Chapter - 3
DEATH AND IMMORTALITY: PHAEDO AND KATHOPANISAD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The third chapter of the present thesis attempts to critically expound two important works - Phaedo in the Greek tradition and Kathopanisad in the Indian tradition - so as to understand the notions of death and transcendence. It is only in two significant developments in the ancient world - the Socratic in Greece and the Upanisadic in India - that the notions of death and immortality as a distinct theme acquired decisive significance. In a general way, our approach toward this theme is centered around the topic whether death is man's absolute enemy or not? Does this mean that on this subject, two important philosophical traditions in the world turns sentimental or unrealistic? Quite the contrary. We find in these traditions no naive representation of a life beyond the grave - understood as a continuation of this life in a 'heaven' freed from all unpleasantness or in a hell stripped of all happiness. What we do find in these traditions is that their placing of the question of death in relationship to the weaknesses and terrors that afflict unintegrated man. There are other remarkable questions too which demand answers, least of philosophical insights, such as where does life come from? Of what whole is it a part? What is man's proper relationship to this life to
which he clutches without considering the entire scheme of creation? With these introductory remarks, let us turn to Phaedo, which expounds the Greek tradition on the notions of death and immortality.

3.2 PHAEDO-GREEK TRADITION

Phaedo is said to be the discourse that took place between Socrates and his friends on the day of his death. The subject of discussion, arising out of some casual remarks of Socrates, is centered around the desirability of death. Socrates maintains that death means release from distractions and snares of the body, and the opportunity to contemplate truth unimpeded. It is to attain that perfect wisdom which the philosopher aims throughout his life to endeavor and reach as closely as he can. The philosopher holds that bodily pleasures are cheap and the body is a hindrance in the pursuit of wisdom, as the senses are inaccurate and unreliable, for, the emotions and bodily needs distract the mind.

According to Socrates, the body, senses and its accompanying desires, and feelings hinder the soul in its search for knowledge and true existence. After death, when the soul is free, one can hope to attain wisdom. During life, the best one can do is to dissociate oneself from the body so far as one can, thereby purifying the individual in his readiness for death.

Virtue consists in being ‘purified’ in one’s emotions and desires, and this can be actualized only by means of wisdom. “Only purification can
qualify one for bliss in the life after death”. One can only be truly virtuous if one makes the attainment of wisdom as an object in everything that one does. Socrates thus concludes that “philosophy is the practice of death”.2

3.2.1 General Nature of Dialogue

The general idea of the dialogue obviates the necessity to consider death as blessing and not a thing to be feared. Socrates is asked to support these views by explaining his reasons for believing in the survival of the soul after death. The important chain of thought consists in the arguments on this topic.

Plato advocates in Phaedo that the soul is as if it is mind alone. Appetite and emotion are treated in Phaedo as belonging to the body, and mind alone as belonging to the soul. Accordingly mind alone is immortal. The bodily senses, desires and feeling hide the soul’s search for knowledge for true existence. Thought is clear when the influence of body is least felt or so to say, when there is the greatest possible separation between body and soul. And what is such a separation when completed but death itself?

In elaborating this position, Plato introduces the famous ‘Doctrine of Forms’. ‘Forms’ are known by mind alone, wisdom concerning true being or eternal form can mature only after death, when the mind is wholly free. The dialogue is purported to proving that the soul survives death. The interdependence of opposites, so to say, soul and body and their
generation out of one another are invoked to show that as life turns to death so death must turn to life once more.

The human soul is said to be a simple and unalterable reality and death therefore cannot decompose it as death is regarded as the decomposition of two elements viz. body and soul. The soul is such an entity, since its natural affinity is not with the changing sensible world but with the changeless and eternal objects of thought. Nor can the soul be a harmony of the body, as the Pythagoreans taught, and hence dependent upon the body as music is upon the lyre.

On the contrary, it directs and sometimes opposes the body, and is therefore independent of it. Since it is invariable in nature, there is no reason to fear that it may eventually itself runs down and stops after wearing out several bodies and passing through a number of reincarnations.

According to Socrates the essential nature of soul is life. It participates in the idea of the principle of life. 'Idea' logically excludes its opposite. Like cold and hot do not participate in the nature of their opposites similarly life does not participate in its opposite that is death.

There is more to 'Platonic Immortality' than an endless repetition of death and re-birth. For Plato the proper destiny of soul is to regain her birthright union with the eternal to which it is akin and from which somehow it has become separated. It may fulfill this destiny by
repeatedly renouncing the world of senses and taking refuge in the intelligible and timeless, until it has at length sufficiently purified itself from the dross of earth. When the moment of its release arrives, it escapes from the revolving wheel of reincarnation, passes out of time altogether, ceases to be everlasting, and becomes one with the eternal.

