

## **Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind and Cognition**

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**Lecture No. # 06**

### **The Concept of Mind in Upanishads**

Today, we are going to discuss the concept of mind in Upanishads. This is in connection with the thesis of transcendental mind that, upanishadic concept of mind also argues for a transcendental theory of mind. Now, this transcendental thesis is indeed quite different from the kind of philosophical theory about mind that we are going to discuss in our later lectures.

But it is very important to talk about the upanishadic concept of mind precisely because, in this thesis, we find that there is a dichotomy between the soul and the mind. There is indeed you know dichotomy between the body and the mind. So, in fact, the transcendental thesis argues that there is a harmony between mind, body and the soul. So, what kind of pre-suppositions that the Upanishads make in order to talk about the concept of mind is something very significant. I think, we can discuss this in connection with a Plato's notion of mind, in connection with the transcendental thesis that has been argued by the platonic philosophers of mind.

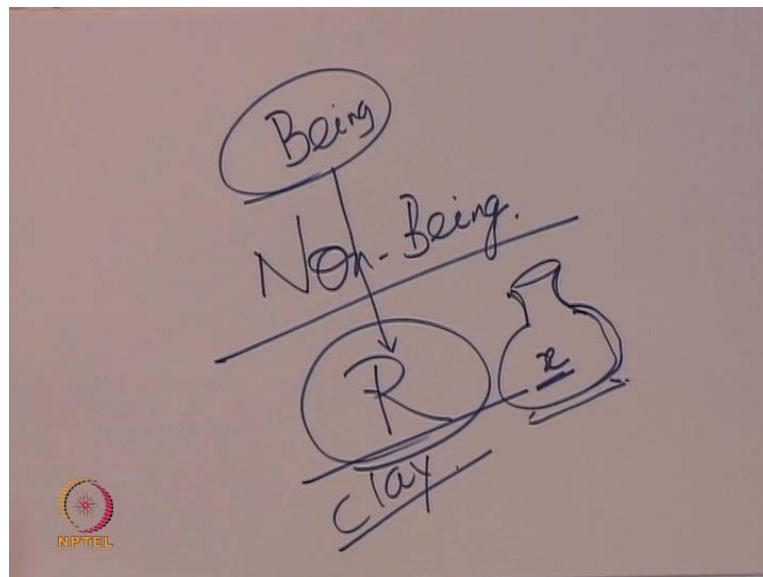
As I mentioned earlier, this notion of transcendental is very much part of the epistemic discourse of the concept of mind. How does one know the mind, how does one comprehend the reality that, this reality is one and not two? So, this has been the basic question in philosophy of mind.

As I also have pointed out that, the transcendental thesis talks about the meta physics of mind, there is a mind which is a meta physical region. So, what kind of meta physics Upanishads talk about in connection with the study of reality? We shall try to explore these questions today.

Now, when we talk about reality, when we talk about the creation of the reality, one goes to the cosmology, the cosmological view point that has been put forward by the Upanishads.

In Upanishad, there is a concept called hiranmya garva. The reality has you evolved from this notion called hiranmya garva. In chandogya Upanishad, there is a debate between uddhalaka and Swataketu. Swataketu is interested to know that how the reality has been conceptualized, how the reality has come into being. And Uddhalaka is further tries to explain to Swataketu that this reality, if at all there is a reality, then this reality has not come from a non-being.

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How can something be called a real and it can come from a non-being? So, therefore, there is some truth behind the existence of the reality. So, there is a being and he gives an example of this, that can we conceptualize the notion of a pot, can we conceptualize the notion of a pot, when we say that there is no clay out of which the pot is made.

So, when we talk about something say x and x is a pot and x is made out of something. So, therefore, when we talk about a reality as a whole, we need to talk about the being and this being might have caused the existence of the reality.

Now, this debate about the being is the cause of reality is there in chandogya Upanishad. But what is interesting is, the epistemic exercise that one undertakes in order to know

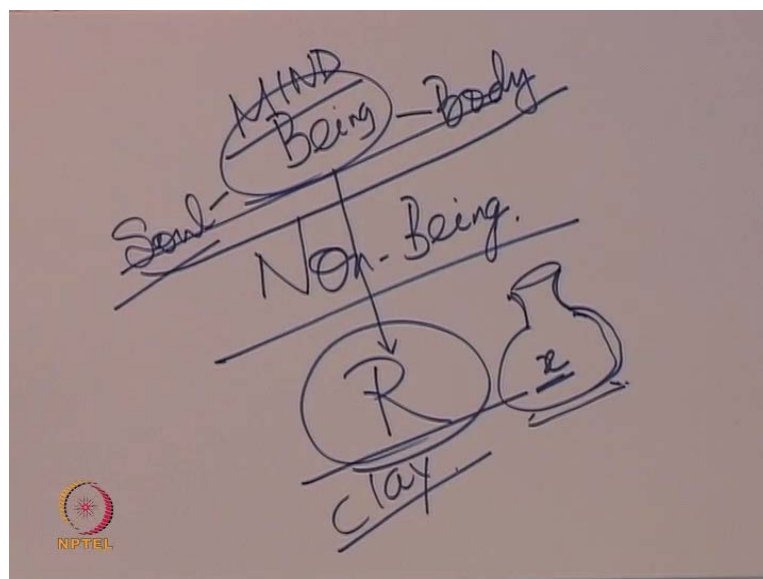
what the true nature of reality is. So that, it is the epistemological question, which has been significantly addressed in Briharanaka Upanishad, where there is a debate between yajnavalkya and maitreyi.

