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JYOTISHASTRA AND THE CONCEPT OF KARMAN IN THE UPANISHADS

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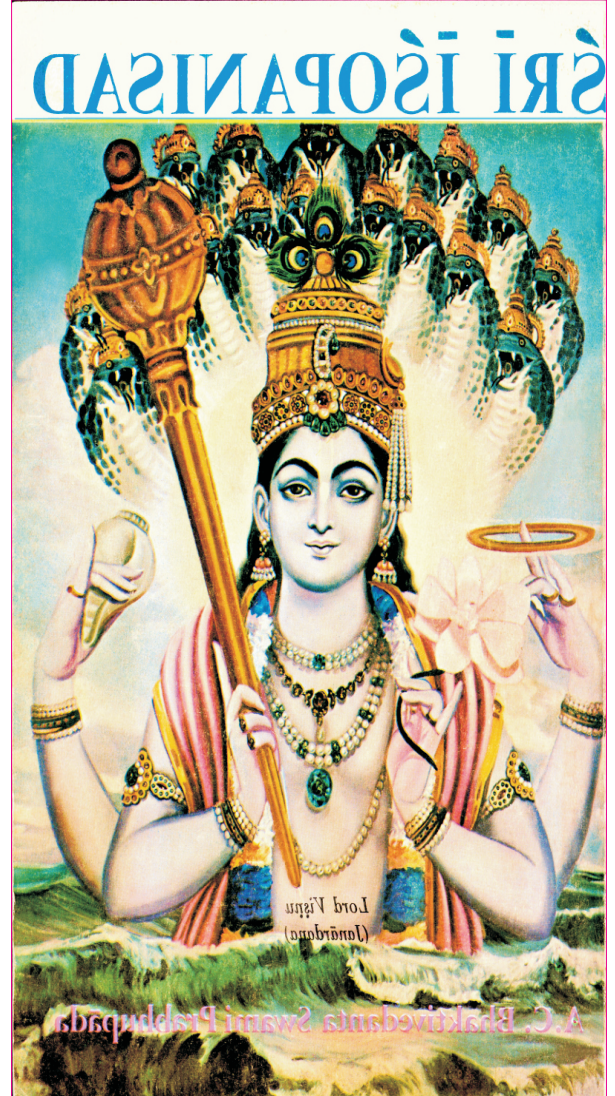
ABSTRACT:

The concept of destiny carries a considerable significance in the life of man. To such a context the Sanskrit Literature displays Karma as a doctrine connecting itself chiefly to the moral actions of man and their outcome formulating the concept of destiny (Daiva) which is currently read by means of the Jataka branch of Jyotishastra.

KEYWORDS: Jyotishastra , Concept of Karman , Sanskrit Literature , project Brahman .

INTRODUCTION:

The above connection is evidently an offshoot in and later to the Upanishads. The present study thereby attempts to explore the development of Jyotisa and Karma in the Upanishads so as to decipher the concept of destiny as also the roots of the co-relation.



Development of Jyotisa in the Upanishads: Naksatras:

Naksatravidya as a branch of study is already established in the period of the Upanishads. The classification of Naksatra as punya (auspicious) and papa (inauspicious), as also male and female exists in the Upanishads.¹

Apara vidya:

The identity of Jyotisa as one amongst the apara vidyas is an important development of this period.²

Visible light forms as symbols and phenomenal forms:

Brahman as all pervasive and being veiled by reality (empirical) is made apprehensible through various symbols. Brahman is addressed as the sun of the universe.³ The fire element is also one of the innumerable aspects through which Brahman is made understandable

Apart from being merely symbolic the conception extends to project Brahman in a phenomenal form

expressed as the one under whose control the luminaries as well as the Time divisions as seasons and years stood apart.⁴

Dreams:

A probe on dreams in the Upanishads make dream state a state of the Atman (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad IV. 3.4; 5.13). The Aitareya Upanishad I. 3.12. considers the waking state as a dream.

Kala in Upanishads:

Kala continues in the Upanishads as 'time in general' and also as 'proper time' for performance of auspicious actions as in Samhitas and Brahmanas.

