A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON KENO UPANISADA, FIRST CANTO: HYMNS 1 TO 8, IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The Vedic literature is an esoteric one. The philosophical explanation of Vedanta literature is wrapped in mysticism and allegory. The Keno Upanisada is the main branch of the Upanisada, named after its first word, and begins with an interrogative sentence. The study covers only the first Chapter (Canto I: hymns 1-8). The chapter centers on the mythical word Brahman and body-mind dualism, which was later developed by the French philosopher René Descartes. The meters of the hymns of Keno are similar to a riddle poem. Keno argued in favor of tacit knowledge, which is difficult to articulate, not easy to communicate, and hard to visualize. Therefore, the Keno Upanisada covers transcendental philosophy and is the first such work in ancient India. Keno is an example of riddle literature with elements of mysticism, and it argues for transcendentalism.

Introduction

The foundation of Vedic literature is grounded in both reality and spirituality. Among the Vedic texts, the Upanisads are the most allegorical, philosophical, and psychologically oriented (Gawde, 2016). The Upanisads are concerned with mind and thought processes (Keith, 1909). There are 108 Upanisads, and each one is unique in attributes and philosophical outlook. Talavakara Upanisada is best known as Keno Upanisada, from its first word (John, 1842). Keno Upanisada is widely discussed and translated into many languages (A. M. Muller 1900). Dara Shikoh (brother of Aurangajib) translated it into Persian, Anquetil-Duperron into Latin, and Raja Rammohan Roy into English (A. M. Muller 1900), etc. This study aims to explore the clear and vibrant presentation of the Keno Upanisada, focusing solely on the first chapter (hymns 1-8). The endeavor seeks to elucidate the metaphor and allegory within the framework of reality. The study is based on the literature on the Keno Upanisada. Translations of the Keno Upanisada by both oriental and occidental scholars have been consulted, including those of Sri Aurobindo (Sri Aurobindo, n.d.), Swami Lokeswarananda (Lokeswarananda, 1992), and Patrick Olivelle (Olivelle, 1998). The Bengali translation of Keno Upanisada (Sen, Tattabhusan, and Ghosh, 1980) by Haraf publication has been studied. The Shankara commentary has been collected from the Wisdom Library (Wisdom Library 2022). Ideological aspects of Upanisada literature have been drawn from the Sacred Book of the East, edited by Max Muller (A. M. Muller, 1900). After reviewing the literature above, a comprehensive study has been conducted.

India is the land of a magnificent literary tradition, characterized in great part by sophisticated poetic techniques (Jamison & Joel, 2014). The Kena Upanisada is among the principal Upanisadas (Olivelle, 1998). It is embedded in the last section of the Talavakara Bahmana of the Sama Veda (John, 1842). The Kena Upanisada is divided into four Canto or Khando (Fig. No. 1). The first Canto and Canto II contents 8 and 5 meters of poem and Canto III (12 para-

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graph) and IV (9 Paragraphs) is in prose (Fig. No. 1). The fourth Canto has the remaining 9 paragraphs, which include 3 paragraphs of the main text and 6 paragraphs from the epilogue. The initial two Canto of the Kena Upanishad (Easwarna, 2007) are written in poetic form, whereas the last two are presented in prose, with one notable exception (Olivelle, 1998).

