Chapter 5

Asceticism in the Early Vedic Literature

The Vedas are the earliest available literary record of the Āryans, particularly their philosophical thought and religious practices during the first thousand years or more of their settlement in India. By the Vedic literature we mean not any particular book, but the whole mass of literature produced by them. We generally include in it the four Samhitās, the Rgveda, Sāmveda, Yajurveda and Atharvaveda, the Brāhmaṇas on the one hand and the Āryanyakas and the Upaniṣads on the other which came into existence in different periods of time. Even in each of the Samhitās, we find evidences of collections of hymns of different periods, grouped together under one common name. Thus Vedic civilisation means various lines of primitive thought and practice of the Āryans which grew and developed over a vast span of time.

The earliest of the Samhitās is the Rgveda wherein we come across the idea of definite gods, as a normal evolution from the striking phenomena of nature. The same Samhitā shows that the development of the Āryan religion and philosophy proceeded along two well-marked directions. On the one hand, we find the idea of propitiating the different gods by means of worship, which led to the religious sacraments known as Yajña or sacrifice. On the other hand, there developed a more philosophic concept about the nature of these gods which culminated in the idea that all these gods were but the manifestations of a higher spirit: ekam sad vipra bahudhā vadanti. The later Vedic literature saw a further development in these directions. The Brāhmaṇas developed the ritualistic 1 Āpástamba in the Yajñoparibhāṣāsūtra has defined the Vedas as the collection of mantras and brāhmaṇas: Mantrabhāmānvyorveda nāmadheyam. Similar definitions have been given by other scholars. Most of the Upaniṣads are included in the Brāhmaṇa portions of the Vedas, though there are a few which are included in the mantra portions also.


side of the sacrifice, while the philosophical ideas were developed in the Upaniṣads.

The ideas that prompted the Rgvedic Āryans to perform sacrifice can be gathered from various hymns. The poet, himself in a reminiscent mood notices the variety of ideas, viz. the propitiation of the divinity with a view to secure favour, protection against the enemy, protection from sin, attainment of fame, wealth and strength, material progress, and expiation behind the performance of sacrifice. Thus the Rgvedic people performed sacrifices accompanied with prayers to the various gods, viz. Indra, Agni, Varuna, Mitra, Asvins and Uṣas etc. They were conscious of the might of gods who symbolised power, strength, wealth and vigour and whom they evoked for the attainment of worldly comforts with a view to enjoy the blessings of the world. Their worship was sincere but utilitarian. Their ideal of happiness was quite simple and materialistic on the whole. It comprised mainly a desire to live a natural duration of human life which was hundred years, full term of life of hundred autumns, hundred springs, hundred winters and a keener desire for progeny and cattle. The desire for sons was so dominant that they longed to see sons of their sons. The prayers of the Rgvedic people thus mainly centred round the desire for prosperity, progeny and safety from misfortunes. Life was thought of as a blessing which they loved in all its fullness and the joys and pleasures of this world deeply interested them.

About the Rgvedic life, Radhakrishnan observes: ‘We find in the hymns of the Rgveda, a keen delight in the beauties of nature, its greatness, its splendour and its pathos. The motive of the sacrifices

1 R.V., III. 55. 3.
3 R.V., I. 103. 8.
5 R.V., I. 9. 8, 44. 2: VIII. 65. 9, 23. 21.
8 R.V., I. 185. 8, 114. 4; VII. 51. 5.
9 R.V., VII. 66. 16, 101. 6; cf. A.V., I. 31. 3; VIII. 2. 8.
10 R.V., X. 18, 2-3-4-6; 85. 39; 161. 2-3-4.
12 R.V., X. 161. 4; IX. 74. 8.
13 R.V., I. 66, 83. 6, 54. 11; II. 4. 8; III. 3. 7. IV. 2. 11.
14 R.V., I. 180. 8; VII. 8. 65; III. 54. 18; V. 41. 17.
15 SV., II. 11. 9.
is love of the good things of the world. We have yet the deep joy in life and the world untainted by any melancholy gloom. The estimate of life which finds expression here was inspired by a healthy appreciation of the good things of the world and to seek its pleasures. The life depicted was simple, fresh and full of zest. There was a vigorous pursuit of material life and the desire for prosperity. Though the prevailing spirit of the hymns is optimistic, there is sometimes a note of sadness in them as in those addressed to the goddess of Dawn, the Ushas, which pointedly refer to the way of men.

There is a voice of doubt as to the power, even to the existence of the gods. In one of the hymns, it is said of Indra: ‘Of whom they ask, where is he? Of him, indeed, they also say, he is not?’ In another hymn, the priests are invited to offer a song of praise to Indra, ‘a true one, if in truth he is! for many say: ‘There is no Indra, who has ever seen him? To whom are we to direct the song of praise?’

We also find in some verses references to death. The Rgvedic people did not try to forget or ignore death. The sober realism of their outlook comes out in the recognition that death was the ‘comrade’ (bandhu), the unseen companion of the race of man. The term ‘comrade’ suggests a manly, undisturbed attitude towards death, untainted by fantasy or fear. What they prayed for in the beginning, was relief from premature death. ‘Let not my thread of life be snapped while I am weaving my song, nor the measure of my work broken up before its time,’ prays a Vedic poet to Varuna. When the melody of life was completed, he was perfectly willing to leave the concert hall of life. But the incomplete song seemed sad. He prayed for life for a hundred autumns, life with its full powers, with sight and hearing, the strength of the arms and the keenness of the mind, unimpaired. When his own sons had become fathers in their turn, he was ready to depart. Not only the Rgvedic

Āryans prayed for long life of prolonged youth and vigour but their outlook on life was also robust and cheerful. The Rṣis even called them ‘the sons of immortality’ (amṛtasya putrā) and ‘the possessors of celestial natures.’

Despite this robust optimism, we find sometimes the notes of pathos in the Varuṇa hymns when Vasiṣṭha prays to Varuṇa: ‘What was the gravest sin, O Varuṇa, committed by me that you want to forsake me, a friend and praiser of yours?’ But though references to death and notes of pathos are to be found here and there and disturb their cheerfulness for a while, the Rgvedic Āryans were, on the whole, in the rosy dawn of life.

Against this picture of the Vedic society of a happy pastoral people, taking a keen pleasure in worldly things, desiring material prosperity and living a full life of zest and vigour, we come across a small section of society which does not seem to seek the delights of this world and appreciate its comforts. The reference is to the Munis figuring in the tenth māndala of Rgveda. Basham calls them ‘a class of holy men, different from the Brāhmaṇas.’ According to Kane, they lived ‘a life of poverty, contemplation and mortification.’ They look somewhat out of tune with the whole image of the Rgvedic society engaged in the performance of sacrifices and the worship of deities. Some scholars argue: ‘In the Rgveda no evidence of an ascetic weltanschauung is found so that the inference seems natural to follow that such an outlook derived from the Dravids or from aboriginal inhabitants of the land.’ This view, which seems to be correct, is partly explained by stating that the hymns to the Muni which are found significantly in the tenth book of the Rgveda ‘Represents a definitely later stratum of composition.’ The reason seems to be that it is a natural development of thought aided by the persistence of magical ideas drawn from lower and more primitive religions. There is no doubt that some of the strange practices and beliefs of the Muni throw light on the ascetic institution which in

1Rādhakrishnan, IP, I, p. 111.
2RV, I. 124. 2: abhinātān daivāni vrātānī pramināti manuṣyā yugāni iyuṣī- nāmupamā śaśvatināmāyatinām prathamaṇaḥ vyaduta.
3RV, II. 12. 5-12.
4RV, VIII. 100. 3 ff.
5RV, VIII. 18. 18: Ye ciddhi mṛtyubāndhav āditya manavaḥ smasi.
6RV, II. 28. 5.
7AV, XIX. 60; RV, X. 158. 4; X. 186. 1.
8RV, I. 89. 9.
10RV, 86. 2-4.
11Basham, The Wonder that was India, p. 244.
12Kane, HDS, II, Pt. I, pp. 419-42.
13Geden, ERE, II, p. 88; Bouquet, Hinduism, p. 33.
14Macdonell, HOSL, p. 45.
15cf. Chapter 4.
course of time came to occupy an engaging attention in the life and thought of the people ancient India.

Firstly we turn to the austerities, ascetic practices (tapas) and then to the Muni.

Tapas

We find in the following passages the original meaning of tapas as ‘heat’ or ‘burning’:

The sun burns untroubled sending forth heat: Sūryastapatī tapayatvārthā. The sun heats the earth: tapanti śatrūṃ svarnaḥbhūme. Fire heats milk: nāśiram dhanā na tapanti gharmanā. They burn their foes as the sun burns the earth: tapanti śatrūṃ mahāsenasam amebhīresām. Chase with thy tapas for ally, our foeman: tapasā yujā vi jāhi śatrūṃ. Burn him: tapā tapiṣṭha tapasā tapasvān. With heat, O bull, on every side consume them: tapā vrśan visvataḥ socitā tān. Agni, burn up the unfriendly who are near us: tapā canśam aruruṣāh parasyā. Smite ye him down with your most flaming weapon: tapiṣṭha tapasā hanmanā. The idea of tormenting or distressing is also implied here. Consume with flame most fiercely glowing: tapiṣṭhā socitā ya sūradhiḥ. With hottest blaze pierce the man who love deception: tapiṣṭhā hésasā droghamitran. Agni is prayed: consume our enemies with thy hottest flames, preserve us from distress: tapiṣṭhāh ajaro doha. Make the fiery pit friendly for Atri’s sake: tapantī gharmanā onyāvāntān Atraye. The frogs who had been burnt and scorched by hot weather: tapati gharmanā asīnavate visagam. Thus the word tapas is used to mean: ‘the heating,’ ‘the burning of sun and fire,’ in the psychological sense, ‘to give pain,’ ‘to make to suffer;’ and ‘to consume by fire and heat, evil or enemies.

