

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
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Lecture 30: Indian Philosophy

Welcome in lecture 30. Today we are going to discuss Indian philosophy, as we have discussed in the last class the Indian knowledge system where we have discussed main Indian text and other important text from the philosophical point of view and which is important and significant for this course. Today, we are going to talk about the philosophy of Upanishads. Last class while discussing this Vedas we also, have discussed that to understand this Vedas we can divide this Vedas in four different parts. So, this is an idea that this is the three parts of this Vedas, this is Samhita, the Brahman, Aranyak and Upanishads. And Upanishads is the philosophical aspect which are to be taught by Acharya to their trusted student. So, this part the Upanishad part, we are going to talk about this philosophical part because this is we are going to talk about the Upanishad because this is a philosophical part of Vedas and this course is about the philosophy. So, therefore this Upanishads is significant for this course. Now let us understand the Samhita and this Brahman is called Karmakāṇḍa. We put together this Samhita and Brahman because this portion pertaining to the rituals that is why it is called karmakāṇḍa. The Aranyak is called the Upasna-kāṇḍa, the forest state. The forest text is called Upasna-kāṇḍa because this portion relating to meditation and then finally this is an Upanishad which is also, part of the Aranyak is called Gyan-Kāṇḍa and portion dealing with the supreme knowledge. So, this Upanishads is about the philosophical part of Vedas and Upanishad talks about the supreme reality. So, what we will do today I will be discussing this Upanishads. I will tell you the very basic level of the philosophy of Upanishads. Again, there are one question that why it is Upanishads. The reason is that there is not one Upanishad there are in many. So, there is one argument that there are one hundred eight Upanishads, and among these Upanishads, few Upanishads nineteen hundred eleven are principal Upanishads. We are identifying a principal Upanishads because the Shankaracharya and Ramanujacharya, which are a part of this course has did commentary on these Upanishads. However, I am not going to talk about the age of Upanishads but in briefly I will give you an idea that how Upanishads is talking about. Later on, when we will start this Vedanta philosophy, the Advaitavāda by Shankaracharya and Vishistadvaitvada by Ramanujacharya then, we will be taking this small concept or concept well in detail. How the Shankaracharya, how the other philosopher has given explanation or detailed explanation of this concept. Also, I would like to tell you few more thing before starting this philosophy of Upanishads in this Vedic system. So, here on your screen there are four words it is a different concept. It is a first one is polytheism, henotheism, monotheism, and monism. These are the important

concept. Now there is an argument in Vedic system that or the scholar the arguing that with is what in Vedas there is in a polytheism. Before talking about the Vedic system or Vedas let us first understand what are this concept is. Then we come back to the Vedas. Polytheism is means that when we accept many gods, when we believe one religion believes in the many gods is called Polytheism. Henotheism, there are gods but they are worshipping only one god. So, they are asking, they are taking one God as a supreme god, Henotheism. Monotheism, they are worshipping single god they believe there is one God. Monism, when monism is, one thing has become a reality of the ultimate real is just one, Monism. So, now coming back to this Vedic system in Vedas, the Vedic scriptures there are other scholars argues that, since has talked about many God, therefore they are arguing that it is in a positivist category. It is in polytheism. However, there are also, argument that is not polytheism because in Vedas they also, have talked about one ultimate god is called that it is tied into the Henotheism. Later on, there are many Upanishads also has talked about the monotheism and finally for example the Shankaracharya and all has talked about the monism. So, we will see this Vedas or Vedic knowledge has traveled to all the range of this system. And this is I believe is a beauty of this literature where we have a lot of an argument and then the concept. Now, so, monism in the Rig Veda is developed into idealistic monism in the Upanishads. Now this is the concept of R̥ta which is very important and through R̥ta there is an argument about the polytheism to the Henotheism because this concept of R̥ta is harmonizes the god with one another and paves the way to monotheism. So, I am not going to talk about a detail because we do not have that is time for to cover this everything. If we are going to discuss the Vedic philosophy itself is taking a lot of time to understand. But you understand in this way that the R̥ta is the concept is in a physical order and it governs the uniformities of nature. So, everything is working in this universe properly, it is uniformed way. So, the reason is that R̥ta. So, R̥ta is what is in a physical order and it governs everything. Now R̥ta works in all ways in cosmological, ethical and rituals. So, there is a right action for example, virtue is always is going to is a rewardable. But again, and against of this is always punishable. So, the idea of good and bad it is there. So, R̥ta has a threefold dimension which is cosmological, ethical and ritual side. Now, this is why I would like to tell you that even in there is a concept of a God in Vedas where we talked about many Gods but still, they have argued there is an argument about the cosmic person is called Parama Purus. And this Parama Purus is written that who has a thousand hands, eyes and feet. The Parama Purus is both transcendent and immanent. So, now what I have argued that how the Monotheism is related to Monism. Now let us come back to the Upanishad. So, the Upanishad speak of Para Brahman and Apra Brahman, the higher and the lower brahman. Now we have been like discussing not only the Indian system, the western system where there is an argument about determinate god and indeterminate god. Like for example we have discussed the idea of God from Spinoza point of view where Spinoza has argued that God in terms of the infinite. And he also, presented the argument that why this God and this primary cause let us say is in a necessary infinite. Now, coming

