

A FEW SELECTED SLOKA OF MUNDAKA UPANISADA IN LIGHT OF 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT: The Vedic literature is ancient Indic literature. The Vedic literature accompanied by the Brahmi script, Devnagari script, and Sanskrit Language. It is a combination of lyric, meter, the speech of sound, hymn, and verse. The origin and spreading history of Vedic literature is still obscure, and it stated journey from vocal lyrics and ultimate reach in the authoritative scripture of Hinduism. The Vedic literature is the corpus literature, and among the four Vedas, Arthaba is the latest one. The Mundaka Upanishad is the part of Arthaba Veda. Here the study covers a few selected hymns of Mundaka Upanisad (ten slokas randomly selected from canto one and two), and effort has been made to create a liaison between old commentaries and contemporary thinking twenty-first-century. Mundaka Upanishad depicted immortality reality as full of abstract and allegory with the wrapper of the lyrical verse of sonic meter. Mundaka Upanishad is the doctrine of Indic philosophy, despite it contains the mystery thrill of a bundle of occidental ideologies.

The Vedic literature is the ancient Indic literature, and it the literature of the post-Harappa era. Literature and religion are two dominant pillars of any cultural studies. The Vedic literature includes a bundle of cultural attributes; religion, script, language, lyrics, etc. The Upanishads are the authoritative scripture of Hinduism (P. Olivelle 1996), and its early history is almost obscure. The Upanishad is not single literature; rather, it is a corpus and the period is not well defined, and the origin of the geographical location has not been specified. Here the study covers a few selected hymns of Mundaka Upanishad (ten slokas from canto one and two), and effort has been made to make a liaison between old commentaries with contemporary thinking of selected hymns of Mundaka Upanishads. Gough defines that the Mundaka Upanishad is one of the most important documents in ancient Indian philosophy (Gough 2006 Reprint).

Here the discussion covers only the first and second canto of the Mundaka Upanishad. The study aims to create a liaison between old commentaries with new interpretations of selected hymns of Mundaka Upanishad (ten slokas from canto one and two). The study is mainly based on the commentary explanation and analysis of Shankara, discussion, and translation of Mundaka Upanishad by Max Muller and Aurobindo. The word meaning of each phase has been derived. The inner meaning

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has been discussed in the light of contemporary thinking. For that purpose, a literature survey has been covered. Among the occidental scholars, Max Muller, Patrick Olivelle, Peter T Daniels, Richard G Salomam, John Stuart Mill, Arthur Lillie, and James Prinsep have covered and Aurobindo, Sarvapalli Radha Krishnan, Swami Rana has been included (oriental school of thought).

The Vedic literature is the sophisticated abstract thought of ancient India, and its journey is very long, and most of its part is obscure (Heehs 2002). The Upanishads is the encyclopedia of Indic culture, Indic script, Sanskrit Language, phonetic and philosophy, and after being a long vocal tradition, it has adopted the scripture. Therefore, the authentication of Upanishad is not only complex; rather, it is next to impossible (Rana 1990). The Upanishads is the ancient literature, and it is the post-Mohenjo-Daro text (Olivelle 1996). The Upanishads as literature and philosophy are discussed by the branches of oriental and occidental philosophers, religious persons and are discussed and analyzed by the people irrespective of time and space. The literature is the artistic and dramatic representation of social thinking. Therefore, it is obvious that the Vedic school of thought has manifold dimensions (Reichenbach 1990) and a few of the dimensions reflected in Mundaka Upanishad.

I. Connotation of Mundaka *Upanisada*

Upa is the prefix, which means the near or vicinity or pre. Ni means confirm or total or whole or holistic, shad means to remove or loose, to attain emancipation, to annihilate (Rana 1990). If it is considered as the word meaning of Upanishad may as follows:

- (i) come closer with wholehearted effort to remove the annihilation
- (ii) It is the precondition to achieve a holistic view to attain final emancipation
- (iii) to learn and confirm the knowledge