1RV., II. 24. 9.
2RV., VII. 34. 19.
3RV., III. 53. 14.
4RV., VII. 34. 19.
5RV., X. 83. 3; cf. AV, 4. 32. 3.
6RV., VI. 5. 4.
7RV., VI. 22. 5; cf. AV, 20. 36. 8.
8RV., III. 18. 2.
9RV., VII. 59. 8; cf. AV, VII. 77. 2.
10RV., IV. 5. 4.
11RV., X. 89. 12.
12RV., VII. 15. 3.
13RV., I. 112. 7.
14RV., VII. 103. 9.

Ascanetism in the Early Vedic Literature

Tapas as heat or fervour is extended to mean heat of mind or zeal in doing things. It is said that gods befriend none except those who have been tried: Na rte śrāntasya sakṣhāya devaḥ. Tapas is the unflagging, unspiring effort in the achievement of higher things; the infinite pains one has to take to do something really worthwhile. Tapas is also conceived as a mighty power lying at the beginning of all great things. Truth (satya) and order (ṛta), for example, were born at the beginning out of abhidhma tapas. Gods and sages too performed noble things through austerities, tapas. Indra, for example, conquered heaven by tapas. Agni was produced by Angirases by tapas. Manyu, the personification of Wrath became a mighty warrior through tapas. He was praised to chase his enemies with tapas.

The practice of austerities (tapas), was said to deliver from sins, lead to heaven and to the gods and make one invincible. The fathers (pīts), it is said, practised tapas when they were on the earth. This suggests that the practice of tapas led to the reward of heaven. Some are also said to have become invincible (anādhyāya) through tapas. According to Sāyaṇa there is here a reference to tapas of various forms such as austerities like Kṛchacāṇḍrāyaṇa whereby the ascetic is rendered invincible (anādhyāya), sacrifices whereby he attains heaven, and penances of the highest order (mahat), that is Rājasīya, Aśvamedha, forms of Upāsana (Yoga) like Hiranyagarbha. Sāyaṇa seems to have misunderstood the development of post-Rgvedic civilisation with the Rgvedic one. The ideas of the austerities like Kṛchacāṇḍrāyaṇa are to be met with in the Dhāmaśāstras. Even the sacrifices like the Rajasīya and Aśvamedha are definitely post-Rgvedic developments. Even the Rgvedic Hiranyagarbha is not associated with any form of Yoga (Upāsana) but it is a term used to indicate the Purusa or Prajāpati or the one as a Golden Germ. Sāyaṇa has thus implied certain ideas which came

1RV., VI. 33. 11; cf. RV, VIII. 2. 18.
2Bose, A.C., The Call of the Vedas, p. 56.
3RV., X. 190. 1.
4RV., X. 167. 1.
5RV., X. 169. 2.
6RV., X. 83. 3.
7RV., X. 154. 2.
8RV., X. 167. 1.
9RV., X. 154. 4.
10RV., X. 154. 2; cf. AV, 18. 2. 16.
to be associated later with *tapas*. No doubt, what exactly was the nature of *tapas* which brought about these great and mysterious results is nowhere described. *Tapas* was also at the root of the power and inspiration of the Rṣis. The great Seven Rṣis of the pristime age are described as absorbed in *tapas*.1

The power of *tapas* is further stressed when we are told in the creation hymn (*Nāsadiya Sūkta*) that Kāma (desire) was born out of *tapas*.2 The sūkta also depicts the Primal Being as practising *tapas* before the creation of the world.3 Griffith renders *tapas* here as fervour or penance.4 Muir translates it as inward fervour.5 Wilson means the contemplation of things that were to be created: *Jagat-sarjan viśayāṃ paryālokaṃ*.6 *Tapas*, it seems, is used here both in the senses of the fervour of austerity and reflection. However, Agrawala gives a different interpretation. *Tapas* elsewhere is known as the primeval heat (*Agraja tapas*), *Devaushya*, the divine heat or an incalculable explosion of energy called *Abhiddha tapas*.7 Agrawala observes: ‘The source, nature and effect of this *tapas* which could have existed and functioned as an infinite ocean of the waves of Prana (*Samāñchana—prasārana*) or Light and Heat (*Jyoti* and *Ghrasana*) cannot be determined. What actually happens as a result of this activity is the creation of individual centres as whirl-pools of energy which the Rṣi here speaks of as Ekam.’8 This suggests that the Āryans regarded *fervour*, warmth behind the *tapas*, as the principle explaining movement, life and thought.

An interesting cosmic use of the verb *tap* is found where the axe of the world is said to get hot: *tasya nāksastapyate*.9 The use of *tapas* in its technical meaning of self-inflicted heat and pain, ascetical practice, giving superhuman power is suggested in: *tanvānāsta-

1RV., X. 109. 4: devā etasyāmavadanta purve saptarṣayāḥ tapase ye niśedūḥ.
2RV., X. 154. 5: rṣin tapasvato yama tapojāṃ api gachchhatat.
3RV., X. 129. 4.
4RV., X. 129. 3.
6Muir, *OST*, V.
7Griffith, op. cit., II, p. 575; cf. Śāyaṇa on AV., XIX, 53. 8; cf. Panini: *Tapāḥ dlocane.
8RV., X. 190. 1; cf. Agrawala.
9Agrawala, ‘*Nāsadiya Sūkta*, Bharati ’62-’63, No. 6, pt. II, p. 10. He adds: ‘This one also was an unknown factor called *Ayyaya Purusa* or *Aja* and *Kimpisavind*, something which is beyond comprehension (RV., I. 1. 64. 6).’

**Asceticism in the Early Vedic Literature**

*pasūbhyaṃ pasūbhyaṃ.*1 In the tenth *mandala* this seems to be the characteristic meaning of *tapas*.

*Tapas* is also used in the Rgveda to indicate devotion and its results: ‘I saw thee meditating in thy spirit, what sprang from *tapas* and thence developed: *Apasāyaṃ tvā manasā cekitānam tapaso vibhutam*.2 And in a prayer for truthful life to libation (Indu): ‘Flow towards Indra, pressed with words of Śrta with sāya with śraddhā and *tapas*: rtavākena satyena śraddhāya tapasā suta (RV., IX. 113. 2).

It seems that *tapas* is indirectly connected with a world-producing sacrifice in the sense of the *Puruṣa sūkta* sacrifice.3 Sayana too has linked *tapas* more directly with sacrifices, particularly with the *dikṣā*, preparatory to the sacrifice.4 But wherever the sacrifice (*Yajña*) is thus connected with *dikṣā* or *tapas*, it is no longer the early simple sacrifice, to win the favour of the gods; its conception comes very close and is very similar to that of the later Brāhmaṇic cosmic and magic idea of *Yajña*.

We find in the Rgveda the gradual development of the idea of *tapas*. From its original meaning of heat, it becomes physical heat and practise of religious austerities or penance and devotional fervour. The idea that Agni can burn enemies to ashes is close to the idea of the magical power of *tapas* in its technical sense. The psychological meaning of *tap*, ‘to give pain’ prepares the later meaning of ‘voluntarily inflicted heat and pain’ hence austerities or ascetical practices. Life, denied of comforts and pleasures, becomes austere, often painful and *tapas* eventually led to austerity or ascetic practices. The *tapas* of the five fires (*pācāgni*) is obviously connected with the physical heat given by Agni. *Tapas* is also connected with cosmic creation.

**The Muni**

The word Muni occurs five times in the Rgveda. In one of the hymns to the Mārutis the course of the leader is compared with that

1RV., VIII. 59. 6: Indrāraṇur ṣadṛṣibhyo maniṣān vāco mātiṃ śtataṃ tamaṃ gne Yāni śtānānaṃ śṛjanta dhīra yajñaṃ tanvānāsta pasūbhyaṃ,
2RV., X. 183. 1.
3RV., IX. 113. 2.
4cf. RV., VIII. 59. 6; RV., X. 90.
5Śāyaṇa on RV., X. 183. 1: *Tapasā jātāṁ tapasā vibhutaṁ tapaśāḥ dikṣārūpāvṛtāt jātāṁ puntpannāṁ tapāsāḥ anuṣṭhiyamaṇādyajño dvetoḥ vibhutaṁ. Also on IX. 113. 2.

1RV., I. 164. 13.
of the Muni (Munirīva: like one inspired). Here an unusual power of the Muni is celebrated. The mighty god Indra is called the friend of the Munis: Munināṁ sakāh. In both the cases, Griffith takes the Munis as 'sages', 'saintly men' or 'ascetics' whereas Sayana takes 'Ṛṣis' for the 'Munis'. Munināṁ sakāh, according to him is the Ṛṣis' friend. Extending the same meaning to the wind-girdled Munis, Viṭāḥsanāṁ munyo in the Muni-sūkta (RV., X.136.1-7), Sayana gives us a picture of the Munis as 'the sons of Viṭāḥsanāṅ,' 'seers' and thinkers' (mānannā munih), who can see things beyond sense-perception (atindriyārthādārśino).

The chief characteristics of the Muni or the Keśin as described in the Muni-sūkta are:

1. He is long-haired (keśin), clad in soiled yellow (piśāṅgā vasate malā), gridled with wind (vāṭarśanāḥ) and into whom the gods enter (deveśito). He supports Agni and moisture, heaven and earth; he resembles the sky and the light.
2. He proclaims: 'In the intoxication of ecstasy we are mounted on the winds. You mortals can see only our body.'
3. He flies through the air and is a friend of the gods.
4. He is steed of the wind (vāṭa), the friend of vāyu, impelled by the gods (deveśito) he inhabits the two seas, that of the rising and that of the setting sun.
5. He travels by the path of the Apsaras, the Gandharvas and wild beasts and he knows thoughts or secret desires.
6. He drinks with Rudra from the cup of poison.