Maitreyi is asking about the wealth. She says, what is that and by possessing that, I can live a peaceful life. Yagyavalkya tries to address this question with reference to various things. And yagyavalkya says, by possessing this material wealth, you cannot live a happy life.

So, the ultimate happiness that has been discussed in this epistemic discourse of knowing the self is something very significant. That is how does one understand its own being? And by knowing the being, one lives a immortal, happy life, every blissful life. Maitreyi was interested to attend that bliss. Maitreyi was not certainly interested to possess the material wealth because she knew that by possessing this wealth, she will not gain the happiness that she is aspiring to realize.

So, Maitreyi's aspiration was to being to us, a theme; that is, the notion of immortality of self. The self which is infinite and more immortal is possessed by me. And how does me realize that? Here is an infinite principle and I must know what I possess. So, that is what is the debate that is what is an epistemic debate, which is there between yagyavalkya and maitreyi.

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So, when we talk about the existence of being, we see that we are all embodied being. The being has the soul; which is immortal, infinite and the being also has a body. Now, therefore, I am an embodied being. But how does one understand the identity, the harmonious existence, the harmony that is there between this two? And where we can locate mind? Is mind a sense organs or is mind something spiritual at **descartes** would argue?

Because the western notion of dualism suggest to us that mind is a spiritual entity. Whereas the upanishadic concept of mind advocates that mind is not a spiritual entity; rather mind is one of the sense organs, that is what is called suksma sarira. So, there are two varieties of sariras. One is the sthula sarira and another one is the suksma sarira, the subtle existence of the body, something I need to understand.

When we talk about the mind, we must talk about its subtle existence. And when we talk about the gross existence of the body, we need to see how the body is been operated, how the body is functional. It is functional with the help of various indriyas. Mana is an indriya. So, mana is different from atman, which is a soul, and we should look at, we need to study, what kind of relationship exist and that binds all three things; atman, mind or manas and sarira, the body.

The soul, the mind and the body are all connected. So, the kind of connection which probably is pre-supposed in Spinoza. So, for example, who is one of the Cartesian philosophers of mind, where Spinoza talks about the pre-established harmony; the harmony between the soul and the body. When we talk about an embodiment, we need to also look at this harmony's existence.


So, let us study in detail what is this notion of atman and what do we locate the concept of atman, is atman a kind of a evaluate or mind in a evaluate or mind is just a mysterious entity. We need to study in detail.

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Contemporary Issues in **Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

## Nature of Self or *Ātman*

- The self is consciousness
- The self is a transcendental reality
- The epistemic exercise aims to explain
  - *the psychological* and
  - *the moral*

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Now let us talk about atman. The notion of self or atman is nothing but a conscious being. The self is a conscious being. And this self is also a transcendental reality. So, self is conscious and self is transcendental.

Now, the conscious being, we need to locate what is the role of consciousness? So, therefore, there is a cognitive or a psychological function involved when we talk about consciousness. And there is also a moral function involved because the consciousness or chethana has been associated with the notion of agency, that me as an agent acting in the world. The engagement between the self and the world would pre-suppose some kind of a normative function that the engagement is regulated by a moral principle, a normative principle.

So, that is what we need to look at, and we also need to relocate that it is a conscious principle, it is a self reflexive principle, a principle which realizes that what is it, is it good or bad? So, that kind of self-recognition of one some action is important when we talk about the agency or when we talk about the self. So, self has two aspects; the psychological aspects and what kind of psychology upanishads teaches us, and what kind of morality they also teach us, we need to look at that.

Now, when we talk about consciousness, when say for example, uddalaka is explaining to swethaketu that from the being, everything has come into existence. Now what is that being, which uddhalaka is conceptualizing here? Uddhalaka is certainly conceptualizing

about a reality, which is pure consciousness. And the upanshadic notion of consciousness refers to brahaman, the notion of brahaman.

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The slide is titled "Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition" and "The psychological aspect of the self". It lists two main topics: "Consciousness" and "Mind". Under "Consciousness", it lists: "Brahman or self-effulgent being", "Prakash-swarupa", "Immortal, eternal and infinite", and "Ultimate metaphysical principle of the universe". Under "Mind", it lists: "As a coordinator of the sense organs". The slide also features the NIPTEL logo and the name "Prof. Ranjan K Panda, Department of Humanities & Social Science, IIT Bombay" at the bottom.