back to this Upanishad system, the Upanishad system also has talked about there are two types of higher and lower gods. So, higher is a Para-Brahman which is indeterminate. Indeterminate means we cannot determine, because it is in an attribute. There are no attributes of this Para Brahman, and therefore it is we cannot determine this Brahman. It cannot talk about this Brahman. Now human tendency is like when you wanted to talk about anything or anyone, we need an attribute. So, if there is no attribute then again it will be difficult to talk about that. So, therefore if you want to understand in this way you may understand that Para Brahman, first is we cannot explain or define Para Brahman terms of the attributes because he is devoid of attributes. On the other hand, the Apara brahman is determinate. It is conditioned and endowed with the attributes. So, we can talk about the Apara Brahman. We can say that these are the attributes of the Apara Brahman, Ishvara. Now when we want to or one way is attempting to describe the higher Brahman, so, it says that it may describe by method of negation. Again, negation is how it is negation method of negation. For example, he has no attributes. He does not have any form. He does not have any shape. He does not have any color. He does not have any size. So, this is what negating. We are negating everything. So, again you will find this is difficult to understand. However, this Para Brahman we will be discussing in detail. We will start the Shankaracharya because Shankaracharya also, is giving a significance. Shankaracharya also, giving an importance to this Para Brahman. He has argued for the Nirguna Brahman. So, we will be discussing in detail from the Sankaran point of view. The lower brahman is described by method of affirmation. Affirmation means when we are going to talk about the attributes that he is creator of this world. He is Lord of law of karma. So, these are the affirmations. We are determining. We are giving attributes. We have talked about the attributes of lower Brahman, attributes of Ishvara.

Now, the Upanishads also, argued that Para Brahman is Atman. So, what is Soul? Soul is Nirguna Brahman and this philosophy is what is a very important philosophy and when Shankaracharya started talking about this idea and he gave a many different argument and very fine argument about how the Atman is a Nirguna Brahman and based on this philosophy he has explained the concept of personhood brilliantly. But however, since we are discussing here Upanishad, Upanishad has argued that Para Brahman is Atman. Now again the argument that there is nothing higher than Brahman and nothing other than Brahman. Now Para Brahman is pure being, it is Sat. Again, it is a pure consciousness and it is a joyful, it is pure bliss. So, when Jiva realizes this, it will become joyful. Upanishad, Para Brahman is possessed of good qualities and devoid of all bad qualities. So, this talks about the God, the idea of Isvara. Again, the Upanishads argues, mentions that the world is said to be created by God and Ishvara is the ruler and the governor of the world. God is Lord of law of karma. So, again there is an argument here about the law of karma. Law of karma we have already discussed but in a very brief if you want to understand, we have discussed that how there is an X and if this X is performing some action, so, the reaction of this action or let us say impression of this action in accumulating for example is one

somewhere and whatever you are in present time you are getting from where? From this time, for example, as we have discussed in the first few classes. Now present I am getting, facing the impression of the past karma, same time I am also, performing some action. So, the accent is accumulating where? Somewhere here. For example, tank number one. If say tank number one, two and three. Now there is a true argument that karma itself can produce effect in your life. So, we do not need or karma does not need any external agent to decide. So, if you are performing an action and then action itself will produce an effect in your life. So, there is an action and then result of the action, impression of action which you are going to face. But then another argument that says that karma is not intelligent and therefore suppose you perform an action X and when you are going to face the impression of this action, it decided by whom? By someone who is capable of doing that and who is that? It is God. God is basically Lord of law of karma. He is regulating everything. He is the creator of this world, this universe. So, this is how the Upanishads have talked about this idea of God.