In the verses 1, 6 and 7 the word Keśin is used and the Muni is used in the verses 2, 3 (mauneyā), 4 and 5. From the description, the first impression we gather is that the Muni is not an ordinary mortal. The qualities of treading the aerial path and filling the two worlds with golden lustre, helping the rain-god Indra can easily belong to the sun-god. Thus is the verses 1, 4 and 5 where the word Keśin is used, Sayana thinks that the deity glorified is either the Sun or Wind or Fire or all the three together.

Mauna is abstinence from speech. It is regarded as helpful for meditation. Mauna itself is a kind of austerity. The Muni is described as maddened with silence (unmaditā mauneyā). There is a suggestion here that silence (mauneyā) and solitude are conducive to ecstasy and concentration (ekegratā). The fact that the Muni is solitary is indicated by Sayana when he explains the Muni's ecstasy as laukikasavarvyaḥ visarjanen unmaditāḥ. The Muni is in an abnormal state of suspended consciousness or ecstatic trance. In that state he behaves like a madman. This agrees with the fact that Aitāśa Muni of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa is regarded by his son as deranged and his speech as Aitāṣapralāp. It is significant that even Sayana links the Keśin walking on the paths of Apsaras and Gāndharvas with Ṛṣi Etaśa.

The ecstasy of the silent Muni seems to have heightened owing to his drinking with Rudra, a potent draught from a magic cup which is poison to ordinary mortals. Probably the use of some poison or narcotic drink to produce exhilaration or hypnosis is suggested here. To the hypnotic effect of drinking Soma by the gods and men, there are many references in the Rgveda. One hymn describes those inebriated with the drink thus: 'We have drunk Soma, we have become immortal, we have entered into light, we have known the gods.' Thus possessed they regarded themselves as being into whom the gods had entered. In an ecstatic trance, the Muni is said to be in the state of divine possession or impelled by the gods (deveśito). So inspired, he is believed to possess extraordinary powers of being uplifted, above the world and attaining to communion with the gods. Roth observes: 'The hymns show the conception that by a life of sanctity (nauneyā) the Muni can attain to the fellowship of the deities of the air, the Vāyus, the Rudras, the Apsarasas and the Gāndharvas; and furnished like them with wonderful powers, can travel along with them on their course.'

Thus we see in the Muni a case of the effort to obtain religious

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1Sayana’s comment on RV., X. 136. 3.
3Sayana’s comment: Unmaditā = unmatā unmatāvadacarantaḥ yād va utkṛṣṭām madhia harṣain prāptāḥ.
4Ait. Brah., VI. 33. 3.
5Sayana on RV., X. 136. 5: Yadvā jñātavyāśasyaṣeretāsasya sakāh svādayitā rasayitā.
6RV., VIII. 48.
exaltation through ecstatic practices which seem to endow him with certain magical powers.

The Muni is described as having long hair (Kesin), wearing the yellow (piśāgha), dirty (malā), garments (vasate). Sāyaṇa suggests vestments of bark (vasate: valkalrupāṇi). The dirt (malā) of both person and garments of the Muni suggests his being engaged in some sort of austerities (tapas). What exactly was the nature of tapas is not described. It was probably some method which produced bodily heat and made the body refugent. The poetic description that the Muni resembled the sky and the light and filled the two worlds with golden lustre may be interpreted that he was engaged in tapas. Sāyaṇa’s view that the Munis, by the might of their penance (tapas) become gods is significant. This also suggests that they devoted themselves to austerities (tapas).

Roth also holds the view that the Muni is engaged in tapas. He explains why he is called the Kesin and why he should resemble Sūrya, Agni or Vāyu. He is long-haired (Kesin) because, according to him, he does not shave his hair during the time of his austerities and upholds fire, moisture, heaven and earth and thus resembles the world of light. We come across many such ideas in later literature.

The Muni is regarded as traversing the path of the Apsarasas, the Gandharvas and the beasts of the wild forests. He is regarded as dwelling in the eastern and western oceans. This power of the Muni to roam at will in different regions and paths may be the root of the later notion prevalent that the Yogin develops supernatural powers which generate the faculty of untrammelled movement at will. But as already discussed, even Shamans or medicine men in primitive cultures possessed such magical powers. The Muni’s powers seem to reflect the impact of the pre-Aryan magical practices of the Shaman or the medicine man.

About the Rgvedic Munis, Schweitzer observes:

‘In these hymns (muni-sūkta) we encounter men who know they are uplifted above this world. They are the Shamans and medicine men—later called, Yogins—who get themselves into a state of ecstasy through drinking the intoxicating Soma, through mortifica-

tion of the flesh and by self-hypnosis. Thus possessed, they regard themselves as beings into whom the gods have entered, and believe themselves in possession of super-natural powers . . . . They regard this state of being uplifted above the world as something that only came under consideration for themselves because they possessed the capacity of attaining to community with the gods.’

Some scholars like Belvarkar and Ranade also consider the Muni to be the prototype of the Yogi. Sampurṣanand is of the view that the Muni-sūkta refers to ‘Yogis in general and not to any one specific group of individuals (the vāṭarśaṇḍas).’ He writes: ‘If Sāyaṇa’s interpretation that Kesin refers to Sūrya, Agni and Vāyu is accepted, then the Yogis are called Kesins because of their identification with Vāyu through their practice of Prāṇayāma. . . . It is, therefore, quite conceivable that in these mantras the Yogis are referred to as Kesins namely Jātādharis.’ Eliade sees in the Muni ‘an ecstatic who only vaguely resembles the Yogin, the chief similarity being his ability to fly through the air—but this siddhi is a magical power that is found everywhere.’ He points out that only the rudiments of classic Yoga are to be found in the Vedas. The ascetic disciplines and ecstatic ideologies which these ancient texts refer to, are not always related to Yoga, properly speaking, though they have found a place in the Yogic tradition. Prāṇāyāma is an important purificatory process in the Yoga system but it is difficult to determine how early in the Vedic culture Yogic technique was known and practised.

We are thus led to conclude that the Muni was an ascetic, though the word tapas does not occur in the sūkta. He had acquired magical powers (siddhis) very similar to the primitive medicine man, the shaman. His figure seems to have inspired many vāṇaprasthas and samīnyāsys of later times who practised severe austerities and lived a life of self-mortification and self-abnegation. Even his long hair and soiled yellow garments became typical of ascetics in the full-fledged system of the four āśramas. The dirt of his person in later times seems to have developed in a practice of besmearing the body with the ashes. Many an ascetic, like the Kesin, grew matted hair

1Sāyaṇa on RV., X. 136. 2: Yadā devasaḥ devaḥ tapaso mahimnā dipya-
mānāḥ sanyaḥ avikṣata devāśvarapah āvishan.
2Muir, OST., IV. p. 319.
3cf. Chapter 3.
4Schweitzer, Indian Thought And Its Development, p. 22.
5Belvarkar & Ranade, HIP., p. 405.
6In his letter of March 24, 1963 to the writer.
7Eliade, Yoga: Immortality and Freedom, pp. 102-103.
8ibid.
and came to be known as Jatadhāris. Even Śiva as a Mahāyogi is a jatadhārī and Rudra, a Kapardine or Dhurjati. Their upāsaks kept long hair (jata) and many sādhus still keep the jata. The yellow robe through the centuries became the commonest symbol of the austere life in India.

The Yajurveda

The Yajurveda represents the sacrificial literature proper as we find in it the exceeding growth of ritualism and an immense development in the various branches of the sacrifice. The main object namely the appeasement of the gods by prayers and minor rites was gradually lost sight of and a more mechanical form of religion based on complicated and elaborate ritualism developed. The sacrifice was no longer an offering to the gods as free personal beings but something that had power in itself. It regulated mechanically the relation of man with them which was controlled and guided by the art of the Brahmin priests, and their wonderful insight into the meaning of all the technical acts. As a result, the priestly class whose monopoly was to perform rites and rituals rose steadily in power and prestige. We find stray references to tapas where it means heat, energy, exhaustion and pain.¹

The Sāmaveda

In this Veda, the hymns taken from the Rgveda were set to music for use at the sacrifices. Here too the ritualistic forms assumed importance. Hence the very purpose of its subject-matter like the Yajurveda almost precluded any scope to ascetic practices (tapas).

The Atharvaveda

The Atharvaveda is a collection of charms and incantations. It was originally called not the Veda but Atharva-Angiras and was not included in the canon of sacred books till about 300 BC. The Rg., Yajur and Sāmaveda were an expression of the buoyant spirit of the Āryans whereas in the Atharvaveda we find a dread of evil spirits and their magical powers. The spells and incantations were designed to accompany magic rites to gain freedom from various diseases and relief from pain and for the attainment of almost every conceivable and of human life. Ritual, sacrifice and prayer were regarded as themselves powers alongside the gods and spirits. They had ceased to be the means whereby the worshipper was brought into touch with the gods with the result that the gods tended to fall more and more into the background. The Atharvaveda thus reflects the practices of the lower side of religious life and is closer to the common people than the priestly atmosphere of the Rgveda. It is the religion of the masses that one meets with throughout.

Tapas

We come across tapas used in the original sense of heat or fervour. There is a reference to the heat of the sun: udgādayatādityo vīryen tapasā saha.¹ Sacrifice is said to have been wrought by power of Brahma (Brāhmaṇa) and the gods are prayed to assist with fervour (tapas).² The people who have originated from thy (the sun’s) tapas are described as following the calf, the Gāyatri.³

Those who practised great austerity (tapo ye ca kārkire mahastānś) and having become invincible through religious fervour (tapasā ye anādhīṣṭān) are said to reach heaven through penances (tapasā ye svarvayuḥ devāpi gacchhatāt).⁴ Ṛṣis austere, practising austerities (Ṛṣintapavastate) are said to be born through penance (tapojām).⁵ Religious austerities are meant here. In the earlier usage, Kill him with Your hottest bolt (tapiṣṭhena haṁman)⁶ is substituted austerity, penance: tapiṣṭhena tapasā.⁷ The change indicates an increasing magical power of tapas.