The core idea and meaning of Upanishad resembles the concept of positivism (Mill 1865). Upa means to come closer or get direct experience through observation; Ni means to view, and observation includes the totality or holistic observation (Mill 1865), and shad means to remove erroneous ideas by experiencing reality as perceived by the person. The Upanishad is nothing but the verified and authenticated experience that the concerned person perceives, and the experience achieved through real first-hand experience is the avenue to get valid knowledge. Positivism comes in the oriental school of thought (by Auguste Comte and David Emile Durkin) during the 17th to 18th centuries. Auguste Comte (1798-1857) argued that religion constitutes the childhood of human beings, metaphysics in adolescence, and science in maturity (Mill 1865). Therefore, it is valid and logical that the word Upanishad is the synonyms for knowledge. In the case of Mundaka Upanishad, the word Mundaka means shaved head, and it means the razor (P. Olivelle 1992). The study since the early sage-hood of ancient India, none sage or none of the deities of Hindus never

depicted on the bare head rather most of the head of male deities and sages are depicted by crown or tress or sacred string or topknot or by the particular hairstyle (P. Olivelle 1992). Sacred string and top knot hairstyle were very common among the Vedic learned personalities (Olivelle 1992). Even in any Indian Epic literature, no male character has gone through the social custom of Mundana (shave head). But after the popularization of Buddhism, this custom was adopted by the Hindu people (Oldmeadow n.d.). The concept of Mundana (shaves head) is more common in Buddhism (Bigandet 1885). Since the 6th century BC, the collateral existence of Jainism, Buddhism, and Hinduism was a very common fact (Heehs 2002).

These three religious groups have practiced their divergent cultural custom within the same territory (Miniotaite 2010). For the time being, these divergent identities (religious custom) converged in geographical space, and the result of the geographical convergent of divergent religious identity gave the birth of a few cultural assimilations (Miniotaite 2010) and acculturation (Heehs 2002). The deluge of Buddhism leaves a few impacts on Hinduism despite, it's originality and vice versa. The religious custom is the most dominant attribute for cultural convergent and as well as cultural divergent. The Mundana is an example of cultural convergence of Buddhist custom to the Hindu community, despite many attributes that remain dissimilar. Therefore, the Mundana concept is an example of the cultural assimilation of ancient India. The Gupta era was the era of cultural assimilation and convergent of the religious custom of Hinduism and Buddhism (Bigandet 1885). The title Mundaka Upanishad reflects the cultural assimilation of Buddhist custom to Hindu.

II. Period of Mundaka *Upanisada*

The chronology of Mundaka Upanishad is obscure (P. Olivelle 1992). The Mundaka is the latest Upanishad (Rana 1990), and a few sentences are already mentioned (verses) in Katha Upanishad and Rig Veda (M. Muller 2001). According to Max Muller, Mundaka Upanishad was the literature of post-Buddhism (M. F. Muller 1891). The custom of *Mundana* (shave head) justified that statement. A few verses may indeed have originated before 4th to 3rd BCE, but those are the vocal and local version (Olivelle 1992), but its scripture with the combination of Brahmi and Sanskrit Language was the fact of 3rd to 2nd century BCE, and the combination of Devnagari script and Sanskrit come in a later period (during Gupta Era) (Mookerji 1989). In most of the early Sanskrit texts, including Upanishad, the authors were not the historical individual; rather, they were the nameless spoke persons of vocal tradition (Heehs 2002). The root of the Mundaka Upanishad was an ancient one, and that was a very brief and verbal tradition of ancient Hindu sages. The oldest datable records of the script are the rock and pillar inscription (Daniels 2019) of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka (3rd BC). The combination of Prakrit Language and Brahmi script was the writing tradition during the 3rd Century BC (Ginar Inscription) (Daniels 2019). Brahmi script was most likely created during the Mauryan Empire (Daniels 2019). The oldest combination of Sanskrit language and Brahmi script inscription found in

Junagarh Inscription (Daniels 2019) or Inscription of Rudradam (150AD). The repertoire of Sanskrit with the Brahmi script developed some notable calligraphy up to the 4th century AD (Daniels 2019).

According to J. Prinsep, the Girnar Inscription at Junagarh (Prinsep 1858) (first inscription of Sanskrit language and Brahmi Script on 150AD) provides the clue that Devnagari script (Archaic alphabet) evolved from Brahmi (Prinsep 1858). The Allahabad inscription contains their different rock edicts of three different eras: the first one is the Ashoke pillar (a combination of Prakrit Language and Brahmi script of 3rd BC), Harrison inscription is the (known as the Ahole inscription of Samudragupta) combination of Sanskrit Language and Gupta Script. The Gupta script is nothing but the descendent Ashokan Brahmi script; rather, it is the modified version of Muryan Brahmi, which includes the writing system of later and alphabet (Prinsep 1858). During the Gupta period, the modern version of Devnagari got its final version (during the last quarter of the 3rd Century). The Devnagari script (which can depict alphasyllabary), known as Abugida, comes during the Gupta era (Mookerji 1989). Therefore, it is clear that the Mundaka Upanishad is the descendent of ancient vocal tradition, and its written form developed later. With a combination of Sanskrit Language and Devnagari script, the Mundaka Upanishad is the incident of the 3rd to 4th century AD (Gupta Era). Hence, it is a very obvious phenomenon that lots of adding and subtraction are included here (Olivelle 1996).

