
UNIT 5 THE SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson you will have obtained the following philosophical knowledge and academic skills:

- To situate the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* in its proper setting
- To obtain the preliminary knowledge about *Svetasvatara Upanishad* including the meaning of the title of the *Upanishad*, its author, period of composition, commentaries on *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, etc.
- The features that distinguishes the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* from other *Upanishads*.
- To familiarize yourself with the prominent philosophical perspectives of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, such as, the Nature of the Ultimate Reality, The role of Grace in obtaining *Moksha*, the concept of *Moksha*, the Identification of *Siva* as the Ultimate, etc.
- To explore the meaning of some important original verses with select textual exegesis.
- To get a taste of the differing scholarly opinions on the interpretation of the philosophy of this *Svetasvatara Upanishad*.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The *Svetâsvatara-upanishad* is held in a very high rank among the *Upanishads*. It belongs to the Krishna (Black) *Yajur Veda*. It expounds the philosophy of *Advaita* (Monism) with emphasis on *Advaita Bhakti*. It is one of the twelve *Upanishads* chosen by Vidyâranya in his *Sarvopanishad-arthânabhûtiprakâsa*. Sankara found it worthy to single it out for a special commentary. In his commentary on *Brahma sutras*, Sankara calls it the “*Mantra Upanishad*” of the Vedic *Shvetashvatara* school. This *Upanishad* contains 113 verses in six chapters. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is regarded as an important source of the Vedanta Philosophy.

5.2 THE TITLE AND THE AUTHOR

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* derives its name from the sage *Svetasvatara* who taught it. It belongs to the *Taittiriya* school of the *Yajur Veda*. It is also called sometimes *Svetâsvatarânâm Mantropanishad*. There is a clue to the author of this *Upanishad* in its last chapter: “*The Sage Shvetashvatara got this knowledge of Brahman, which is very sacred and revered by many great sages, through his penance and through God’s grace, and he taught it very well to his disciples*” (6: 19).¹

This verse suggests that this *Upanishad* was attributed to a sage called *Shvetashvatara*. *Shvetashvatara* could also refer to a class or line of spiritual teachers. *Svetâsvatara* is said to have told it to the best among the hermits. He wanted it to be kept secret, and not be taught to anyone except to a son or a regular pupil.

Etymologically, *Svetâsvatara* means a white mule. Mules were known and prized in India from the earliest times. *Svetâsvatara*, as the name of a person means someone who owns a white horse. The author reconciles in an original way those upanishadic teachings which he considers as highly valuable, whether they had been proclaimed at length or merely suggested or alluded to.

5.3 PERIOD OF COMPOSITION

Like most other ancient religious literature of India, there is no scholarly consensus on the exact date of this *Upanishad*. However, it is admitted that *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is one of the *Upanishads* of the latest period, perhaps of the 5th century B.C.E. Scholars Keith and Silburn are of the opinion that its final redaction took place around 200 B.C.E.

5.4 COMMENATARIES

There is a major commentary on *Svetasvatara Upanishad* attributed to Sankara. However, on comparison with the other commentaries written by Sankara, some scholars doubt the authorship of this commentary by Sankara. There are three more other commentators on *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, namely by Vijñanatma, Shankarananda and Narayana Tirtha.

5.5 UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD

Although the fundamental teachings *Svetasvatara Upanishad* are identical with those of the other *Upanishads*, it differs with them in some significant manners. There are many unique properties to this particular *Upanishad*. Although the unique features of this *Upanishad* could be identified in the central tenets of its philosophical perspectives, it is worth listing them at the outset.

- 1) Emphasis on *Bhakti* (devotion), which is not usually found in Upanishadic literature, is one of its special features. There are beautiful imageries regarding the Ultimate Reality or Godhead, which form very appropriate themes for meditation. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* contains several

directives and instructions for practicing the presence of God. *Bhakti* is only indirectly voiced in the form of *Upasana* in other *Upanishads*, but here, leaving no room for doubt, it is explicitly mentioned. There is a clear mention of the word *para-bhakti* at the end of the sixth chapter. Use of words such as *Sharanam*, *Prapadye*, etc., clearly voice submission to God or Brahman.