Tapas is also used in cosmogonic hymns where it may suggest the creative heat or fervour that is symbolised by brooding over eggs.⁸ But in religious language, tapas means religious or devotional fervour, the inspiration of the ṛṣi and thus related to brahmaṇ, the holy word: tadbrahma ca tapasā saptaśaya upijāvanti.⁹ Tapas may have had a partly physical connotation. The sacrificial ritual itself,

¹AV., XVII. 1. 24.
²AV., XIX. 72; Kṛtamiṣṭam brahmaṇo viryena tena ya deva tapaśvateha.
³AV., XIII. 1. 10: Yāste viśāṭapāṣaḥ sambabhūvḥ vatsaṁ Gāyatrīmanu
⁴AV., XVIII. 2. 16; cf. TĀ., VI. 3. 2.
⁵AV., XVIII. 2. 15-18; cf. XI. 1. 26: ṛṣināṁ ṛṣeyāṁ tapso-adhijātā.
⁶AV., VII. 59. 9.
⁷AV., VII. 77. 2; cf. TS., IV. 3. 13. 3.
⁸AV., X. 7. 1; XI. 8. 2 and 6.
⁹AV., VIII. 10. 25.
performed over the sacred fire was 'heating' to the officiants. For these reasons, tapas occurs as a cosmic force. Occasionally it is a First Principle itself but more often the creator exercises tapas in making the world. In prayers to time (kāla) personified as a primordial power, tapas is associated: käle tapaḥ käle jyeṣṭham,\(^1\) and brahma tapo diṣaḥ.\(^2\)

The Atharvaveda speaks of the earth as upheld by Dharman—'eternal Law.'\(^3\) Tapas is described, together with satya, rta, dīkṣā, brahma and yaśa, as upholding the earth (prthiviṁ dhārayant).\(^4\) Tapas is also described as the leavings of the sacrifice (ucchiṣṭa) together with rta, satya, rāstrā, śrama, dharma and karma.\(^5\) Those versed in Brahma (Brahnaviḍo), it is said, go with tapas and dīkṣā.\(^6\)

The word tapas in the Atharvaveda is mentioned in connection with the Brāhmaṇā. Earlier, he was described as a member of the god's own body (devānāṁ avaiyekamanam), through whom Brhaspati obtained his consort (tena jāyamvanvarīdāṁ Brhaspatiḥ).\(^7\) Basically, he is one who possesses Brahma, the cosmic power, the one from whom Brahmā originates (tasmād jātāṁ brahmaṇāṁ brahma jyeṣṭham).\(^8\) The Brāhmaṇā moves about stirring both hemispheres: in him the gods become of equal mind, he supports heaven and earth and fills his teacher with tapas.\(^9\) Thus the essentially cosmic—magical function of the Brāhmaṇā seems evident: the heat or fervour of his tapas is creative of the cosmic power, Brahma, by which the gods and world are produced, upheld and protected. The Brāhmaṇā practices are so necessary that even an Ācārya cannot do without them if he wants to find a true Brāhmaṇā disciple.\(^10\)

On the other hand, a teacher is indispensable to the Brāhmaṇā who at the time of initiation ceremony (upanayan) is made to enter as it were the womb of the teacher.\(^1\) The Brāhmaṇā stays with the teacher apparently for a long time (he grows a beard); he dresses in the skin of a black antelope; a girdle (mekhalā) described as the daughter of faith (śraddhāṁ duḥhitā) and born of spiritual fervour (tapaso adhījātā),\(^2\) firewood and toil (pariśrama) are the symbols of the means, by which he fills the world with tapas. Mekhalā could well stand for a symbol of ritual continence as also the Brāhmaṇā is without wife.\(^3\) We are reminded here of Agastya who practised tapas while living a pious life of a householder: ubhau varṇo puroṣa.\(^4\) It is by means of tapas—connected with upanayana ceremony—that the Brāhmaṇā wants to master Brahma, the cosmic power. For it is due to Brāhmaṇāyaṁ, the ascetical-magical power over Brahma, that the world-order is established, that the king protects his kingdom, that a girl obtains a husband, a horse gets fodder, the gods get immortality and Indra becomes the king of the gods.\(^5\) Brāhmaṇāyaṁ is thus assimilated by tapas. Brāhmaṇāyaṁ as a stage of life, an āśrama, though not yet legally or traditionally imposed, seems to have been already accepted by society.

The words tapasvin and tapasi denoting the ascetic are to be found\(^6\) though according to Keith, tapasa (ascetic) is not found in the Vedic literature till the Brhadārāṇyaka Upaniṣad.\(^7\) All the three words are identical in meaning and denotes one who practised austerities (tapas).

**Brāhmaṇas**

The Brāhmaṇas are an inexhaustible mine for the history of sacrifice, religious practices and the institutions of priesthood.\(^8\) The idea that the sacrifice nourished the gods\(^9\) assumed great importance now and almost grotesque proportion. The creative activity of

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\(^{1}\) _AV_, XI. 5 (7) 3.
\(^{2}\) _AV_, VI. 133. 4.
\(^{3}\) cf. _RV_, X-109. 5.
\(^{4}\) _RV_, I. 179. 6.
\(^{5}\) _AV_, XI. 5. 7. 17-19. On _AV_, XI. 5, Zaechar comments: 'In the Brahmacārīr hymn the identification of the microcosm and macrocosm is complete...the identification of microscopic man not only with the universe but with the creator of the universe had already reached its extreme limit.'—*Hinduism*, p. 63.
\(^{6}\) _AV_, XIII. 2. 25.
\(^{7}\) _Vedic Index_, I, p. 307.
\(^{8}\) Bloomfield, *Religion of the Vedas*, p. 45.
\(^{9}\) _RV_, I.181, 1; III-20.1, 35.9; IV.24.6; VIII.18.19.
Prajñāpati was represented as exhausting him so much that his power required to be continually renewed partly by his own exertion, austerity (tapas) and partly by the food of the sacrifice. Stories are related as to how the gods and the asuras competed for world-power and how the gods only won through the correct knowledge of the sacrifice. If anything went wrong not only the sacrifice was useless but it was also believed that misfortune would attend the offerer. Hence the Brāhmaṇins specialist who could do it was in great demand. On his part, he strove to make the rites more and more intricate and indispensable. The over-emphasis on sacrifice reduced religion to an artificial, mechanical and stereotyped form. The sacrifice became greater than the gods and the priests who manipulated the sacrifice greater than all. The Brāhmaṇins rose to such an exalted position that they came to be known as veritable 'gods on earth (bhūmideva). The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa explains the position of the priest in unmistakable terms. As a result, the Brāhmaṇic religion became unintelligible and uninspiring to the illiterate masses and quite extravagant and meaningless to the literate. The masses found the bloody sacrifices of innocent animals quite shocking. The result was a general unrest and discontent with the Brāhmaṇic cult.

Tapas

There was not much scope for reference to austerities, tapas in Brāhmaṇa literature which is concerned almost entirely with the order and interpretation of the sacrifice, with cosmology and mythology. The practice of tapas, however, was recognised and enjoined. Its significance is illustrated firstly by its reference to the divinities. It is said that the gods became divine through the practice of tapas. By means of tapas the Rishis obtained the right to a share in the soma drink. It is said that the gods conquered the heavenly world through sacrifice (Yajñena), austerities, penances, āśrama (tapas) and sacrificial oblations (āhutibhihiḥ). The divine rṣis are said to be born from tapas. Prior to each act of creation, Prajñāpati was believed to have practised tapas. On one occasion, it is said that he practised such ugraṁ tapas that the lights, stars came forth from all the pores of his body. He produced the world through tapas. Elsewhere, Prajñāpati, we are told, created the world by 'heating' himself to an extreme degree through tapas—that is he created it by a sort of magical sweating. For Brāhmaṇic speculation, Prajñāpati was himself the product of tapas; in the beginning (agre) non-being (asat) became mind (manas) and heated itself (atapyata), giving birth to smoke, light, fire and finally to Prajñāpati. Tapas thus came to be regarded of great value and power; the gods and even Brahma performed it. It is enjoined that we must do what the gods did in the beginning.

The Tatītirīya Brāhmaṇa illustrates the great virtue of Brahmaṇcyāra in the sense of studying the Veda with due self-control. The decayed and old Bhāradvāja, when asked by Indra, how he would use another life if granted, said he would use it in practising brahmaṇcyāra. The Gopatha-Brāhmaṇa extols a Brahma-cārin who goes to a hermitage, where Munis like Vasishtha, Vāmadeva and Jāmadagni practised rigid austerities (tapas), like standing in water for a thousand years and observing strict celibacy (brahmaṇcyāra). Here the word ‘āśrama’ occurs in the sense of a hermitage and hence the rṣis seem to be hermits or vānaprasthas. Brahmaṇcyāra has acquired a significant place in a life of tapas.

