prāṇamayakośa* and the other *kośas* which lie within the *annamayakośa* may be imagined to be

moulded after the latter (Shankara on Tait. Up. 2.3.1). Such a representation indicates that the *prāṇamayakośa* permeates the *annamayakośa.*

4.7.1 The five divisions of the *prāṇamayakośa.*

In the Pr. Up. (3.1) it is recounted how *prāna* is born of the *ātman* (*ātman eṣa prāṇo jāyate*). As in the case of a person there is his shadow, so this *prāṇa* is the shadow of the *ātman.* The Pr. Up. (3.2-16) then proceeds to enumerate the fivefold functions of the *prāṇa* which work due to the immediate presence of the *ātman.*

The five *prāṇas* and their functions are enumerated as follows : *prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna,* and *samāna,* viz. the vital force which rises upwards (*prāṇa*); that which moves downwards (*apāna)*; that by which these two are held (*vyāna*); that which carries the grosser material of food to *apāna* and brings the subtler material to each limb (*samāna*) and that which brings up or carries down what has been drunk or eaten (*udāna*) (Grimes 1989 : 264). While the foregoing translations are more literal in nature there are, however, more specific functions of the *prāṇas*, which upon evaluation would lend more vivid definitions to these words.

In the context of this division *prāṇa* is the vital force operative in the lungs and heart. It is responsible for respiration and circulation. It also activates all other divisions of the *prāṇa. Apāna* functions below the heart and helps in the elimination of waste matter. *Samāna* is located in the digestive organs and is involved in the assimilation of food and drink. *Vyāna* (lit. the pervading one) is designated so because it pervades the entire body and operates on the nerves. It regulates *prāṇa* and *apāna* as their nexus. It is responsible for speech and work of great strength (Pr. Up. 3.2-16 ; Satprakashananda 1981 : 106).

The *udana* has a special relevance to eschatology. The *udana* functions upward from the feet to the head. It promotes growth, height, and maintains the bodily heat. At the time of physical death the *annamayakosa* drops away. This process is achieved by the *udana* directing the other *kosas* out of one of the eleven gates (Ka. Up. 2.2.1). This *prana* then leads the *kosas* to whatever region (*lokas*) their *karmas* would take them to. The following passage gives an overview of this goal (Pr. Up. 3.7) :

athaikayordhva udānaḥ

puṇyeṇa puṇyalokaṁ nayati

pāpena pāpam ubhābhyām

eva manuṣya-lokaṁ.

"Now then udāna, when it is in its upward movement, leads to a virtuous world as a result of virtue, to an evil world as a result of sin, and to the human world as a result of both."

Thus, from an overall picture we glean that *prāna* pervades the entire *annamayakośa* and functions in a direct way with all the anatomical structures and physiological processes. While all five *prāṇas* function in an interconnected manner it is the *udāna* that is responsible for the death process.

4.7.2 The *prānas* and *nādīs* : eschatological significance.

The term *nāḍī* is another Sanskrit word which is difficult to render into English. According to Dasgupta (1952 : 345) 'they (*nāḍīs*) are some kind of ducts, through which blood and other secretions flow, and many of these are extremely fine, being about a thousandth part of

a hair in breadth." Furthermore, the Ups. state that these *nāḍīs* are filled with white, blue, yellow, green and red fluids (Br. Up. 4.3.20).

As Satprakashananda (1977 : 106) points out that the analysis of the human system by the medical authorities of ancient India is rather psycho-physiological than anatomical. This may be one of the reasons why their physiological or anatomical terms do not correspond with those of modern medical science. He further adds that *nāḍīs* within this context means "a vital channel of transportation or communication in the psycho-physical system".

Since these *nāḍīs* originate in the region of the heart some translators have rendered them as 'arteries'. Radhakrishnan has translated them as 'arteries' in some texts and 'veins' in others. However, he leaves no doubt that 'arteries' and 'veins' are elements beyond the gross blood-vessels.

Vivekananda uses the term 'nerve fibres' but makes it abundantly clear that by 'nerves' he does not mean the physical anatomical structures of the 'nerves'. Furthermore, he states that these 'nerve fibres' are 'channels through which afferent and efferent currents travel.' They are channels in which pranic energy and mental impulses travel (CW1 1984 : 1963).

These *nāḍīs* form a network throughout the body (Pr. Up. 3.6) :

hrdy hy eṣa ātmā, atraitad ekaśatam nāḍīnām,

tāsām śatam śatam ekaikasyām dvāsaptatir

dvāsaptatih pratiśākhā nāḍī sahasrāṇi bhavanti

āsu vyānaś carati.

"This subtle body (associated with the ātman) is surely in the heart. There are a hundred and one of the (chief) nerves there. Each of them has a hundred divisions. Each branch is divided into seventy-two thousand sub-branches. Within them moves the diffused vital force (vyāna)."

At the time of the physical death of the individual the *udāna prāṇa* directs the remaining *kośas* through the respective *nāḍī* to one of the 'eleven gates' which would form the exit for the subtle *kośas*. In the case of an enlightened seer this exit is made through the *suṣumnā nādī* and out through the *vidṛti* aperture on the crown of the head (Mai. Up. 6.21). For such a soul his microcosmic *kośas* merge with their macrocosmic counterparts. He is thus free from births and deaths (*saṁsāra*).

For the unenlightened soul the subtle *kośas*, directed by their *karmas* and the force of the *udāna*, move along other *nādīs* and depart from one of the other 'gates'. The Ka. Up. (2.3.16) states:

śatam caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyas

tāsām mūrdhānam abhiniḥsṛtaikā

tayordhvam āyann amṛtatvam eti

viṣvaṅṅ ānya utkramaṇe bhavanti

"The nerves of the heart are a hundred and one in number;
One of them leads up to the crown of the head. Going upward
through that nerve one gets immortality. The others that have
different directions become the cause of death (i.e. saṁsāra,
births and deaths)."

Thus we notice that of all the manifestations of *prāṇa* the *udāna* has an important place in the *pañcakośa* scheme of eschatology.

4.7.3 *Prāṇa* in alternate states of consciousness.

Apart from the superconscious state (*turīya*) which transcends all *kośas* the Ups. speak of the waking state (*jāgrat*), the dream state (*svapna*) and the dreamless sleep state (*suṣupti*). *Prāṇa* functions in the latter three states.

The waking state is experienced by an awareness of the *annamayakośa*. It is the *prāṇas* which vitalize this *kośa*. The dream state is experienced by the subtle body (*prāṇamaya, manomaya* and *vijñānamaya kośas*). During dream sleep the *prāṇas* still function at the bodily level since respiration, digestion etc. are still being carried out. Dreamless sleep occurs at the level of the *ānandamayakośa*. Even here it is the *prāṇa* that assists in bringing about this state.

Different Ups. give various angles of explanation for the functioning of the *prāṇas* in these states. The Sub. Up. (4.1) informs us that there are ten hollows in the region of the heart. Again, this does not refer to the physical heart. In these hollows are established the chief *prāṇas*. When the flow of the *jīvas* mind is yoked with *prāṇa* such a condition makes the person experience a state of consciousness in which he sees vast open scenes of rivers and cities. This *prāṇa* is obviously functioning through certain *nāḍīs* associated with this state. Likewise when this attention is yoked to *vyāna* the person has visions of gods and seers. When yoked with *apāna* he sees semi-divine and even evil beings. When yoked with *udāna* he sees the heavenly worlds and their deities. When yoked with *samāna* he sees the heavenly world with wealth of all kinds (Sub. Up. 4.1 ; Radhakrishnan 1990 : 867 - 868). These states of consciousness form a vast potential for exploration, especially in the field of parapsychology. The Ups., however, caution us that all these states of consciousness, however gratifying they may be to the *jīva*, are in no way akin to the goal (*turīya*). They are only mile-stones on a journey to spiritual enlightenment.

4.7.4 Reasons for the study of the *prāṇamayakośa.*

From the foregoing study it can be gleaned that the *prāṇamayakośa* has some useful eschatological elements lodged within it. The functions of the *nāḍīs* and the *udāna* have a special relevance to *mokṣa*.

It is evident from literary sources that the Upanishadic era and even its subsequent period produced thinkers who considered the body as the ultimate Reality. Likewise, there were philosophers who considered *prāṇa* or one of the other *kośas* to be the ultimate life principle. This plurality of consciousness must have been a vexing problem to the Upanishadic seers. The Tait. Up. spares no effort in pointing out that the *kośas* are not consciousness (*ātman*), they only reflect consciousness.

In keeping with this line of argument Shankara is of the view that the *prānamayakośa* is to be studied as an entity dwelling in the *annamayakośa*. When the idea that the *prānamayakośa* is the life principle (*ātman*) is deeply ingrained the illusion that the body is one's *ātman* disappears. Then there arises the conviction that the *annamayakośa* is the body, and the *prānamayakośa* is one's own Self (*ātman*) dwelling in that body, there being no room for two selves. Through this technique the *prānamayakośa* will serve to prove that the body is not consciousness (*ātman*) (Shankara on Tait. Up. 3.3.1). Radhakrishnan (1990 : 555) states 'from materialism we pass into vitalism'. This process of discrimination is followed with respect to the other *kosas*.

4.8 The *manomayakośa.*

Prakṛti or primordial nature comprises matter vibrating at different intensities. The *annamayakośa* vibrates at a gross level. The *manas* (mind), also an integral part of *prakṛti*, vibrates at a more subtle level. For Vivekananda, "the mind and body are like two layers in the same substance, moving at different rates of speed. Relatively, one being slower and the other quicker." (CW1 1984 : 299). The mind is made of the subtle essence of food (Ch. Up. 6.5.1.) :

Annamaśitam tredhā vidhīyate,

tasya yaḥ sthaviṣṭho dhātus tat purīṣam bhavati,

yo madhyamas tan māṁsam,

yo'ṇiṣthas tan manaḥ.

"Food when eaten becomes divided into three parts. What is its grossest ingredient becomes faeces; its middle ingredient becomes flesh; and its subtlest portion becomes the mind."

In this approach food is analyzed into three constituent parts consisting of refuse matter rejected by the organism, nutritive ingredients assimilated by the physiological system and the subtle essence which goes to make up the mind (*manas*). The Ups. mention that the subtle essence enters the heart and then moves into the fine *nāḍīs* like the *hitā nāḍī* and sustains the senses and their basis, the mind (Br. Up. 4.3.20 ; Swahananda 1980 : 432)

It is important to note here that the Vedic conception of the mind is materialistic. Shankara (on Ch. Up. 6.5.1) argues that the mind being produced by food is material, elemental and not impartible and eternal.

A significant Sanskrit term for the mind is *antaḥkaraṇa* (the internal instrument). This defines the position of the mind and also informs us that it is an instrument functioning due to the consciousness of the *ātman* present in it.

