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## UPANISHADIC PHILOSOPHY AS THE BASIS FOR PEACE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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**Abstract:** Upanishads are considered as the great treatises which reveal mankind a treasure of wisdom that was useful not only in the past but it is useful even in the present times. They are the treasure of spiritual knowledge and also practical wisdom. They are the guidelines of living a life of perfect harmony, peace, love and bliss. Most of the time Upanishads are looked for only spiritual teaching. Generally it is believed that they contain only the doctrine of Atman, its evolution as universe, and identity of soul with Atman. Besides spiritual teaching Upanishad also contain valuable teachings in the field of morality. An attempt is made in this paper to find out how the moral concepts discussed in Upanishads are significant in person's life in the process of learning.

Learning process refers to acquiring skills, abilities and potentialities of a learner to be a good human being and to tackle problems of life in an effective manner. Education is the process of helping the child to understand himself and to master himself, in this regard Upanishadic teaching of Self-realisation is useful and relevant in today's times. A self realized person is one who experiences peace within and who is able to tackle the problems of conflicts of the outer world in an effective manner.

In the present day context of violent social upheavals we have to consider the problems faced by youth, the frustration which they are facing due to futility of their search for meaning of life and purpose for which they are living. There is a need to have new approach to Education. Education for peace is the need of an hour. Some of the moral and spiritual concepts discussed in Upanishad may provide a foundation to the Education for peace. An attempt is made in this paper to find out such concepts and their significant role in peace education.

**Keywords:** Upanishads, Self-realization, spiritual teaching

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**Introduction:** In the contemporary world we are living in a sophisticated technological world, where our lives are guided and controlled by technology. We are enjoying the fruits of development of science and technology with which our life is becoming more comfortable, more luxurious. There is a lot of material progress. With the advancement in science and technology man has achieved lot of development almost in all the fields, whether it is agriculture, medicine, science, education, technology, transportation, industry etc. development in medical science has brought down death rate, infant mortality and increased lifespan of a person. Information is available at the finger tips. With the development in information technology rapid changes are taking place almost in all fields. These changes have taken place in a very short period of time, i.e. few decades only. Man's life has become more comfortable but still the problems of man are not solved, on the contrary they are increasing. In spite of the material progress the terrorism, crime and violence, religious conflicts are increasing. Today whether man is living a happy and contented peaceful life is questionable. Human being is facing lot of problems at individual level, at social level, and also at environmental level. There is a need of promoting Education towards Peace. For improving the present society, finding solutions to present problems is very important, solutions has to be sought in the present so that aggravating those problems can be prevented and

future problems can be avoided. The right kind of education is able to give some solution to problems.

The present paper is divided into three sections. First section discusses the concept of Education and Peace Education, the second section is an attempt to find out how Upanishad discusses regarding Peace Education. This section is further divided into three dealing with peace with oneself, peace with others and peace with nature. The third section discusses about the relevance of Upanishadic thoughts of Peace. The method used here is analytical, hermeneutical and reinterpreting the philosophy of Upanishads and revealing the new horizons of meaning in the context of the problems faced by contemporary society.

**I Education and Peace Education:** Education must aim at meeting the challenges of the present times and the emerging future. It must aim at empowerment of a person. There is a need of making education relevant to our time. Education is closely related to the values. Education is, in fact, very naturally value oriented. Education is one of the powerful media of fostering and imbibing values in the younger generation. Today the question is raised about the educational system that - does it emphasize the development of child's character and inner personality? Value oriented education aims at developing the integrated personality of the student. Swami Vivekananda said "the ideal of all education all training should be man making. Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and

runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life building man making and character making assimilation of ideas." Education must aim at promoting peace and happiness. Peace can be external peace and internal peace. Peace refers to contentment. External peace refers to material progress. It is in connection with the others. Whereas internal peace refers to peace within it's related to person himself. Education helps the person to understand oneself. Person who knows oneself is at peace. The person who has peace within lives with others in harmony and is able to live a conflict free life.