In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa we come across a passage in which sage Nārada tells the childless King Harisandra: 'What is the use of smearing this body with ashes (mala)? Why don the deer skin (Ajima)? Why grow matted hair (śamrū)? Why practise penances (tapas)? O, Brāhmaṇas, pray for sons.' Sāyaṇa takes mala for

1Tandyā Br., IV.10.1.
2KS., XXII.9; TS., V.33; Tandyā Br., XVIII.1.2.
3AB., VIII.24.25; also SB., II.2.2.6, II.4.3.14.
5AB., III.30. arbhavaṁ saṁsatabhavvo vai deveṣu tapasā somapitamabhya-jayamstebhyāḥ prāptaḥ.
6ibid., II.13: Devā vai yajñena āśramaṇa tapasāhutibhihiḥ svargāni lokama-jayam.
grihasthāśrama ajīna for brahmacarya and smaśru and tapas for the last āśramas. This does not seem satisfactory. What was the use of denouncing mala and wishing for a son? The incongruity would be removed if all the four epithets are applied to the last āśrama of Saṁnyāsa. Mala then will be dirt accumulated on the body of an ascetic like the Ṛgvedic Muni,2 ajīna the hide of a deer for the ascetic to squat on, his hair and beard grown (smaśru), and practising penance (tapas). The age of the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas held that the sacrifices should be continually performed till death. To give them up in favour of austerities (tapas) and renunciation (saṁnyāsa) would not have appealed to the society. Yajña was the best karma and the ideal was heaven. It was still believed that the gates of heaven were barred against the one who had no son.3

Aranyakas

As the name Aranyaka (arayne avyetavyam aranyakaṁ) suggests the Aranyakas were the works to be read in the forest in opposition to the Brāhmaṇas which were to be read in the villages. According to Sāyaṇa, they were intended for persons who had retired from the busy scenes of every day life and adopted the condition of vānaprastha: 'From the circumstances of their being read in the forest these works are called Aranyakas. It is obtained that they should be read in the forests and none should hear them who is not duly qualified.' As against the external show and formal sacrifices and the elaborate rituals of the Brāhmaṇas, the Aranyakas deal with the efficacy of the inner or mental sacrifice and helped the bridge between the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads. The Aranyakas thus form a natural transition to the speculation of the Upaniṣads. As a matter of fact some of the oldest Upaniṣads are included in the Aranyaka-texts. The Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas are called the Karma-kānda whereas the Aranyakas and the Upaniṣads are called the Jhāna-Kānda.6 Some people include the Aranyaka-

1Kane holds the same view. HDS, II. pt. I, p. 420.
2cf. RV., X.136.2: munyo vātaraśaṅhāḥ piśaṅgā vasate māla.
3AB., IV. 3, 4, 3.
4Sāyaṇa’s commentary on the Taittiriyaranyaka: aranyādyahyayanādetadāraṇyakam iti aranyāyadhyitayāṁ vākyam prācaṅkṣya etadāraṇyakam sarvaṁ nāvratī śrotumaraḥi.
5cf Radhakrishnan, S. IP., I, p. 47.

kas in the Karma-kānda but really speaking, they represent a transition from Karma-kānda to the Jhāna-kānda.1

In the Taittirīya Āranyaka, Prajāpati is declared to have practised penance (tapas) and performed a kind of self-sacrifice. The sacrifice consisted in shaking his body after the practice of tapas. The consequence is described to have been as follows: 'From Prajāpati’s flesh arose three kinds of Rṣis. They are Aruṇas, Ketus, and Vātaraśanas. From his nails arose Vaikhānasas; and from his hair Vālakhilyas.2 Sāyaṇa describes the Vātaraśanas as Śramaṇas and Urdhvaṁamathis.3

The fact that in the Taittirīya Āranyaka, Vātaraśana Rṣis are said to have existed in former times whom Sāyaṇa calls Śramaṇas is significant. The term śramaṇa means ‘one who was toiling.’ It should be noted that even in the Bṛhadāranyaka, Upaniṣad which cannot be much later than the Taittirīya Āranyaka, the terms śramaṇa and tāpasa occur in one passage. The passage describes the nature of the high stage of perfection. It is a stage in which a thief becomes a non-thief (steno’steno bhavati), a cāṇḍāla a non-cāṇḍāla, a śramaṇa a non-śramaṇa, a tāpasa a non-tāpasa and so on.4

Sāyaṇa explains the term śramaṇa in the above passage to mean parivrājaka, ascetic, saṁnyāsī, that is one who is in the last āśrama. He takes the term tāpasa, that is one who practises austerities (tapas) to stand for vānaprastha, the third of the four āśramas. When the full theory of the four āśramas came to be developed, tapas came to be prescribed for a person in the third āśrama, though he was called a vānaprastha. A distinction was made between forcible constraint of passions (tapas) and spiritual renunciation (nyāsa). Tapas was for the vānaprastha who was in the lower stage and nyāsa for the saṁnyāsīn.5 In later Upaniṣads where the āśrama

3Sharma, A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, pp. 13-14.
4Tor., II.23.2.
5Sharma, S. Ph, Philosophy of the Upaniṣads, p. 91. Nyāsa means mentally invoking God, and holy texts to come to occupy certain parts of the body.
theory is given, the term śramaṇa is conspicuous by its absence. After the Buddha, it came to be monopolised by the Buddhists so that the compound expression Śramaṇa-Brāhmaṇa came to denote the two opposing religious systems of the Buddhists and the Brāhmins.1

The passage in Taṅttirīya Āraṇyaka, however, makes it clear that the vaikāhānasas were rṣis. In the vaikāhaṇasa sāman they are said to be rṣis, dear to Indra.2 A certain Rahasyu Devamalintuc killed them at a place called ‘Muni’s death’ (muni-maṇḍapa).3 Thereafter, Indra revived them by a sāman, when the gods had asked him about the whereabouts of the Vaikāhānasas. Indra called Rahasyu and asked him as to who had killed the Vaikāhānasas? When Rahasyu replied that he did, Indra replied that by doing so he had killed Brahmins.4 Thus it seems that vaikāhānasas were tāpasi rṣis of the established Brāhmaṇic society who practised austerities with a view to subdue physical senses and joining tāpas to the offering of sacrifices. Probably they used to live somewhat away from the centres of Brāhmaṇic community in the forests, where a group of them was killed. Their tradition was, however, revived by the Brāhmaṇic society. Later references to the reputed author of a Vaikāhānasāstra,5 dealing with the rules of forest-dwellers suggest that relatively early, the Brāhmaṇic society had come to accept the ideal of a way of life of penance and offering of sacrifices in the forest. The vaikāhānasas may be called the predecessors of the vānaprasthas.6

The Āriṇaketaṭaka-vrata is prescribed for the first time. The Rṣis, to render it a pure and fit receptacle for worship and contemplation. Kane, HDS, II, Pt. I, p. 319.

2Tandyra Br., XIV.4.6-7.
3Pancavimsa Br., XIV.4.7.
4Jaimini, Br., III.190.
5cf. Manu, VI.21 mentions it.
6Baudh. DS. (II.6.18) identifies them: Vaikāhānas`opi vānaprastha eva: Also II. 11.14, Kalidas in the Sakuntala speaks of the life led by the charming Sakuntalā in Kanva’s hermitage as vaikāhāna-vrata (I.27) Byhat-Parasara (Chapter XI. p. 290) speaks of four divisions of vānaprasthas: vaikāhāna, udāmba, vālakhīya and vanevāsi. The Vaikāhānasamārtaṇa (VIII.7) says that the vānaprasthas are either sapatikā or apotikā and the first are of four kinds: Adumbara, Vairūtika, Vālakhīya and Phenapa. The apotikā hermits are of innumerable kinds; they have no names but are referred to in accordance with their ascetic practices those who live like pigeons, those who eat only what has been dried by the sun, etc. (VIII.8).

it is laid down, should live on water or every day eat whatever is obtained by begging—should worship Agni; they should not have any possession; they should live in forest; wear the ‘Kṣaṇa’ garment, either yellow or white and carry on the pursuit of knowledge.1 Similarly, a tapasvi, says the text, should learn knowledge of the Brahman (svādhya) in forest, whether he be talking, standing, walking or sleeping.2 These men seem to be vānaprasthas.

According to the Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka, a man should perform the Brahman sacrifice in his body, which is purified by renunciation and should constantly brood on the Šātan, by means of tapas, brahmaacya and fasting.3 The practice of tapas, it is said, will enable him to be indifferent to desire and the Brahman sacrifice will drive death away.4 The Āraṇyaka also explains the allegorical speculations of the ritual and the efficacy of the inner or mental sacrifice.5 Breathing exercises are more and more emphasised. It is said that he who chants the Gāyatrī-stotra should not breathe.6 The idea of upāsana or internal worship to gain Brahmacarīya has developed. Tapas is now connected with meditative worship.

Thus we see in the Āraṇyakas the order of hermits or anchorites later called the vānaprasthas who devoted themselves to sacred practices which had three aspects: sacrifice, tapas and meditation. Sacrifice was no longer an external show but an inward exercise in which the meanings of the mantras were meditated upon. The idea of tapas as both physical and mental training to attain Brahmacarīya had come to be recognised. Some of the thinkers took to secluded forest-life, reflecting over the ultimate problems of life.

Upaniṣads

The word ‘Upaniṣad’ is derived from upa (near) + ni (down) + sad (to sit) i.e. sitting down near.7 Groups of people used to sit near the teacher to learn from him the philosophical doctrine. In the sylvan solitude of hermitages the Upaniṣad thinkers pondered on the problems of the deepest concern and imparted their

1TẠ, I.32.
2ibid, II.12.
3ASA, XV.1.
4ibid, XIII 1.
5ibid, V.5-8, X.1-8.
6Jaimn, Br., III.3.1; Kau, Br., XXIII.5.
7Radhakrishnan, S., PU, Introduction p. 19.
knowledge to fit disciples near them. By its very nature, this knowledge was a secret, rahasya, to be communicated only to the tested few. In the words of the Upaniṣads it was guhya ādesaḥ and paramān guhyam. Thus ‘Upaniṣad’ meant the secret doctrine taught by the teacher to his worthy pupils.

Śankarācārya derived the word Upaniṣad from the root sad (to loosen, to destroy) with upa and ni as prefixes. He interpreted it to mean ‘that which destroyed all ignorance and led one to Brahma.’ The word ‘Upaniṣad’ has since come to be accepted as brahma-knowledge by which ignorance, which is the root-cause of worldly existence, is loosened or destroyed. It was the qualified ācārya who imparted to his disciple, sitting devotedly near him or at such private sessions, the secret instruction which dispelled all ignorance of the pupil and helped him in self-realisation. Towards this end, the Vedānta prescribed a long training which was threefold: śravana, manana and nididyāsana.