Now let us talk about the individual soul. An individual soul, the Upanishads have argued about the sense organ and sense organ is controlled by manas. So, there is a sense organ, there are manas and the manas is controlled by buddhi and buddhi is controlled by self. So, this is the chain where we start from here to here, self. So, sense organ is like passing this information to manas, manas to buddhi and buddhi to self. So, when we will be discussing the philosophy of mind or the idea of mind, this word is going to play a very important role and each word has a different meaning like manas, buddhi and self. This concept we will be discussing because for example, Shankaracharya or Ramanujacharya or Sankhya philosophy has talked well in detail about the mind. What exactly in mind, how do we perceive an object, how do we decide, how do we take a decision. So, this there, this world will come. Now the individual soul is knower, is enjoyer and active agent. So, individual soul is going to enjoy or face the impression of your past karmas. So, individual soul is an active agent who is performing set of actions. So, the individual soul is a doer, and the individual soul is a knower, enjoyer, and then an active agent. The atman associated with the sense organ and manas is the individual self that enjoy the fruit of action. So, when we are saying this that who enjoys this fruit of your past karmas, Upanishads argues that atman with the sense organ and manas. Now what is again Upanishads has given a detailed explanation about the action and then its result. Because this karma, because we have a performing many sets of actions or we have performed many actions and there is impression of for example an action is in a full. Somewhere we are supposed to face this impression of this last action. But the same time for example we are facing impression of the past karmas but same time you are also, performing some action. So, this also, is accumulating and this circle I am circle in the sense that is continuing receiving and accumulating because we are every moment you are performing action. So, when we are receiving it does not mean that we are inactive we also, performing actions. Now, if you want to exhaust or for example since we have performed, I have to face all the impression

of the past action therefore this one body is not be enough to face all the impression all the inclination. Therefore, I need birth after birth, body after body. So, this is how we are moving, changing bodies, but we are still in this circle, the circle of birth and rebirth. So, this is what we call Bhava-chakra or this is called cycle of birth and rebirth. Now as I have said that in the last class that how all the Indian philosophy has our philosophy let us say the Western philosophy in the Indian philosophy will find that they have tried to answer the question but in particular Indian philosophy has talked about the problem and the solutions. So, now there are many philosophers including Vedanta philosophy and Buddhism, Jainism. So, other philosophers everyone has talked about this action and the impression of the action. Upanishad is giving a detail that how you we are in this situation problem and the main problem of this everything is desire, inclination. So, when we are desiring something or willing something that is a will now desire to will and then will to action and action to becomes. So, we have inclination to get something or to perform something then you are performing you are willing and then performing and then an impression. Buddhism also has a given a well in detail this idea that how we are performing an action for example action can be anything for example someone offered me a chocolate or any sweet item. And I after having this chocolate and ice cream or sweet item I liked very much. Now, I have a strong desire to have one more time. Now this is become an inclination. Even sometime after sometime maybe I will be performing some action in order to get that thing to test again to enjoy the object once more time. So, when we are performing an action we also, getting lot of inclination. So, that desire it is what plays an important role and Buddhism when we will be discussing the Buddhism which is a part of this course argues that how this desire how this your inclination plays an important role in the cycle of birth and birth.

Now little bit just to further an idea, however, this is a very important topic, and at the same time, this is very vast. and many Upanishads has argued like for example Mandukya Upanishad speak of four stages. Waking condition, the condition of dream, condition of dreamless sleep and finally the ecstatic condition there is a Turiya condition. Now what it is I will explain you. So, for example this is you, and for just for because we have not discussed many things. So, later on we will be discussing detail that what it is. Shankaracharya also, has talked about these different stages. Now how this is for example this is an individual; this is an agent This is for example table and we are perceiving an object. So, there is an T and we perceive an object. So, this is then a gross body, and there is another, for example, for time being subtle body, omniuous, and this is So. So, we are perceiving an object outside of the body or mind is T through the sense organ through the gross body. So, it is called waking states. So, waking condition we can perceive many objects. So, there are objects and we can perceive, so, idea. Well, we have the second stage. Second stage say that condition of dream where this is one is inactive. The gross body is inactive. You are sleeping. Now your sense organ is not like working. Working in the sense that it is inactive. Now, whatever you have seen that is again you have seen for you, there