III. Script and Language of Mundaka Upanishad

The language of Mundaka Upanishad is pure Sanskrit, and it is in verses with the Devnagari script. This combination of Devnagari script and Sanskrit language was the fact of the 3rd to 4th century AD. The core idea of this Upanishad may prevail before a long, but this written form with Sanskrit language and Devnagari script is the incident of the Gupta era. Early Upanishad may be the combination of Brahmi script and Sanskrit language. The Brahmi was neither alphabet nor syllabi; instead, Brahmi was the Abugidas (Share and Daniels 2016). It is nothing but the writing style. It may be an authenticated guesswork that from vocal tradition to written scripture of Mundaka Upanishad started its journey with Brahmi script and Sanskrit language from the 3rd to 2nd BC. The Vedic literature attached to a geographical territory and a social-economic-history. The Upanishads were the literature of the iron era (P. Olivelle 1992). The Upanishad is the dominant part of Vedic literature, and it started the journey from northwestern India and reached up to the Gangetic alluvial fan (P. Olivelle 1996). The era of Vedic oral tradition started from 1700 to 350 BCE, and that was the era of massive use of Iron instruments, and that was also the era of cultivation (Rana 1990). These two innovations changed the productive system, and therefore, division labor becomes a dominant fact. The first phase of urbanization in India started during the Indus valley civilization (twin towns Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa), and the second dive of Indian urbanization started during the Vedic era (Rana 1990). There is evidence of widespread settlement in the Ganga valley and development

urban unit (sixteen *Maha-janapad* or the oligarchic republic) during the 6th to 4th century BC (Kulkarni 1999).

IV. A few Sloka of Mundaka *Upanisada* and Its Interpretation

Here from Canto one, three slokas, and canto two, seven slokas have been selected for discussion.

yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate grhṇate ca yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti |
yathā sataḥ puruṣātkeśalomāni tathā'kṣarātsambhavatīha viśvam || 7 ||1/1/7 (Muller
2001)

This sloka cited four terrestrial similarities; Spider spread the net and absorbs that, second is the herbs and plants attain spring after getting all the nutrient from terrestrial earth, third is the hair comes from the head and also removed from the head, and the last one is the human being come physically from a human body (Aurobindo 1920). These four earthly phenomena occur in terrestrial earth, and all the facts act the same way (immortal) in respect of time and space. Moreover, those four facts are the material reality, and all are functionally interrelated. The Shankara, Gurupada, and group of oriental philosophers interpreted this sloka of Mundaka Upanishad in the light of eternal truth and soul all these (Sastry 1905). Here, the above four phenomena are governed by nature's law. Indeed, the activities of Spider, the growth and fall of hair from the head, spring in flora, and human life origin from a human being; all are natural phenomena and established natural law which is universally applicable irrespective of time and space. The terrestrial earth is going by the rules of nature, and these nature's rules are immortal. This sloka depicts that if the human spends life with megalomania and living in a world of hallucination of self-satisfaction, but in reality, it is the lunatic behavior (Aurobindo 1920). Here an earthly example cited to depict this mysterious phase of human behavior. A blind person guides the blind human being (already mentioned in Rig Veda), then the result will be negative. The interpretation of Shankara and Gurupada depicts this sloka linked with the philosophy of life (Sastry 1905). Here, it is obvious and clear that if someone wishes to have a blaze of light, they have to start with a small spark; if someone starts with a dark, it leads to more darkness. A small and positive step towards light brings more light. According to Rabindranath Tagore, a burning lamp can only light another lamp when burning in its flame (Bhattacharya 2011). The eyes are the dominant sense organ to get a vivid and visual picture of reality. Here the blindness is synonymous with ignorance. The human being has another four sensors out of the eye; despite that, here, the example of blind people is coined. If someone may be very close to reality but without sight (knowledge), he or she cannot get the true picture. The light surrounds the blind person but, due to lack of sight, cannot observe anything. Similarly, knowledge is the sensor to sense truth or reality (Patyaying n.d.).

avidyāyaṃ bahudhā vartamānā vayaṃ kṛtārthā ityabhimanyanti bālāḥ |
yatkarmino na pravedayanti rāgāthenāturāḥ kṣīṇalokāścyavante || 9 ||1/2.9 (Muller
2001)