- 2) Along the same line, being an *Upanishad* of the latest period, there is a vigorous endeavour of synthesis, centred on definite monotheism. Belgian scholar, Richard Desmet, observes that “It is a sort of prefiguration of the Bhagavad-Gita but the *Bhagavan* it exalts is not *Krishna*, but the *Siva* or *Rudra* and it still ignores the conception of *avatara* (descent of the Godhead and its apparent embodiment in a finite form.”² *Svetasvatara Upanishad* tries to reconcile the different philosophical and religious views of its time and advocates the unity of the souls and world in the one Supreme Reality.
- 3) Unlike the emphasis on the Supreme Absolute or *Brahman* in other *Upanishads*, this *Upanishad* identifies *Rudra* or Lord *Siva* as the creator of the world, its protector and guide.
- 4) There is the emphasis on a personal ‘*Isvara*’ who is the omniscient and omnipotent, the manifested *Brahman*, than *Brahman* the Absolute, advocated other *Upanishads* whose complete perfection does not admit of any change. While major *Upanishads* like *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* deals with the unqualified and unchanging nature of the *Brahman*, this *Upanishad* deals with the manifest, creative, nurturing, the omniscient, and omnipotent *Isvara* or *Rudra* who causes the energy of the world to flow and bear life. Where *Brahman* is often described as *formless* in other important *Upanishads*, this *Upanishad* gives the form (fullness or *murtitva*) of God. The reason for attributing form to God may be the anthropological difficulty in concentrating the mind on or showing devotion to a formless *Brahman*, especially since devotion emphasized in it. While describing various powers of God, it uses similes such as God having thousands of heads *Sahasra-sheersha* - to denote God’s endless knowledge, thousands of eyes - to denote God as the universal witness for everything going on in the universe and God’s having thousands of feet - to indicate his omnipresence. This *Upanishad* mentions that God or *Parama Purusha* is shining in its glory beyond the darkness of ignorance or *Tamas*.
- 5) It is a devotional and a kind of theistic work distinct from the other leading *Upanishads* which are more abstract and philosophical.
- 6) While other *Upanishads* are concerned with presenting their own philosophical perspectives, this *Upanishad* was written in an attempt to unite the disparate religious and philosophical viewpoints of its time. Its focus on the unity of souls and nature and God are to be appropriated in this setting.
- 7) The style of composition of this *Upanishad* deserves special mention here. Normally, *Upanishads* contain serious philosophical thought, but this *Upanishad* explains the same principles in a simple, lucid and poetic way. The original and independent hymns of the sage *Shvetasvatara* are presented in a beautiful poetic style. *Svetasvatara* is both a seer and a poet. For example, while trying to describe the omnipresence of *Brahman*, hymn 4.2 says, “You

are woman; you are man; you are boy and you are girl; you are the shivering old man helped by a stick; you are born in the form of this world.” Hymn 4.4 reads, “You are the blue butterfly, the green-eyed parrot and the lightning cloud. You are the seasons and the seas. You are the one without any beginning; you are omnipresent; all the worlds are born out of you.”

5.6 PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES IN SVETASVATARA UPANISHAD

THE NATURE OF THE ULTIMATE REALITY

As mentioned above, rather than conducting a philosophical inquiry on its own, the thrust of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* on systematisation and harmonisation of diverse ideas. Originating in the setting of various schools of thought that were prevalent at the time of its composition, it tries to harmonise the ideas scattered among them. However, the central vision of the entire Upanishads concerning the God as the One in-dwelling presence has been kept intact by *Svetasvatara Upanishad* too. God has become more personal in *Svetasvatara Upanishad*. The term *Deva* is used frequently in reference to the Ultimate. Other terms like *Rudra* and *Hara* which became prominent only later on in the Hindu thought were used in this *Upanishad* and are not found in the other *Upanishads*.

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* declares the unity and oneness of the Ultimate Reality behind the universe with great emphasis. In 3.2 we read,

For there is one Rudra only, they do not allow a second, who rules all the worlds by his powers. He stands behind all persons, and after having created all worlds he, the protector, rolls it up at the end of time.”

This one Ultimate Reality is the in-dwelling spirit pervading the entire universe.

The god who is in the fire, the god who is in the water, the god who has entered into the whole world, the god who is in plants, the god who is in trees, adoration be to that god, adoration! (2.17).

Chapter 1, verse 3 states forth the overall teaching of this *Upanishad*:

The sages, devoted to meditation and concentration, have seen the power belonging to God himself hidden in its own qualities (guna).

He, being one, superintends all those causes, time, self, and the rest.