Peace education has been defined differently by different thinkers depending on the context and place. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois (African American philosopher) talks about peace education in terms of equal rights for people of all races and all economic classes. According to him role of teacher is very important in passing the right kind of education. Paolo Friere, the Brazilian philosopher who talks about the "banking system of education also emphasize the role of teacher. In this system, "Education must begin by addressing the teacher-student relationship. Under this system of education, both the teacher and student benefit from the learning experience; the teacher learns from the student and vice versa. This theory of education emphasises dialogue based on love, humility and faith. This is a horizontal relationship where mutual respect is established in the learning environment." The need for Peace Education is felt more in today's time as there is increase in number of conflicts and violent attacks, there is increase of terrorist activities worldwide, The gap between rich and poor is widening, there are many who are suffering due to discrimination, world is also facing many environmental problems. R. D. Laing an American thinker define "Peace Education is an attempt to respond to the problem of conflict and violence on scales ranging from global and national to local and personal. It is about ways of creating more just and sustainable future."

"Peace education in UNICEF refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level." UN charter also emphasized on Peace, it declared 2001-2010 as the decade of Culture of Peace. Culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, beliefs and ways of life which emphasize on respecting the life and ending of violence. It also includes the rights of human beings, providing equal rights and

opportunity to women and men. Peace Education is not merely the knowledge of values, attitudes for maintaining peace, but it includes transformation of knowledge, as pointed by Betty Reardon, the American Peace Educator, "the transmission of knowledge about the requirements of, the obstacles to and possibilities for achieving and maintaining peace, training in skills for interpreting the knowledge, and the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying the knowledge to overcoming problems and achieving possibilities"

Peace Education has mainly following three factors, viz

- Process of acquiring the values, the knowledge
- Developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors
- To live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment.

Education system should aim at promoting such environment and experiences where learners will be able to develop their abilities and potentialities towards becoming more rational and peace loving individuals. "Any system of education, in order to be effective in promoting peace and happiness must be based on the structure, growth, and working of the human mind. At the same time, its foundations must be firmly rooted in ethnic culture heritage, and socio-economic environment." India has a rich cultural heritage and great philosophical tradition dating back to the composition of the Upanishads in the later Vedic period. The present paper emphasizes on the relevance of Upanishadic Philosophy as the basis of peace education and in promoting Peace. Upanishads contain the supreme wisdom which influenced many thinkers since ages. Klaus G Witz writes about the Upanishads that they "form the backbone of a large portion of Hindu Tradition and give it a profound unity and great spiritual height." They are considered as the foundation of the later philosophies, because of the richness and diverse thoughts.

#### **I. Upanishadic Philosophy and Peace Education:**

Swami Vivekananda said about Upanishads that they are not about revealing the life of any teacher but they are about the principles, and these principles are significant in the maintenance and promotion of peace. It helps us in our journey of knowledge as it is mentioned in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, "From untruth, lead me to the truth: From darkness lead me to the light, from death lead me to immortality" Upanishads establishes harmony in outer world and inner world. Upanishads talk about the peace of the outer world as well as inner world. It talks about the 1) Peace with oneself 2) Peace with others 3) Peace with Nature. All the Upanishads start with Shanti path i.e. invocation of peace.

On the one side this vast universe exists, different thinkers have given different explanations about this whole universe i.e. what we see around us. Similarly

there is a world of inner life of a man. It is what we are. Upanishads attempt to seek unity in both these worlds. They have realized that the problems related to the outer world cannot be solved by looking into the outer world but introspecting into one's inner world. Upanishads have found the balance and harmony between these two worlds. In the external world lot of progress is achieved, scientists and various thinkers are constantly attempting to know about the external world, but we know very little about inner life. Why this difference is there. Max Muller answers "Let us remember that however much the telescopes for observing the stars of heaven have been improved, the observatories of the soul have remained much the same"