Shankara (on Tait. Up. 2.2.1) states that the *manomayakośa* is an aggregate of *vṛttis* (thought impressions) such as desires, fancies etc. These aggregates are enumerated as follows (Br. Up 1.5.3) :

"Desire, determination, doubt, faith, lack of faith,
steadfastness, lack of steadfastness, shame, intelligence,
fear, all this is truly mind."

The above *vṛttis* comprise a sample of the elements that go to make up the *manomayakośa*. Other Ups. refer to added qualities as well (Mait. Up. 3.5). The mind is said to be infinite on account of its countless modifications (*anantam vai manaḥ*) (Br. Up. 3.1.9).

For Radhakrishnan (1990 : 555) *manas* is 'rudimentary mind'. It is a pool of thought possibilities that is yet to evolve into intellectuality. "Men with conflicting desires, divided minds, oppressed by dualities are not the final products of evolution" (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 555). This is the level of the mind identified as *manas*. In modern terms we may divide the mind into two divisions : volitional and cognitive. The *manomayakośa* with its five organs of perception (vision, audition, touch, taste and smell) is the volitional aspect of the mind while the *vijñānamayakośa* which is responsible for discrimination and decision-making is the cognitive mind.

4.8.1 Role of the *manomayakośa* in eschatology.

Since the *manas* is directly connected with the sense organs it is this connection which is responsible for the condition of the mind. The *vṛttis*, such as desires, untruth, violence etc., which are unconducive to *mokṣa* should be controlled and eliminated. The *manas* is transformed by the help of useful sensory input. The Ch. Up. (7.2.6.2) states :

āhāra-śuddhan sattva-śuddhiḥ,

sattva-śuddhan dhruvā smṛtiḥ,

smṛti-laṁbhe sarva-granthīnāṁ vipramokṣaḥ;

tasmai mṛdita-kaṣāyāya tamasaḥ pāraṁ

darśayati bhagavān sanatkunārah

"When the impressions gathered by the sense-organs are pure the mind becomes pure; when the mind is pure, the memory (of one's divine nature) becomes constant; when this memory is attained, one becomes completely freed from all bondages."

Thus we find that the condition of the *manomayakośa* should develop into a repository of *vṛttis* that would facilitate spiritual growth. Such a *manomayakośa* is a catalyst for *moksa.*

Imagination (*vikalpa*), which occurs within the ambit of *manas*, is another useful psychological tool for the correct production of spiritual *vṛttis*. In the lower order of animals we do not come across any form of imagination akin to that of human beings. The nearest creature to us, the chimpanzee, cannot retain an image long enough to reflect on it, however clever it may be in learning tricks or getting food that is beyond its natural reach. The brain of the lion, tiger, rhinoceros, and other powerful animals also lack the mechanism of imagination, or we should not be here to discuss the matter (Walter 1953 : 2) It is only at the human level that the *manas*, guided by the intellect, is capable of developing *vṛttis* through the correct use of imagination. *Mokṣa* is not imagination; imagination can serve as a useful vehicle for attaining *mokṣa.* Furthermore, imagination can serve as the vehicle to achieve new breakthroughs to patterns of spiritual thought in the *manas* that would represent a comprehensive picture of human destiny and the techniques for its realization.

4.9 The *Vijñānamayakośa.*

The *vijñānamayakośa* (lit. the sheath of the intellect or *buddhi*) has been given a place of justified merit in the Vedanta. A well developed intellect is an unfailing guide in both temporal and spiritual matters. Conceptually, *buddhi* means right determination or decision without doubt or even the slightest wavering of thoughts. Its intrinsic quality is conviction. It includes reason and understanding. It represents the capacity of discrimination between right and wrong, between the real and the apparent, between the eternal and the non-eternal, between the *pañcakośas* and the *ātman* (Satprakashananda 1981 : 81 ; Nikhilananda 1987 : 87).

The Ups. have separated the functions of the mind from that of the intellect. "Verily different from and within that which consists of mind is the self, consisting of the intellect (*vijñāna).* By that (intellect) this (mind) is filled" (Tait. Up. 2.4.1). The Ka. Up. (1.3.3-9) uses an image of a chariot to depict the functions of the *buddhi.* The *buddhi* is the charioteer driving the chariot of the body, of which the *ātman* is the master, towards *mokṣa*, by holding the rein of the mind and guiding the organs, the horses through the sensory world.

When a range of thought possibilities is formed at the level of *manas* it is the intellect that analyses the mental data and arrives at a decision. Furthermore, the intellect has the capacity to control thoughts. It must hold itself above the *vṛttis* and watch them before it can restrain them. This is another special feature of the intellect. The *buddhi* serves as the most effective instrument of self-upliftment (BG 6.5) :

> *"A person should lift the (lower) self by the (higher) self (through buddhi) and not degrade the self. For, verily, this self is the friend of the self and the self is the foe of the self."*

A dissipated mind and a poor intellect are impediments in the formation of a strong will. But a mind and intellect, firm and enlightened like a 'flame kept in a windless spot', are the intrinsic qualities of an indomitable will that is necessary for *mokṣa*. The Ch. Up. (3.14.1) mentions the eschatological significance of the will :

> *Now, verily a person consists of will. According to the will a person has in this world, so does he become on departing hence. Let him, therefore, form his will."*

The most difficult task of the intellect is to direct the thought processes towards *mokṣa*. "With respect to each sense organ there are attachment and aversion to its object. Yet one should not yield to them, because they are enemies on one's way" (BG 3.34).

Upon directing the attention of the sense organs within, it then becomes the function of the *buddhi* to locate the *pañcakośas*, individually and collectively, and finally to move onto the technique of transcending the *kośas*. The supreme truths are neither the rigid conclusions of logical reasoning nor the intellectual affirmations of the secular intellect. Intellectual truth is only one of the doors to the outer precincts of *mokṣa* (Aurobindo 1971 : 124).

Shankara (VC 185) brings out the limitations of the *vijñānamayakośa* :

> *"This vijñānamayakośa , which seems to be invested with the power of consciousness, is a modification of prakṛti (primordial nature). It is endowed with the function of knowledge and always wholly identifies itself with the body, organs, etc.*

The samsaric quality of the *vijñānamayakośa* is its constant habit of being associated with body-consciousness to the exclusion of the *ātman*. Its supreme relevance in eschatology is that it is the natural tool for a more glorious life in the Spirit.

Its relevance is borne out by the prayer in the Tait. Up. (1.1.1) in which the teacher says, *medhaya spṛunatu*, 'may He invigorate us with intelligence'. According to Sharvananda (1957 : 36) *medha* means intelligence and mental power, especially tenacious memory. The aspirant must be able to concentrate his thoughts on a given object and keep it uninterruptedly in a field of attention. In fact this power of attention is the essence of all education (secular and spiritual). The mind should be gripped by a single aim and it should once and for all cease to wander among manifold and endless thoughts.

4.10 The *ānandamayakośa.*

Finer than the sheath of intelligence and even filling that sheath is the sheath of bliss (*ānandamayakośa*) (Tait. Up. 2.5.1). This bliss sheath is not to be confused with the supreme bliss of the *ātman*. The *ānandamayakośa* is a modification of *prakṛti*. Due to its close proximity to the *ātman* it reflects one of the main 'qualities' attributed to the *ātman*, viz., bliss.

The chief features of this sheath are pleasure and rest. Pleasure is experienced when one comes into contact with an agreeable object or event. In a karmic sense pleasure is the outcome of good actions. All these encounters and actions create subtle *vṛttis* which gather to form a repository in the *ānandamayakośa*.

However, the fullest manifestations of this sheath is experienced in deep sleep (dreamless sleep) when one is totally unconscious of suffering of any kind. After waking from deep sleep a person remarks that he slept happily. A partial manifestation is known in the waking state when the senses come into contact with pleasant objects, or in dream sleep due to the dream encounter with pleasant and agreeable objects (VC 207- 208 ; Nikhilananda 1987 : 89).

In all hierarchical set-ups the lower or grosser manifestations are strengthened by their union with the higher. In the mundane sense the physical and subtle bodies find limited fulfillment in the *ānandamayakośa* on account of the happiness and rest they derive from it. The conscious anticipation of joy is a psychological element inherent in human life. To this extent the *ānandamayakośa* fulfills temporal needs.

While one school of thinkers accepts the *ānandamayakośa* as part of *prakṛti* there are others who readily oppose this view and identify the *ānandamayakośa* with the *ātman* or *brahman*. Radhakrishnan, for example, feels that the author of the Brahma Sutras (1.1.12-19) identifies the *ānandamayakośa* with *brahman*. The Tait. Up. however presents this sheath as being separate from *brahman*. The *ānandamayakośa* is responsible for relative bliss while absolute bliss is *brahman* alone. The VP (8.1) states :

> *Happiness is of two kinds– relative and absolute. Of these relative happiness is a particular manifestation of a modicum of bliss caused by differences in the mental mode generated by a contact with pleasant objects . . . . Absolute bliss is brahman alone."*

The eschatological significance of the *ānandamayakośa* is that it provides this approach with a much-needed subtle degree of abstraction that leads the search to the gateway of the *ātman*.

4.11 The Gayatrī *mantra*, the *pañcakośas* and the *lokas*.

One of the most popular and well used *mantras* of the Hindus (including South African Hindus) is the Gayatrī (RV 3.62.10) which is an inspired composition of sage Viśvāmitra :

aum bhūr bhuvah svah

tat savitur vareṇyam

bhargo devasya dhīmahi

dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt

"Oh Supreme brahman (represented by aum), the creator of the universe (i.e. the three lokas–bhūr, bhuvaḥ and svaḥ), I meditate on Thy adorable glory which is fit to be worshipped; the embodiment of knowledge and light (savitri), the remover of all sins and ignorance. May Thou illumine and guide our faculties (towards mokṣa)"

Millions of Hindus repeat this prayer during their daily *sandhyā*. Etymologically considered *sandhyā* is a compound word made up of *san* (perfect or complete) and *dhyā* (meditation). Hence, *sandhyā* is a 'complete' or holistic meditation on the ever perfect God. In this meditation the Gāyatrī *mantra* is chanted (Vidyarnava 1979 : 32).

Shubhanarayanan (1975 : 25), in interpreting Aurobindo's view of the subtle body, states that the *annamayakośa* of one's being is connected with the corresponding sheaths of other beings, forming the *bhuvarloka*. In the same way the *manomayakośa* and *vijñānamayakośa* of the individual is connected with their larger counterparts to form the *swarloka*.