It states that there is one God, who will soon be identified as *Rudra*, and the cosmic power (*sakti*), whose diversity of qualities (*guna*) should not hide the singleness, which is His. He rules over all other causes. In *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, creation is the casting of a net by the creator. The net of creation could be called as the *maya*. However, *maya* here is the *Sakti*, power, by which the ultimate creates the universe and upholds it.

As in later Saivism, the ontological distinction between the individual *atman* and his inciter or Mover is clearly professed in 1.6.

In that vast Brahma-wheel, in which all things live and rest, the bird flutters about, so long as he thinks that the self (in him) is different from the mover (the god, the lord). When he has been blessed by him, then he gains immortality.

In verse 1.7, the author integrates the unpanishadic teaching on *Brahman*, as the world basis, on *Akshara*, on *Samsara*, the world of rebirth and *moksha*, deliverance through a merging in *Brahman* by exclusive intervention upon it.

But what is praised (in the Upanishads) is the Highest Brahman, and in it there is the triad. The Highest Brahman is the safe support, it is imperishable. The Brahma-students, when they have known what is within this (world), are devoted and merged in the Brahman. free from birth.

It is agreed by many that what is really peculiar in the *Svetâsvatara Upanishad* is the strong stress which it lays on the personality of the Lord, the *Îsvara*, *Deva*. The *Isvara* here is God as creator and ruler of the world, and not as *Paramâtman*, or the Highest Self. In *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, *Îsvara* is the creator. The concept of *Isvara*, unique to *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is identical with *Brahman* and at the same time it differs from the popular conceptions of *Brahman*. “This God,” says Pramâda Dâsa Mitra, “is the spirit conscious of the universe. Whilst an extremely limited portion, and that only of the material universe, enters into my consciousness, the whole of the conscious universe, together, of course, with the material one that hangs upon it, enters into the consciousness of God. . . . And again, “Whilst we (the *jîvâtman*s) are subject to *Mâyâ*, *Mâyâ* is subject to *Îsvara*. If we truly know *Îsvara*, we know him as *Brahman*; if we truly know ourselves, we know ourselves as *Brahman*. This being so, we must not be surprised if sometimes we find *Îsvara* sharply distinguished from *Brahman*, whilst at other times *Îsvara*, and *Brahman* are interchanged.”³

God’s transcendence and spirituality are again inculcated in chapter 4, verses 19 and 20. No one can see Him with the eye for He is not situated in space and nothing is fully like Him. He can be known only through heart and mind.

No one has grasped him above, or across, or in the middle. There is no image of him whose name is Great Glory. His form cannot be seen, no one perceives him with the eye. Those who through heart and mind know him thus abiding in the heart, become immortal” (4, 19-20).

THE EMPHASIS ON GRACE

While other *Upanishads* are concerned with presenting their own philosophical perspectives, this *Upanishad* was written in an attempt to unite the disparate religious and philosophical viewpoints of its time. In 1.6, “When he has been blessed by him,” is said to be an allusion to the saving grace which is a specific feature of this *Upanishad*. Chapter 6 is expanding the idea that God is the One Cause and Mover of all things and that through love inspired by His grace humans can find *moksha* in his knowledge. The concept of devotion later found profound expression in the *Bhakti Sutras* and other treatises on *Bhakti*.

Let us love the old Brahman by the grace of Savitri; if thou make thy dwelling there, the path will not hurt thee. (2.7)

The Self, smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of the creature. A man who has left all grief behind, sees the majesty, the Lord, the passionless, by the grace of the creator (the Lord) (3.20)

Interestingly, Even the composition of the very *Upanishad* is said to be realized through the grace of the Lord.

Through the power of his penance and through the grace of God has the wise Svetasvatara truly, proclaimed Brahman, the highest and holiest, to the best of ascetics, as approved by the company of Rishis (6.19)

Indirect allusions to grace and devotion could be found in the following verses:

Some wise men, deluded, speak of Nature, and others of Time (as the cause of everything); but it is the greatness of God by which this Brahma-wheel is made to turn.

It is at the command of him who always covers this world, the knower, the time of time, who assumes qualities and all knowledge, it is at his command that this work (creation) unfolds itself, which is called earth, water, fire, air, and ether;

He is the eternal among eternal, the thinker among thinkers, who, though one, fulfils the desires of many. He who has known that cause which is to be apprehended by Sankhya (philosophy) and Yoga (religious discipline), he is freed from all fetters.