Now, what is brahaman? It is a prakash-swarupa. As I have mentioned here, it is prakash-swarupa. Brahman or a self-effulgent being. It is immortal, eternal and infinite. This prakasha, it is a jyothi swarupa. It has no existence within space and time. It is beyond space and time and therefore, it is transcendent. So, and brahaman acts as a meta physical principle. So, the ultimate meta physical principle that can explain the nature of reality in upanishads, refers to the existence of brahaman. And brahaman is a pure consciousness.

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Contemporary Issues in **Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

## Ātman and Brahman Relationship

- Atman is conscious, immortal, eternal & infinite
- Not located in space and time
- Not be understood in terms of any binary categories
- Not identical with human bodies
- Atman is a **transcendent being.**

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Now I will talk about the mind little later. Now what kind of relationship this brahaman and atman are having? As I mentioned, brahaman is consciousness, atman is also conscious. Atman is also immortal and atman is also eternal and infinite.

Atman cannot be located in space and time, not to be understood in terms of any binary categories. So, for example, when we talk about binary categories, we refer to (( )) .But brahaman is a kind of a universal of all and atman is a part of it. Brahaman is very vast and atman is just a tiny aspect of the brahaman.

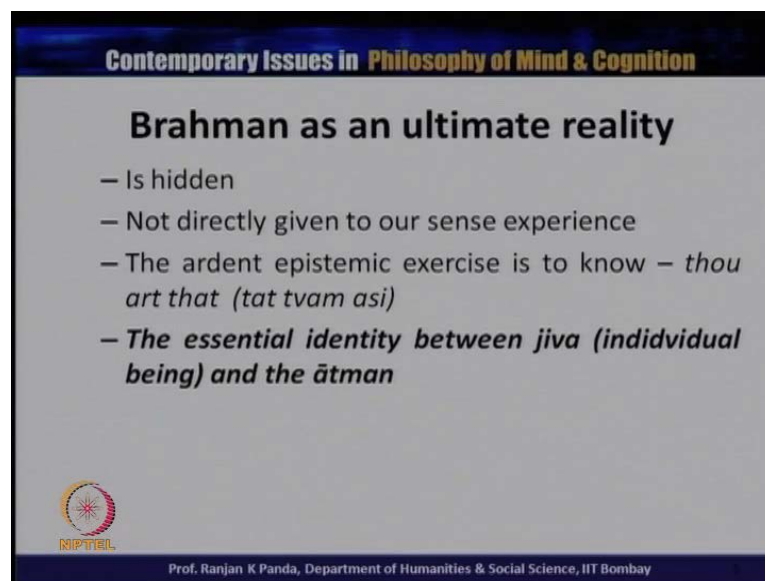
So, these kinds of binaries are not applicable to brahaman-atman relationship. And it is not identical with human bodies. If you say that is it identical with human bodies, it is a product of human bodies, now what kind of existence the atman would have when we suggest that it is (( )) embodied being?

Upanishads would argue that atman and the soul is not identical with the body. Soul is a kind of a (( )) . It is an witness consciousness. In brihadaaryanyak upnishad, there is an allegory allegory about two birds where, this two birds represent the two aspects of the self, two aspects of the consciousness or we can say two kinds of consciousness. One kind of consciousness talks about our engagement with the world. You see one bird is picking those fruits, trying to eat those fruits, another bird is just looking at the outside world, just guessing, it is near spectator. And that is why I said, it is (( )) it is (( )) in the sense that it is it has this power of witnessing.

But this witness is not only involved witness, not only intentional witness; he is just an onlooker, who is witnessing things as they are happening before him. So, the bird, which represents the state of an onlooker, a disinterested looker, suggests that the soul is just a witnessing principle, whereas, there is another aspects to this consciousness. As I said, soul is conscious. So, there is another aspect to this consciousness. That consciousness is about the every engagement of an agent which interacting with the world. So, how does one transcend this engagement is important?

So, the upanishadic psychology would suggest the method of transcending from the physical interaction with the world or the intentional interaction with the world. Transcending from the actions, karma and realize what you are. That is what the message is.


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**Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

**Brahman as an ultimate reality**

- Is hidden
- Not directly given to our sense experience
- The ardent epistemic exercise is to know – *thou art that (tat tvam asi)*
- *The essential identity between jiva (individual being) and the ātman*