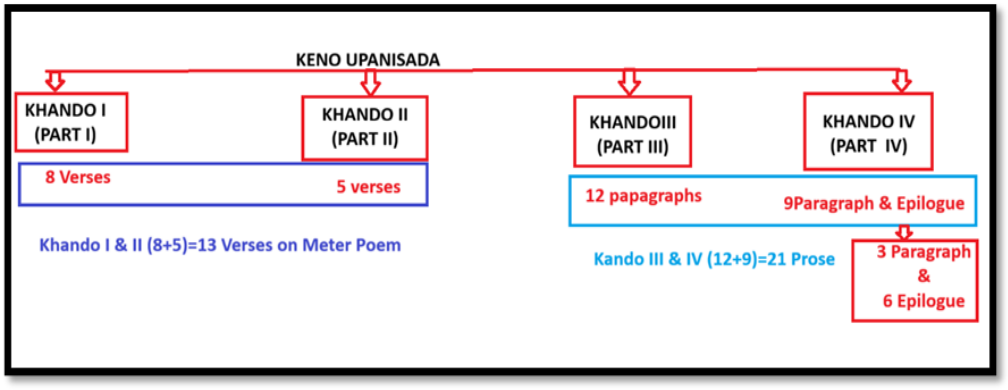

Fig.No. 1: Chapters of Keno Upanisada

I. Keno-Upanisada and Riddle Poem

Keno Upanisada is an archaic and liturgical composition. It has an adhesive relation to the long tradition of Indo-European and Indo-Iranian praise poetry, and is most nearly mirrored in the old Avestan gathas attributed to Zarathustra (Jamison & Joel, 2014). The first canto of the Keno Upanisada comprises eight verses, which are structured as metrical poems (Hume, 1921). The hymn features pairs of two lines, with the first pair consisting of interrogative sentences, while the preceding line contains the response (Olivelle, 1998). The response is obscure and full of allegory (Ambedkar, n.d.). That pattern of literature is called a riddle poem (Kaivola & Annikki, 2018). Sometimes riddle poems are popular in children's literature. The Rig-Veda is an ancient example of a riddle poem (Kaivola & Annikki, 2018). The earliest surviving written riddles are found in Sumerian Cuneiform tablets. The riddle in Vedic literature is common, and it is called Prohelika (Ambedkar, n.d.). The riddle poem is an ancient literary form, and it was common in the Sphinx riddle in Greek and the Epic of Gilgamesh in Mesopotamia (John, 1842). The exact time of the riddle poem's origin remains obscure, but most research suggests it dates back to around 2100 BC (Kaivola & Annikki, 2018).

Folklorist Robert A Georges describes the main attributes of a riddle poem (Williamson, 1982), that is, the elements meant to be guessed, and it is recorded without a solution. Keno Upanisada used the riddle-style poem with intricate allegory. It stands out as a unique literary fusion of riddle poetry and complex use of relative clauses. The Keno begins with the phrase by whom? The terms who and whom are closely related; who serves as a relative pronoun that provides additional information about the noun. The essential prerequisite of a relative clause is the presence of a main clause. The 'who' is a relative clause that conveys information about the individual referenced in the main clause. Conversely, it pertains to the object of a verb or preposition. Notably, the Keno Upanisada does not explicitly mention the main clause; instead, it describes the mythical and allegorical term Brahama. The ambiguous and mythical term, which is justified as the main clause, is never personified or described (Kafatos & Chopra, 2014). The phrase 'by whom' (Lokeseswarananda, 1992) relates to those affected

by an action, while whom is the subjective form of who, referring to individuals impacted by an action. People are affected by an action. Keno Upanisada is distinguished by the relative clause that initiates it.

II. Keno-Upanisada and Time Period

The Upanisada was performed orally, deploying inherited verbal formulae (Kulasrestha, 2006). The phonetic and euphonic changes were natural in oral tradition. Therefore, the exact period of its origin is obscure and presents many obstacles to tracing its time (Majumder & Dattatrya Pusalkar, 1951). It is definitely the fact before the Buddha (Sinha, 2021). The Keno Upanisada was likely written around the middle of the 1st millennium BCE (Majumder & Pusalkar, 1951). Its structure is quite unique, featuring the first 13 verses (Cantos I & II) presented as a metrical poem, followed by 21 prose paragraphs of the main text and an additional 6 prose paragraphs serving as an epilogue (Müller, 1900). The Keno Upanisada blends poetry and prose. It serves as a bridge between the ancient prose style and poetry for the subsequent period. According to Phillips, the Keno Upanisada was composed after the Brihadaranyaka, Chandogya, Isha, Taittiriya, and Aitareya texts (Pre-6th century BC), but prior to the Katha, Mundaka (Sinha, 2021), Prasna, Mandukya, and Svetasvatara. Ranade (1926) presents a perspective akin to Phillips's, categorizing the Keno Upanisada's chronological composition into the third group of ancient Upanisadas. Paul Deussen (Ranade, 1926) regards the Keno-Upanisada as a traditional work that connects the phases of prose writing with poetic innovation. According to Winternitz, the Keno-Upanisada is the literature of the pre-Buddha and pre-Jain era (Muller & Navlakha, 2000). But the pre-Jain era is not justified.