Seeking for freedom I go for refuge to that God who is the light of his own thoughts, he who first creates Brahman (m.) and delivers the Vedas to him;

If these truths have been told to a high-minded man, who feels the highest devotion for God, and for his Guru as for God, then they will shine forth, - then they will shine forth indeed. (6.1, 2,13, 18, 23).

While Chapter 2 verse 15 stresses God's transcendence, 16 emphasizes His immanence though not forgetting His transcendence. He indeed is the God who pervades all regions: he is the first-born (as *Hiranyagarbha*), and he is in the womb. He has been born, and he will be born. He stands behind all persons, looking everywhere. Belgian scholar Richard Desmet observes that the formulation of the verse 16 favours the later theory of *avatara*.

He indeed is the god who pervades all regions: he is the first-born (as *Hiranyagarbha*), and he is in the womb. He has been born, and he will be born. He stands behind all persons, looking everywhere (2.16).

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1) How does *Svetasvatara Upanishad* differ from other major Upanishads?

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- 2) Why *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is called the Upanishad of grace and love?

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THE CONCEPT OF SOUL AND MOKSHA

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is said to be the only *Upanishad* among major *Upanishads* to discuss concept of soul exclusively. The soul here is not the Spirit or the *Atman* which the *Upanishads* have declared as *Brahman*. "... this *Upanishad* describes *Ataman* as *anisha* or powerless, subject to the influence of pleasure and pain. It is quite evident that the *Atman* of this *Upanishad* is not the same *Atman* about which all *Upanishads* have declared in such glorious terms. With the introduction of this new term, we have to postulate three entities: *Brahman*, the *Atman* or the Self and the Soul. The Soul—that Entity which is *anisha* or powerless because of being affected by pleasure and pain—is obviously the Ego."⁴ The ego is the greatest impediment to *moksha* or salvation. This *Upanishad* says that *Brahman* is to be realized in His immanent nature. When a human person discovers the undistorted self in the world, he can be said to have realized the *Brahman*.

The author of this is careful to avoid a monistic interpretation of *moksha*. *Moksha* is obtained by the knowledge of God (*jnana*). Following upon meditation one attains *moksha* which has three aspects: breaking of fetters; freedom from birth and death; universal lordship. The latter implies fulfillment of all desires and isolation:

When that god is known, all fetters fall off, sufferings are destroyed, and birth and death cease. From meditating on him there arises, on the dissolution of the body, the third state, that of universal lordship; but he only who is alone, is satisfied" (1:11).

In chapter one, the author integrates the ascetic practice and brahmanic meditation as a means to *moksha*, although grace is not mentioned here as a condition for success. The beholding in one's finite *atman* of the very *Brahman-Atman* is proposed here as possible through austerity (*tapas*) and the meditation on *Aum*.

By making his body the under-wood, and the syllable Om the upper-wood, man, after repeating the drill of meditation, will perceive the bright god, like the spark hidden in the wood.

As oil in seeds, as butter in cream, as water in (dry) river-beds, as fire in wood, so is the Self seized within the self, if man looks for him by truthfulness and penance;

(If he looks) for the Self that pervades everything, as butter is contained in milk, and the roots whereof are self-knowledge and penance. That is the Brahman taught by the Upanishad. (1:14-16.)

The main thrust of the chapter two is the glorification of the practice of *yoga* which is also presented as the means of attaining God:

If a wise man hold his body with its three erect parts (chest, neck, and head) even, and turn his senses with the mind towards the heart, he will then in the boat of Brahman cross all the torrents which cause fear.

Compressing his breathings let him, who has subdued all motions, breathe forth through the nose with gentle breath. Let the wise man without fail restrain his mind, that chariot yoked with vicious horses.

Let him perform his exercises in a place level, pure, free from pebbles, fire, and dust, delightful by its sounds, its water, and bowers, not painful to the eye, and full of shelters and caves. (2.8-10).

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* contains several ideas in germinal form out of which the later speculations in the systems of *Sankhya* and *Yoga* would emerge. The word *Yoga* and its derivatives are frequently used in the *Upanishad*. However, the description of *Svetasvatara Upanishad* by some commentators as closer to the dualist *Sankhya* system as opposed to the monistic *advaita* may not hold true. For, *Svetasvatara Upanishad* stands undisputedly for the *advaitic* approach which is central to the other major *Upanishads*. “The followers of *Sankhya*, *yoga* and *saivism*... feel that their respective schools originated here (in *Svetasvatara Upanishad* verse 2). But the spirit of the *Upanishad* does not seem to go in their favour. The *Upanishad* overcomes all types of duality and preaches non-dualistic *Vedanta*.”⁵

Verse 2.15 implies that the freedom from the finite self consists in the real vision of the pure nature of Brahman.