In ‘Phaedrus’, it is pointed out that the soul being self-moving, cannot be started or stopped by anything outside itself. Hence it must be without beginning and immortal. Thus, it is linked to changing world yet is changeless. It is everlasting, but could also become eternal. It is at the same time uncreated and creative; constant and variable; static and dynamic. It is to the soul that Plato finally looked as the proper agent to put the Form into effect and to enact and embody them in a physical world.

In brief, the existence of soul which Plato had taken for granted may be understood as the knowing subject in the process of knowledge. Soul is called upon to act a natural intermediary between the Forms and the sensible world, and to that the soul was elevated into a cosmic principle. It is linked through the senses to the world of sensible particulars, and through its intellectual activities to the ‘Forms’.

Further, Plato describes the moving, changing world of particular things - the realm of Becoming - as a mixture of the Being of the Forms with the Non-Being. Though he has not defined Non-Being, it might imply the
whole multiple, sensible, concrete, changing aspect of Universe. It is unreal and illusory as it lacks the characteristics of the true Being of the Forms.

'Form', in itself, is absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which is without diminution and increase. Any change is imparted to the ever growing and perishing beauties of all things. In the embrace of this absolute we fulfill our longing for immortality'.

In summing up, it can be inferred that according to Plato, reproduction, to be sure, rescue the race from the mortality of the individual life, and nutrition and memory enable the particular body and soul to survive the passing moment and attain the comparative immortality of a lifetime and a career. So too, noble thoughts and deed, which leave after us, save us from oblivion as no progeny can. But the mind becomes one with the Form of pure beauty, and thus identifies with the eternal, is lifted out of time altogether and becomes deathless in another and higher sense of the world.

When the soul gets its unison with the eternal, it looses its temporal and spatial character. The soul, Plato argues, may become so sunk in and attached to the eternal, that her liberation from time and sense may become almost complete in this life and be wholly completed by death.

3.2.2 Why Immortality?

Plato was much indebted to the Orthodox Pythagoreanism for his belief in immortality. He found a valuable clue to the solution of his
problem in the Orphics and Pythagorean belief in the divinity and immortality of soul. His interest in this doctrine is clearly seen in his theory of Recollection. Plato's endeavour is to discover from an ex-hypothesis which we do not know and that what we are looking for? "If the Orphic doctrine of the immortality and transmigration of souls is correct, then the soul will behold all things in this world and the next, and so must acquire knowledge of everything. And if this is so, it should be capable of being reminded of what it knew". The theory of Recollection which is introduced in Meno in order to establish the possibility of acquiring knowledge in general, is adduced in Phaedo to prove the pre-existence of soul. Pre-existence of soul postulates its post-existence as a consequence.

Plato offers a number of arguments for the immortality of soul. According to him soul survives the death of the body, for opposites are generated out of opposites, and life is opposite of death. He argues that since life and death are opposites, it is certain that the living die. According to the Universal law of nature the living must return from the death, and therefore the dead must exist somewhere prior to return. Same implications follow from Plato's account of knowledge as recollection. Knowledge of true being is recognition of what was known in a previous existence.

The argument that knowledge is recollection proves the pre-existence of soul and alongwith the argument of opposites, it is also proved that soul exists after death, for, if the soul exists before birth and the living

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come from the dead as the dead come from the living, the soul thus exists before and after the various bodies into which it is born.

Plato adds another argument. It is based on the comparison of the nature of soul with that of the body. Comparison of body and soul shows that body is like all other compound and perishable physical objects, but soul resembles the absolute in some ways and share their permanence. This dichotomy of soul and body appears in the knowing process. If soul relies on sensation it is dragged down to unstable and the confused, but if it relies on its own reason, then soul apprehends the pure and eternal. As the soul is in the very likeness of divine, and immortal, it is indissoluble and unchangeable.

Plato provides another argument which is based on the doctrine of Forms so as to prove the immortality of soul. It elaborates his theory of causation. Two chief characteristics of Form are uniqueness and simplicity: they cannot admit their opposites. Soul renders the body alive. It has relation to life and so cannot admit its opposite i.e. death. Thus, soul is proved to be immortal.

"Plato’s doctrine of Recollection is said to be the basis of his argument for the existence of Forms and they in turn are the ground of the final proof of the soul for its immortality". The theory of Recollection gives rise to the consideration that knowledge as wisdom implies for more than sense-perception or the mere functioning of a bodily organ. In general the
kinship of mind with things divine and changeless makes it difficult to believe that its functioning ceases suddenly and for ever long before the body is corrupted. There is also the notion of the nature of life itself, even today unexplained by scientists. What Plato suggests is a spiritual world in addition to the world of matter.

The Meno refers to knowledge in the realm of the eternal being and with the help of the Orphics doctrine of transmigration of souls proves the "immortality of the soul by showing that it partakes of the truth of being". All these aspects come together in Phaedo.