The Upaniṣads are the utterances of spiritually minded people who obtained glimpses of the highest truths by earnest meditation. They belong not to a single thinker but to the sages of a whole age. This is one reason why some scholars think they do not present a coherent or consistent system of philosophy. According to them it is difficult to say definitely what the teachings of the Upaniṣads as a whole are. However, Radhakrishnan points out that different aspects of the Upaniṣadic doctrines are not exclusive of each other and they can give us a single coherent view.

There cannot be disagreement on one point that the Upaniṣads are in the main, concerned with the knowledge of the spirit, the inner being, the spiritual life that leads to eternal peace and immortality. In other words, spiritual knowledge is the subject-matter of the Upaniṣads. By spiritual knowledge, they mean the attainment of salvation through the doctrine of the Brahman-

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1Chanda. Up., III.52.
3Introduction to the Katha. Up. In his commentary on T.U., he says: upani-
sannāh vā asyaṁ parasī śreyā iti.
4He was to be Brahmanīṣa according to Mund. Up., I. ii.12.
5Brihad. Up., II.4.5: ātma vā are draṣṭavyāḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididyā-
sityaḥ.
6Majumdar, R.C., The Cultural Heritage of India, IV, p. 33; Hiriyana, OIP, p. 19; Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, p. 29; Zaeheer, Hindutam, p. 97.

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1Chanda. Up., VII. 1.3.
2Mund. Up., I. 1.4-5.
prompted their sacrificial performances. But some found that this only led to the progressive increase of their desires and not to the diminution thereof and consequently it neither put an end to worldly sorrow and suffering nor did it bring peace of mind. There was thus at this time deep dissatisfaction about the whole of the ritualistic way of life which had failed to satisfy the demands of the intellect and the heart of an enlightened section of the community. It was from this small section of society, the Brahmins as well as the Kṣatriyas, that investigations on the deep problems of spirit arose. This dissatisfaction is clearly felt when the Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad compares sacrifice with unsteady boats (plavā adhyātma yajñarupā) incapable of taking one beyond the sea of existence. It is also said that those who regard sacrifices as the highest good of human life go again and again from old age to death. Full of desire they fall down from their places in the heavens as soon as their merit is exhausted. Thus it is said that the faithful performance of sacrifice takes a man but to the world of fathers (pitrālokā) whence he will return to earth in due course. Yaśña could only take him to heaven from where he had to come down to earth after a brief stay.

This has given rise to many contrary views on the part of many scholars, European as well as Indian regarding the Vedic sacrifices and Brahman, the Absolute in the Upaniṣads. The gist of their views is the main doctrine of the Vedas (excluding the Upaniṣads) is that the Vedic sacrifices should be performed to reach heaven whereas the main doctrines of the Upaniṣads are that Vedic sacrifices are useless and should not be performed, that minor deities do not exist, there being only the Supreme Deity called Brahman and that one should try to attain salvation by acquiring the knowledge of Brahman.

We shall now quote passages from the Upaniṣads in which it is explicitly stated that by performing sacrifices one could go to heaven, that minor gods did exist and that sacrifices should not be given up.

We find in the Śiṣopaniṣad a prayer to the god of fire (Agni) to lead the soul by a nice path after death. The Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad

1Mund. Up., I, 2.7.
2Bṛhad., I, 5.16, VI, 2.16; Chand., V, 10.3; Prasna., I, 9; Mund., I, 2.10.
3Muller, Max RPU., p. 21; Macdonell, HOSL., p. 215; Wintermitz. HIL., p. 237; Hume, TPU., p. 53; Radhakrishnan, S., IP., I, pp. 71-72; Dasgupta, HIP., I, p. 28; Hiriyana, OIP., p. 48; Ranade, CSUP., p. 6; Majumdar ed. the Vedic Age, p. 493.
4Isa., 18.

alludes approvingly to Agni and Soma, the chief sacrificial deities and commends a return to the old ritualistic worship. In the Kenopaniṣad it is stated that the gods Agni, Vāyu and Indra surpass the other gods as they touched Brahman from the nearest place.

In the Kathopaniṣad we find Naciketas addressing Yama thus: ‘Oh God of death, you know how god of fire (Agni) is to be worshipped so that one may attain heaven. Please teach it to me. I have full faith in you.” When Naciketas asks about Brahmapājāna, Yama says: ‘In the past the gods also wanted to know it.” Again Yama says: ‘All the minor gods rest in Him (Brahman).” The same Upaniṣad says: ‘Out of fear of Brahman, Agni gives heat, the Surya also gives heat, Indra, Vayu and the fifth god Yama perform their respective functions.” The Praśnopaniṣad says: ‘Those who perform sacrifices and excavate tanks go to the heaven which is the moon.”

The Muṇḍakopaniṣad begins by saying that of all the minor gods Brahmā first came into existence. It also asserts the truth of the Vedic sacrifices: ‘All this is true, the rituals which are revealed to the sages and which were inherent in the mantras.” It also enjoins on the performance of Vedic sacrifice: ‘You should constantly try to perform these sacrifices with the desire for attaining the ultimate truth.” It is also stated: ‘They (who perform sacrifices) enjoy the fruits thereof in heaven and are born again in this world or even in lower worlds.” To give the minor gods their due importance, it is said: ‘The minor gods were created out of the Supreme God (Brahman).” The Taittiriya Upaniṣad prescribes the performance of sacrifice: ‘You should not neglect to perform the rites in honour of gods and ancestors.” The rites for the gods, it is stated, are the sacri-
fices; the rites for the ancestors are śraddhā and tarpāṇa. The Upaniṣad affirms: "Pursue the path of religion." Śaṅkaracārya comments: "So long as one does not realise one's identity with Brahman, one should carefully perform the rites laid down in the Vedas and Smṛtis."

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad says: "The path of religion can be divided into three parts: Sacrifices, study and gifts constitute the first part." According to the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad: "The Brahmans desire to know the Brahman by the study of the Veda (vedāṇuva-cana), by sacrifice (yajñā), by gifts (dāna), by penance (tapas) and by fasting (aṇḍāṣṭakam)." Commenting on this passage Śaṅkaracārya observes: "Those persons whose minds are purified by the performance of Karma can know without hindrance Brahman as revealed by the Upaniṣads."

It should be of special interest that in the Chāndogya and Brha-dāraṇyaka Upaniṣads those who are engaged in performing sacrifices also discuss philosophical questions. It is pointed out that the rituals which the sages contemplated in the hymns were developed in various ways in the three Vedas and these should be performed always with a sincere desire."

From the above discussion it appears that some Upaniṣads continue the philosophy of the Brāhmaṇas. Some of them even suggest the importance of a number of minor deities whose worship led to the heaven. Majority of the Upaniṣads, however, discard these beliefs and suggest a new path—Jñāna-mārga as the only means of salvation. It is a better path for the liberation of man. All the different views expressed in the Upaniṣads, therefore, need not create confusion. It is quite possible that the Upaniṣads referring to the minor gods and sacrifices continue the Brāhmanic phase and hence are nearer the Brāhmaṇas and belonging to the earlier phase of Upaniṣads. However, Saṃprūṇananda lends a proper perspective. He aptly observes: "It has become a fashion to study the Upaniṣads by themselves. This method of study often leads to the conclusion that they represent some kind of an intellectual revolt against the ritual and priesthood of the Vedic hymns. No importance is attached to the fact that Vṛṣaṇi and his commentator Śaṅkaracārya, the greatest exponents of the Jñāna Mārga support the study of the Vedas and the performance of the rites enjoined by them and speak of them as absolutely necessary." It has also to be remembered that the cross-section of the social picture that appears in the Upaniṣads does not represent the whole society of those days. It certainly comprises such sections of society as were busy with spiritual and philosophical problems. The remaining strata of society continued to believe in the efficacy of the sacrifices and the existence of the minor deities. It was the god Agni and the other gods who acted as witnesses at the marriages performed according to the Vedic rites. They were still presiding deities of the mantras.

Mysticism

The philosophy of the Upaniṣads centre round the concept of Supreme Truth or Ultimate Reality called Brahman. From the objective point of view, this Reality is called Brahman (the Self) but from the subjective point of view, the same is called Ātman (the Self), for God is present both in the universe and in the heart of man. The two words are generally used synonymously in the Upaniṣads. And the central theme of the Upaniṣads is that Brahman is Ātman and Ātman is Brahman.

The Upaniṣads abound in expounding the nature of Brahman, the Supreme Reality. They employ all kinds of similes and metaphors to describe what it is not. They never tire of telling us again and again that it cannot be comprehended by the study of the scriptures or by the power of intellect or by much learning. Logic, discussion, scholarship and the scriptures do not help. It is also said that not only can it not be perceived by the eye (cakṣusā) or described in speech (vācā), it cannot be also gained by the other senses (nāṁyair devaiḥ), by ascetic practices (tapasā) or by sacrificial performances (karmāṇā vā). Thus the realisation of this Reality is beyond speech, beyond thought and beyond all sense-percep-

1Dharmam cara: TU., I.11.2.
2prāg brahmātmapi pratibodhānīyamaniṣṭāshāyaśtri śrotasmārtakarmāṇi.
3Chand., 2.23.1.
4Brhad., IV. 4.22.
5Karmābhij samākṣa hi viśuddhātmānāḥ śaknuvanti ātmānāṁ upaniṣad prakāśitām apratihandhāni hi vedituṁ.
6Chand., I. 11. ff.
tion. Often a seeker of truth indulges in apparent contradictory terms: 'I do not think that I know it well. Nor do I think that I do not know it. Among us he who knows it—knows it. And he too does not know that he does not know.'