And when by means of the real nature of his self he sees, as by a lamp, the real nature of Brahman, then having known the unborn, eternal God, who is beyond all natures, he is freed from all fetters.

Moksha from the world of sorrow can be had only by reaching Him who is beyond the reach of forms and sorrow “which is beyond this world is without form and without suffering. They who know it, become immortal, but others suffer pain indeed” (3.10).

In chapter 5, verse 9, this *Upanishad* uses the term *Jiva* for the first time to signify the individual *atman*. In an effort to express the spiritual nature of the *jiva*, it is said to be the most minute and yet conformed to Infinity. This *Jiva* could be saved only the knowledge of God. Knowledge frees the human from all fetters: *avidya*, the various *gunas* and *karman*, which bind him to rebirth.

That living soul (jiva) is to be known as part of the hundredth part of the point of a hair, divided a hundred times, and yet it is to be infinite.... He who knows him who has no beginning and no end, in the midst of chaos, creating all things, having many forms, alone enveloping everything, is freed from all fetters. (5.9,13).

Some commentators of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* have suggested a sectarian element in *Svetasvatara Upanishad* as advocating the germinal forms of Saivist thinking. For instance, when speaking of the Highest Self or the Highest *Brahman*, it applies such names to him as *Hara* (1.10), *Rudra* (2.17; 3. 2, 4; 4. 12, 21, 22), *Siva* (3.14; 4.10). “It is interesting to note that while other *Upanishads* have described *Brahman* by the pronoun IT, this *Upanishad* speaks of *Brahman* as He. This is because of the name given to *Brahman* as *Siva*.”⁶ The *Shvetasvatara Upanishad* is said to be the earliest textual exposition of a systematic philosophy of Shaivism.⁷ As explained by Gavin Flood, the text proposes: “... a theology which elevates Rudra to the status of supreme being, the Lord (*Īśa*) who is transcendent yet also has cosmological functions, as does *Śiva* in later traditions.”⁸ Chapter three exalts the one God as *Rudra*, integrating many earlier teachings. Rudra, who in *Rigveda* personified the destructive powers of nature, is now given the triple divine function of creation, protection and dissolution.

The snarer who rules alone by his powers, who rules all the worlds by his powers, who is one and the same, while things arise and exists, - they who know this are immortal.

For there is one Rudra only, they do not allow a second, who rules all the worlds by his powers. He stands behind all persons, and after having created all worlds he, the protector, rolls it up at the end of time.

That one god, having his eyes, his face, his arms, and his feet in every place, when producing heaven and earth, forges them together with his arms and his Wings.(3:1-3).

Here the verse 3 is borrowed from the hymn to *Visva-karman* in *Rigveda*, 10.81,3.

The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* describes Rudra, a term originally used for *Siva*, as the very *Brahman*. According to this *Upanishad* the Highest Reality is verily *Rudra* who is without a second. According to the *Upanishad*, *Siva* rules (*isata*) these worlds with His enormous powers (*isanibhi*). He is independent from all creatures (*pratyan janan*) and He is the protector of all the worlds (*visvabhuvana gopa*). At the end of creation He withdraws these worlds into Himself. He is the source and origin of all gods. As the ruler of all gods and as *Iswara* he gives birth to *Hiranyagarbha*, the golden germ (3.4). He alone can liberate us beyond the cycle of birth and death. No other path could save us (3.8). There is nothing higher or smaller than Him. He alone pervades the whole universe. (3.9). “He is the Lord and He, *Siva*, is therefore found everywhere” (3.11).

