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## UNIT 4a AITAREYA AND ISA

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### 4a.0 OBJECTIVES

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The main objective of the Unit is:

- to lead your mind away from the outer ceremonies to its inner meaning
- to enable you to know how this Upanishad deals with the creation of the universe
- to enable you to know how it deals with the creation of 'Food,' which is understood not just as physical nourishment but representation of the sustaining and feeding force inherent in nature

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### 4a.1 INTRODUCTION

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Aitareya Upanishad is a Mukhya Upanishad that belongs to Rg Veda. It has a short prose text with three parts with 33 verses. This is the part of Aitareya Aryanaka and begins with the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of the second Aryanaka covers – 5, 6 and 7<sup>th</sup> sections. The main *rishi* is Aitareya Mahidasa. The Upanishad has three parts, the 1<sup>st</sup> part has 3 sections in this Atman is a Divine creator. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Part, the three births of man, is dealt with. The 3<sup>rd</sup> part is about Brahman and Atman. The Upanishad contains most famous expression of the Vedanta, a Mahavakya, "Prajnanam Brahman," meaning Brahman is consciousness.

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### 4a.2 A PRE-VIEW

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Aitareyopanishad deals with **Creation**. Human from time immemorial has questioned, wondered and talked about the creation of Universe. There has been many discussion and discourses by religious heads, philosophers, thinkers, great artists and scientists. Each one has come up with most fascinating and beautiful theories. These are only theories and can never be proved as scientifically true.

In Aitareopanishad, creation is a pure poetry, a greatest artistic work, which goes step by step methodically, practically, systematically and ends with creator and the creation merging together to make it a whole.

Who is this creator? Is it Atman or someone else? Who is this Atman? Where has he come from? How did Atman exist in nothingness? These are irrelevant

questions. If we brood on this we miss the beauty of creation. Creation happened intuitively, so we too must read on this intuitively.

Nothing comes from nothing, so there has to be something to start with. Naturally, there is Atman, alone and in solitude. Greatest things happen in silence, solitude and in deep meditation. Atman at such great moment decided to 'Create' the universe. Universe is not created with momentary whim or fancies. Instead, the creation is meditated upon. Like an artist who visualizes his creation on an empty canvas and a sculpture who sees his creation on a rock or a marble piece. Here Atman's creation is presented in a concrete picture of creation from the level of sense – perception. It is a manifestation of the visible and an expression of an inner reality. The inner core of reality, the whole of universe with all its manifold layers expressions appeared as many concentric circles, the common centre, Atman/ Brahman. And to a very great extent, the creation and the physical world are true only as far as human's physical existence is concerned.

The Atman started his brush strokes starting from landscape a solid ground to stand by. He created, the three layers of sky – ambhas' a world of celestial water, under that 'dyuloka', abode for gods, above the earth, where the light passes through, marici'. Each one is called according to the characteristic of its use. This earth, He calls it 'mara', death. And under this solid ground there is water, 'apah'. Why is it that earth called as 'mara'? 'mara' means death. What is born on this earth dies. But at the same time, what is yet to be born comes to life.

Once an artist or a sculpture starts working on his canvas or on the stone, he starts filling details from minute to large one. Each detail has to be considered, each detail is important and significant. So, the artist meditates, visualizes and uses his brush/chisel with caution, knowledge and to perfection. It is so with Atman. Once he has created the space, he wants some one to guard it. So, He took water in his hand and fashioned a 'purusa' from it. Water a fluid which can slip away from between the fingers, became a creation of His inner vision 'purusa'. Like an egg hatching to life, the water in Atman hand took perfect form. The fire is speech, the sun is sight. The moon reflector of the sun is heart a place of mind /emotion/love. Navel region was the place of out breath – death. Even though the earth is 'mara,' a place of death, Atman did not stop at out breath, He goes one step ahead, under the out breath he created, 'generative organ with a seed of life. 'Purusa' a mortal but he has a seed of life with in him. The creator creates his creation to be immortal – "nabir nirabhidvata, nabya apanah, apanam mrtyuh, sisnam nirabhiyata, sisnad retah retasa apah,"

Fire, Sun and other deities want a form to stay to satisfy their hunger and thirst. So, Virats offers them four legged animals, they refuse them, and he gives them, the man. They were happy as he is superior. The human body, in addition to fitness, has elated soul in its higher level of existence; hence man is the master piece of creation. So the deities are happy, 'sukrtam bateti. Puruso va va sukrtam,' and entered the man. They became the part of human's five senses and different organs. The sense exists and functions become of something for whose sake it exists like - the sun gives light to the eyes to see, the sight and so on. Even hunger and thirst enter human.