The Apology culminated in the conviction, that "death is 'good' to him who is a 'good' man". Phaedo transforms this view into a new context where in Apology, it was concealed behind the simple world 'good' and is revealed as a realm of Forms. It is made secured in the knowledge that the soul by its very nature belong to the world of "eternal Forms, of true being, of the good, of transcendence".

3.2.3 Problem Taken Care of in Phaedo

A closer look at Phaedo makes it clear that Plato advances initially popular and materialistic concept of the soul. According to him, the Universe itself is represented as being in continuous movement between opposites. It may be recalled here that this aspect of nature is dominant in the theories of Heraclitus and Empedocles. It is the view of "natural
philosophy according to which it may be inferred from the perennial transformation of life and death, or from the cyclical movement of becoming, "that the souls must exist somewhere and be reborn thence".

The materialistic conception has two defects. In a large number of opposites, there is a state 'between' the opposites. But in the opposites of life and death or death and life, there is no state 'between. There is a difference between what is absolute and what is relative. The second defect is that the separate nature of soul has been ignored. Life and death are envisaged as purely natural phenomena like sleeping and waking. What is lacking in this view is that the 'soul' conceived as the (rational) self whose preservation is a matter of concern to man caring about his fate.

The fear that the soul might be dispersed arises within the concepts of natural philosophy. Empedocles, Anaxagoras and the Atomists had used the concepts of combination and separation in their conception of bodies as atoms. According to Democritus what is composite may be broken into its component parts, but what is not composite is indestructible. So Plato contrasts the visible, composite nature of the physical objects with the kind of being which is invisible, in composite and non-physical and that is attributed to the eternal Forms. These two types of beings are coordinated to the body and soul of man.
"The three fold link connecting knowledge as Forms, mythical eschatology, and moral demand is deeply grounded throughout Phaedo as a whole". The eschatology rests on the distinction between body and soul. The pure soul of the philosopher which practices death, departs into the realm it resembles, i.e. the invisible, divine, immortal and intelligible. It is released from the body and from its wanderings. The soul that is uncleaned and weighted down by the body is dragged back into the visible world, and depending upon its character, is reincarnated in various physical shapes.

These visions of the beyond which are interspersed with repeated occurrences of the world 'probable' are connected by means of a "moral theme". This theme is clear from the very beginning of the dialogue. Socrates calls a turning away from pleasure, pain, desire and fear that obscure the clarity of knowledge and bind the soul to the body.

The problem of death and immortality surveyed by Plato's character Socrates consists of three stages. The first stage represents the "passionate search for a solution to the problem in the context of natural philosophy or science." Physical principles are used to explain nature. Mind or spirit including knowledge itself, appears as the result of physical causes. The second stage introduces the "concept of 'mind' by Anaxagoras". It provide an explanation of the nature by which every phenomenon is interpreted according to the principle of good, or perfect order of the whole. The third stage represents a "change in direction from the things we turn to
the 'logoi' to thoughts, concepts and definitions"\textsuperscript{13} in the meaning of this Greek term 'pure reason'.

What is described in Phaedo then is the development of Greek philosophy from Thales to Plato. The conversation that the soul rises beyond the level on which concepts derived from natural sciences predominate and reaches the level of pure philosophy of Forms. The final proof of immortality of soul rests on the foundation of this method.

3.2.4 Arguments for Immortality

"Of the various arguments adduced in Phaedo in support of the claim that the soul is immortal, Plato probably regarded 'Doctrine of Forms' as satisfactory and convincing. The others merely prepare for it, and help to understand it when it comes"\textsuperscript{14}.

No argument on purely mechanistic lines can suffice such a ground. The first argument for immortality in Phaedo goes like this: the term 'dead' logically implies that the object which is dead has previously been 'living' and which is living has previously been dead. It suggests that the souls must exist somewhere after death, waiting to be born again. If the reciprocal process of passing from the 'dead' to the 'living' does not take place, then sooner or later there would be no more births. "These principles may be called, respectively the law of alternation and the law of compensation"\textsuperscript{15}.

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But this does not warrant that souls after death retain intelligence; this is provided by another argument which is derived from the theory of 'Recollection'. Man entertains conception of various kinds of perfection, such as perfect 'equality', though he has never perceived anything that is exact or perfect on this earth. This conception must result from latent knowledge, acquired before birth of which he is reminded through sense-perception. This implies that soul existed before birth and had intelligence.

The treatment of the next 'proof' the argument from 'Affinity' makes it clear that Plato regarded the soul as being of an altogether different place from physical phenomenon. "The emphatic rejection of mechanistic causes as a satisfactory explanation of anything makes it most unlikely that Plato could have been satisfied with a demonstration of the soul's immortality based entirely on mechanistic principles." It is likely that in presenting this cyclical argument Plato believed that it was as sound as any argument of probability on mechanistic lines could be, and he presented it in order to show those who were impressed by mechanistic argument that even on their premises the immortality of the soul could be plausibly defended.