The Māndukya Upaniṣad, however, states that there is the turiyā state in which one is in the state of a deep dreamless sleep when neither the knower nor the known can be distinctly felt. In that superconscious state one has the experience of the liberated spirit. This is a state which is not within the experience of ordinary men. Here we find an allusion to the great experience which springs from a deep insight transcending all reasoning and which can only be apprehended intuitively. As the same Upaniṣad says: 'The relation of truth is possible only through the most perfect moral purity which results in a natural illumination of intuitive perception when one seeks to attain this Reality through meditation.' Ranade calls this state: 'immediate, intuitive first-hand experience' which is to be attained 'more by way of mysticism than by the way of thought.' According to Dasgupta it is 'ineffable, intuitive experience regarded by the Upaniṣadic sages as absolute and ultimate truth.' Only the mystics can attain and testify to this intuitive experience for Dasgupta points out that they possess the 'higher intuitive knowledge (prajñā) as distinguished from jñāna or cognition.' It is, therefore, no surprise that the Upaniṣads do not lay down any definite method for arriving at the perception of this truth.

As the mysticism in the Early Vedic Literature

Ranade, however, opines that the Upaniṣads afford us certain basic conditions for attainment of the self. These are: 'complete elevation of moral life, including the absolute control of all passions and desires, the abandonment of worldly ambitions and hopes and the attainment of an unruffled peace of mind.' But the Kaṭha Upaniṣad warns us that it is a very difficult path—like the edge of a sharp razor: kṣurasya dhārā nīśitā duratrayā durgān pathah. No effort, however tremendous is of any avail. The reason is: this Self can only be realised by those to whom it reveals itself. Thus without divine grace, man is without any hope. All his efforts are rendered futile and he continues to float aimlessly in the ocean of samāsāra. The very nature of the Reality and the pathway to attain it are such that only the rare intellectually and morally elevated beings who possess prajñā like the Upaniṣadic ēś or seers could realize it. For the ordinary people there was no hope.

About the Upaniṣadic mysticism Ranade says: 'The Upaniṣadic mysticism was the mysticism of men who lived in cloisters far away from the bustle of humanity, and who, if they permitted any company at all, permitted only the company of their disciples. The Upaniṣadic mystic did not come forward with the deliberate purpose of mixing with them in order to ameliorate their spiritual condition.'

Inspite of the profundity and brilliance of the Upaniṣadic ideas it can be said that they cannot be regarded as sufficient for the moral or religious needs of the masses. The Upaniṣadic thinkers, who were mystics, lived in their splendid ivory tower, more concerned with their own salvation and approachable by only a few of the intelligentia to whom the subtle philosophy of the Brahman-Ātman could make its appeal. Moreover, they followed an intuitive process and conclusions were not based on an intelligible chain of reasoning and argument but held out merely as the experience or realization of great minds. They were, therefore, to be accepted on faith.

1Kena, Up., II. 2: nahaṁ manye suvedeti no na vedeti veda ca yo nastad veda tad veda no na vedeti veda ca cf. ibid, 1, 3: anyadvā tadvititadātho avidītadāthi.
5Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 42. The AV, passage (X. 8, 44) which contains the earliest occurrence of the word Ātman in its philosophical sense takes pains to make clear the reason for knowing that Ātman: akāmo dhīro anātmaḥ svayāṁbhū rasen trpito na kutaścanonāḥ: taveva vidvān na bhūyaḥ mṛtyo Ātmanāṁ dhiramajaraṁ yuvānaṁ. A knower of the Brahman-Ātman is possessed of all these qualities. See Byhad., I. 5, 20, IV, 3, 37, Chand., VI. 25, 2 VI, 12, 6.
6ibid, pp. 55-56, 41.
Tapas

The Upaniṣads, as discussed earlier, emphasise the path of knowledge towards self-realization. Knowledge should lead to experience and finally to direct perception of God: ātmā va are dṛṣṭavyaḥ.¹ That is why Nididhyāsanā is insisted on in the last stage of the spiritual journey. Also prescribed are certain exercises in meditation as preliminary steps which are called Upāsanās viz. meditations on the five elements, Prāṇa and Aum.² As these Upāsanās trained the aspirant and prepared him for the higher stages of meditation, they were of considerable value to the development of the concept of tapas. It was no longer confined to mere self-mortification. It took on a distinctly ethical colouring. It became a training directed towards exercises of an inward kind. The Kena Upaniṣad, for example, says: 'Austerities (tapas), self-control (dama) and work (karma) form the support of the secret teaching relating to Brahman. Vedas are all its organs (sarvāṅgāni) and truth (satya) is its abode.'³ This indicates that those who sought spiritual illumination should cultivate qualities of tapas and damah to acquire sense-control so necessary for meditation. Tapas is also recognised together with truth (satya), right knowledge (samyag-jñāna) and practice of chastity (brahmacaryam), as one of the means of attaining the self.⁴ According to Śaṅkara, tapas here refers to the focussing of the mind and the senses on the eternal self.⁵

In Brhadāranyaka and Taittiriya Upaniṣads, there occurs a phrase in the creation of legends: sa tapo'tapyata.⁶ It literally means: 'He exerted himself, he performed tapas.' It is translated by Winternitz: He tortured himself and mortified himself.⁷ This meaning does not fit in here. Tapas here means austere thinking or reflection. It is to be taken in the sense of knowledge (jñāna), thought or reflection (ālocana) as it is very clear from the words whose

tapas is in essence jñāna: yasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ.¹ Śaṅkara in his commentary observes: tapas here means jñāna, there being no possibility of other kind of tapas, for his desires are already satisfied (āptakāma) and so he cannot perform any austerity. Hence the phrase means that he reflected upon the creation of the world He is about to make.⁸

In the Aitareya Upaniṣad there is the metaphor of God 'brooding' over the world egg.⁹ Radhakrishnan comments: Tapas, the energizing of conscious force, austere thinking, the inward travail of the spirit, is the 'brooding' which is responsible for the creative work. It is the force by which some mighty possibility is actualised.⁴ It is thus described in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad that Brahma performed tapas and thereby created all that we see around us and having created them entered them (anuprāvīṣat).⁵ In a number of passages that follow, tapas is identified with Brahman: tapo Brahma. It is asserted that Brahman underwent tapas (tapo tapyata).⁶ Śaṅkara means by tapas knowledge.⁷ Brahman willed, he thought and he created. In the same manner elsewhere Prajapati is described to have practised austerity (tapotapīya).⁸

In the Praśna Upaniṣad tapas is used as sense restraint (indriya-saṃhyama). Tapas, brahmacaryam and śraddhā are considered indispensable conditions of knowledge.⁹ Study of the Vedas (svādhyāya) and teaching (pravacana) have been described as tapas.¹⁰ It is said that Brahman can be known by tapas: tapo brahmaḥ.¹¹ It is also said that Brahman can be realised by knowledge (vidyayā), austerity (tapasā) and meditation (cintayā).¹² Tapas is a requisite for perception of the Ātman which is said to have its roots in self-knowledge and penance (ātmavyād tapomūlāṁ tad brahmaḥ).¹³ It is said that the

¹Brhad, II. 4.5.
²Aitareya Br., V. 32; TU., I. 5.4, I. 6-8 Aum is the pravacana, which by the time of the Upaniṣads, is charged with the significance of the entire universe. Radhakrishnan, PU., p. 615.
³Kena, IV. 8.
⁴Mund. III. 1.5.
⁶Brhad. I. 2.6; TU., II. 6.1.
⁷Winternitz, HIL., p. 220.
⁸East and West in Religion, p. 76.
⁹TU., 2.6.1.
¹⁰ibid, 3.2. f.
¹¹tapas iti jñānāṁ ucyate. tapaḥ paryālocanāṁ.
¹²Brhad., I. 2.7; I. 5.2.
¹³Praśna. Up., I. 2; V. 3.
¹⁴TU., I.9.
¹⁵ibid. III. 2.1; III. 3.1; III. 4.1; III. 5.1.
¹⁷Śveta. Up. I.15.16; stayenai tapasā yo'nupaśyati.
Supreme is attainable through proper tapas. Tapas is also considered necessary for instruction in sacred knowledge. By contemplative power (tapasā) Brahma is said to have expanded (cītate Bhūmā). Tapas here is the energy by which the world is produced. It is austerity or meditation: tapa saṁtāpa iti, tapa ālocaṇa iti.

From the above passages it can be seen that tapas means energy, self-effort, thought, self-control, study, austerity and meditation. Tapas is preliminary to creation and instruction in sacred knowledge. Brahma is built up by tapas. Through tapas is all creation effected. The Supreme is attainable through tapas. Tapas is also a requisite for perception of the Ātman. It is notable that the concept of tapas in the Upaniṣads is of a pure nature. It is regarded not as a means to the attainment of mundane or extramundane benefits but as a means to enlightenment or self-knowledge. The ascetic life (tapas) has become ancillary to the search for knowledge.

Towards Renunciation

As meditation and knowledge came to be regarded as superior to sacrifice, so tapas also was viewed as capable of producing wonderful results. But there came a stage in the Upaniṣadic times when tapas came to be depreciated in comparison with knowledge as an inferior, secondary way to the highest bliss, to Brahman. A gradual development of this tendency can be clearly seen.

Tapas is more powerful than sacrifice. But it was believed to lead only to the lower bliss of the world of the forefathers (pitṛ-lokā). Tapas in itself seems to be powerless without a reshaping of the mind: it came to be associated with faith (śraddhā) and brahmacarīyam. Brahmacarīyam and tapas are spoken of together and later on brahmacarīyam is itself regarded as tapas.