**II. Peace with oneself:** A person is knower and doer. A person who do not have the knowledge of their origin or about oneself do not experience the peace, but rather suffer from many problems. This truth is expounded in the seventh chapter of Chandogya Upanishad through a dialogue between Narada and Sanatkumara. Narad was a learned man but in spite of his vast learning, he was full of sorrow and tension. He approached to Sanatkumara a wise learned and knower of self and told him, "inspite of all the knowledge I have, I am only Knower of words and not a knower of Atman(the Self). I have heard from great ones like you that only the knower of the Atman crosses the ocean of sorrow. Therefore since I do not know the Atman, I am full of sorrow; Take me O, blessed one, across that ocean of sorrow. Knowledge about oneself i.e. what we are in reality helps us to remain at peace. The Socrates a Greek philosopher insists on 'know thyself'. A person who knows oneself is not only wise but is also full of peace.

If a person studies all the Vedas but does not have knowledge of self then he starts thinking himself as greater than others. That is the reason why Aruni from Chandogya Upanishad started giving instructions about Reality to his son. He wanted to inculcate good behavior in him. He knew it that by knowing Reality one can know one's self. Just as by knowing a lump of earth, all things made of earth become known. Upanishads consider this world not as a source of problems and unhappiness but as a training ground for a person's Self realization, Aruni knew that in the absence of this knowledge person becomes arrogant, egoist and selfish. He gives many examples to his son so that he will realize his identity. Egoism, arrogance and selfishness are the root cause of various problems in this world like increase in divorces, environmental problems, family problems etc.

In the same Upanishad in the second chapter Panchakosha it explained about the material life and spiritual life. This Panchakosa refers to five levels of

realities of human person. These five levels are Physical level, glossy body (AnnamayaKosa), Vital air (Pranamaya), Mental level (Manomay), Intellect level (Vijnanamaya), Bliss (Anandmaya). As a person he should develop at all levels. There should be total development at individual level. According to S.R. Bhatt, "It stands for development of all dimensions of human personality - physical, mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual. Mere physical or mental or intellectual development is lopsided and can never be sustainable" If a person achieves this all round development he is at peace with oneself and also with others.

1. Physical development of a Man includes that he should take proper care of his body, Artha and Kama Purusartha are prescribed for physical development of man. The AnnamayaKosa refers to physical development. The Annamayakosa or the gross body signifies the gross manifestation of matter. All creatures are born and they live grow by food only, what we become is the result of the kind of food that we take. If we want to live a good healthy life then we have to take a good food at proper timing. Eating fast food, and fried food, irregular food habits will lead to several bodily disorders and diseases, etc hence proper food habits are important. If a person does not take proper care of physical development by not taking food, then he may not be able to work on his development or preservation and retention of knowledge. A person suffering from diseases cannot be happy.
2. Social Development of Man -Taittiriya Upanishad says "Through prana the Gods live and so also do men and beasts. Prana is verily the life of beings. Therefore it is called the universal life or life of all. Those who worship prana as Brahman attain the whole life duration or the full span of life, Prana verily is the life of beings. Therefore it is called the universal life or the life of all." Taittiriya Upanishad 2.3- Worshipping prana as Brahman is protecting prana of others it implies that one should not do any kind of violence. Not to kill others. We should not harm anyone. Respecting life is very important for any person's progress as well as society's development. In the terrorist stricken society, people are living under constant fear of death and insecurity many people die at young age due to terrorist attacks. However if other peoples life is respected, protected, there will be absence of violence, people will not die unnatural deaths but will be able live full span of life. For living a good satisfying life one should have a good interpersonal relationship with others.
3. Mental Development of Man - All living creatures are endowed with Manomaya selves, Manomaya is the inner self of the Pranamaya .Manomayakosa is

mental sheath, more subtle than the pranamayakosa. Through the functioning of Manomayakosa one says 'I think', 'I imagine', etc. One should have proper control over the mind. Svetasvatara Upanishad II.4. states "The sages of the great all-knowing control their mind and control their thoughts." For having peace at all levels proper control over mind and thoughts is essential.