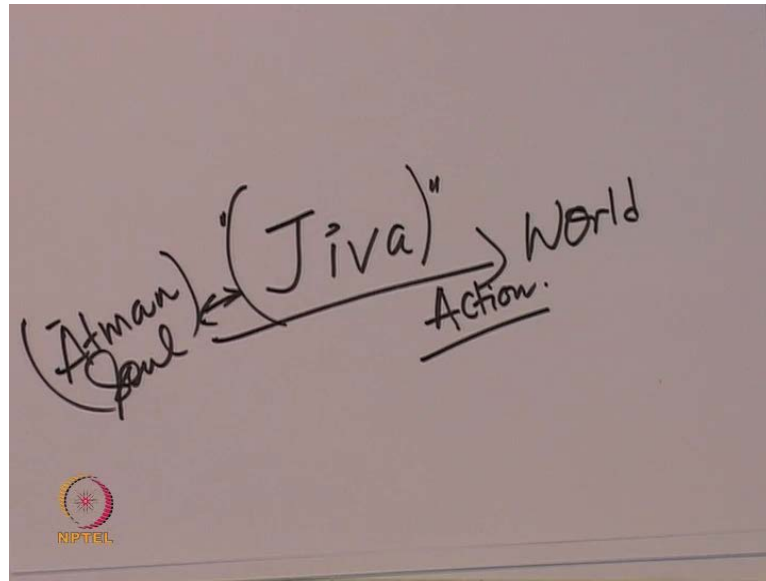
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One needs to realize the essential identity between jiva and atman. So, there are two things.



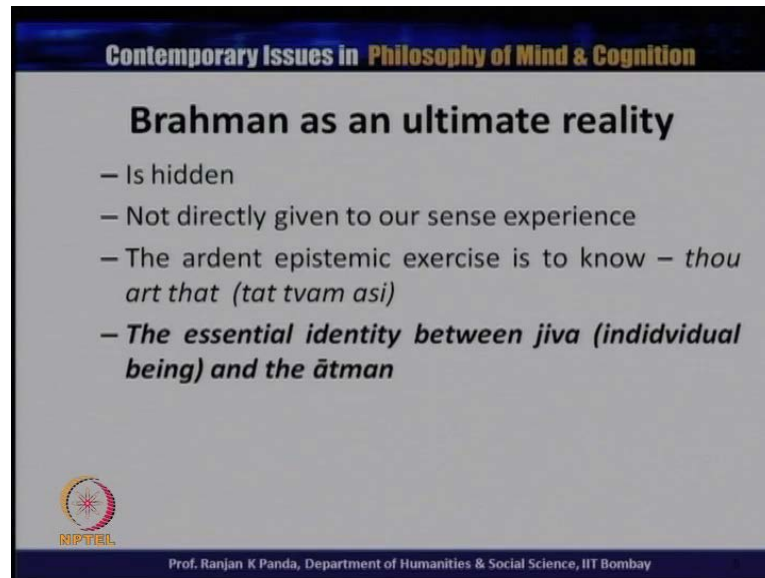
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One, I am a jivapurous. I am a jivapurous in the sense that, I am a living being and all living being are the manifestations of the brahman, and being a living being, I have this power of interacting with the world. So, I have the power of interacting with the world. But when I interact with world, I may not realize what I am doing. I am just doing. I may not understand the consequence of my interaction through the performance of various actions. So, that is what the epistemic aspect of it is.

So, when does one realize that, I am not supposed to be just engaged with the world? When does one withdraw from this engagement? This withdrawal is important and that is what is the moral significance of the upanishadic notion of consciousness. And the withdrawal is about transcending. How does the jiva comprehend or grasps that this engagement is not a real engagement? The real engagement is what it should have with atman or the soul. So, that essential identity between jiva and atman is something what you called true knowledge.

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**Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

**Brahman as an ultimate reality**

- Is hidden
- Not directly given to our sense experience
- The ardent epistemic exercise is to know – *thou art that (tat tvam asi)*
- **The essential identity between jiva (individual being) and the ātman**

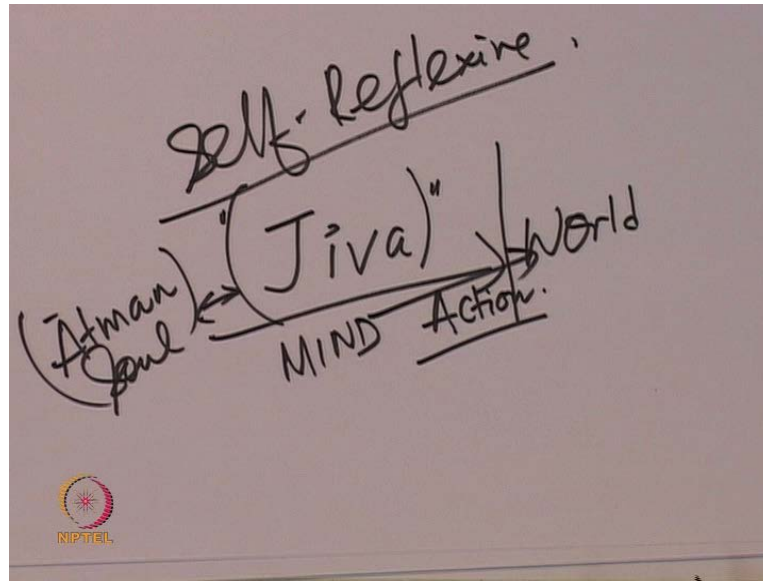
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What upanishads says tat tvam asi, The ardent of epistemic exercise is to know thou art that. And that is to be known. And that is to be known not through my sense experiences. My sense organs would not help me to understand what it is. But of course, my sense organs would help me when I am engaged with this world.