By articulating (i.e. chanting and contemplating upon the meaning) of the Gayatrī *mantra* one is asked to tune one's physical, vital and mental *kosas* to such a degree so as to make them vibrate in accordance with their larger counterparts. This technique produces an expansion of consciousness, a movement from a limited and fragmented view of each *kośa* to a more universal and holistic vision. This expansion of awareness should not stop at the level of the *lokas* but should be taken to its logical conclusion which is to transcend the *kośas* and *lokas* resulting in *brahman*-consciousness or *mokṣa* (Shubhanarayanan 1975 : 25 ; Vidyarnava 1979 : 36).

The above meditation within the framework of the *pañcakośas* and *lokas* is significant in that it leads one from an ego-bound individualism to a larger group identity and then onto an expanded spiritual awareness.

4.12 The *pañcakośas, karma* and reincarnation.

The word *karma* is derived from the root *kṛi*, to do or to act. The doctrine of *karma* and rebirth forms an important part of the Upanishadic teachings and has exerted the greatest practical influence upon Hindu society up to the present day. This doctrine, formulated in the Upanishadic period, is a response to the quest for knowledge of the hereafter. It also explained for the Hindus the inequality between one person and another at the time of birth and gave them reasons to believe in a moral foundation of the universe, in which virtue is, in the long run, rewarded and iniquity punished. The doctrine of *karma* and rebirth is certainly an original contribution of Hinduism to the philosophical thought of the world (Nikhilananda 1989 : 27).

One of the earliest conceptual definitions of *karma* is to be found in the Br. Up. (4.4.6) :

"According as one acts, according as one behaves,
so does he become. The doer of good becomes good,
the doer of bad becomes evil. One becomes virtuous
by virtuous action, bad by bad action."

On analysis the Upanishadic seers found that desires were the root cause of *karma* (Br. Up. 4.4.6) :

"Man is indeed filled with desire (kāma). As is his desire
so is his resolution (kṛatu) and so is the deed (karma) he does.
As is his action so is the result he reaps."

Desire is the root of empirical existence (*saṁsāra mūla*) and is responsible for taking the *jīva* through cycles of births and deaths to work out the results of *karma*. The only solution to *saṁsāra* is *mokṣa*.

However, the different types of *karmas* must be analyzed in order to see the larger workings of this doctrine.

4.12.1 *Sañchita karma.*

This is the accumulated *karma*, the stored up latent impressions of the past that will work itself out in a future life or lives. Vivekananda (CW2 346) explains the workings of this *karma* :

> *"Every thought that we think, every deed that we do, after a certain time becomes fine (subtle), goes into seed form, so to speak, and lives in the fine body in a potential form and after a time emerges again and bears its results. These results condition the life of man ..... Our thoughts, our words and deeds, are the threads of the net which we throw around ourselves, for good or for evil. Once we set in motion a certain power, we have to take the full consequences of it. This is the law of karma."*

According to this doctrine every individual is responsible for his own destiny, be it elevation or degradation, prosperity or adversity, enjoyment or suffering. The law of *karma* functions at all levels – physical, subtle and causal.

4.12.2 *Prārabdha karma.*

This is the fructifying *karma*, the past impressions that are bearing fruit in the present life. Although the formulation of the fruit bearing *karma* is unalterable, yet it admits to modifications

in certain respects. A typical example of this is one's height. None can make a tall body short or short body tall. However, these conditions may be ameliorated (Satprakashananda 1981 : 140). We cannot alter these physical circumstances but we can certainly change our attitude towards them. This is how *prārabdha karma* functions in the ordinary *jīva*. There is a subtle difference in the functioning of this *karma* in the case of the *jīvanmukta* which will be analyzed later on.

4.12.3 *Āgāmi karma.*

These are prospective *karmas*, the impressions of the current activities that are accumulating and will bear fruit in due course. It is important to note that the law of *karma* rules out fatalism, accidentalism, and naturalism in human affairs. Satprakashananda (1981 : 134) observes :

> *"No supernatural power determines the events of man's life. There is no scope for chance in human existence. It is not blind nature that motivates human actions . . . the doctrine of predestination is a dogmatic version of fatalism."*

Vivekananda (CW3 125) points out that man is the maker of his own fate : "This law knocks on the head at once all doctrines of predestination and fate ... . The human will stands beyond all circumstances. Before it - the strong, gigantic, infinite will and freedom in man – all the powers, even of nature, must bow down, succumb, and become its servants. This is the result of the law of *karma*."

4.13 *Saṁsāra* and the *pañcakośas.*

The theory of rebirth is the necessary counterpart of the law of *karma* and the immortality of the *ātman. Saṁsāra* is a word which connotes a vast process of empirical existence. It implies the cycle of births and deaths, i.e. transmigration of *jīvas* (Grimes 1989 : 308).

The subtle and causal bodies are the repositories for all karmic seeds. This implies *karmas* that have not been worked out in the present life and which will invariably fructify in some future life. At the time of the physical death of the individuals the *annamayakośa* drops off. The top (*nāḍī*) end of the heart brightens or brings to light the impressions of *karma* gathered in the remaining *kośas*. Those thoughts, experiences, and desires that prevail at that time determine the way the subtle and causal bodies (as one entity) depart. Looming out through the brightened top of the *nāḍī*, these *kosas* depart through the eye, or through the head or through any aperture of the body. When it departs the *prāṇas* follow; when *prāṇa* departs all the senses follow. In fact, they depart together (Br. Up. 4.4.2 ; Shankara on Br. Up. 4.4.2).

Following this death process the disembodied *jīva* is directed by its karmic force. The highly developed spiritual souls who were paragons of righteousness and unflinching embodiments of spiritual disciplines, but who do not succeed in attaining *mokṣa* before death, repair to *brahmaloka* or the sphere of *Brahma,* and from there in due course, attain *mokṣa.* This journey of the *jīva* lies through a path known as the *devayāna* or the 'path of the gods'.

The second group of *jīvas*, the ritualists and philanthropists, who cherish a desire for the fruit of actions, go after death to *chaṁdraloka* or the lunar sphere. This is a metaphysical sphere with mellow light like that of the moon. This journey lies through a path known as *pitṛyāna* or

the 'way of the ancestors'. After enjoying immense bliss there as a reward for their meritorious action, they come back to earth, since they still cherish desires for worldly happiness.

The third group are those *jīvas* who performed actions forbidden by the moral rules of religion. After death they assume sub-human subtle bodies and dwell in what is generally known as hell. The BS (3.1.15) speak of seven different hells to which the evil-doers are cast by their own karmic force to expiate their sins through suffering in hell. When their evil karmic residue that warrants suffering in hell is exhausted they are reborn on earth as human beings.

Fourthly, those persons who perform extremely vile deeds spend many births in sub-human forms like animals and even trees (Ka. Up. 2.2.7). They too, over a protracted period, return to human bodies.

The disembodied *jīvas*, upon their return to this world, enter another womb, at the time of conception and with the latent karmic impressions 'manufacture' a new body (*annamayakośa*). The struggle for life and *mokṣa* continues. This repeated pattern of births and deaths continues within the context of *saṁsāra*. As a matter of interest it must be pointed out that the Hindu view of transmigration, (unlike the Greek theory of metempsychosis developed by Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, etc.), emphasizes reincarnation in human form. Spiritual growth is nurtured only through the human body.

4.14 *Māyā* and the *pañcakośas.*

The word *māyā* is used in the Rg V (10.177) to denote a kind of magical power. In the Br. Up. (1.5.19) the god Indra uses this power to assume many forms. However, in the Ups. this word acquires a philosophical meaning. The Sv. Up. (4.10) describes God as a *māyin*, 'the

wonder-working powerful Being, who creates the world by His powers'. All empirical existence, apart from the Absolute (*ātman*), comes within the ambit of *māyā*. *Māyā* is that power which measures out, molds forms in the formless. God has control over *māyā*, He is not subject to it (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 84 - 85). It is *māyā* which produces nature (*prakṛti*) which in turn is compounded of the three *guṇas* (purity, activity and inertia). *Māyā* not only produces *prakṛti*, it also pervades *prakṛti*. Working through the three *guṇas* it gives every dimension of *prakṛti* a sense of constant change. Hence, *saṁsāra*, nature in incessant motion. This imparts a sense of transitoriness to the empirical world in contrast to the *ātman* which is unchanging and eternal.

Furthermore, the main philosophical implication of *māyā* is that we should not confuse the myriad forms of this power and its manifestations with the *ātman*. To do this is an illusion. The illusion merely lies in our point of view, if we think that the names and forms, objects and events, around us are realities of nature, instead of realizing that they are concepts of our measuring and categorizing minds. *Māyā* is the illusion of taking these concepts for reality, of confusing the map with the territory (Capra 1983 : 100 ; Nikhilananda 1987 : 58).

Māyā functions in a two-fold way : the intrinsic power which uplifts the *jīva* and leads it to knowledge (*vidyāmāyā*) and its obverse which obscures or conceals the *ātman* (viz. *avidyāmāyā*).

Throughout the analysis of the *pañcakośas* in the Tait. Up. the *ṛṣi* repeatedly cautions his student that each *kośa* is an empirical entity. It should not be confused with the *ātman* in spite of its having some semblance of consciousness. Even collectively, the *kośas* are not conscious entities in themselves. They are products of *māyā*. Just as *māyā* cannot be understood without a reference to the Absolute (*brahman*) the *pañcakośas* are likewise meaningless without the *ātman*.

In order to arrive at a state of complete comprehension it is necessary to transcend the *pañcakosa* paradigm and survey the whole with intuition.

Each *kośa* has both *vidyā* and *avidyā* elements lodged within it. The a*vidyā* elements bind the *kośas* and hence the *jīva* to a sense of ignorance and limitations resulting in samsaric existence (births, deaths, relative happiness and suffering). The *vidyāmāyā* elements of the *kośas* have a supreme relevance for *mokṣa*. This comprises the unfailing potential for spiritual life, viz. the intrinsic capacity to lift the *jīva* out of the morass of samsaric existence and direct it towards a goal of eternal freedom. It is for this reason that the Vedanta is of the conviction that 'each soul is potentially divine' (Vivekananda CW1 1984 : 124).

4.15 The quest for the ultimate.

The crucial subject of human freedom (from *saṁsāra*) hangs on the slender thread of the decision between man as nothing more than a texture of cause and effect determinism like all empirical nature, and man having a focus of freedom of the *ātman* within him (Ranganathananda 1987 : 246).

Vivekananda (CW1 1984 : 10-11) presents the samsaric plight of the *jīva* in a vivid manner :

> *"Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions - a powerless, helpless wreck in an ever - raging, ever - rushing uncompromising current of cause and effect.... The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape? - was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy, and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage. And he stood up before the world and in trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings ... ."*

Following this Vivekananda quoted the words of sage Śvetāśvatara (Sv. Up. 3.8) :

vedāham etam puruśam mahāntam
āditya - varnam tamasaḥ parastāt
tam eva viditvā atimṛtyum eti
nānyaḥ panthā vidyate 'yanāya

"I know the supreme Being (the ātman) who is like the sun, beyond darkness (delusion). Knowing him alone, you shall be saved from death over again."