Kala as 'appointed time' in relation with death of a person occurs in the Upanishads. Prior to the Upanishads, kala comes in connection either with a deity or with a rite, whereas in the Upanishads it is associated with human being equated with finish or end (Chandogya Upanishad II. 13.1.)

Development of Karma in the Upanishads

Rta and Sacrifices:

The earlier concept of karma as Rta prevalent in the Rgveda continue in the Upanishads. Karma in the sense of Rta is referred to in the Kathopanishad 1.3.1. and Maitri Upanishad 2.6.6.

Sacrifices existed in the Upanishads. The reward of sacrificial performance was securing a place in the world of the fathers (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad I. 5.16.).

Yet apart from sacrifices being valued in this phase a confined utility of sacrifices as leading to rotation in the cycle of rebirths is expressed. With such an allocation, sacrifices are only a bridge to Brahman.⁵

Moral aspect of karman:

The chief nature of karma in Upanishads is moral. They transform ritual karma into ethically retributive karma.

Karma as a retributive force became the cause of happiness and suffering. Earlier this idea is expressed in the Taittiriya Brahmana III. 11.1 showing the fate of actions while Svetasvatara Upanishad V. 7 extends the importance of conduct explaining the consequence of actions acquired by the doer in accordance with their nature.

Karma as destiny (Daiva):

The retributive force of karman connects transmigration to the theory. With puṛya and papa appearing in a clearly ethical sense in the Upanishads and rebirth as a consequence of willful acts performed in some remote past manifesting in the form of sufferings and happiness thereby reflecting an inequality in present birth amongst human forms constitute the angle of destiny (Daiva) in the Upanishads.

Karma as Vidya:

Apart from actions resulting from desire and will of man, the inclination of Upanishadic thought to project karma as Vidya (knowledge) is generally prevalent. Also the nature of Brahman Atman in the sense of non-action as being contradictory to action, karma as knowledge is made a means to understand the ultimate principle. In this sense Brhadaranyaka Upanishad distinguishes karma as ritual actions and vidya as well.⁶

Co-relation of Jyotisa and Karma in the Upanishads

As expressions of Brahman or Supreme Atman:

Atman understood as the only reality, the Upanishads convey that by understanding Atman through hearing, reflecting and meditating upon all is known.⁷

Brahman, as a cosmic principle regulating the entire activity of the material world and Atman as the psychical principle embodied in a being is also an expression. In this sense, the sun is expressed as the eye of the

all pervading entity,⁸ its apprehension through symbols expressing the cosmic form whereas the dream state as one of the states of the Atman is the expression of the psychical form.

Worship of symbolic forms:

Worship in such a form produced results as deliverance from sin. Kausitaki Upanishad (2.7) mentions the worship of sun at its rising, mid-day and setting positions to such an effect. Certain rituals connected with nakshatras and favourable days also occur (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad VI. 3.1)

The concept of auspicious times for religious rites to be performed for fulfillment of desires continue in the Upanishads. Kala is a representation of Brahman in the Upanishads thereby is an object of worship. Sinivali is believed to implant embryo and is revered.⁹

Activity of Brahman through the agency of kala:

Time is an expression of Brahman and is said to operate in the world of names, forms and activity thereby 'Time' serves as an agency from which the beings flow, grow and disappear. Time is said to cause change in the universe counted through the digits of Prajapati (as Time) and thereby has an extension beyond the symbolic form.

Sun as the source of the relation between time and Brahman, also displays the connection between the supreme Atman and the individual one. Purusa in a hidden form dwelling in the material sun through the rays of the sun is connected to the puruṣa in the eye.¹⁰

CONCLUSION:

The study reveals that the prevalent connection of Jyotishsastra and the concept of Karman connected with the concept of destiny is only a part come forward of the other aspects of the co-relation present in the Upanishads and that it chiefly worked for the understanding and the unity of the Brahman and the Atman which formulated the prime subject matter of the Upanishads. A further study of the co-relation in present times is essential to understand the essence of their coming together in the Upanishads.

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