is something appearing. It is a dream. Because this subtle body or it is manas is inactive. Now the third stage, even this subtle body is inactive. This is only soul, self. There is no object. I mean this is how even Shankaracharya talked about it, given proof that look there is no object. And then when the final form then we will realize the pure form of the soul, individual soul then the subject-object duality is vanishes. There is no subject, there is no object. It will be maybe difficult for you to understand now but maybe, we will be discussing in detail, when we will start the Shankaracharya philosophy. Now there is another Upanishad, it is called Taittiriya Upanishad, describe five set of this sheath of this body. Now the Taittiriya Upanishad describes five sheaths. Roughly, I mean, you may say this like this. So, there are five layers and so on. So, first one is called Annamayakoṣa, the gross body, which depends on the Ann. We are taking food. Next is the Pranamayakoṣa. Pranamayakoṣa is a vital sheath which is a very important part, the pranam. Third one is mental sheath which is a Manomayakoṣa. And fourth one is intellect, Intellectual sheath, So, Vigyanamayakoṣa. And then finally it is Anandmayakoṣa. It is called blissful sheath. So, this is how Upanishad has talked about these five sheaths. Again, there is a Kath Upanishad where it talks about the distinction between the individual Soul and universal Soul. Again, the same Upanishad talks about how this individual soul is different from the body. So, my intention is to cite all the Upanishads to just to give you an idea that the Upanishads talks about the individual soul, how they have defined the soul, the God, the Brahman, indeterminate God, determinate God and world and so on. So, these are the points which I have mentioned. These all the points it is discussed by the later philosopher who has written a commentary on this Upanishads and has argued or given a detailed explanation of these ideas. So, this class was just to talk about the Upanishads and just to give you an idea that the philosophy of Upanishads in very basic level. In Upanishads you also, will find the stories where they have talked about this idea of soul. For example, the Nachiketa, how the Nachiketa met Yama and asked for the nature of soul. Whether the soul survives after death or not, then Yama what he did he gave us, he took some examination because to check the kid's sincerity and after that he replied. So, the idea is this Upanishads has talked about this concept in detail.

Now another concept is called ignorance, the avidya. And this ignorance is the main cause of the problem. Problem of this cycle of birth and rebirth. So, we do not have the right knowledge let us say in this way. Because of that we perform a set of action and we are in the situation. Situation is the cycle of birth. Now ignorance is what is ignorance and they have argued that ignorance is not discrimination of eternal and the non-eternal. So, we are not able to see things in the right way or in the real nature, and therefore, accordingly, we are performing a set of actions, and that is leading us where in the cycle of birth and rebirth. So, the concept of ignorance, or let us say the concept of avidya, is a very important or significant concept in the Indian philosophical system. Here I have used this word ignorance but however it is recommended to use only Avidya. Since this class is in a basic level So, therefore it is okay if you are using this word ignorance. Otherwise, we are always

using only word Avidya. We do not have sometimes very difficult to get a right English word for this Sanskrit word for example avidya for example manas buddhi. So, therefore these are the words we should use in the real form. But for your understanding so, that it will be easy for you to understand we have to use this word called ignorance and ignorance word also, is mentioned in the books. Now this individual soul's individuality because it believes that it is in a different form of the thing. It is due to avidya. So, avidya plays important role in terms of soul and then world. Now it again argued it is not only they are talking about the problem and causes but again they also, talks about they again they also, have mentioned the solution of this problem and Upanishad mentions that when it knows the individual soul knows its identity with Brahman it realizes its innate freedom. So, basically this realization itself will cause this innate freedom. Realizing is not a simple understanding that is in a very high level of state when one once realizes that in a real nature of his own soul. However, Upanishad describes that the discipline of body and mind and practice of yoga purify the mind and make it fit for acquiring knowledge of the atman. So, therefore they have talked about the yoga then discipline of body and mind. So, this is how we can achieve that state.

About the world the Upanishad gives a detail about this idea and argues that the world is real and it is the expression of the glory of Brahman. So, the uniformity of nature controlled by his will, and the creation and evolution is the transition from undifferentiated to a different state. So, this is how this has talked about this world and as given that what is world and how there is an appearance of world, how this world is created, and so on. Based on this, Upanishads many philosophers have talked about his own philosophy and found a different school of thought. Discussing Upanishads was important because it is a source material of the many schools of thought and they are arguing based on this text Upanishads. As I have said that there are some principal Upanishads and the Shankaracharya Ramanujacharya has written a commentary on this Upanishads. So, this was the basic philosophy about the God and the soul and the world. So, it was a very basic and brief. However, Upanishads each Upanishads is an important and I believe this is also, very significant reading on Upanishads. So, I just tried to give you some idea of Upanishads. Basically, this course, as I have been saying that this course is on a basic level; therefore, I am not going into detail. However, this concept which we have discussed today we will be discussing again while discussing the other school of thought for example Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya. So, thank you and this class was based on this books Outline of Indian philosophy, and Introduction of Indian philosophy. Thank you so much. Thank you for your kind attention. Thank you.