The *pañcakośas* function within the framework of time, space and causation. The *ātman* transcends these concepts and as such cannot be attained, in the ultimate analysis, by the *pañcakośas*. "When speech and mind strive to comprehend it (*ātman*), they recoil being unable to do so" (*yato vāco nivartante, aprāpya manasā saha*) (Tait. Up. 1.4.1). Therefore, when the spiritual search is finally extended to the *ātman* the *pañcakośas* are abandoned having served their purpose.

CHAPTER FIVE

The *pañcakośas* and the *jīvanmukta*

5.1 The origins of the *jīvanmukta* ideal.

By definition the *jīvanmukta* is a *jīva* which has attained *mokṣa* while still living in the physical body within the context of empirical (samsaric) existence. Such a person breaks through the fetters of attachment to *saṁsāra* and frees himself from ignorance (*avidyā*) and its paralyzing effects (Grimes 1989 : 156 ; Nikhilananda 1987 : 115). This ideal has been enshrined as the highest goal of life by several branches of Indian philosophy (Sankhya, Yoga, Saiva Siddhanta and Vedanta). This study now looks at the roots of the *jīvanmukta* ideal and then evaluates the *jīvanmukta* doctrine from the standpoint of Advaita Vedanta as expounded by Shankara with supplementary interpretations from Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan, Aurobindo etc. of the Neo-Vedanta school.

The '*jīvanmukta*' ideal may be traced back to the Ups. themselves. Tait. Up. 3.10.5. certainly describes the state of the *jīvanmukta*. Several other Upanishadic verses do the same (Br. Up. 2.4.12 ; Sv. Up. 1.10). On the basis of literary evidence it may be easily gleaned that this ideal was well established in the Upanishadic period. In contrast with this Arapura (1986 : 124) argues that while the material for this notion can be found in the classical texts and in Shankara, its origin as an articulated ideal lies outside them, in fact in certain texts of popular spirituality. Radhakrishnan (1990 : 121-123), however, draws up a good definition of the *jīvanmukta* from the passages in the Ups. themselves.

Arapura (1986 : 124) postulates that the *śruti* texts only reveal generalizations of spiritual matters. Concepts like *jīvanmukta*, *paramahaṁsa* and *avatāra* are particularizations that are not

emphasized in the Ups. as they are in the secondary texts. Primary texts do not particularize nor will someone like Shankara do so; his work is to 'show' (expound) *śruti*.

In contrast to such views as Arapura holds it can be pointed out that the classical texts 'explicitly admit' the ideal of the *jīvanmukta* and in fact Shankara favoured this ideal (Hiriyanna 1956 : 279).

There are two views in the Ups. regarding the nature of *mokṣa*. According to one of them *mokṣa* is attainable only after death – "I shall remain here (in the world) only as long as I shall be released (from ignorance). Then I shall reach *mokṣa*" (Ch. Up. 6.14.2). This is designated *videhamukti* (liberation after death). Even after attaining the intuitive knowledge of the *ātman*, the *pañcakośas* continue to exist on account of the momentum of past *karmas*. When the physical body dies, it gets resolved into the original causes. The remaining *kośas* also get disintegrated and return from their 'empirical home' to their macrocosmic source. Then the *jīva* attains final liberation (*mokṣa*). Mahadevan (1952 : 69) feels that this view, in effect, is an inheritance from the eschatological doctrines of the early Vedic period (Brahmanas) according to which heaven is a far-off place which could be reached by the soul only after it has cast off its physical body.

According to another Upanishadic view *mokṣa* can be attained here in this very life: "Verily, even while we are here we may know this *ātman*" (Br. Up. 4.4.14). " He who knows that (*ātman*), which is hidden in the cave (of the heart), breaks loose from the bonds of ignorance here on earth itself " (Mun. Up. 2.1.10). This state is known as the *jīvanmukta* (liberated while living). It is the state of spiritual freedom even while all the *pañcakośas* are retained. Such a paradox is resolved through several mechanisms in the Vedanta. This study will now demonstrate these mechanisms.

5.2 The *pañcakośas* and the pre-intuitive state.

The aspirant seeking *mokṣa* must be a *mumukṣutva*, that is, he or she must have an intense desire for *mokṣa* . This is the most important qualification needed by the student of the Vedanta. This attitude arranges the *pañcakośa* in an irreversible direction towards *mokṣa* .

This journey is fraught with various mystical experiences, of 'visions and voices', all of which are experienced within the context of the *pañcakośas* alone. The teachers of Vedanta are unanimous in warning their students against the danger of attributing too much importance to these experiences as being 'messages' from God. Such experiences are not illusions or hallucinations but simply indicate milestones on the journey to *mokṣa* (Ka. Up. 2.3.9 ; Sub. Up. 4.1). Even though subtle they still exist within the empirical nature of the *pañcakośa* and the student must resist the inviting temptation to be bound by these experiences.

This journey of introspection and contemplation is a powerful undertaking and involves a break from the obvious in terms of life-style and the entire content of ones consciousness. It is a strenuous exercise of preparatory labours – of ethical culture and the development of an indomitable will. The Vedanta declares : not he who has not ceased from bad conduct, not he who is not tranquil, not he who is not composed, not he whose mind is turbulent can attain Him by intelligence (Ka. Up. 1.2. 24).

5.2.1 Use of negative language.

The use of negative terms '*neti*', '*neti*' ('not this', 'not this') (Br. Up. 2.3.6) comprise an important Upanishadic technique utilized to 'locate and comprehend' the incomprehensible *ātman*. It is a journey to *moksa* using the '*via negativa*' method. This method is especially relevant in the *pañcakośa* approach to *mokṣa*. When the *ānandamayakośa* is ignorantly perceived to be the *ātman* the aspirant discriminates and develops the unreality of this perception. In a

progressive inwards search for the *atman* he abandons the *ānandamayakośa* with the strong affirmation or conviction – 'not this', 'not this'. This process is followed with respect to the other *kośas*. The maturity of this process eliminates the unnecessary *upādhis* or mental impressions of ignorance that are impediments to knowledge and purity.

5.2.2 Recollection.

Recollection is not just remembrance of the *ātman*. It has its own mystical parameters. At the early level it is the deliberate dwelling upon the nature of the *ātman*. This may be achieved, as it is done in Vedanta, by a constant recollection of one of the *mahāvākyas* (great statements). These *mahāvākyas* extracted from the four Vedas are:

prajñānam brahma (consciousness is *brahman*) (Ai. Up. 5.3 of the Rg V); *aham brahmāsmi* (I am *brahman*) (Br. Up. 1.4.10 of the YV); *tat tvam asi* (you are That) (Ch. Up. 6.8.7 of SV) and *ayamātma brahmā* (This *ātman* is *brahman*) (Man. Up. 2 of SV).

These powerful affirmations when kept before the mind overpower the intruding thoughts that possess an empirical nature. Here is another subtle degree of advancement : the maturity of this process yields a sense of inner purity, a state separate in itself, in which contemplation of the *ātman* (to the exclusion of everything else) becomes habitual. This is consciousness-purity (*chittaśuddhi*). In this state, which naturally involves the maturing of our rational faculties, the *jīva* waits in a state of ripe habitual purity. The *kośa* theory is true, self-consistent and correctly correlates experiences that are predictable up to this stage of consciousness-purity. Yet this is not the ultimate experience of Vedantic intuition. It is only an existential force, a kind of rich milieu that must help in the ultimate leap to intuition. At this stage the experience is a powerful intellectual registration of the path already traversed and the goal that lies ahead.

5.2.3 Divine grace and revelation.

In the Ka. Up. (1.2.23) we discover that the existential effort is inadequate for *ātmavidyā:*

"This ātman cannot be attained by the study of the Vedas,
or by the intellect, or by vast learning. The ātma, the seeker
yearns for, is attainable only by the one whom the atman chooses.
To such a one the Self reveals its own nature."

This passage is fraught with a typical Upanishadic paradox. It seems most paradoxical that the vast effort employed and the experiences gained thus far seem useless. This in itself is intrinsic to the approach. There is the vision of the *ātman* which is entirely beyond the power of the individual to prepare for or bring about. This experience of 'helplessness' is an extraordinary grace of the *ātman* (or in a more theistic sense – God).

In every sense all life is from God and the aspirant's yearning is made up by the active support of God's grace. If individuals become aware of God's presence in the soul, it is due to God's own working in the soul. It is beyond the power of the unassisted *kośas*, despite their maturity into perfect instruments for *ātmavidyā*. Human nature feels so weakened that it is helpless of itself to help itself. If the *jīva* is to escape from itself, as it actually is, and reach the freedom (*mokṣa*) for which it is made, it needs a transforming within, the capacity for intuition. The soul feels that this force becomes operative and evident not through its own effort, but through an experience from beyond, from the incomprehensible *ātman* (Radhakrishnan 1990 : 619 ; Shankara on Ka. Up. 1.2.24).

The intuitive experience goes beyond the workings of rational knowledge and predictability. Rational knowledge can only be so classified as it is obtained through reason. The intuitive experience, which transcends even the subtlest pinnacle of reason, and in fact it is not a process, cannot be termed irrational; it is extra-rational. Logicians decry the fuzziness of

intuition, just as exclusive intuitionists find it difficult to accept the structures of logic. But holistic knowledge is incomplete without a synthesis of both dimensions (*aparāvidyā* and *parāvidyā*). For Capra (1983: 39) these insights (intuition) tend to come suddenly and, characteristically, not when sitting at a desk working out the equations, but when relaxing, in the bath, during a walk in the woods, on the beach, etc. During these periods of relaxation after concentrated intellectual activity, the intuitive mind seems to take over and can produce the sudden clarifying insights which give so much joy to the researcher.

Capra's explanation, though made in the context of scientific research, is a model we may easily use to understand spiritual intuition. In fact in all expressions of the intuitive faculty the conscious self and the rational consciousness surrender themselves to something deeper than themselves. Only then does spontaneity of knowledge as a result of intuition express itself (Ranganathananda 1987 : 441-442). The *ātman* can only be known in the intuitive experience.

5.3 Nature of the *ātman.*

The Vedanta describes two types of superconscious (*samādhi*) experiences : *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*. In the *savikalpa* state the aspirant experiences immense bliss, ecstasy, on account of the *kośas* being purified and their constant reflection on the *ātman* – the source of all bliss. In this state of consciousness one's own personality as distinct from *brahman* persists, however attenuated it may be. This *samādhi* is experienced within the context of the *pañcakośas*.