So, atman is not an object of my perception. It cannot be an object of my perception. Whatever can be an object of my perception are given. It is outside me. Now what is that me? Then, me is that which is inside. So, there is an a interiority to this experience. And there is an exteriority to this experience. So, this internal-external debate that you would find in the western philosophy of mind, something very significant with reference to this upanishadic notion of self and the experience of the self.

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When being experiences his own true nature, that refers to the interiority of ones experience. So, therefore, consciousness has been self-reflexive. When we say consciousness is self-reflexive, it reflects on its own being. Try to understand what is it. So, there is an, it is not that this direction its intentional engagement is just always from mind what we called mind to the world. They are all intentionally connected.

But there is also a kind of intentionality which is directed towards its own existence. So, it is that kind of intentional directedness provides us some kind of an epistemic structure what you called the structure of interiority. Yes intentionality, which is directed towards the world provides at a kind of a epistemic intentional structure, in which one is engaged with the world and try to understand the content of this engagement etcetera. So, that is what you know something interesting.

Why one has to know what swetaketu, who is an interested learner, who is a **jijnca** like maitreyi. And uddalaka and yagyavalkya are trying to explained to this **jijnca**. Now, unless you are in a interested knower, unless you have this **jijnca**, unless you have this **jijnca** to know what is truth as socrates says, Aristotle is trying address this. One must have desire to know what it is. That is the fundamental primary principle which Aristotle is talking about.

Similarly, the upanishadic concept of mind tries to emphasize this aspect of knowing and the act of knowing is that one must be interested to know, one must be willing to know

what it is. Maitreyi was willing to know what is that immortality and the power of immortality by possessing which, should have lived a very blissful life, happy life.

So, the kind of a the finest perfect well-being that maitreyi was trying to conceptualize, Amartya sen has discussed about. Now, similarly swethaketu was interested to know from his father uddhalaka, that what is that reality which has created the existence of this entire cosmos? What is that reality is responsible for the existence of this entire cosmos?

Certainly, uddalaka was trying to explain the meta physical principle, and this meta physical principle is to be grasped. It needs to be comprehended through consciousness because it is not part of the sense organs. It cannot be derived through this kind of a (( )) that the interaction with sense organs with the world from which this kind of knowledge does not arise.

Hence we need to talk about this kind of a hidden reality. It is always hidden; that self, which is an disinterested onlooker is not directly given to me. It is a hidden reality and I need to unfold the traits. I need to remove the valves and see its existence, seeing through experiences. And this experiences directed towards the inner form of reality because the truth is not an external one, it is something internal, (( )) one has to realize that. So, that is why we need to talk about a kind of a reflexive mode of consciousness. A consciousness which is directed towards its own reality and we need to look at that.

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**Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

### The Harmony

- The harmonious co-existence between the finite and the infinite (*between the jiva and atman*)
- We need to **realize** this harmony.
- Realization signifies the *act of knowing*
- *There must be a desire to know (jīñāsa)*

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Now I have also talked about this notion of harmony, kind of a harmonious co-existence between jivas and atman because the harmony has to be there between finite and the infinite, when there qualitatively different. We need to talk about the relationship and as I said, one must realize their co-existence. Now this realization is something important and that comes through the act of knowing. As I said the desire to know, one has to be **jijnca** to know.

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**Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

**Brahman and the field of knowing**

- *Ksētra* (the field) *ksētrajña* (the knower of the field)
- *Jagat* as the manifestation of the **Brahman**
- Hence it is finite and represents a finite field of knowing
- *The infinite possibilities of knowing.*

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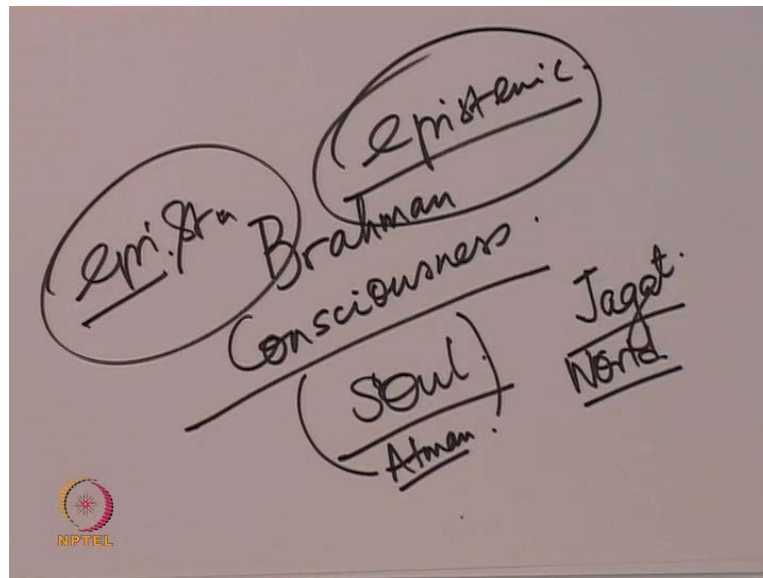
Then it is very interesting to talk about this field of knowing. The field is a infinite field. When we talk about Brahman, a kind of a consciousness; it is a kind of a pure consciousness and it has infinite potential and atman is a part of brahaman or atman is like brahaman.