"The argument from 'Affinity' that the body is visible but the soul is invisible, and soul is therefore more likely to be akin to the class of things that are invariable and constant and incomposite". Of the two components of man, the body seems to have affinity with the visible world of changing physical phenomena, while the soul has affinity with the invisible
world of things unchanging and divine. Soul is therefore, indissoluble. It can hardly be supposed that while even the body remains for a considerable time after death, the soul must perish at once.

This, indeed, does not constitute a final demonstrative proof for the immortality of the soul. Plato's primary intention is simply to emphasize the peculiar nature of the objects with which his arguments are concerned. Soul is not like ordinary physical phenomena, but something that has strong affinity with a very different class of things viz. psyche.

The soul is thus brought into relation with the theory of Forms and Plato proceeds from purely mechanistic argument towards the metaphysical reasonings on which his final proof is based in Phaedo. Platonic 'Forms' are shown to be causes of things. Everything that an object is or does will be the participation of in some 'Form' or 'Forms' and no 'Form' can ever take upon itself from the nature of its opposite, if it has one. For this reason, although two opposite Forms can be simultaneously represented in one sensible, nevertheless when an object possesses a certain quality as an essential attribute, it cannot partake of the quality opposite to that and still remain what it was before. At the approach of heat, snow melts, or as Plato would say, the snow perishes or withdraws, and something else (water) is generated.
According to Plato this same principle can be applied to soul. Soul is essentially alive, by definition, it is that which gives life to body, hence soul cannot 'admit' the opposite of life - namely death. At the approach of death it must either 'withdraw or perish'. In as much as it does not 'admit' death, it may be called 'deathless'.

That which cannot admit death must surely be everlasting. So annihilation (being annihilated) is contradictory to the essential quality of soul. Perishing or annihilation would involve cessation which would in turn involve death. Hence the possibility of 'perishing' in this case is ruled out, and accordingly in the approach of death soul 'withdraws'.

3.2.5 Plato's Later ‘Proofs of Immortality’

In Symposium Plato teaches 'that which is mortal can only achieve immortality vicariously'. The kind of immortality for which even the philosophers can hope is nothing but a vicarious self perpetuation. Having beheld the Form of the Beautiful, he can beget true virtue in something else which is the soul. This would mean that Plato temporarily abandoned the inter-dependence of individual immortality and the doctrine of Forms as announced in Phaedo and also the doctrine of Recollection. It is not to be supposed here that Plato's arguments are inadequate but additional proof might help to create inner conviction. There are two such 'proofs'- one in Republic and other in Phaedrus, which is amplified in the tenth book of the Laws.
At the end of the Republic, Plato argues that "nothing can be destroyed except by its own peculiar 'evil'. The soul's special 'evil' is moral wickedness or vice. But moral evil will not destroy soul in the way in which disease can destroy a body". Nothing other than its own peculiar 'evil' can be supposed to destroy it, so the conclusion is that soul is wholly indestructible. Plato makes an assumption that soul is not part of, or in any way dependent upon the body, because he tacitly assumes that soul is that which brings life to the body.

In the Laws, Plato argues that Soul is identified with self-moving motion and found to be the origin of all movement and all change and therefore immortal. But in Phaedrus, the argument rests upon the claim that "what is always in motion is immortal and what moves itself can never cease to move".

The tendency in Plato's later works and in the works of Aristotle and others just before and after Plato's death, was to develop the theme upon which it is based that 'like knows like' - which is gradual development of the argument from Affinity in Phaedo which suggest that soul is immortal. This tendency further assimilates the conception of man's cognizing 'soul' to the divine objects of his cognition - including God himself. Man must practice becoming like God, the effort of practicising virtue will help him to a fuller comprehension of truth and the perfection which he finally attains will bring with it an understanding of the nature both of his own soul and of God.
It is in accordance with this outlook that by giving the divine element within us the freedom to maintain itself and to contemplate the divine can we hope to acquire understanding of ourselves, and therewith certainty of the immortality of the soul. “Now-a-days we think of intellect and spirit as quite distinct, but for Plato ‘soul’ included both. It was in the highest degree rational, and at the same time capable of experiencing the most intense spiritual rapture in the apprehension of divine truth”.20

3.2.6 Belief in the Immortality of Soul

To sum up, belief in the immortality of soul in Phaedo is supported by three main arguments:

The first argument is based on rebirth. This is but a particular example of the general principle that all things are born from their opposites. Living souls then come from souls that are dead and dead from the living. In this general principle, “double journey of soul is accepted from death to life as well from life to death”.21

The second argument is based on the doctrine of Recollection and on the existence of ideas which are objects of recollection. Once it is admitted that the Form exists and that knowledge is the recollection of Forms which are caused by perception, then the existence of soul before birth also necessarily follows. And if it exists before death it strengthens the first argument that it exists after death.
The third and last argument too is based on the ‘Theory of Ideas’. Granted the existence of ‘Ideas’, these have two kinds of existence; “the one of simple, eternal, unchanging Forms - the objects of knowledge; the other of particulars, composite, mortal and ever-changing”. The first is divine, the other is not. Which of the two does the soul resemble? As its very nature is to rule over the body and to apprehend the Form, it must be similar to the Forms and akin to divine. So it is simple and not composite. It is therefore to be indissoluble.