In contrast to this there is the *nirvikalpa* state where all awareness of multiplicity including that of oneself as distinct from *brahman* is completely dissolved. It is beyond the three states of mind (waking, dream sleep and dreamless sleep). It is the 'Fourth' – *turīya*. It is a state of Pure Consciousness, which strictly speaking should not be called a state because it transcends all

logical definitions that we have of a 'state'. It has no connection with the finite mind and is only experienced when the *ātman* is realized. The Man. Up. (7) states :

> *The Fourth, say the wise, is not subjective experience, nor objective experience, nor experience intermediate between these two, nor is it a negative condition which is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness. It is not the knowledge of the senses nor is it relative knowledge, nor yet inferential knowledge. Beyond the senses, beyond the understanding, beyond all expression is the Fourth. It is pure unitary consciousness, wherein awareness of the world and of multiplicity is completely obliterated. It is ineffable peace. It is the supreme good. It is one without a second. It is the Self. Know it alone!"*

This is the supreme mystic experience of intuition, the knowledge of the *ātman.*

Radhakrishan (1990 : 689) points out that here is a reality which is beyond the distinction of subject and object and yet it is above and not below this distinction. It is super-theism and not atheism or anti-theism. It is pure Being.

5.4 Identity of *brahman* and *ātman.*

In the Ups. the unity of *ātman* and *brahman* is explicitly and repeatedly asserted. Consider, for example, this unfailing note in the Ups. (Ka. Up. 2.4.10) :

> *"What is within is also without. What is without is also within. He who sees differences between what is within and what is without goes ever more from death to death."*

This is the relevance of this union to eschatology. A question arises as to why is *brahman* to be meditated upon as the *ātman* and not as the all pervading *brahman.* Furthermore, the *ātman* is described as 'smaller than a grain of rice, smaller than a grain of barley' etc. (Ch. Up.

1.14.3). Shankara (on BS 1.2.6) resolves this paradox by stating that the case is analogous to that of the ether in the eye of a needle, which is spoken of as limited and small, whereas in fact it is all-pervading (Mun. Up. 3.1.7) :

> *"Brahman is supreme; he is self-luminous, he is beyond all thought. Subtler than the subtlest is he, farther than the farthest, nearer than the nearest. He resides in the shrine of the heart of every being."*

The Vedanta portrays this ultimate eschatological goal of the *jīva* as having the following characteristics :

> *The knower of Brahman attains the Highest (brahman). (Tait. Up. 2.1.1) He who knows the (absolute) bliss of brahman has nothing to fear(Tait. Up. 2.1.1). If a man realizes brahman here then the very purpose of his life is fulfilled. If he does not, then utmost misery awaits him. Having perceived brahman in every being the wise depart from the world and become immortal (Ken. Up. 2.5). Verily the highest joy attends the yogi whose mind is perfectly tranquil, whose passions are calmed, who is free from stain and has become one with brahman (BG 6.27).*

5.5 Retrieving the *pañcakośas* after *nirvikalpa samādhi.*

What then is the status of the *pañcakośas* after *nirvikalpa samādhi* ? There is, according to the Ups. one and only one non-empirical state which is Being (*ātman*). The *pañcakośa* structure of finite reality, which becomes the vehicle for the concrete approach to the *ātman,* is affirmed and negated at the same time. It becomes a symbol for a symbolic expression. He who wants to show a particular star to one unacquainted with astronomy first points to the end of a high branch telling such a person that the star is visible there. When the eye has thus been directed towards the end of the branch and has consequently been withdrawn from all other directions, then the branch that was affirmed is negated and the instructor directs the student's

mind to the heavens. Commentators never tire of using such models to explain the affirmation-negation process with respect to the *pañcakośas*. However, the full value of the *pañcakośas* are only established in the final negation process to which it points. And yet it also is affirmed by it, and this affirmation gives the symbolic expression an adequate basis for pointing beyond itself.

A common flaw in the interpretation of *nirvikalpa samādhi* is the notion that the *pañcakośas* are annihilated in this state. This is totally incorrect, at least from the standpoint of the Ups. This state involves the absence of subject-object relationship but that cannot be described as annihilation.

Upon returning from *nirvikalpa samādhi* the seer retrieves the *pañcakośas*. The difference between the pre-intuitive and post-intiutive stages, is that he perceives these *kośas* with a new vision as we shall presently see.

Firstly, the *ātman* becomes the supreme reality and the *pañcakośas* are now positively known to be a changing relative reality. 'The knowers of *brahman* speak of them as light and shade' (Ka. Up. 1.3.1).

Secondly the seer does not perceive a multiplicity of consciousnesses with respect to the *kośas*. He sees the one *ātman* permeating the *pañcakośas*. This perception of oneness constitutes the ultimate eschatological goal in so far as the *pañcakośa* approach to *mokṣa* is concerned. 'There is nothing like multiplicity here. Whoever perceives anything like multiplicity here goes from death to death' (Ka. Up. 2.1.11). In the BG (2.69) this state of the *jīvanmukta* is described as follows :

> *"That (the ultimate One) which is night to ordinary beings is as clear as day to the awakened sage. That (multiplicity) in which ordinary beings are awake is the night to the sage who sees."*

The truth to the sage is that the manifold universe of reality involving time, space and causation is real to the unilluminated; but to the illuminated the non-dual Being alone exists as the supreme reality.

It is of interest that Schrödinger, the physicist, says that "the plurality that we perceive is only an appearance, it is not real. Vedantic philosophy, in which this is fundamental dogma, has sought to clarify it by a number of analogies, one of the most attractive being the many faceted crystal which, while showing hundred of little pictures of what is in reality a single existent object, does not really multiply that object" (Schrödinger 1964 : 18-19).

Apart from this new vision of the *pañcakośas* the *jīvanmukta's* perception of the entire universe undergoes a corresponding transformation. Schrödinger (1964 : 21-22) presents a synoptic view of this expanded vision :

> *"Hence this life of yours which you are living is not merely a piece of the entire existence, but is in a certain sense the whole; only this whole is not so constituted that it can be surveyed in one single glance. This as we know, is what the Brahmins express in that sacred, mystic formula which is yet really so simple and so clear : Tat tvam asi, this is you. Or, again, in such words as ' I am in the east and the west, I am below and above, I am this whole world."*

Thus we discover that the '*jīvanmukta* ideal' recognizes the divine element in the composition of man and the universe. It does justice, in fact enhances, the value of these. The Vedanta is emphatic about the fact that *mokṣa* is possible here and now, and that this freedom is the birthright of all souls.

5.6 The *jīvanmukta, karma* and *avidyā.*

Among the different schools of Hindu theological and philosophical thought there is a controversy as to whether there remains any trace of nescience in a *jīvanmukta* (Prajñānananda 1992 : 30). The Advaita School to which this study averts is unanimous on the issue that the *jīvanmukta* possesses *prārabdha karma* (those results of action which have given rise to the present body of the *jīvanmukta* and which need to work themselves out). The other two types of *karma* (*sañchita* and *āgāmi*) are eliminated in the intuitive experience of the *ātman.*

Regarding the *prārabdha karma,* Shankara (VC 451) is of the view that the work or deeds which have fashioned the body of the *jīvanmukta* prior to the dawning of knowledge are not destroyed. In fact it is the last remaining potential which keeps the *jīvanmukta* within a body and yet liberates him from body-consciousness (VC 453). "The seer (knower of *brahman*) does not see death or disease or sorrow. The seer sees all (Reality permeating all) and obtains all in every way" (Ch. Up. 7.26.2).

With respect to nescience the Vedanta is clear that the *jīvanmukta* is without such ignorance – "all doubts are dispelled" (Mun. Up. 2.2.9) and "the fire of knowledge (of the *ātman*) burns to ashes the nescience of a realized soul" (BG 4.37 ; BS 4.1.13). Thus the inexorable law of *karma* and its counterpart, *avidyā*, are true and functional only in ordinary people. For the *jīvanmukta*, "as water does not wet the lotus leaf, even so no sins (*karmas* and ignorance) cling to him who knows It" (Ch. Up. 4.14.3).

5.7 *Mokṣa* always inherent in the *jīva.*

From the viewpoint of Vedantic soteriology *mokṣa* is always inherent in the *jīva.* When the Ups. declare that '*mokṣa* is to be attained' it does not mean that the ultimate state is a new

acquisition or possession (i.e. something eternal which has to be newly acquired). Nor does the word 'attain' imply the state of liberation which has to be produced. Intuitive knowledge is beyond 'production'. On the other hand, the attainment here refers to the manifestation of the *Brahmanness* already inherent in the *jīva*. This manifestation only consists of the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*). Words like 'attain' and 'becoming' are merely used in a tautological sense.

5.8 Ecstasy in the Tait. Up. 3.10.5.

Ecstasy is a word which covers a plethora of meanings. On one end it is the intoxication brought on by pharmaceutical novelties. It may also be the wild excitement produced by sense gratification. But the ecstasy of the Ups. is none of these. It is not the product of unbridled weakness, 'this *ātman* is not known by the weak, nor by the thoughtless, nor by those who do not rightly meditate. But by the rightly meditative, the thoughtful, and the strong, the *ātman* is fully known (Ka. Up. 1.2.24).

Ecstasy may be brought on by being conscious of the *ānandamayakośa* which by its very nature is an expression of joy. This is also not the ultimate ecstasy of the Ups.

Furthermore, in the immediate pre-intuitive state there is yet another degree of ecstasy. For Radhakrishnan (1940 : 78) "to have this ecstasy is to look upon the promised land but not to set foot on its soil". "All experience of God when it becomes intense is ecstatic, though every ecstatic emotion is not an experience of God" (Radhakrishnan 1940 : 77).

The ecstasy described in Tait. Up. (3.10.5) is that of a *jīvanmukta*. Having realized the *ātman* he retrieves the *pañcakośas* and moving up and down them freely (i.e. without bondage) he enjoys the world. He enjoys the pleasures of the *pañcakośas*, not as one entangled in its limitations and corresponding ignorance, but as an inward spectator, unattached to them, "There

such a one moves about, laughing, playing, rejoicing with women, chariots or relations, not remembering the limiting adjuncts of the body" (Ch.Up. 8.12.6). The *jīvanmukta*, utilizing his transformed *pañcakośas*, expresses the supreme ecstasy of this state with the chant (*sāman*) :

"Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful! Oh wonderful!"

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions and recommendations

6 The Vedantic Focus.

In Vedanta we discover a lateral synthesis – the existence of theological statements, mystical insights and rational knowledge, side by side. In order to develop an interpretation of any concept or doctrine it is imperative that these divisions are not viewed in isolation. They are allied; rather they all have intuitive experience (*pratyakṣānubhuti*) as their origin.