As I said, we need to talk about the reality not in terms of binaries. So, therefore, try to understand that atma is a swaropa of... and this swaropa is a jyothi swaropa of this pure consciousness. So, it is the soul or atman is also infinite, eternal and not bound by space and time.

So, the soul is not part of the world, jagat, it is not the part of the world. Then when we talk about knowing, the act of knowing, the soul creates its own field. Now this debate with debate of ksetra ksetrajna. I said just a few minutes before that, the intentionality creates a kind of an epistemic structure and this epistemic intentional structure of knowledge is what I called ksetra.

As a kartha, I am performing karma, action and these actions are intentional actions, perceptual is intentional, my saying is intentional, my experiencing is also intentional, experiencing of all the things which is given to me are also intentional. The act of intentionality forms some kind of an intentional epistemic structure. It is a kind of an intentional epistemic structure.

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Similarly, when I try to know about my own (( )) which talks about the interiority of my experience, I am talking about also another kind of an epistemic structure. Now, what is significant is this that this epistemic structure for sale constitutes what we called ksetra, the field of knowledge. And ksetrajna is a person who is involved in this act of knowing.


In Bhagavad Gita, Krishna talks about this that there is a field in which the agent is interacting with the world and there is also an agent who is trying to know what one is doing. He is; this knower is a ksetrajna. So, the ksetrajna is bound by this normative principle that he must know what is reality, what is its true identity, what is its being, a ksetrajna must know. And therefore, as a knower of the field, he tries to realize what truth is.

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## Brahman and the field of knowing

- *Kṣétra* (the field) *kṣétrajñā* (the knower of the field)
- *Jagat* as the manifestation of the **Brahman**
- Hence it is finite and represents a finite field of knowing
- *The infinite possibilities of knowing.*

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Further its engagement with the world or jagat is truth will give him knowledge or the engagement with or the ujjwal or try to understand, what is the limitation of this engagement, how far this knowledge are tenable. So, understanding the limitation, it will talk about maybe there is an infinite. So, that mode of engagement will talk about a kind of the infinite possibilities of knowing. Knowledge itself is infinite and there must be an infinite possibilities of knowing.


So, the brahaman, as a universal field, includes everything and one who understands that everything is one, and there is no difference between them. Everything is created by one. One understand all the qualities of, one understands the communality between them, then one does not find any distinction between you and me, higher and lower, poor and distinct rich; one does not really differentiate between the pain and the non-pain, the suffering and the bliss, everything is human, everything is evolving from one or has evolved from one and everything is merging into the one. So, that realization or knowledge is something significant when we talk about the infinite possibilities of knowing.

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*amṛtasya putraḥ*

- *Jiva* as the son of immortality
- **Ātman, manas and śarira** (soul, mind and the body)
- *Indriyas* (sense organs) coordinated by the mind

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Now, why one should know because, you are the amrtasya putraḥ. You are the jiva, as the son of immortality, must have this desire to know. You are not just simple being, you are amrtasya putraḥ. So, then the jiva must know it is true nature in the sense that what is that immortality of which being. To understand that, we need to talk about the harmony between atman, manas and sarira and how sariara and the mana are coordinated, we need to look at that.

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**Śrira – the body**

- It is the totality of sense organs
  - Gross and subtle sense organs
  - **Thinking, experiencing, remembering and knowing**
  - One needs to understand the true nature of these *indriyas*
  - Body is not the instrument of pleasure and lust, rather for **spiritual realization**.

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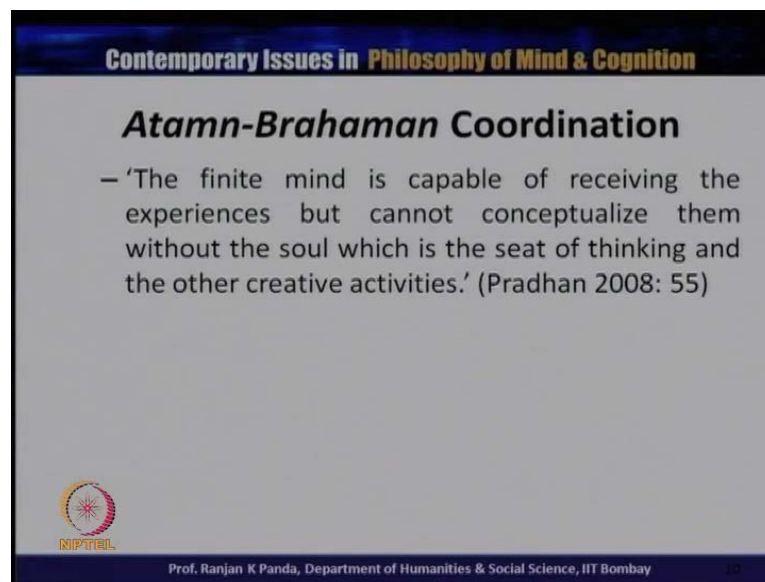