These arguments in Phaedo are largely based on the simple and uniform nature of the soul and its kinship with Forms. In other works, like in Phaedrus and in Republic, the soul is shown to be a multiplicity of parts and its functions. If these arguments no longer holds true then Plato brings a new argument which is that of the characteristic evil of each thing. The evil in the soul, according to Plato, is rooted in injustice, intemperance, cowardice and ignorance (the opposite of the four virtues). But a man’s soul cannot be destroyed by them. Plato fully realizes that this does not solve of the question. Since a bad man with these evil continues to live, therefore the soul is immortal, for physical disease, being the peculiar evil of the body and not of the soul cannot but kill only the body. Which part of the soul is immortal? He merely asserts his belief that the essential part of the soul (its immortal part) cannot be the whole of what in the Republic has been included under Psyche. For Plato, “the intellect alone is immortal as the most
divine part of the soul. It is the most important "division of the human soul into intellect which is immortal and another, a mortal part".\textsuperscript{23}

As for immortality, the human soul as a whole definitely does not attain it, since part of it is unequivocally stated to be mortal. Human personality ceases to be at death. It is nevertheless clear from "Phaedo to Timaeus that the highest part of the soul the mind or intellect - which has the capacity to apprehend universal truth, does survive".\textsuperscript{24} It lives on, presumably, as a focus of soul-force and is longing for perfection, beauty and truth, which is the ultimate origin of all ordered movement and life in the universe.

A perennial question that arises for serious reflection may be put in the following way: How does the immortal mind keep its individuality? It should be remembered that the motif of the Platonic philosopher is to live on the universal plane to lose himself more and more in the contemplation of truth, so that the perfect psyche would lose itself completely in the universal mind, the world-psyche.

It remains to the individual only in so far as it is imperfect, and personal immortality is not something to aim at, but something to outgrow. In another dialogue Philebus, the "whole universe is regarded as a body endowed with soul".\textsuperscript{25} Just as our bodies are nurtured by the matter of the outside universe and are part of its body, the same is true of the relation
between individual soul and world-soul. In Timaeus, too, the world is taken as “a living being endowed with a soul and mind and accordingly the soul is spread throughout the universe”.  

Plato adheres to the old notion of correlation between microcosm and macrocosm and is further developed. There is a definite correspondence between the world soul and the souls of men. They are made of the same ingredients. It is by the systematic understanding of the motion and rhythm of the universe that man may best induce within himself the appropriate motions of its intelligence.

3.2.7 Critical View - Phaedo

“The philosopher desires death. What is the nature of that death which he desires? Death is the separation of soul and body - and the philosopher desires such a separation. He would like to be freed from the dominion of bodily pleasures and of the senses which are always perturbing his mental vision. He wants the light of mind only to behold the light of truth”. All the evils and impurities and necessities of men come from the body. Death separates him from these impurities which in life he cannot wholly lay aside. Why then should he repine when the hour of separation arrives? Why, if he is dead while he lives, should he fear death, through which alone he can behold wisdom in its purity?
Man expresses his fear when the soul upon leaving the body vanishes like smoke or air. Plato’s answers are founded on a philosophical assumption that all opposites e.g. less-greater, weaker-stronger, sleeping-waking, life-death - are generated out of each other. Nor can the process of generation be only a passage from living to dying, for then all would end in death. The circle of nature is not complete unless the living come from the dead as well as pass to them.

Certain questions pose serious reflections such as what idea can we form of the soul when separated from the body? Or how can the soul be united with the body and still be independent? Is the soul related to the body as the whole to the parts or as the cause to the effect? Shall we say with Aristotle, then that the soul is the entelechy or form of an organised living body? or with Plato, that she has a life of her own? Is the soul related to the body as sight to the eye? Or is the opposition of the soul and body a mere illusion, and the true self is neither soul nor body, but the union of the two in the 'I' which is above them.

“Believing in the Immortality of soul, the position to be answered is the question of Socrates; ‘What is that which is (supposed) to be immortal? Is it the personal or individual element in us, or the spiritual and universal’”? We must ask further what we mean by the word immortality. Regarding the duration of a living being in countless ages we can form no conception. The truest conception which we can form of a future life is a

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state of progress - a progress from evil to good or so to say from ignorance to knowledge.