III. First Canto of Keno-Upanisada

Hymn 1:
keneṣitaṃ patati preṣitaṃ manaḥ kena prāṇaḥ prathamaḥ praiti yuktaḥ |
keneṣitāṃ vācamimāṃ vadanti cakṣuḥ śrotraṃ ka u devo yunakti || *1* || (Wisdom Library 2022)

(By whom missioned falls the mind shot to its mark? By whom is the first life-breath moved forward on its paths? By whom is this word impelled that men speak? What god set eyes and ears to their workings?) (Sri Aurobindo n.d.)

The initial hymn of the Keno-Upanisada elucidates the fundamental attributes (mind and thought) of human beings, which differentiate them from the animal kingdom (Pandit, 1974). The hymn encompasses four sensory organs, excluding the skin, as well as two abstract concepts: mind and thought (Muller & Navlakha, 2000). Thought is the byproduct of the mind. Mind finds its physical residence in the brain, which is one of the body's extraordinary organs. The brain, mind, and thought are interconnected and also associated with Psychology, Neuroscience, Cognitive Sense, and Tacit Knowledge (Sen, Tattabhusan, and Ghosh, 1980). Therefore, the hymn comprises the five-sensory organs: the brain, nose, ears, eyes, and tongue (Hume, 1921). In Buddhist doctrine, there is a belief in the sixth sense organ, which includes the mind as one of its organs (Wang, 2021). In contrast, Vedic literature does not explicitly mention sense organs; however, it recognizes the mind as a sense organ alongside the nose, ears, eyes, and tongue, as evidenced by allegorical expressions and interrogative sentences (Hoffman, 2009). The question has been raised as to who is responsible for controlling these organs. The phrase 'by whom' indicates a reference to the personal noun. The initial hymn represents a metaphysical exploration of human existence (Singh, 2003). It instigates the concealed relationship between the body (as a sensory organ) and the mind (as a thought process). Theories concerning the body-mind connection emerged during the 16th century AD among

Western scholars. It developed notably through the work of René Descartes in 1641, who articulated that the mind is non-physical (Gawde, 2016). Subsequently, numerous theories were developed, including body-mind dualism, interactionism, parallelism, and monism (Rao, 2002). The first hymn of the Keno Upanisada serves as the foundational point for the discourse on body-mind dualism. The Vedic sages, or the Vedanta school of thought, recognized the relationship between the body and mind and the concept of dualism.

Hymn 2:
śrotrasya śrotraṃ manaso mano yadvāco ha vācaṃ sa u prāṇasya prāṇaścakṣuṣaścakṣuḥ | atimucya dhīrāḥ pretyāsmāllokādamṛtā bhavanti || *2* || (Wisdom Library, 2022)

(That which is hearing of our hearing, mind of our mind, speech of our speech, that too is life of our life-breath and sight of our sight. The wise are released beyond, and they pass from this world and become immortal (Aurobindo, 2021).

The hymn is the response of Sloke number 1. The response (by whom) is recorded as 'he/she'. The answer is presented as a personal pronoun. The sloka reveals that the individual is the wise one, existing beyond the terrestrial realm, and is immortal. But an individual's identity is obscure; it depends on readers' guesswork. It is the attributes of a riddle poem (Jamison & Joel, 2014). Therefore, Keno-Upanisada serves as an example of a riddle poem, imbued with philosophical and aesthetic qualities (Jamison & Joel, 2014). Normally, the senses are controlled by the brain and the nervous system. The brain receives sensory inputs via nerves and provides controlling feedback. It is undeniable that there is a direct relation between the physical state, the brain, and subjective experiences. Nowadays, the brain, mind, and consciousness are areas of research for both neurologists and philosophers. The hymn posed the most anticipated research question of the modern world.