So, as I said about sariras, it is the totality of the sense organs, gross as well as the subtle sense organs. Now when we talk about subtle sense organ, which is the mana, it performs various activities; thinking, experiencing, remembering, knowing, etcetera.

Body is not the instrument of pressure and lust; rather it is for spiritual realization. Remember the upanishadic notion of body is not suppose to be engaged with pleasure. No, pleasure is not a reality, because the body is to be seen as a kind of a spiritual field. The body itself is a ksetra and the atman which is residing in the body is ksetrajna.

So, therefore, the ksetrajna must understand the true nature of the bodies, understand what is the swarupa of all these indriyas, in what way they function and how their functions can be controlled and how one can overcome the limitations of this functions. So, this engagement is significantly addressed. The body is no more a kind of a space for the attainment of pleasure. Body is therefore, a space for realizing or understanding what is spiritually significant. So, that is what is a kind of a normativity which we need to address to.


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**Atamn-Brahaman Coordination**

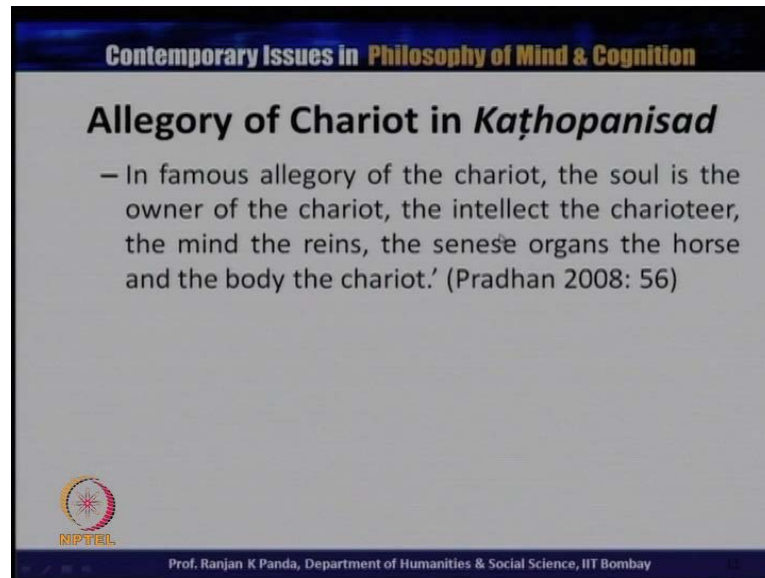
– ‘The finite mind is capable of receiving the experiences but cannot conceptualize them without the soul which is the seat of thinking and the other creative activities.’ (Pradhan 2008: 55)

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So, the atman-brahaman coordination as given defines, I quote “The finite mind is capable of receiving the experiences but cannot conceptualize them without the soul which is the seat of thinking and the other creative activities”. So, when we talk about creative activities of the mind, we really refer to the soul, not the mind. Because mind is an indriya, mana is an indriya; it is a subtle sense organ.

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And what is its function? Look at this allegory of a chariot in kathopanisad. I have also mentioned about this allegory of chariot with reference to plato and a person says, I quote “In a famous allegory of the chariot, the soul is the owner of the chariot, the intellect is the charioteer, the mind the reins, the sense organs the horse and the body the chariot.”


So, in kathopanisad, this allegory is very significantly explained that each one of them has a function. And we need to look at the coordination between them, we need to look at the relation between them, then only will understand their normative significance, otherwise we cannot.

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**Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

## Dualism and Beyond

- The Upanisadic mind is not spiritual as in Descartes and other dualists thinkers. Here the mind is a subtle organ of the physical type and is taken as a part of the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarira*).

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So, the dualism that is been proposed here is not the kind of a dualism which has been conceptualized in the kind of a western philosophical scenario, rather the upanishadic dualism is dualism between the soul and the mind and the sarira; the body.

The upanishadic mind is not spiritual as in Descartes and other dualists thinkers. Here the mind is a subtle organ of the psυχical type and is taken as a part of the subtle body called suksma sarira.

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**Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

- The soul is categorically different from body and the mind, it being of the nature of consciousness (*prajnanam Brahman*)
- The mind is proximate to the soul but it cannot be identified with the soul. Therefore, the mind must remain within its physical limits, though it can aspire to get closer to the soul. (Pradhan 2008: 56)

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The soul is categorically different from the body and the mind, it is being of the nature of consciousness (prajnanam brahman). The mind is proximate to the soul but it is cannot be identified with the soul. Therefore, the mind must remain within the physical limits, though it can aspire to get closer to the soul.