"The ground of our belief in immortality is said to be the perfection of the divine nature".29 "Thus the belief in the immortality of 'soul' rests at last on the belief in God".30

Doctrine of the immortality of soul has sunk deep into the heart of the human race like other 'eternal ideas of man'. This has a history in time. It is really a deeply rooted instinct. Men are apt to rebel against any examination of the nature and grounds of their belief. But there is a higher spirit that can be gathered from Phaedo, as well as from the other writings of Plato, which says that first principles should be most constantly received, and that the highest subjects demand of us of greatest accuracy.

In the earlier times there was a customary belief rather than a reasoned belief in the immortality of the soul. It was primarily centered around the notion of morality and the order of society. The mass of mankind went on their way busy with the affairs of this life. But in present times the question has been re-opened. It is doubtful whether the belief which was the strongest motive of action in the past can survive the conflict with a scientific age in which rules of evidence are stricter and the mind has become more sensitive to criticism. When we submit the Phaedo to the requirement of logic, the perplexity should not be forgotten.
Freedom-physical freedom, mental freedom and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanisads. By sheer speculation on the meaning of the facts of the external world, the Vedic thinkers had earlier arrived at a unitary conception of the universe, at a materialistic monism, through their concepts of *avyakta*, indeterminate nature, or prana, cosmic energy. But the culminating point of their discoveries was the spiritual unification of all experiences in the Atman or Brahman:

In the words of Bloomfield 'There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the Upanisads'. The Upanisads are thus the perennial spring of strength and creativity in India in long history. This creativity and strength derive from their vision of man as the 'Atman', the eternal infinite dimension of the human personality. Their theme is freedom of the human spirit and their message is fearlessness and love and service. They summon men to realize his essential spiritual nature, and the transcendence of the limitations of finitude.

There is a verse in the Mundaka Upanisad which says "He, the, all-knowing one, the all-seeing one, whose glory is this universe,"31 This Atman, the Self of man, is established in the luminous city of Brahman, which is the heart of man. He manifests as mind and thought; the psychic
and vital energy in the human system functions in and through Him, and, present in the heart, He animates the physical body of man.

The wise ones realizes Him everywhere, inside as well as outside. Him whose form is bliss and immortality and whose glory overflows as the visible universe.

The Upanisads summon man to a constant struggle to gain the highest; the struggle to achieve the eternal, the permanent, the immortal embedded in life and experience. When man achieve self-transcendence, he discovers himself as the Universal Man. He finds that he is one with all, for he has realized the Self in all.

It is the knowledge “by which the imperishable is realized” as Mundaka Upanisad puts it and life achieves all round fulfillment.

3.3.1 General Introduction - Kathopanisad

There are two participants in the dialogue in Kathopanisad; young Nachiketa, the student, and wise Yama, the teacher. Nachiketa is the embodiment of inner discipline and is a lover of truth. He is a child, pure, fresh and fearless, pulsating with life and vigorous. Yama, the god of death, is the master of Self-knowledge. He has pierced the mystery which is hidden in life and death and achieved wisdom and serenity.
The Upanisad sets out the communication of truth which is ‘Death and its Transcendence’ from Yama to Nachiketa. It is approached through the ever present mystery of death. The Upanisad, in its last chapter, concludes its exposition with the statement that Nachiketa has realized the truth for himself and become free and that others also can do likewise.

The Upanisad in its six chapters unfolds a fascinating picture of an young pulsating life, inquisitive and fearless, knocking at the doors of death which is terrible, and extracting from it wisdom which lies beyond life and death. The story is unfolded as to how Nachiketa asked Yama three questions/boons, the last of which related to death and its transcendence. On the basis of this third question the remaining five chapters expound a philosophy which conveys the essential spiritual solution to the problem of death and transcendence.

3.3.2 Death is not all

In verse six of the first chapter, Nachiketa says to his father that like “a blade of grass man dies and is born again. Death is not all”.33 Human life, is at best transitory. The psychological vehicle animated by the spirit is determined by the law of Karma. He who knows himself as the spirit, and not as psychological vehicle is free and is immortal. Rebirth is the law of nature. The unity of life suggests the application of this course to human being also. The doctrine of rebirth is assumed here.

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Nachiketa has no doubt about survival. His problem relates to the condition of the liberated soul. In ‘Svarga’, which is part of the manifested universe, the immortality may be endlessness but not eternity. Whatever is manifest will sooner or later enter into that from whom it emerged. Yet as the duration in Svarga-loka is incalculable, the dwellers in it are said to be immortal. They may continue as long as the manifested world dies.

Nachiketa’s third and last question is formulated in well chosen words, “When a man dies there is this doubt, some say that he exists; some (others) say that he does not exist. This should I like to know, being taught by you. Of the boons, this is (my) third boon.”