This sloka depicts that if someone dwells in the imaginary heaven, that is nothing but the childish behavior of a grown-up human being, and ultimately one day, she or he has to fall from imaginary heaven, and that would be painstaking to the person (Aurobindo 1920). If human beings gather knowledge by work and experience and that knowledge provides long satisfaction. The satisfaction is achieved by the good work, experience, and social welfare that provides heavenly pleasure. This sloka is imitating the empirical approach and the positivist thinking of life. The long-term observation practiced and experience is the key to achieve knowledge and satisfaction. The doctrine of Auguste Comte is quite similar to the above said thought. The human being gathers experience about phenomena, and all phenomena are relative and real mode, and sense about the fact (phenomenon) is unknown to human beings. However, the succession and similitude of facts are constant with specific circumstances, and that is universally applicable (Mill 1865).

tadetatsatyam yathā sudīptātpāvākādvisphulingāḥ sahasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ
tathākṣarādvividhāḥ soṃya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpi yanti || 1 ||2/1/1 (Muller
2001)

The small spark of fire leads to the blaze of fire, and the blaze of the fire is not a permanent phenomenon. Ultimately blaze of fire slowly gets down after complete combustion (Aurobindo 1920). Between the start to the end of setting the fire, there are various phases of development; initiation, attainment of maturity, and decay. This is nothing but the presentation of the closed system. This sloka depicts the closed system approach to interpret the earthly phenomena. The progress of various phases of setting the fire is nothing but the presentation of time scale (cyclic, graded, and steady) (Schumm and Lichty 1965).

agnīrmūrdhā cakṣuṣī candrasūryau diśaḥ śrotre vāgvivṛtāśca vedāḥ |
vāyuḥ praṇo hṛdayaṃ viśvamasya padbhyāṃ pṛthivī hyeṣa sarvabhūtāntarātmā || 4
||2/1/4

The three celestial elements, the Earth, sun, moon, and four import symbols (fair, atmosphere, light, and sound) of life and civilization, have been ironically used. Earth signifies attachment or gravity. Vedic literature always depicted the similarities between light and sight. The Sun and Moon signify the symbol of light but that light senses by sight. The Sun, Moon, and Slight signify the light wave. Fire signifies the fact of rising. The sound and atmosphere are related to sonic theology (Beck 1995), and sound also signify the sound wave. Aristotle believed that all the matter in the universe was made up of four basic elements - Earth, air, fire, and water. These

elements were acted on by two forces: gravity, the tendency for Earth and water to sink, and levity, the tendency for air and fire to rise. This division of the contents of the universe into matter and forces is still used today (Hawking 2012). Here, the Earth for gravity, Sun Moon and Eyes for light-wave, fire for rising condition or anti-gravity, sound for sound wave and atmosphere for the volatility, and these five attributes comprehend the core (heart) of study of physics and astronomy (Schroeder 1992).

dhanurghṛitvaupaniṣadaṃ mahāstraṃ śaraṃ hyupāsāniśitaṃ saṃdhayīta |
āyama tadbhāvagatena cetasā lakṣyaṃ tadevākṣaraṃ somya viddhi || 3 ||2/2/3
(Muller 2001)

The bow is the primitive hunting instrument. It contains four attributes; bow, arrows, target, and archer. There is always a physical gap (space) between the target point and the archer. The arrows connect the two by covering the physical distance (space), and the bow is the instrument through which the archer can hit the target. Generally, after reaching the target point, arrows remain attached to the target. Here this hunting phenomenon is allegorically used. Here the individual is the archer, the bow is the Upanishad (practical experience), which might be a weapon, wholehearted attention and devotion is the arrow, the target is to achieve knowledge. The time and space barrier can easily be removable by the practice of proper methodology with dedication and attention.

praṇavo dhanuḥ śāro hyātmā brahma tallakṣyamucyate |
apramattena veddhavyaṃ śaravattanmayo bhavet || 4 ||2/2/4 (Muller 2001)

The earlier Vedic people were Nomads, and therefore hunting was used as a simile in Vedic literature. There is always a gap between hunter and target; the arrows start their journey from the bow, reach the target, and hit the target with arrows. Arrows remain to attach with the target, and the arrow never comes back to hunters. Here bow is machinery to achieve knowledge (here Upanishad is the bow), arrow signifies the two things; the first one is the self who travels a long path to get knowledge and signifies the time. The proper methodology and experience (Upanishad) help the individual soul achieve a target after crossing the long-time path. The sciences do not distinguish between the forward and backward directions of time. However, there are at least three arrows of time that do distinguish the past from the future. They are the thermodynamic arrow, the direction of time in which disorder increases; the psychological arrow, the direction of time in which we remember the past and not the future; and the cosmological arrow, the direction of time in which the universe expands rather than contracts (Hawking 2012). Here the arrows signify the time in universal perspective, and it is never counted in reverse order.