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So, the mind-soul reality, the mind and the soul; they are nearer to each other. But one cannot talk about a kind some kind of a identity between them.

Now, when somebody in proximity with the other, one try to understand its true natures. The soul takes over, soul has a control over the entire function of what you called the chariot, the reins and the charioteer, the intellects and the owner of the chariot, and that owner, pre-supposition upon a owner is a meta physical pre-supposition, it is a normative pre-supposition. So, hence the kind of dichotomy one finds in western philosophical scenario is not available here because mind is not nearly a spiritual entity, as it is been understood by Descarte and other Cartesians.


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**Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition**

***Pañcakośas (five sheaths)***

- Annamaya Kosa (the bodily sheath)
- Pranamaya Kosa (the sheath of life)
- Manomaya Kosa (the mental sheath)
- Vijñanamaya Kosa ( the sheath of consciousness)
- Anandamaya Kosa (the sheath of bliss)

• In *Taittiriya Upanisad*, part II. (Pradhan 2008: 56-57)

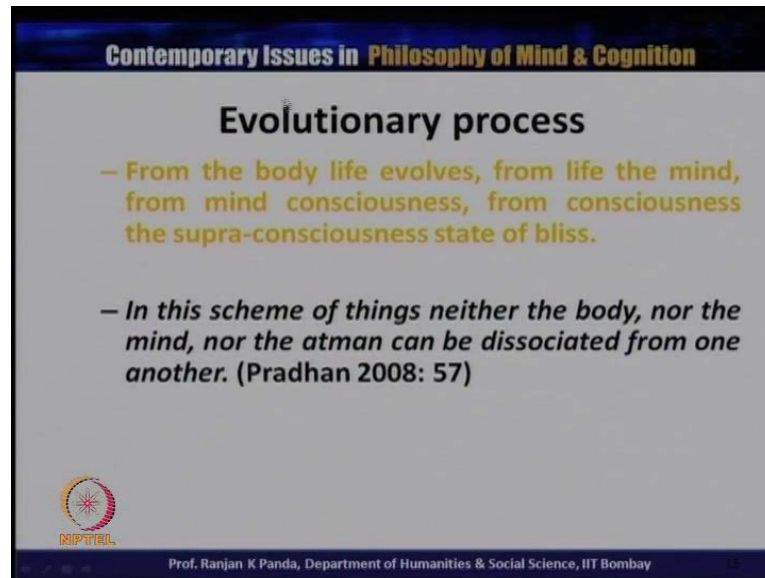
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Prof. Ranjan K Panda, Department of Humanities & Social Science, IIT Bombay

Now look at how it has been explained. It is explained with reference to the pancakosas in taittiriya Upanishad. It then refers to the five sets, which talks about the evolutionary aspect of the reality. It starts with annamaya at the bottom level and it goes upward. So, it is kind of a bottom up relationship. This revolution is always a kind of a bottom up relationship. Annamaya kosa the bodily sheath, the pranamaya kosa, manomaya kosa, vijñanamaya kosa and anandamay kosa.

The anandamay kosa is a kosa which talks about the sheath of bliss. Vijñanamaya, which we talk about intellect, consciousness. Manomaya which we talk about the mental, which is sense organs, sukamay indriya. Pranamaya kosa, where we talk about life, what Aristotle talks about a principle of life. Annamaya kosa which is we talk about the bodily sheath. So, these are different layers goes from bottom to up. So, it is a kind of an evolutionary always as a kind of an upward. Evolution always represents some kind of an upward movement.

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The slide features a dark blue header with the text "Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Mind & Cognition" in white. Below the header, the title "Evolutionary process" is centered in a bold, black font. Two bullet points in orange text describe the evolutionary process: "– From the body life evolves, from life the mind, from mind consciousness, from consciousness the supra-consciousness state of bliss." and "– In this scheme of things neither the body, nor the mind, nor the atman can be dissociated from one another. (Pradhan 2008: 57)". At the bottom left is the NPTEL logo, and at the bottom center is the text "Prof. Ranjan K Panda, Department of Humanities & Social Science, IIT Bombay".

Now what is this evolutionary process? Pradhan says, I quote “From the body life evolves, from life the mind, from the mind consciousness, from consciousness the supra-consciousness state of bliss” and that is what maitreyi was trying to understand, that is what swetaketu was trying to understand or attend the state of bliss.

So, in this scheme of things, neither the body nor the mind nor the atman can be dissociated from one another. They are found as the totality. So, it is the totality as a whole which represents the reality. And it is the totality is manifestation of this meta physical principle called brahaman or consciousness. To know what it is, one must transcend these layers of existence, from annamaya to anandamaya kosa, that the finest state of the existence of being.

Thank you.