It is the phenomenon of death that makes us ask questions about life. Nachiketa thinks that an answer to this question alone can make life meaningful and worthwhile. Nachiketa’s question relating to this significant theme to Yama was like the bursting of a bombshell. In this question, Nachiketa portrays the human aspiration to reach the eternal as the goal; he is attempting to find safety from the ills and anxieties of finite experiences. So long as death is in power, man cannot enjoy wealth and life for the fear of death destroys the zest for living. So Nachiketa asks for self-knowledge (atma-vijnanam), which is beyond the power of the destruction which follows in death.
3.3.3 Secret of Death is Immortality

What Nachiketa is doubtful about is with regard to the state of liberation? What is secret of death? What is liberation? What is the nature of eternal reality? What is man’s relation to it? These questions naturally intertwined each other. He is asking about the state of departure from which there is no return.

Yama tries to dissuade Nachiketa not to insist him on explaining about the third boon. He is ready to grant any other thing in place of it. But Nachiketa categorically but politely tells Yama about his resolution to know about the supreme theme of death. According to Nachiketa a person cannot be attracted by an earthly life of passion and greed if he comes to know that there is joy in a life hereafter. No one who has a foretaste of that which does not perish nor change would find pleasure in earthly delights.

Yama begins his exposition with a pointed reference to the good life as the ethical precondition to spiritual realization. But good life is not an ultimate, nor an end in itself, it must lead to the realisation of the Atman, the true self of man which is birthless and deathless and said to be the spiritual reality both in man and in the universe. Avidya or ignorance is therefore concerned with the pleasanter and vidya or wisdom with the good. "(Preyas and Sreyas)".35
He who is filled with selfish desires and attracted by worldly possessions becomes subject to the law of *Karma* which leads him from birth to birth and so is under the control of Yama. Kathopanisad in its last chapter exhorts us that "when all desires that cling to one's heart will fall away, then this very mortal man will become immortal and experiences Brahman here (in this world)."³⁶

The Upanisad further advises that man will not taste immortality without overcoming the foolish delusion arising from the possession of material wealth. He will only experience death again and again. 'They come into my clutches again, says Yama, the god of death.' The death of body is not the only form of death; nor is it so serious for a being so high in the scale of evolution as man, but spiritual death is a more serious matter.

3.3.4 *Eternal Dimension to Reality*

Yama continues to exhort in the fourth chapter that "the wise do not seek eternal in the world of the non-eternal".³⁷ An eternal dimension to reality is primarily to be sought 'within' and not 'without'. Body is affected by the 'six-fold waves of change' as *Vedanta* in general expresses it, namely, birth, existence growth, transformation, decay and destruction; this is also true of the entire world of outer nature. These belong to the category of change, that is to say, they are under the realm of 'death'. They are conditioned by time because they are subject to cause and effect. Resultantly, the changeless and immortal cannot be sought in the world of changes and decay.
Nachiketa is in search of the changeless and the eternal, hidden in the world of change and death. Knowledge of the changeless is the only key to the knowledge of the changeful which, otherwise, will ever remain a mystery. It is the search for the amrita - the immortal, and this search is always inward; hence its attainment is made possible through yoga and meditation on the inner self.

The nature of Atman or Brahman gained through the discipline of mind is described unequivocally in the second chapter of the Kathopanisad. According to the Upanisad, the self constitutes the inner reality of each individual. It is without a cause and is therefore changeless. When it knows itself as the spirit and ceases to know of itself as bound up with any name or form, it realizes its true nature. This is the answer to the question of Nachiketa regarding the mystery of death. The self is eternal and hence death does not refer to it. In the Upanisadic terms, ‘He is not slain when the body is slain. He neither slays nor is he slain’.

He who is freed from sorrow, through the tranquillity of mind and senses, sees the greatness of the Self. Such a discerning man beholds or realizes Him. And with such a realization death does not affect him. What is subject to death does not belong to him. He is merely a witness to the phenomenal world which is subject to death. The phenomenal world is not ‘Self’. The Self is apprehended through the transcendence of phenomenal world by the perceiver.
3.3.5 Nature of Witness Self or Atman

The witness self or atman cannot be attained by learning the scriptures, nor by a sharp intellect, nor by much instructions. "It is attained by him whom it chooses to him; this Atman reveals its own (true) form".38 The Self reveals its true character to that who seeks it exclusively. The Self, as the nature of self-consciousness, cannot be known by the mind because it is that in and through which the mind itself knows and functions. To reiterate what we have discussed so far self-knowledge is depicted in the Upanisads as the knowledge of the oneness of the Universal Atman (i.e., Brahman) and the individual atman. The dialectics of it is expressed by Sankara in the following words: "As long as the knowledge of the self which is to be sought after has not arisen, so long the self is a knower, but the same knower will turn out to be the 'Self' sought after, free from all evil and blemish."39