It has been the goal of this study to try to interpret and understand analytically in terms of conceptual thinking what has been presented in the living experience of intuition as we find it embodied in the *śṛuti* texts. Such a study in effect, cannot give us an experience of the actual - it attempts to show what is possible, not what *is,* but what *may be.*

The philosophical inquiry starts with the systematization of our sense-perceptions and the elements of faith inherent in us. By scripturally-assisted reason we develop speculative knowledge of Reality. Even this knowledge fails to dispel the seeker's doubts and misconceptions regarding Truth. This vagueness or indecisiveness is the mark of all speculative or inferential knowledge. The student of Vedanta is urged to verify the verdict of reason by actual experience, for which he will have to undergo special discipline. "While speculative knowledge awaits the evidence of intuitive perception, intuitive experience needs rational interpretation for its universal acceptance" (Satprakashananda 1977 : 178).

It is an established fact in Hinduism that the Upanishadic writings are the only works with such a high density of intuitive statements. As such they comprise the supreme authority of the faith. The present study of the *jīva* and its progressive approach to *mokṣa* is largely the reading, the interpretation, of these intuitive statements.

6.1 The classical texts, medieval interpretations and Neo-Vedanta.

While it is an undisputed fact that the Ups. are the source-books of Hindu mysticism and philosophy, they, however, do not systematize their conclusions into an ordered and comprehensive whole. They are of the nature of intuitive flashes rather than organized philosophy. In all probability these teachings were understood by like-minded people in the time and environment to which they belonged. Yet, it must be seen that such mystical knowledge, in essence, belongs to an autonomous realm of experience, the custodians of which, would be only a few at any given time. Furthermore, such subtle mystical concepts fit in uneasily with the more gross, traditional and widespread religious beliefs and practices of the community (Katz 1983 : 1). Under these conditions mystical teachings have their own unique qualifications for onward transmission. It is essential that not only are the texts carried forward but living embodiments of its teachings emerge for the purposes of interpretation and the vital function of imparting an 'aliveness' to the concepts. In Hinduism, the historical process has been kind, at least in this respect, to the furtherance of these sacred teachings.

In different periods of history the spiritual activities of a people usually converge their course of movement towards a certain specific direction. Their centre of emphasis may shift from time to time, which accordingly may in turn find its expression in various forms. This historical truism is usually ascribed to the change of conditions of life or the emergence of new circumstances and new problems or the maturity or even eccentricity of mind, or the interaction or integration of ideas, or the appearance of some master-mind who sees a completely new and therefore untraditional approach to Reality. The rise of Buddhism in the post-Upanishadic period was an event of profound adjustments for Hinduism. On the one hand Hinduism absorbed the new elements of Buddhism that were compatible with its ethos and on the other the orthodox elements of Hinduism asserted themself only to reject the untraditional concepts of the Buddha.

However, Buddhism left its lasting impact on Hinduism until the emergence of Shankara in the eighth century AD, who, by his uncommon missionary endeavours sought to reassert the Upanishadic values.

Shankara was essentially a mystic of the traditional Upanishadic school. This imparted to him a sense of authenticity and vision to read and interpret the *śruti* texts. Without his literary contributions many areas of Upanishadic study would have been left dark, and perhaps dark forever. Shankara's approach to the Upanishadic texts are therefore priceless.

However, Shankara was a product of his time – shaped by the historical forces prevalent nearly twelve centuries ago. Viewed from the modern and post-modern periods, it is difficult to read the Ups. without Shankara, yet, the *Zeitgeist* demands that we look at the *śruti* texts afresh. In so far as mystical knowledge is concerned it is difficult to find Shankara out of tune with the Upanishadic seers. However, certain social encrustations are to be found within his teachings.

Shankara felt that spiritual knowledge was only meant for certain upper sections of the social hierarchy. It was not meant for labourers (*śudras*) (Shankara on BS 1.3.34 -35). As such he has disassociated Upanishadic knowledge from an important section of the community.

Shankara also felt that men were more qualified than women for spiritual life (VC 4). Bucke (1969 : 65), from empirical data, concurs with Shankara. It is difficult to ascertain why a visionary like Shankara arrived at this deduction or how Bucke yielded this generalization.

In sharp contrast to the above sociological issues the Neo-Vedantic movements have dropped this medieval burden and reverted to the original position of the Ups. by opening their doors of knowledge to all, irrespective of social standing, gender or race. For Vivekananda (CW7 1979 : 214 - 215):

> *"In what scriptures do you find statements that women are not competent for knowledge and devotion? In the period of degradation, when priests made the other castes incompetent for the study of the Vedas, they deprived the women also of all rights. Otherwise you will*

find in the Vedic or Upanishadic age Maitreyi, Gārgi, and other ladies of revered memory have taken the places of Rishis through their skill in discussing about Brahman. In an assembly of a thousand Brahmans who were all erudite in the Vedas, Gārgi boldly challenged Yājñavalkya in a discussion about Brahman. Since such ideal women were entitled to spiritual knowledge, why shall not the women have the same privilege now? What has happened once can certainly happen again . . . ."

Only by updating Upanishadic research by Neo-Vedantic interpretations do we make them chronologically relevant. Furthermore, this process stops us from committing any anachronisms or making incoherent or incorrect interpretations of the Upanishadic spirit.

6.2 For one's own salvation and for the welfare of all.

It has been pointed out that the transition from medieval Hinduism to Neo-Vedanta is really a movement from a status where individual salvation was foremost to a life-affirming ideal in which the concerns of the world are real (2.9.1.). The Neo-Vedanta movements consider individual salvation to be a great limitation placed on the Vedanta. Instead these movements advocate a higher universal attitude in which the individual must work for his or her own salvation as well as the collective salvation of all. This imparts a spirit of vibrancy to the socio-welfare and spiritual activities of the Neo-Vedanta movements. To assist suffering humanity as manifestations of the divine is in itself worship.

In Shankara's school knowledge (*jñāna*) was seen as the only means for *mokṣa*. Devotion and work (selfless action) were viewed as aids to *jñāna* (2.8.5) and never as direct means to *mokṣa*. The Neo-Vedanta has departed from this view and recognizes the various temperaments of individuals . Vivekananda states : (CW1 1984 : 124) :

"Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy – by one, or more, or all of these – and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details."

This multi-path approach to God opens up a wider range of spiritual exercises from which the aspirant may follow the practices of his or her choice. This also obviates the impediment of boredom so common in spiritual life. Vedanta does not believe in the standardization of minds. Every soul must be free to manifest its inherent divinity.

While the Neo-Vedanta movements emphasize socio-welfare work they are not unmindful of the fact that it is spiritual knowledge acquired through selfless-service, devotion, philosophy or *yoga*, that is the means to *mokṣa*. "Spiritual knowledge is the only thing that can destroy our miseries for ever; any other knowledge satisfies wants only for a time" (CW1 1984 : 52).

6.3 Matter and spirit analysis.

The language and conceptual models that we inherited from the nineteenth century were rigidly materialistic in nature. Matter was the primary reality and it was difficult to find a place in this framework for concepts of a mystical or a philosophical nature. "This frame was so narrow and rigid that it was difficult to find a place in it for many concepts of our language that had always belonged to its very substance, for instance, the concept of mind, of the human soul or of life" (Heisenberg 1989 : 185). Unfortunately, these notions persist, even today, making it difficult for the wide-spread understanding of subtle mystical concepts. Yet, mystical knowledge must survive or we lose the connection with the essential values of human life.

The Neo-Vedantic movements are no longer Sanskrit-bound. While this freedom is a progressive leap forward it has its inherent problems. Subtle concepts like *prāṇa* or *nādīs* are difficult to render into English or any other language not belonging to the Sanskrit tradition. Nakamura, for example, whose importance in indological literature cannot be overstated, refers to

sūryaloka as being a physical entity. He even develops an argument to show the soul's journey to *sūryaloka* (the sphere of the sun) when such a soul dies at night, that is, when the sun is not visible (Nakamura 1990 : 527-528). *Sūryaloka* is simply a sphere of subtle light (BS 1.3.32). In such circumstances philological interpretations cannot replace a thorough metaphysical understanding of the terms. A key to the understanding of Upanishadic texts is to discover where philology ends and metaphysics begins (4.7.3).

Happily, some Neo-Vedantic teachers like Vivekananda, Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan, whose principal medium of communication was English, have left behind, as substantial literary legacies, works that have advanced the course of Upanishadic interpretation. However, it can be said that among them no comprehensive standardization has emerged as yet (4.7.2). Another dimension of this problem which must be addressed, and which in fact is receiving some attention, is the meeting of eastern and western approaches to these issues. Leaving aside scepticism and prejudice, there should be a greater objective study in this field, not as a cultural fancy, but as an attempt to overcome limitations and develop the human potential to what Abraham Maslow called 'the farther reaches of human nature'. Researchers like Fritjof Capra , Ken Wilber and others have already explored many meeting grounds between Western thought and Eastern psychologies. With rapid globalization this process, now in its embryonic stage, needs to develop in proportion to the effects of globalization. Its standardization must be encouraged. The 'ecology of the mind' is a necessity for the twenty-first century.

6.4 Vedic and Upanishadic goals and the present South African Hindu psyche.

Apart from looking at the *jīvanmukta* ideal from the *pañcakośa* approach another factor which motivated this study was the sociological issues listed previously (1.1) and their manifestations (1.2) among the diasporic South African Hindus.

Looking at the spectrum of Vedic and Upanishadic eschatological beliefs on one hand, and the current eschatological beliefs of the South African Hindus on the other, it can be pointed out by contrast that the majority of the said Hindus subscribe to views from both the Vedic and Upanishadic developments. Firstly, they readily relate to all the early Vedic developments, i.e., the nature of the soul (*jīva*) and its journey to intermediate eschatological goals, viz. *lokas* of the ancestors or deities of their choice (4.12). Secondly, there is the tendency to select a partial understanding of the *karma* doctrine of the Ups. Evidently this combination produces an incomplete 'eschatological psyche' in which we find the combination of two elements: the samsaric aspects of the *lokas* and the doctrine of *karma*. This disparity is a serious lapse especially if it is compared to the comprehensive *jīvanmukta* idea. It is beyond the scope of this research to state exactly what manifestations these lapses have in producing death anxiety and suicides which are so prevalent in the said community. Here lies an important area for empirical research.

At this stage it can also be pointed out that the secondary scriptures of Hinduism (*smṛti*) are dominated by discussions and teachings pertaining to what may be called '*saṁsāra*' and '*karmas*' although the ultimate ideal of these works are always *mokṣa*. An earlier reference (1.1.2) to this issue indicates yet another unhealthy condition : a total emphasis on secondary scriptures without the vital link to *śruti* texts. This imbalance must also be adjusted to normality.