Brahmacarīyam here is used in the sense of a studious life, lived in continence and implying a mental discipline. Śraddhā is the attitude of mind which accepts a reality beyond the reach of the senses and is determined to give up worldly things to obtain it. The Chāndogya Upaṇiṣad distinguishes only two ways of life: the Gṛhastha and the Brahmācārī, the latter category apparently including Vedic students and Upaniṣadic hermits in the woods. Here not only the need for brahmacaryā advocated but also the equivalence of certain sacrifices to brahmacaryā is stressed on. The waning influence of tapas could be seen in the words of Yājñavalkya to Gargi that a thousand years of tapas without the knowledge of Brahman is of no avail. The utter futility of tapas is demonstrated in the case of king Brihadratha, who having performed the highest penance—that too acquiring vaivāgya, has failed to attain self-knowledge. Tapas thus occupies a secondary, subordinate pre-conditional to bring about a change of mind, leading up to the Brahma-state, defined as jīvāna. Once it is fully realised that the Brahma-experience stands out of all proportion to sacrifice and tapas, tapas is dropped and brahmacaryā and jīvāna are pointed out as leading up to Brahma realisation.

In complete harmony with the spirit of these texts, the Upaniṣads, now speak of the one who stands firm in Brahman (brahma-sanrṣṭha) and who attains life eternal. In comparison with this state of brahma-sanrṣṭha sacrifices, study and charity; and austerity (tapas), naïṣṭīka brahmācārī in pursuit of sacred wisdom, staying with the teacher all his life are said to attain only to the worlds of the virtuous (punya-loka). Śāṅkara suggests that brahma-sanrṣṭha refers to the parivār or the monk who alone obtains eternal life, while others who practise active virtues obtain the worlds of the virtuous. According to him, the true brahma-sanrṣṭha is the saṁnyāsī who gives up all actions. The three branches of Dharma mentioned

1 Chand, Up., VIII, 5, 1-3.
2 Bhāy, Up., III, 8, 10: Yo vā etadākaṣṭaraṁ gāryavidenta asin loke jhuoti yajate tapastapayate bahunā va sahasrāṇi antadevaśaya tadbhavati.
3 Maira, Up., I, 1, 2.
5 Bhāy, VI, 2, 16.
7 Praśna, Up., I, 9, 10.
by the Chândogya Upaniṣad seem to be alternative paths for religious and spiritual development leading to punyaloka. Immortality is possible only for the one who knows the Brahman (Brahma-saṁsthā). He stands apart from the three paths of gārhaṇthya, tapas and naṁśhya-brahmacarya. Thus the Brahma-saṁsthā seems to be identical with the Atyāśraya who knows the Ātman and is beyond āśrama. Here no chronological idea is suggested that the one who knows Ātman is in a period of life. A transcendency is expressed as in the Brahma-saṁsthā. Both states point to renunciation of the world.

We have already seen that the vānaprastha stage has been accepted by the Brāhmanic society in the Āranyakas. Tapas is distinctly associated in the Upaniṣads with the life of the anchorite in the forest, the vānaprastha for whom the practice of tapas is especially obligatory but it is said, he must add faith (śraddhā) to it. Those who practise tapas and śraddhā in the forest are said to be free from passion (virajā), tranquil and wise (sānta vidvāmo) and leading the life of a mendicant (bhikṣucaaryaṁ carantaḥ). Who are they? They are the ascetics (yatayāḥ) with their imperfections done away and who behold this self within the body, of the nature of light and pure. Thus those who live in the forest purified by austerities (tapas) and those who know and are learned become almsmen, religious mendicants (bhikṣus). A new mode of life of a wandering beggar, a religious mendicant (parivṛtta, bhikṣu) to attain the highest bliss, the Brahman has come to be recognised for the first time.

The Bhagadāranyaka Upaniṣad refers to such class of men who are world-forsakers and almsmen when Yājñavalkya tells king Janaka: 'Him Brahmans seek to know by the study of the Veda, by sacrifices, by gifts, by penance (tapasā), by fasting. On knowing Him, in truth, one becomes an ascetic (Muni). Desiring him only as their worlds, mendicants (pravṛjino) wander forth (pravrajanti). Because they know this, the ancient (sages) did not wish for offspring. What shall we do with offspring (they said), we who have attained this Self, this worlds. They, having risen above the desire for sons, the desire for wealth, the desire for the worlds, led the life of a mendicant (bhikṣucaaryaṁ caranti). The Ātma-Knowledge is then the final, culminating point, leading up to which, other paths of life are but stages of development. Behind their spiritual urge to attain this supreme wisdom, the Upaniṣadic thinkers have realised that worldly goods did not give lasting happiness. The true and everlasting happiness was to be found in the bliss of Ātman.

The same Upaniṣad sets forth this ideal of renunciation elsewhere thus: 'The Brāhmins, having known that Self, having overcome the desire for progeny, the desire for wealth, the desire for worlds, live the life of mendicants (bhikṣucaaryaṁ caranti). Here the life of mendicancy is suggested as the outcome of knowing the Ātman whereas in the first passage (IV. 4. 22) it is a means to the self-knowledge (etam eva pravṛjino lokah icchantah pravrajanti), as the sanmuryāsa in the last stage of life (āśrama) came to be understood.

In the second passage (III. 5.1) the mendicants, having realised the self which is the only desire (ātma-kāma) have realised all their desires (āpta-kāma), the state which the ascetic or sanmuryāsa aspires to reach. (IV. 4. 22). It is significant that in III. 5.1, "a Brahmin, after he has done with learning, is advised to desire to live as a child." It is said that 'when he has done (both) with the state of childhood and with learning, then he becomes silent mediator.' The Rgvedic Muni was silent; maunam, mauneyā was his chief trait. The Upaniṣadic Muni takes to pāṇḍityayā, manan, thought, meditation. After manan, maunam is again recommended to him. The true knower of Brahman has to devote himself exclusively to the contemplation of the self and shun all other thoughts as distractions. In the silence of his own soul (ātman) he has to find (Brahman).

We thus find that the thirst for spiritual knowledge to attain self-realisation inspired the ideal of religious mendicancy and renunciation of the world. The greatest of the Brahmaidins of the Upaniṣadic age Yājñavalkya renounces the worldly life and takes to the life of a pravarājyā after he has divided his property between

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1Śvetā. Up., VI. 2.1.
2Chānd. Up., V. 10: Ye ca ime aranyē śraddhā tapa eti upāsate.
3Mund. Up., I. 2.11.
4ibid, III. 1.5: antah-śārīre jyotir-mayohi shrubho yam paśyanti yatayāḥ kṣipadośaḥ.
5Dutt holds the view that almsmanship was customary; Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India, p. 45.
7ibid, III. 5.1: etam vai tam ātmanāṁ viditvā, brāhmaṇāṁ putrojaṇyās ca vitaeśānyās ca lokasaṁyās ca vṛtyāyā, atha bhikṣucaaryaṁ caranti.
8Tasmāt brāhmaṇāṇaṁ pāṇḍityāṁ nirvidya bālyena tiṣṭhaeti; bālyam ca pāṇḍityāṁ ca nirvidya, atha muniḥ; amaunāṁ ca maunāṁ ca nirvidya, atha brāhmaṇāḥ.
his two wives, Maitreyi and Kātyāyanī. The conversation between him and Maitreyi aims at showing that the giving up of all worldly possessions and retiring to the world of the forest completely dedicated to a life of *tapas* was indispensable for the knowledge of Brahman and the attainment of salvation.\(^1\) With the emergence of the doctrine of Brahman-Ātman, the miseries and sufferings of human life came to be attributed to the absence of self-knowledge. The eternal Ātman was bliss and everything else painful and transitory: *ato anyad ārtam*. The world was believed to be deceptive and life evil. To this phase of pessimism were added other forces, as described in the third chapter. According to the doctrine of transmigration and law of Karma, *sāṁśāra* was full of misery and ruled by Karma resulted in a perpetual bondage of birth and death. The fear of present miseries and future sufferings of rebirths made the world a miserable place to escape at all costs. The Upaniṣadic thinkers preached that the seeker after saving knowledge must get rid of all desires for worldly things. This naturally meant detachment from normal human life; not because it was painful, transitory and negligible but because it was also distracting. It impeded the attainment of the highest goal by involving man in mundane interests. Thus developed in the Upaniṣadic times the ideal norm of the wandering mendicant (*samnyāsīn, bhikṣu, samāna, muni*), the homeless ascetic, living on alms, cut off from family ties, possessions and all worldly life. He stood outside of everything, even of caste. He died to the world only to live in the world of Brahman-Ātman.

**Summing Up**

In the Vedic literature we find that the Āryans still lived a full life though in the Upaniṣads, there is an emphasis on the life of the spirit and self-realisation, due to the development of the doctrine of Brahman-Ātman. The institution of *tapas* has developed from its basic meaning of heat or warmth or fervour to ascetic practices and devotional fervour. In the Upaniṣads it has come to be accepted as a means of enlightenment or self-knowledge. Sacrifice through discredited as leaking boats and incapable for attaining salvation had still an important place in the life of the common man. Though the Upaniṣadic thinkers held out that self-realisation was necessary to obtain salvation and which could only be had through the intuitive knowledge of Brahman, the path was confined to a few who could understand the subtle-philosophy of Brahman-Ātman and who could completely elevate life on intellectual and moral planes. The few regarded the Brahman-experience not only as ineffable and intuitive but also as absolute and ultimate truth. The masses, however, continued to rely upon sacrifices and minor gods to reach heaven. Spiritual knowledge was not the monopoly of only Brāhmins. Even the Kṣatriyas, some of whom were kings, were in possession of it and instructed even the Brāhmins in the secret doctrine. It was believed that salvation was obtainable by living a righteous life of *Artha, Kāma* and *Dharma* according to Vedic prescriptions. Even kings like Janaka were said to have obtained salvation while still ruling and there was no need to give up worldly life and its interests. However, a minority of thinkers and mystics endeavoured to attain salvation and immortality through self-realisation and as a result of realising Brahman, and wandered as mendicants. For the very purpose, others took to a life of *Samnyāsa*. Due to pessimism arising from Brahman-Ātman philosophy as also other factors like *sāṁśāra* and *karma*, the *samnyāsa* ideal came to be developed in the Upaniṣadic times.

\(^1\) *Brhad. Up.*, IV. 5.2.