4. Moral Development of Man : Morality consists of discrimination between right and wrong. Vijnanamaya Kosa refers to moral development of man. To think what is right or wrong one requires determinative knowledge. Mind runs in any direction, but it is the intellect which guides the mind, this is Vijnanamayakosa. The intellect guides the mind regarding what one has to do. A wise person acts according to one's intellect. When one acts according to one's mind one may be carried away by desires, prejudices, or feelings, like love hate, etc. hence one's act may not be right, but when one acts as per one's intellect it will always lead to righteousness. The intellect of Vijnanamayakosa helps in discriminating what is good or bad and what is right or wrong. This discriminative knowledge helps a person to live a peaceful life.
5. Spiritual Development or the Highest intellectual development - AnandmayaKosa reflects this. To live a good life we require wealth but life's aim should not be merely assimilating or hoarding wealth. When Yajnavalkya wanted to divide his property among his wives, Maitreyi asked him whether with this will I be immortal?. One cannot get everything or happiness by wealth. Wealth, fame, all these are for temporary period, does not remain permanent and yet we are running after them leading to tensions, sorrows and many other problems. What is that which leads to permanent Bliss and happiness is knowledge of oneself i.e. the highest intellectual development.
6. Panchakosa theory is a good example of the balanced teachings of Upanishad only thinking about material life is not the reality, but it consists of something more. Aurobindo writes "This body, as ancient occult science discovered, is not the whole even of our physical being; this gross density is not all of our substance. The oldest vedantic knowledge tells us of five degrees of our being, the material, the vital, the mental, the ideal, the spiritual, or beatific and to each of these grades of our soul there corresponds a grade of our substance, a sheath as it was called in the ancient figurative language. A later psychology found that these five sheaths of our substance were material of three bodies, gross physical, subtle and casual, in all of which the soul actually

and simultaneously dwells, although here and now we are superficially conscious only of the material vehicle. But it is possible to become conscious in our other bodies as well". Panchakosa theory is an all inclusive theory. It touches upon all levels of realities, rather it emphasises the balanced approach towards all different levels. Modern society has already experienced that by emphasizing one level of reality leads to various problems. In modern society lot of emphasis is given only to materialism. However material life is not the complete reality. The development at all the levels as mentioned above is needed for a peaceful life.

**III. Peace with Others:** While achieving the knowledge of Self he/she cannot neglect one's duties towards others and in these others they include other men, Gods who presided over the natural forces like river, trees, mountains etc. Man is related to many other people as well as to the nature. Some of the people play an important role in shaping one's personality, or the development of a person like his parents and teachers. Upanishads regards them as God and it says 'Matrudeva, Pitrudeva Acharyadeva Bhav . Here treating mother, father and teacher as a God shows high regards or respect for them. In a child's education role of teachers and parent is very important. If parents are instrument of joy, happiness and bliss in home and are peace loving, the child will always smile and radiate happiness and will be peace loving individual. A person should have feeling of gratitude towards their teachers and parents and they must take proper care of them

In Upanishads the process of education is two way. It takes the approach of participative and two way learning. Teachers are mere facilitators, Before the beginning of learning the the peace invocation talks about teacher student relationship. It states. 'Om! May Brahman protect us (teacher and student) both! May Brahman nourish us both! May we both acquire energy (as a result of this study)! May we both become illumined (by this study)! May we not hate each other! Om. Peace! Peace! Peace!'

Peace and Happiness is not sought only by material enrichment. Material enrichment only may lead to the greediness, acquiring more and more will not lead to happiness; however by giving whatever you can to others helping others is another way of leading towards happiness. Upanishad emphasizes the concept of dana .One should give others whatever he/she can give to needy people. One's well-being depends upon the society's progress, and no society can progress if some of its members are living in utter poverty, so it's a duty of affluent class to help the poor and needy people. According to the Bread for the world institute, "In developing countries, 6 million people die each year, mostly from hunger

related causes.” This situation shows that there are so many who are in dire need of one’s help. Hence people must realize that their act of giving a little from their own wealth will save the life of other fellow being, it may change their life. Upanishadic teaching tells us to help others even strangers. Taittiriya Upanishad 3.10.1 states “One should not refuse anyone at one’s dwelling even strangers”, strangers should be given a good hospitality. Guest including strangers are welcomed.