Hymn 3:
na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāggacchati no mano na vidmo na vijānīmo yathaitadanuśiṣyādanyadeva tadviditādatho aviditādadhi |
iti śuśruma pūrveṣāṃ ye nastadvyācacakṣire || 3 | (Wisdom Library, 2022)

(Their sight travels not, nor speech, nor the mind. We know it not nor can distinguish how one should teach of it: for it is other than the known; It is there above the unknown. It is so we have heard from men of old who declared that to our understanding (Aurobindo, 2021).

The sloke serves as a response to both the initial and subsequent hymns. It hypothetically describes a place using negative expressions, suggesting that a specific individual (he/she) exists beyond the terrestrial domain. The sloka conveys that an individual can obtain knowledge and facts only from someone proficient and well-versed in the subject matter (Kulasrestha, 2006). One of the important quotations of Rabindranath Tagore, that is "A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame," is relevant (Sundaram, 2011). The sloka describes the personal noun as a knowledgeable person who possesses an implicit understanding beyond the reach of sensory perception and cannot be conveyed.

There are fundamentally two types of knowledge (Foley, 2012): cognitive and tacit. Human beings acquire cognitive information through their senses and their brains. In contrast, tacit knowledge is personal, intuitive, and grounded in experience (Johannessen, 2022), making it difficult to communicate or articulate. It cannot be captured by the sense organs. According to Swami Vivekananda, the mind apparatus (*citta*) is a combination of three compo-

nents, namely manas, buddhi, and ahaṃkāra, and sensory organs (Krishnapp et al., 2020). Human perception and behavior are intrinsically linked to the mind. While the sense organs detect stimuli, the brain, despite its functional role, may fail to produce responses, which could indicate dysfunction within the nervous system. Sensory adaptation refers to the process by which our brain cells become less responsive to constant stimuli. There is an apparent paradox: the brain can function without continuous feedback, even as the sense organs receive stimuli shaped by prior experience. The hymn reflects the Cartesian dualist view of the mind. The sloka distinguishes between cognitive and tacit knowledge through allegory.

Hymn 4:
yadvācānabhyuditaṃ yena vāgabhyudyate |
tadeva brahma tvaṃ viddhi nedaṃ yadidamupāsate || 4 || (Wisdom Library, 2022)

(That which is unexpressed by the word, that by which the word is expressed, know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here) (Aurobindo, 2021).

The pronoun he or she is characterized as Brahama. However, Brahama is neither personified nor depicted as a singular individual. Hymn number 4 serves as the response to hymn number1, and it elucidates the identity of the personal noun (as Brahama) referenced in hymns 2 and 3 as he or she. The Brahama is a proper noun, yet it lacks distinct identity or is not personified. It does not exist in the physical realm of the earth; the earth serves as a reflection of that. Human civilization remains oblivious to Brahama. It is not associated with human desires or expectations. The definition of Brahama is not established, allowing readers to interpret it based on their knowledge and understanding. Brahma is recognized through implicit philosophical knowledge, and the concept pertains to the aesthetic dimension of life (Calkins, 1908).

Hymn 5:
yanmanasā na manute yenāhurmano matam |
tadeva brahma tvaṃ viddhi nedaṃ yadidamupāsate || 5 || (Wisdom Library, 2022)

(That which thinks not by the mind,1 that by which the mind is thought, know. That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here) (Aurobindo, 2021).

The sloka narrates the nature of Bharama. The information about Brahama is not communicable via words and not imagined via the mind. Rather, Brahama is the master of the mind. Basically, Brahama is beyond the senses, the sense organs, and even the mind. The mind receives responses from the terrestrial world, and emotion depends entirely on the mind's activities (Krishnapp et al., 2020). Brahma is not associated with time and space, nor is it connected to individuals or personified. However, Brahama is described as the ultimate reality. The concept of Brahama pertains to individualism, a connection to the divine, and a rejection of materialism. Consequently, Brahama is a transcendent concept. The Keno Upanisada is a piece of transcendental literature from ancient India. Transcendentalism and literature were further developed by the scholar Ralph Waldo Emerson during the 18th century (Goodman, 2003). Keno Upanisada is the first Indian literary effort by the Vedic sages to establish transcendentalism as the central theme for comprehending reality.