The *jīvanmukta* is a rare being but the *jīvanmukta* ideal may be sought after by all. Human beings possess everything that is needed for *ātman*-consciousness, but these prerequisites are not in the right state. It is like ice and water ; ice possesses the nature of water, but possesses it in a state in which the properties of water are not apparent. Human beings are of the nature of God, but in a state in which this knowledge is not apparent. Apparently they are not divine, or to put it differently, they possesses *ātman*-consciousness, but does not know it or have the enjoyment of it.

The *jīvanmukta* ideal demands a radical break-away from the ordinary eschatological beliefs. To set foot on this path is the first step towards overcoming *saṁsāra*. "If your intelligence accepts this you may cast away all bondages of *karma*" (BG 2 : 39). Its ethical implications are also clear, "Never does anyone who does good tread the path of woe" (BG 6 : 40).

Death anxiety, from the viewpoint of Hindu psychology, is brought on by an awareness of mortality, an incapacity to perceive the immortal within the mortal. Yet we have the scriptural assurance, "Even a little of this righteous *dharma* saves one from great fear" (BG 2 : 40).

What happens to the soul that has sincerely sought *mokṣa* and not attained it? "No effort is lost" (BG 2: 40). Such a soul goes to the *loka* of righteous souls and having dwelt there for many years returns to the earth only to be born in an environment congenial for *mokṣa* (BG 6: 41). No effort is wasted in death. In fact, karmic merits accumulate and form the impetus for the onward journey of the soul (BG 4 : 43) :

> *"There he regains the (mental) impressions (of ātman-consciousness) which he had developed in his previous life and with this (as the starting point) he strives again for perfection."*

The ultimate hope is also declared by the scripture, "By his former practice, he is carried on irresistibly (to *mokṣa*)" (BG 6 : 44). These assurances are profound elements of faith. They support and nourish spiritual life with a sense of knowledge and hope and we are told that such a state is open to all, "the most sinful person can attain it" (BG 4 : 36).

It cannot be said that the *jīvanmukta* ideal is a purely theoretical issue. Faith in this course of the ultimate destiny is a 'yes', a positive point in self-commitment. It cannot work a miracle, for, a positive probability does not become an immediate certainty. Progress on the path is the evidence that achieves this.

6.5 The *guṛu* in modern context.

There is widespread confusion regarding the need for a *guru*. Many South African Hindus feel that a *guru* is unnecessary. This is a serious disparity in spiritual life. The *śṛuti* texts emphasize the need for a *guru*. Ideally the *guru* should be a *jīvanmukta*. Knowing the rare occurrence of such enlightened souls it becomes difficult for the layman to have access to spiritual knowledge. The spiritually-advanced soul is one who is selfless and knows the spirit of the scriptures. With some guidance from such souls the layman may be enriched and strengthened spiritually.

While the *guru* has the responsibility to promote the spiritual well-being of the disciple it should never be forgotten that the disciple should have a serious commitment to spiritual advancement, to inner exploration and meditation. Self-control and the cultivation of a strong will to achieve *mokṣa* are elements that enrich the *guru*-disciple relationship (4.9).

6.6 *Karma* and *mokṣa*.

Some comments are inevitable with respect to *karma* (1.2.1). The doctrine of *karma* when misread appears as fate. This is the unfortunate reading of this doctrine by the majority of the South African Hindus. It is an inherent weakness that produces samsaric suffering.

This research has demonstrated, largely from *śṛuti* texts, that karma can eventually be overcome and that the *jīvanmukta* ideal is the means to accelerate the tempo of this process. The potential of the human will should not be underestimated, for herein lies the mechanism for overcoming *karma*.

The doctrine of *karma* also has its important moral component, an ethic of universal human responsibility. All our present actions affect the human future, as the life of each of us has been affected not only by our own past but by those who lived before us and is being affected in the present by those who are not living. Apart from individual trends of karmic history there is the universal network of global *karma*, to which each contributes and by which each is affected. Understood in this way the doctrine of *karma* affirms the corporate unity of the human race (Hick 1990 : 140). We cannot function, either as individuals or as a nation, in exclusivism or active hostility towards others. Mutual interaction is the essence of the *karma* theory and ultimately the responsibility is upon each individual to maintain a healthy karmic network. The individual is a participator in the destiny of the world, in the global ecology.

This study views the concept of *mokṣa* from the viewpoint of the *jīva* (i.e. the microcosmic level). In this scheme we see the transformation of the individual person into a *jīvanmukta*. However, microcosmic changes affect the macrocosm. An illumined individual (*jīvanmukta*) is a source of peace to the entire macrocosm. One aspect of eschatology affects the entire eschatological scheme (4.2).

6.7 The *pañcakośa* model.

The *pañcakośa* model is a product of a specific cultural milieu. The fire altar in the shape of a bird with open wings utilized in the Brahmana period forms the basis for this formulation in the Up. period (4.4.3). The external image gets transformed by a receptive, analytical, and mystically-oriented mind into a *pañcakośa* model which in turn is used as a key to unlock the inner nature of human beings. With its concentric arrangement of bird figures it forms one of the earliest diagrams in the history of man's inner world. It reveals how the hidden parts of the human person work and fit together.

Furthermore, these *pañcakośas* become the workshop for spiritual experiences. They provide the transcendence and integration – from the gross to the subtle and from the microcosm to the macrocosm. Subtle concepts like *prāṇa* and *manas* would be difficult to locate and understand without this model. However, its subtle duties do not stop here. The model is directional in character and show the inevitable convergence to the point of the *ātman*. Ultimately it becomes a creative force for the intuitive experience. In the Tait. Up. all the eschatological forces at work owe their allegiance to this model. In effect, it is practice in accordance with this model which is one of the ways that produces the *jīvanmukta*.

This researcher has a pastoral concern about the high rate of death anxiety and suicides in the South African Hindu community. It is the view of the researcher that this community has a cultural psyche which is not only unique but in many ways an inheritance from the Vedic past. This collective psyche which is now experiencing these aberrations may be healed by the correct application of the Upanishadic knowledge. The *pañcakośa* model is in many respects an assembly of psychological elements akin to the community's psyche and may accordingly be used as the basis for psychotherapy for this healing to take place. The workings of the human mind, the doctrine of mortality and immortality, the death-process (4.7.2), the inherent capacity to

overcome karma (4.12) – all these essential components of the *pañcakośas* model form rich material for such a study and consequently for the amelioration of human suffering.

6.8 The *pañcakośas* and suicides.

In analyzing suicides against the *pañcakośa* background the following points may be made :

6.8.1 Natural deaths or suicides are the effect of the other four *kośas* detaching themselves from the body (*annamayakośa*). In the instance of a natural death the *jīva* evolves to newer life-forms in accordance with its *karmas* (4.12). In suicides a type of negative will is strengthened to the extent that it leads to the abrupt delinking of the *annamayakośa* from the other *kośas*. In this case the will is incorrectly used.

6.8.2 From counselling sessions the researcher observed that many individuals with suicidal tendencies had a poor opinion of their bodies (*annamayakośa*). They had a negative view of their physical fate. The death and decay of the body was immaterial to them. They wanted to escape from the body and its limitations. Such persons were obviously unaware of the vast potential latent in the *annamayakośa*. Such people need a type of education that explores the *mokṣa* potential of the *annamayakośa* (4.6.1) Furthermore, they need to know that the body is the gross, moving 'temple of God'. The body is sacred and it is linked with a divine purpose. Such an attitude is a healing process in itself.

6.8.3 The *prāṇamayakośa* has a variety of manifestations (4.7.1) one of which is the function of the *udāna prāṇa* (4.7.1). The inherent potential of this *prāna* to transcend *saṁsāra* must be discovered and utilized for the emancipation from suffering.

6.8.4 The *manomayakośa* is a conglomerate of the *vṛttis* (thought impressions) (4.8.1) These may be of two kinds : negative *vṛttis* impede spiritual progress and positive *vṛttis* promote

spiritual growth. A *manomayakośa* with *mokṣa*-laden *vrttis* is a deterrent in committing suicides (4.9).

6.8.5 The *ānandamayakośa* is a reservoir of bliss always inherent in the individual (4.10). Meditation on this *kośa* has the potential to wean victims of depression away from their mental traumas to regions of psychological stability and happiness.

6.8.6 Even when the disembodied *jīva* (i.e. the subtle and causal bodies) (4.4.2) go to other *lokas* (4.13) their full *mokṣa* potential is not realized. The Ups. consider this intermediate eschatological goal as spiritual suicide (3.9). The Vedanta emphasizes the need for bringing out the full potential of the *jiva* in the ultimate state of *mokṣa*. Lower eschatological goals (*lokas*) delay the attainment of *mokṣa*.

6.9 The *ātman*, witness-consciousness and healing.

A progressive shift of attention from one *kośa* to the next invests a practical meditator with the capacity for "witness-consciousness". This state implies the ability to witness a less subtle *kośa* from the standpoint of more subtle one. This meditation technique may be perfected by practice (*abhyāsa*). Such an exercise is possible within the framework of the *pañcakośas* at the pre-*jīvanmukta* level. However, the *jīvanmukta* is established in "witness-consciousness" – "He (*ātman*) is never seen but is the seer, He is never heard but is the hearer" (Br. Up. 3.7.23).

The above meditation may be useful for those afflicted by death anxiety and suicidal tendencies. Such individuals may be trained to find help within themselves rather than to be helpless victims of any trauma. "Witness-consciousness" at the higher *kośas* affords one, firstly, the ability to withdraw one's mind from the problematic areas of the lower *kośas*, and secondly, the capacity to identify with values like healthy determination and bliss which are products of the higher *kośas* . The practice and perfection of this technique facilitates the movement of the mind

from agony to happiness, from depression to joy. The *pañcakośas* have an intrinsic ability to avert impending catastrophes and to promote a zest for life.

6.10 Globalization and the future.

With the current globalization process in full momentum many previous cultural and historical prejudices are being obliterated. This is generating unparalleled opportunities to forge the kind of shift in paradigm we need to survive in the twenty-first century. Vedanta views the world as a comprehensive and interconnected whole. The development of this ideal implies a helpful cross-cultural borrowing. From the Hindu position there is nothing richer to give, nothing so profound to impart, than the knowledge of the Ups. For the Hindu this means a return to the spirit of the Ups. and the corresponding application of that spirit to the challenges of the post-modern world. Herein lies the potential for immense goodness but "the harvest has long been ripening for the sickle, but as yet, to our reproach, those who reap are few."