Creation is not over, it continues, creator decides that he has to create food for his creation. Once more he takes water in his hand and he creates 'food'. If some

food item is given to a child, it takes it directly to his/her mouth and eats it. Eating is as simple as child's play. Then why describe which part of the body takes food. This is a poetic, aesthetic in detail of a creative mind. Food once created started running away to save itself. But the food is for consumption, it gives sustenance, nourishment and energy. There is a lyrical description how different parts of the body tried to grab the food and failed. But it is the out – breath that gasped the food what air is, 'tad apanenajighrksat, tad awayat, saiso'nnasya graho yad vayur annayur va esa yad vayuh,' Watching his creation, Atman wants to be the part of his creation. He enters human through one's skull.

Aitareyopanishad does not end with creation of the universe by Atman, it goes further with the three stages of birth of man and final ultimate realization of man that he is the part of this great creation and the creator is in him, who guides and protects him. The whole idea behind the Upanishad is to understand the creation and the creator and the place of the creator within us. The creator became a part of his creation. Man has to understand, intuitively that the creator is none other than Brahman, and He is always within him. Human has to understand this - '*prajna – netram prajnane pratisthitam, prajna – netro lokah prajna pratistha, prajnanam brahma.*'

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### 4a.3 DISCUSSION

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The Aitareopanishad is a creation of three visualizations:

- 1) The creation of the universe,
- 2) The three stages of human's life and
- 3) The third and the last one, the relationship of human and Brahman. In this the whole creation of life completes. There is unity and merging of inner vision with the outer reality.

*"atma va idam eka evagra asit namyat kin cana nusat, sa aiksata llokan nu srja iti,"* (1. 1. 1)

The self verily was (all) this, one only, in the beginning. Nothing else whatsoever existed. He thought, let me now create this world.

Was the universe created , as Atman was alone? Did the universe come into being at the time of profound silence? Was the universe created by Atman by sheer fancy, boredom or with love?

These are fascinating questions without definite answers. More than why the universe is created, how it is created is interesting. It is created to perfection by a fluid – water.

To assist human different deities were created, each one having a specific function. '*agnir vag bhutva mukham pravisad, vayuh prano bhuyvas nasike pravisad, adityas caksur bhutvaksini pravisad, disah srotram bhutva karnam....*' (1.2.4) It is interesting how the assignment is given to the deities – mouth is the place of fire, it became the organ of speech, nostril is the place of air, it assume the form the sense of smell, the sun enters the eyes to give the sense of sight, different directions enters the ears to give the sense of hearing, skin is the place of touch and feel, herbs and trees entered the skin and they become the hair on the skin,

heart is the place of moon, it forms the mind, death enters the navel in the form of 'apana,' water enters into the limb of generation in the form of semen, organ of procreation. Each deity enters their respective abode. The relationship between the deity and the senses are not one of cause and effect but one of co – existence.

Not being satisfied, the creator goes further and created – hunger and thirst to satisfy them food. In the first place why did Creator create hunger, thirst and food? He gave deities to serve the mortal, He could have made this mortal enjoy life without hunger, thirst and food. But creator knew what he was creating. The creation was the manifestation of the inner reality, vision and a purpose.

It is up to the mortal to understand. Understanding starts with questioning what are these hunger, thirst and food. Are they just physical or do they have higher meaning and intentions? These three can be understood in three level of understanding – 1. Physical, 2. Psychological and 3. Spiritual. 1. At physical level – hunger and thirst cannot be ignored as they make a man weak and in the long run sick. So, food helps the man to sustain, to be healthy and strong. 2. At the psychological level – It is the ambition of the mortal that his death need not be an end but continuity, and the hunger and thirst to know the outer world, for these hunger and thirst the food is the birth of a child and birth of knowledge and learning respectively. 3. At spiritual level - hunger and thirst to know 'what, why, how and where' questions that arises because of learning and knowledge. The food for this is to intuit the intentions of the creator, feel him inside and be conscious of His kindness and love for his creation.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Was food created because of hunger and thirst?