arā iva rathanābhau samhatā yatra nādyah sa eṣo'ntaścarate bahudhā
jāyamānaḥ | omityevaṃ dhyāyatha ātmānaṃ svasti vaḥ pārāya tamasah
parastāt || 6 || 2/2/6 (Muller 2001)

The various identified attributes of any system work in different ways, but the total system is more than the sum of their parts (Stevenson 2020). The spoke is an important part of the wheel, and the wheels carry the chariot. Each spoke radiates from centers to connect the wheel. Similarly, nerves connect the various part of the body (nerves signifies the spoke), various parts of the body constitute the complete physique (wheel signifies the body), and chariot signifies the human life (Aurobindo 1920). It is a simple reflection of the organismic approach. The chariot used for travel, and it crossed the distance to reach the destination. The chariot takes the time to cover the physical distance (physical space). Human life is a combination of time and psychological space. The psychological space is simply a reflection of mental integration and ultimate maturity (Schilpp 1992) achieve through the experience.

na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratāraḥ nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ |
tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṃ tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṃ vibhāti || 10 || (Muller
2001)

This verse depicts a scientific truth about the light. The light makes visible the terrestrial Earth. The light came from the Sun and reached Earth. Sunlight takes about 8.3 minutes to reach Earth from the surface of the Sun. Here light and vision are fused into Sun and the eye. However, light associate with vision, and light is the matter (Vavilov 1965). Sun radiates electromagnetic radiation (EMR), and EMR reached Earth, and a single specific part appears as light (visible band). Human visibility matches with a specific part of EMR, and through this specific part, human beings can visualize the terrestrial Earth. EMR provides heat to autotrophy and the source of all energy. Therefore, here an allegory has been used that all shine after Sun who shines. Here the heliocentric concept of terrestrial Earth is glorified.

brahmaivedamamṛtaṃ purastādbrahma paścādbrahma dakṣiṇataścottareṇa |
adhaścordhvaṃ ca prasṛtaṃ brahmaivedaṃ viśvamidaṃ variṣṭhaṃ || 12 || (Muller
2001)

The core theme of all *Upanishads* is Brahma. Brahma means boundless Knowledge (Rana 1990). Brahma comes from the root 'brh', which means expanding and being a neuter noun (Aurobindo 1920). According to Jon Gongga, there is no synonymous world in the Western language (Sharma 1987) and literature to express the meaning of Brahma in a single word. Sarvapalli Radhakrishna expressed that Brahma is the mature and ultimate phase of mind (Schilpp 1992). The evolution in the animal world is the most remarkable physical phenomena of the earth and the human being since the evolution is achieving mental maturity. Brahma is the nothing maturity or ultimate

state of mind achieved through the journey of life (Sharma 1987). The ever-expanding state of mind includes a greater aspect of wellbeing.

The modern and most recognized theory of the origin of the earth and the universe is related to the concept of ever expansion (Hawking 2012). The origin of the universe started from the nebula. Due to high gravitational concentration, a big explosion and the elements are thrown and moving from the center that is expanding (Hawking 2012). The observation of space depicts all celestial bodies gradually moving away from the ever-expanding center (Dress 1990). The assumption about the universe that it is static with space and time is not true; rather, it is expanding, and the increased distance between the different galaxies and expansion is the result of the big bang (Hawking 2012). The universe started the journey from a singularity to ever expansion (Schroeder 1992).

Conclusion

The Mundaka Upanishad is an ancient text of Hindu scripture full of abstract ideology. Mundaka Upanishad has a long vocal lyrical tradition from 4th to 3rd BCE, and it converted in scripture with a combination of Brahmi script and Sanskrit language during 1st to 2nd AD. The latest version of Mundaka Upanishad (combinations of Devnagari script and Sanskrit language) is the Gupta era. It covers the diversified dimension of the oriental school of thought of Vedic India. Mundaka Upanishad depicted immortality reality full of abstract and allegory with the wrapper of lyrical verse with the sonic meter. Mundaka Upanishad is the doctrine of Indic philosophy despite its mystery thrill of a bundle of occidental ideologies like Positivism, Organismic approach, the cyclical concept, time-space concept, Big Bang with allegory.

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