In Upanishad Dana – helping others giving gifts to others is appreciated a lot. In Taittiriya Upanishad II. 11 .4 states *Shraddhayadeyamshraddhayadeyam, sriyadeyam, .....* “Gifts should be given with faith, it should never be given without faith, it should be given in plenty, with modesty, with sympathy.” Here charity as a virtue is emphasized. It tells us one of the important aspects of charity, what kind of attitude one should have. One should not think of one self as supreme because he/she is helping others, but modesty is very important. One should not be arrogant but should have sympathetic approach towards others. In a more culturally developed and advanced society human relationships should be based on humanitarian ground. When a human person relate to other person as merely a person then it crosses all boundaries of space, nationality, religion, language, creed etc. General human relationship of a man is based on love and affection. This has a spiritual basis. A man who has realized self sees oneness there is no duality, for him/her love and affection is the basis of all relations. He feels affiliated to everyone and does not hate anyone. Ishavasya Upanishad states, “What delusion, what sorrow can there be for that wise man who realizes the unity of all existence by perceiving all human beings as his own Self” Ramanad Tiwari –says about 6<sup>th</sup> verse of (*kahmohakahshokah* ) Ishavasyopanishad “This one verse forms the supreme gospel of social life and relationship. The seventh verse elucidates the personal psychological effect of the observance of the principle of affiliation contained in the sixth verse .a person having spiritual knowledge believes and practices the principle of equality. He/she treats everyone equally without discrimination.

**IV Peace with Nature:** Man’s life is greatly affected by the environment in which he is living, hence peace with nature is equally important. In a polluted degraded environment it’s difficult to live a peaceful life. Nature has been always kind towards man by providing its wealth in the form of natural resources. Due to the availability of these natural resources industrialization had taken place. However man’s selfishness and too much emphasis on individualism have caused lot of damage to environment. Most of the environmental problems have taken place because of the anthropocentric approach, which is

human centered approach. In this view human beings are only considered as at the center of universe. Everything is judged in terms of its utility to human beings. They assign intrinsic value to human beings and instrumental value to nature. However Upanishads consider nature as non-different from Brahman, the Ultimate Reality, so it assigned intrinsic value to nature.

It is man’s moral responsibility that one must protect the earth, must save the natural resources and should not spoil the environment but to keep it clean, pollution free for the coming future generation. In the Vedic terminology he is indebted to this DevRna. Here the word Dev does not mean ‘God’ but all the natural resources like air, water, land etc. According to M. Vannucci- “Natural phenomena are manifestations or expressions of the Gods, not the Gods themselves; they are manifestations of and express the principles that govern the world and cosmic order, ‘Rta.’” Protection of Rta is considered as one of the important duty of mankind. A person thinks that one is indebted to nature; there is feeling of gratitude and respect for the nature.

Vedic man did not consider him separate from nature, “Nature is to be understood as friend, revered as mother, obeyed as father and nurtured as a beloved child. Nature is saved because man depends entirely on it and because of this everything is satisfied, including man and the terrifying aspects of nature itself, such as glaciers, landslides, earthquakes, storms, (AV, XVII) that have to be taken as they are, even if difficult to bear.” A modern man who exploits nature only for his selfish motives does not consider nature as a friend or mother, but thinks he has mastery over nature.

The Upanishads are the scriptures which have put forth a vision and ideals which definitely will help in reducing those environmental problems. Why should one protect the environment? In Svetasvatara Upanishad we find the answer for the problem “The God who is in fire, who is in water, who has entered into whole world, who is in plants, who is in trees to that God be adoration – yea, be adoration”. One should respect and protect the trees, water resources like rivers , oceans, energy sources not just because they are useful to us but because they are worthy of themselves since they are not different from reality. Ultimate reality which a philosopher calls Brahma or religious man calls God resides in it. Nature is not different from Brahman. According to Upanishadic teaching Nature has intrinsic value. It is not for man but both man and nature belongs to the same Reality. According to Upanishads trees, birds, animals, rivers, oceans are the part of one Reality viz Brahman; man and these non human beings do not belong to two separate realities, but they belong to the same Brahman. But since among these various non human