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2) As you read the Upanishad what is your visualization of creation?

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## 4a.4 LET US SUM UP

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Creation is a wonder. If we look around - the high Himalayas, vast sea, river, waterfall, forest– it is amazing how such a beautiful breath taking creation possible. Whether it is God or the natural phenomenon, whatever may be the cause, the effort of it is beyond description. The ancient seers wrote on creation looking at vast magnificent life giving earth. Nature is not only beautiful but also it has energy, force and life.

Aitareyopanishad says Atman created it as he was alone, 'lokan nu srja', he thought and he created. He made the earth for mortals, but at the same time he made it a place of birth. On the earth, continuous life cycle goes on without a break. In this human sees the creation taking place every minute.

New hopes, new expectations, new ideas, new discoveries, new thoughts, new aspirations etc are continuously created. Nothing stays permanent; every second there is a creation. If we look at the thought processes of 'vedanta', we can observe the way it has transformed time and again – rituals, understanding of God, prayers, knowledge, concept of God, recognizing God within – everything is transformed to suit time again and again. This is not only in understanding God but in all fields – science, understanding people (psychology) relationship, values, moral, and economics, name a topic, it has changed from time to time.

But with all these changes and transitions, diversity of knowledge – the concept of God has stood the test of time. Means to the end has changed but the end had stood high and mighty as ever. He is the omnipotent and the Absolute. That is the greatest mystery of all creation and transitions.

Because of this, even Upanishad has stood up the test of time as it deals with 'Truth' of creation and understanding of oneself in relation to God, the God who resides within us. To understand the psycho make up of our being we have the capacity and patience to continue the search till the end. Reality of understanding that there is no separation between the inner and outer world. There is no difference between the way 'purusa' came to being and the child's birth. Both are creation, wonder of nature. The correspondence allows the realization of the identity of force working in nature and in man and drawing greater power, strength, wisdom and vision through the finer infusion of the force into us.

That is why; Upanishad is called as 'upasana' (meditation). Meditation not only elevates the feeling but also widens our being. Knowledge attained enables us to asses the force (within and without) rightly and to pass successfully through different layers of being, the psycho and cosmic character.

Right knowledge frees man from all our world clinging. It is an awakening in transcendental consciousness when the finite together with the infinite vanishes away personality vanishes personal experiences. It is a state of supra – personal, supra – conceptual and supra – temporal experience. And at that stage human realizes that Brahman is consciousness: '*prajnanam brahma*.'

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## 4a.5 KEY WORDS

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- Omnipotent** : Omnipotent means all-powerful.
- Time** : Time is a component of the measuring system used to sequence events, to compare the durations of events and the intervals between them, and to quantify the motions of objects. Time has been a major subject of religion, philosophy, and science, but defining it in a non-controversial manner applicable to all fields of study has consistently eluded the greatest scholars.

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## 4a.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 4a.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1) The Creator gave deities to serve the mortal, He could have made this mortal enjoy life without hunger, thirst and food. But creator knew what he was creating. The creation was the manifestation of the inner reality, vision and a purpose.

It is up to the mortal to understand. Understanding starts with questioning what are these hunger, thirst and food. Are they just physical or do they have higher meaning and intentions? These three can be understood in three level of understanding – 1. Physical, 2. Psychological and 3. Spiritual. The food for this is to intuit the intentions of the creator, feel him inside and be conscious of His kindness and love for his creation.

- 2) Creation is a wonder. If we look around - the high Himalayas, vast sea, river, waterfall, forest– it is amazing how such a beautiful breath taking creation possible. Whether it is God or the natural phenomenon, whatever may be the cause, the effort of it is beyond description. The ancient seers wrote on creation looking at vast magnificent life giving earth. Nature is not only beautiful but also it has energy, force and life.