The identification of *Siva* as the ultimate is said to be one of the most significant contributions of *Svetasvatara Upanishad*. “It is most significant that the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* describes *Siva* as the symbol of the Ultimate. In other *Upanishads* the Sacred word, *OM* has been stated as the symbol of *Brahman*. Here *Siva* is equated with *Brahman*. Now *Siva* is indeed the expression of *Ananda*. In this *Upanishad* we see almost a devotional outburst to *Siva* in his aspect as *Ananda*.”⁹

It is possible that the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* reflected the sentiments and the spirit of the age in which it was composed. Saivism might have already been a

popular cult and the author of *Svetasvatara Upanishad* in his synthesizing mission must have been influenced by it. However there are differing scholarly opinions which argue that the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* contains no clear evidence for any sectarian thinking like that of Saivism or the *bhakti* tradition. They hold that that the idea of the Highest Self was developed first, and, after it had reached its highest purity, was lowered again by an identification with mythological and personal deities. Some commentators do not think that the attribution of Supremacy to *Siva* does not make this *Upanishad* a theistic work. They say that the distinguishing feature of this *Upanishad* is that it calls the absolute by a name and that naming alone does not make it anything theistic.¹⁰

5.7 LET US SUM UP

The Upanishadic teachers were earnest in their search for truth and ever ready to advance from inadequate to more adequate considerations. Their main conclusion is that in both the universe at large and in the individual human being there is a Ground which is pure Being, unyielding to change. To realize this Being in oneself means salvation. Once this is done, re-birth and redeath are done away, and humans realize themselves as at least participating in eternal being. This conclusion takes on a more religious shape in the later *Upanishads*, especially, in the *Svetasvatara*, where that Being is seen to be the One Benign God, extending His merciful grace to humans whom He fills with devotion (*bhakti*) towards Him and leads to the beatific vision. As Rohit Meta comments: “The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* is indeed the culminating point of the whole process of knowledge which the other *Upanishads* have indicated. The Upanishadic teachers were not engaged in dry, metaphysical speculations—they were sages who spoke the language of experience. . . . It is to this experience of devotion that the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* leads the students to the Divine Wisdom.”¹¹

Check Your Progress II

- 1) What is the nature of the Ultimate reality according to *Svetasvatara Upanishad*?

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- 2) What are the means towards *moksha* outlined in *Svetasvatara Upanishad* ?

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- 3) Critically evaluate the association of *Svetasvatara Upanishad* with Saivism and Sankhya system.

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5.8 KEY WORDS

- Godhead** : The term “Godhead” is sometimes used to refer to the unknowable aspect of God which lies beyond His actions or emanations (as it were).
- Beatific Vision** : Beatific vision is the eternal and direct perception of God enjoyed by those who are in Heaven.

5.9 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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5. 10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) *Upanishads* like *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* deals with the unquantified and unchanging nature of the *Brahman*, this *Upanishad* deals with the manifest, creative, nurturing, the omniscient, and omnipotent *Isvara* or *Rudra* who causes the energy of the world to flow and bear life. Where *Brahman* is often described as *formless* in other important *Upanishads*, this *Upanishad* gives the form (fullness or *murtitva*) of God. While other *Upanishads* are concerned with presenting their own philosophical perspectives, this *Upanishad* was written in an attempt to unite the disparate religious and philosophical viewpoints of its time.]
- 2) While other *Upanishads* are concerned with presenting their own philosophical perspectives, this *Upanishad* was written in an attempt to unite the disparate religious and philosophical viewpoints of its time.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) The central vision of the entire *Upanishads* concerning the God as the One in-dwelling presence has been kept intact by *Svetasvatara Upanishad* too. God has become more personal in *Svetasvatara Upanishad*. The term *Deva* is used frequently in reference to the Ultimate. Other terms like *Rudra* and *Hara* which became prominent only later on in the Hindu thought were used in this *Upanishad* and are not found in the other *Upanishads*.
- 2) *Moksha* is obtained by the knowledge of God (*jnana*). Following upon meditation one attains *moksha* which has three aspects: breaking of fetters; freedom from birth and death; universal lordship. In chapter one, the author integrates the ascetic practice and brahmanic meditation as a means to *moksha*.
- 3) Some commentators of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* have suggested a sectarian element in *Svetasvatara Upanishad* as advocating the germinal forms of Saivist thinking. For instance, when speaking of the Highest Self or the Highest *Brahman*, it applies such names to him as *Hara*, *Rudra* and *Siva*. The *Shvetasvatara Upanishad* is said to be the earliest textual exposition of a systematic philosophy of Shaivism. It is possible that the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* reflected the sentiments and the spirit of the age in which it was composed. Saivism might have already been a popular cult and the author of *Svetasvatara Upanishad* in his synthesizing mission must have been influenced by it.