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GLOSSARY OF SANSKRIT TERMS

abhyāsa	Practice ; practice of spiritual discipline.
ācārya	Spiritual teacher.
ādhibhautika	Proceeding from *bhūtas* or elements.
ādhidaivika	Pertaining to gods.
adhvaryu	One of the priests officiating at a sacrifice, his duty being to measure the ground, build the altar, prepare the sacrificial vessels, etc. While he is engaged in these duties, hymns from the Yajur Veda are recited.
adhyātmika	Pertaining to the *ātman* .
Advaita	Non-duality; a school of Vedanta Philosophy, teaching the oneness of God, soul and universe, whose chief exponent was Shankara.
āgāmi (*karma*)	One of the three kinds of actions in the theory of *karma* in Indian Philosophy, the other two being *prārabdha* and *sañcita*. *Āgāmi* is the action performed in this life which will produce its results in a future life.
Agni	Deity presiding over fire ; fire.
ahaṅkāra	Ego or 'I'-consciousness; one of the four functions of the inner-organ. (See *antahkaraṇa*).
ajñāna	A term of Vedanta Philosophy meaning ignorance,individual or cosmic. According to non-dualistic Vedanta, *ajñāna* is

	responsible for the perception of multiplicity as also for man's bondage and suffering.
antahkaraṇa	The inner-organ comprising *manas* (mind), *buddhi* (intellect or determinative faculty), *citta* (mind-stuff), and *ahaṅkāra* (ego).
ānanda	Bliss.
ānandamayakośa	Sheath of bliss.
annamayakośa	Sheath made up of food, physical body.
aparāvidyā	Empirical knowledge.
apāna	A modification of the vital breath, by the action of which the unasimilated food and drink go downward and are ultimately ejected; also the movement of the out-going breath.
Āraṇyaka	A section of the Vedas (See Vedas).
āśrama	Stage of life. There are four *āśramas* in the life of a Hindu : (1) *brahmacarya* (student), (2) *garhastya* (living in the household), (3) *vanaprastha* (retiring to the forest) and (4) *sannyāsa* (renunciation).
ātman	The Self or the Soul ; consciousness viewed within the context of the individual. According to non- dualistic Vedanta it is non-different from the supreme soul (*brahman*).
Aum	The most sacred word of the Vedas; It is the symbol of both the Personal God and of the Absolute.
vidyā	A term of Vedanta Philosophy meaning ignorance, individual or cosmic.
ṣya	Commentary.

bhokta	Enjoyer.
bhuh	Earth
bhuvah	The space between earth and heaven; the atmosphere.
brahmaloka	The plane of Brahma, roughly corresponding to the highest heaven of the dualistic religions, where fortunate souls go after death and enjoy comunion with the Personal God.
brahman	The Absolute; the Supreme Reality of non-dualistic Vedanta.
brahmavidyā	The knowledge of *brahman.*
Brahma	The Creator-God; the first person of the Hindu Trinity; the other two being Visnu and Siva.
Brāhmaṇa	One of the two main sections of the Vedas.
buddhi	Intelligence or determinative faculty; one of the four divisions of the inner-organ or *antahkaraṇa* according to Indian Philosophy (see *antahkaraṇa*).
caitanya	Pure consciousness.
cit	Pure consciousness.
chandraloka	The sphere lunar light, where souls repair after death to enjoy the fruit of their meritorious deeds done with a selfish motive.
darśana	Philosophy.
dharma	Righteousness; duty; the intrinsic nature of a thing which governs its growth.
devas	(Lit. shining ones). The gods of Hinduism.
Gāyatrī	Vedic *mantra*; Vedic metre of twenty four syllables.

guṇa	(1) Quality ; (2) Ingredient ; (3) Merit ; also the three constituents of *prakṛti* viz. *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* - *sattva* stands for placidity, *rajas* for restlessness and activity and *tamas* for inertia.
hiraṇyagarbha	A name of *brahman*; the first manifestation of *brahman*; the cosmic form of the Self creating the subtle universe.
hotṛi	A priest conducting a sacrifice; especially one who recites the prayers of the Rg Veda at the sacrifice.
Indra	The king of gods in the Vedic Religion.
indrīyas	Organs. There are two types of organs : *pañcajñānendrīyas* (five organs of knowledge –ears, the skin, the eyes, the nose and the tongue) and *pañcakarmendrīyas* (five organs of action – organs of speech, the hands, the feet and the organs of evacuation and generation).
Īśvara	*Saguna brahman* or *brahman* with attributes, as the ruler of the universe.
jagat	The universe.
jāgrat	Wakefulness, waking stste.
japa	Repetition of a holy syllable or sacred formula as a religious. discipline.
jīva	The individual soul.
jīvanmukta	One enjoying liberation while in the body.
jīvātma	Individual soul

jñāna	Knowledge, the process of reasoning by means of which ultimate Truth is attained.
jñānakānda	The knowledge (philosophical) portion of the Vedas.
jñāni	Knower; a follower of the path of discrimination.
kāraṇa	Instrument.
karma	Action in general; duty; ritualistic worship; results of action.
karmakānda	The part of the Vedas that deal with rituals and sacrifices.
kārika	A type of commentary in verse; the famous *kārika* of Gaudapada on the Mandukya Upanisad.
kośa	(Lit. sheath or covering). The following are the five *kośas* as described in Vedanta philosophy : (1) The *annamayakośa* or gross physical body made of and sustained by food, (2) the *prāṇamayakośa* or vital sheath or energy sheath, (3) the *manomayakośa* or mental sheath, (4) the *vijnānamayakośa* or the sheath of intelligence, and (5) the *ānandamayakośa* or the sheath of bliss. These five sheaths cover the *ātman* which is the innermost reality of the *jīva* and is untouched by the characteristics of the sheaths.
lakṣaṇā	Implication, secondary meaning.
lokas	Regions or worlds, subtle dimensions.
manana	Cogitation.
manas	Mind.
manomayakośa	Mind or mental sheath

mantra	Holy Sanskrit text; the sacred formula used in *japa*, or repetition of God's name. Also one of the two main sections of the Vedas.
māyā	A term of Vedanta philosophy denoting ignorance obscuring the vision of Reality; the cosmic illusion on account of which the one appears as many, the Absolute as the relative.
mokṣa	Liberation.
mukta	The liberated one.
mumukṣu	Aspirer after liberation.
nididhyasāna	Meditation.
nirvāna	Final deliverance.
nirvikalpa	Indeterminate.
nirvikalpa samādhi	The highest state of *samādhi* in which the aspirant realizes his total oneness with *brahman.*
niṣkāmakarma	Motiveless action - action done without expectation of any return.
nityakarma	Daily duties.
Pañcadaśī	(Lit. five and ten) fifteen; here the name of the work used in this (as it has fifteen chapters) the author of which is Sri Vidyaranya Swami. It is a work on Advaita Vedanta with a chapter on the *pañcakośas.*
paramahaṁsa	One belonging to the highest order of sannyasins, or monks.
Pitṛyāna	The Southern Path, or Way of the Manes, by which departing souls attain to Chandraloka, or the sphere of lunar light.
pradhana	The primary or unevolved matter; another epithet of *prakṛti*, the source of the visible universe.

prajñā, prajñāna	Consciousness.
prakṛti	Primal nature, also see *pradhana.*
prāṇamayakośa	Vital sheath ; energy sheath.
prārabdha karma	The portion of the work performed in a previous life which is bearing fruit in the present life.
pratyakṣānubhuti	Intuition; direct perception
purāṇa	Ancient; a type of semi-mythological and semi-historical documents of the Hindus.
puruṣa	Soul; so called because it is experienced as abiding in the cavity of the heart.
rajas	One of the three *guṇas* that constitute *prakṛti*, whose nature is restlessness and activity.
ṛṣi	A seer of Truth to whom the wisdom of the Vedas was revealed.
sāma	Song; name of one of the four Vedas and also a name of *brahman.*
samādhi	Superconscious trance; absorption in the goal meditated upon.
saṁsāra	Phenomenal existence and transmigration, empirical existence .
saṁskāra	Impression.
sañcita karma	Actions performed in a previous life which remain stored up, to bear fruit in a future life.
Sāṅkhya	One of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, which teaches that the universe evolves as the result of the union of *prakṛti* (nature) and *purusha* (consciousness). According to this system, which is attributed to Kapila, there are as many *purushas*, or units of consciousness, as there are living beings.

śarīra	Body.
satcitananda	Existence, knowledge and bliss-absolute. This is the intrinsic nature of *brahman.*
sattva	Purity
savikalpa	Determinate.
śloka	Verse.
smṛti	What is remembered. Manuals of moral codes of the Hindus, secondary scriptures of the Hindus.
soma	The juice of a creeper, used in Vedic sacrifices.
śravaṇa	Hearing (of the scriptural truths from the preceptor).
śruti	What is heard or revealed; Vedas.
śukla	White or bright.
sukṣmaśarīra	Subtle body.
sushumna	Among the innumerable nerves in the nervous system, the *sushumna* is the most inportant. It is situated within the spinal column and extends from the base of the spine to the brain. The *sushumna*, through which the awakened spiritual enengy rises, is described as the *Brahmavartman*, or Parthway to *brahman.*
suṣupti	Deep sleep.
svah	Heaven
svapna	Dream.
taijasa	Soul identified with the mind or subtle body in dream experience.
amas	One of the constituents (inertia) of *prakrti*
imasika	Of or pertaining to *tamas* (inertia).

udgātri	One of the officiating priests in a Vedic sacrifice; his duty was to recite from the Sama Veda.
upādhi	Limiting adjunct. A term of Vedanta philosohpy denoting a limitation imposed upon the Self or upon *Brahman* through ignorance.
upāsana	Meditation, worship.
vairāgya	Dispassion.
vāsana	Latent impression.
vedānga	Auxiliaries of the Vedas. They are six in number, viz., *siksa* (science of pronunciation), *kalpa* (the code of rituals) *vyakaranam* (grammar) *niruktam* (etymology) *chandas* (metre) and *jyotism* (astrology).
Vedānta	(Lit. The essence or the concluding portion of the Vedas). A system of philosophy ascribed to Vyasa, discussed mainly in the Upanisads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras.
videhamukti	Liberation after the physical death of the body.
vijñāna	Knowledge; Self-realization.
vijñānamayakośa	The intellectual sheath.
vikalpa	Doubt; fancy; determination; modification.
viksepa	Projection; one of the two powers of *ajñāna*, due to which contrary objects are projected.
viveka	Discrimination.
vṛtti	Modification; thought impressions.
Yama	The king of death, a Vedic deity.

yoga	Union of the individual soul (*ātman*) with the supreme Soul (*brahman*) ; the discipline by which such union is effected, Yoga System (one of the six systems of Hindu Philosophy ascribed to Patanjali).
yogi	One who practices *yoga*.