Hymn 6
yaccakṣuṣā na paśyati yena cakṣūṁṣi paśyati |
tadeva brahma tvaṃ viddhi nedaṃ yadidamupāsate || 6 || (Wisdom Library, 2022).

(That which sees not with the eye, that by which one sees the eye’s seeings, know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here) (Aurobindo, 2021).

The sloka conveys that Brahama cannot be expressed verbally nor perceived through the ears. The knowledge of Brahama transcends the sensory organs and is apprehended by the soul. Thus, it serves as an ancient example of transcendent literature. The hymn Six resonates with hymn Five. The Keno Upanisad represents the earliest oriental text to elucidate transcendentalism through a riddle poem (Kaivola & Annikki, 2018).

Hymn 7:
yacchrotreṇa na śṛṇoti yena śrotramiṁśrutam |
tadeva brahma tvaṃ viddhi nedaṃ yadidamupāsate || 7 || (Wisdom Library, 2022)

(What cannot be heard with the ear, but by which the ears are able to hear, that alone know thou to be the *Brahman*; not this which (people) here worship) (Wisdom Library, 2022).

The concept of Brahama is neither verbally communicable nor audible. Thus, it's a kind of tacit knowledge that is not transferred via sense organs. But Brahama is related to the brain, mind, and thought. The knowledge about Brahama absolutely depends upon cognition, as well as the perceived information by the individual, not on the information acquired via the sense organs. The hymn clarified that Brahama is not associated with ritualistic and traditional religious practices, nor with the common perceptions of humanity (Aurobindo, 2021). It established a clear differentiation between information and consciousness (Goodman, 2003). Information generates experiences in reaction to external stimuli, resembling computer software, whereas consciousness represents the capacity to truly know and make choices (Rao, 2002). Brahama embodies the concept of consciousness.

Hymn 8:
yatprāṇena na prāṇiti yena prāṇaḥ praṇīyate |
tadeva brahma tvaṃ viddhi nedaṃ yadidamupāsate || 8 || (Wisdom Library, 2022).

(What none breathes with the breath, but by which breath is in-breathed, that alone know thou to be the *Brahman*; not this which (people) here worship) (Wisdom Library, 2022).

The mind serves as the foundation for all experiences, and human life is the outcome of the interaction between the body and the mind. This can be likened to the execution of software (the mind) on hardware (the sense organs) in a computerized system (Rao, 2002). Upon the body's death, it can no longer facilitate this interaction. This situation is analogous to a computer with faulty hardware that can no longer run software (Ibid.). It's the basic inquiry behind the body-mind dualism.

RESULT:
Keno-Upanisada is the Vedic example of transcendental literature. Brahma is a mystical term, and it is regarded as a transcendental entity. Though it is never ever personified or narrated as a personal noun or a proper noun. Rather, it is narrated in the third person (he/she). The first canto of the Keno Upanisada states that the human being, through the senses, receives cognitive information, but human perception of the phenomenological world depends on individual experience, knowledge, and perception. Perception and tacit knowledge are neither audible nor easily communicated. The concept of Brahman is not conventional, archaic, or ritualistic. It is not a phenomenon that is sought after by the masses. Rather, it is a perceptual and tacit concept. The attributes of thought processes, perception, and the mind are essential for grasp-

ing the idea of Brahman. Ultimately, the concept of Brahman is a personal perception. The eight hymns in the First Canto of Keno Upanisada illustrate the dualism of body and mind through the allegory of Brahman, which embodies the essence of consciousness.

Concussion

The Keno Upanisada is the principal branch of the Upanisadas, named after its opening word, and begins with an interrogative sentence. Keno Upanisada is an Indian archaic and liturgical composition. It represents the connection between the poetic and prose traditions in ancient Sanskrit literature. It has crossed a long path as an oral tradition. It bears resemblance to ancient Indo-European poetic traditions, particularly the Avestan Gathas. It starts with interrogative sentences, and the response is related to allegory. Therefore, it is the literature of a riddle poem. The central theme of the Keno Upanisada revolves around the mythical term Brahama, but it is never personified and anthropomorphized.

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