beings, man is the only creature who has rational faculty, one can think about the moral duties towards other creatures. It is the moral duty of a person to maintain order in the world, for which one should not make reckless use of trees or should not exploit the animals for one's selfish motives. Performances of duties towards non human beings are not because they are going to benefit man, but because they are considered having their own value, this is what environmental ethics considers. In the words of Tom Regan, "Sumer argues that the lives and interests of non human animals, not just of those human beings, ought to be taken into account in their own right. Recognition of this fact he states marks, 'the beginning of a genuine environmental consciousness' "The Upanishadic teaching considers the ideal of Cosmic Unity, where all living and non living beings including rivers, oceans are treated as belonging to the One Ultimate Reality. In the words of S.R.Bhatt, "In the Chandogya Upanishad it is very pertinently stated that 'Real happiness lies only in the total and never in the partial. (*YoVaiBhumatatsukhamnalapesukhamasti* ). Any development concerning only a part of Reality can never provide genuine and lasting happiness."

#### V. Relevance of Upanishadic thought of Peace:

For living a peaceful life what one wants is a stress and tension free life, a life where one is at peace with oneself, with others and with nature. Whenever and wherever the clashes or conflicts takes place, the root cause of them is the feeling of distinctness or separateness. I or we and they (others) when one thinks of others to be different from one's religion, caste, creed, language, nation etc, the feeling of separateness arises giving rise to clashes, conflicts, riotsetc which further gives rise to unhappiness and sorrows, but if this separateness or distinctness is removed then there is no feeling of grief or sorrow. Upanishad teaches one very important lesson of equality. One who realizes all beings as not distinct from oneself, one sees everyone as oneself, one never hates anyone, and neither does one suffer from any delusion or sorrow. "It is philosophy that proves to us that the sense of separateness is not true, it imparts to us the knowledge of oneness, and with this knowledge comes also morality and ethics and we discover our true kinship with every man and woman and with the whole of nature".

For a peaceful society there should be cordial and affectionate human relationship. A person having the

knowledge of Self or Brahman sees oneness everywhere. There is no duality or separateness. For such a knowledgeable person the whole world is like one family, '*VasudhaivaKutumbakam*' Such a person overcomes duality and there is absence of egoism and selfishness. If a person thinks other as belonging to him or her then chances of conflicts are lesser. When a person thinks other as belonging to different group than his or her own then interpersonal relation may not be cordial relationship. A good interpersonal relationship is based on love and sacrifice i.e. by sacrificing one's selfish interests

Brahdaranyaka Upanishad -1.4.3 (*Tasmatsekakinareme*) states that Man is never happy when he is alone. There is story in Brahdaranyaka Upanishad- "Prajapati was alone in the beginning of creation, as no creatures had been created till then he did not enjoy with himself alone. Hence he created the copular world". This parable of Prajapati signifies that the deeper truth of life is joy and it cannot be realized in isolated individuality. It can be realized only in inner spiritual non-duality and integrity which can concretely and empirically realized in a diversity of beings.

Many of the present problems can be solved by following the principles of Upanishads in our day to day life. Egoism, arrogance and selfishness are the root cause of various problems in this world like increase in divorces, environmental problems, family problems etc. Diversity is one of the features of today's world community, with globalization people belonging to diverse culture are coming closer to each other, interacting with each other. In such a diverse culture respect for other's culture, respecting other's views and ideology even if one is in disagreement with it is an important virtue to be cherished. Today's society is more complex and more diverse.

This Upanishadic teaching has the capacity of making our life tension free and problem free and leading towards peace at both the level internal as well as external. Swami Sivananda writes "There is no book in the whole world that is so thrilling, soul-stirring and inspiring as the Upanishads. The philosophy taught by the Upanishads has been the source of solace for many both in the East and the West".

To conclude with Universal prayer, "*May all be happy, May all be without disease, May all creatures have well-being, And none be in misery of any sort, May peace, peace and peace be everywhere*"

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