3.3.6 Various Layers of Truth of Atman

Yama expounds to Nachiketa the various layers concerning the truth of Atman. Starting from the body and the environing world, each succeeding inner layer is shown as being more subtle and accordingly more immense and inward than the preceding one. All these layers are finite and subject to change. At the innermost core of them all is the Atman or the purusha, the ever pure, ever free, ever awake and infinite Self of man which is also the infinite Self of the Universe.
Although Atman is present in every being, it is not an object, but the subject or the knower. As the eternal subject it is the ever-present datum of experience and not a mere logical construction. Thus Yama describes the subtle nature of Atman, realizing of which one is liberated from the jaws of death. This dimension of realization of Atman is soundless, touchless, formless and thus imperishable. The Upanisad advances this theory which is beyond the sway of subject-object coordinate predication. Similarly "it is without taste, without smell, eternal, beginningless and endless (even) beyond the mahat, and immutable. Once this is realized, one is liberated from the jaws of death".40

Yama further elaborates that Atman is not manifest in the objects. The reason being that the self-existent Lord created the sense organs (including the mind) with the defect of an out-going disposition; therefore (man) perceives (things) outwardly, but not the inward Self. A certain 'dhira' (wise man), desirous of immortality, turns his senses (including the mind) inward and realizes the inner self. Self understood as above, is of the nature of pure consciousness and immutable. It is infinite and non-dual. This identity theory of the Self is not a bare idea, nor an abstraction because it is reached by overcoming the differentiating attributes of two concrete beings (not just two heuristic ideas) that is, the soul and the Supreme Spirit.
Nachiketa is raising one of the most important problems that affects the human mind namely what happens to the soul after the falling away of the physical body. This question is such that, man from time immemorial and all ages has asked time and again. Every human being who leaves this world undoubtedly is the fore-runner of many who have to follow them. The body seems to fall down. What vestige remains behind the Soul which so long inspired it is an awe to the homo-sapiens. Are they right who say that along with the body, the soul too ceases to be? Does it continue to live in a future state of existence? These questions trouble every human being who has suffered the pangs of the loss of persons whom he has cherished almost as dearly as his own life.

It may be said that Nachiketa questions to Yama i.e. from Death itself is out of the experiences of the eschatological thoughts of mankind in general. The answers which the God of Death gives to the queries of Nachiketa are assertions about the immortality and imperishability of the human soul. He who thinks that this world alone matters comes under the sway of death. The Soul neither comes from anything nor does anything comes out of it. It is unborn and eternal. It has existed from all eternity. It neither kills nor is killed. Many souls have to take on a body repeatedly, while some others inhabit the lower world of existence.
The liberated soul, on the other hand is able to throw off his mortal coil finally. Immortality comes only to him who has succeeded in throwing away his desires so as to attain communion with ‘Paramatman’.

The yama - Nachiketa dialogue may not be considered merely as the eschatological search about the state of the Soul after death. A critical philosophical mind may regard this problem from a different perspective. That is to say that ethics must be eschatological. The question of death and immortality is fundamental to a personalistic ethics and confronts us in every act and expression of life as it was happened to Nachiketa. Insensitiveness to death and forgetfulness of it mean eventually insensitiveness to personality and to its eternal destiny, as well as insensitiveness to the destiny of the world as a whole. It amounts to the saying that a theory of ethics which does not regard death of its central problem has no value and is lacking in depth and earnestness. As it is understood from the dialogue of Nachiketa with Yama, Nachiketa did not frame his questions especially the third one not with a prospect to happiness in an unending life over the world, but in view of an inevitable death and victory over death, so to say, of an eternal life. Thus we may say that creative ethics does not undergird the creation of temporary and transitory values which helps us to forget death, but to the creation of eternal, permanent immortal values which further the victory of eternity and prepare man towards that end.
In Kathopanisad we find another inquiry, which is pertaining to the question as to what happens to the soul in the state of dream. What is it that keeps itself awake in man when the bodily tenament seems to have gone to rest in the state of sleep? This is another approach to the problem of death. The state of dream is regarded as a miniature form of the state of death. Yama says that they alone are happy who identify the universal Self i.e. the Self within. From death to death does he go, he tells us, who sees that there is difference and distinction in the world, implying thereby that the world must be understood as a complete unity. World could not be a unity unless it were permeated by the same immanent principle. Same universal spirit manifest itself in all being and is yet transcendent. To sum up Universal spirit is both immanent and transcendent.

3.4 PHAEDO AND KATHOPANISAD - A COMPARISON

In Plato we have the idea of a soul substance immortal in its own right. We find in Plato the view that soul is not quite eternal like the divine ideas. It partakes in their nature and must train itself by exercising its highest faculties in order to have immortal thoughts and identify itself with the eternal world by entering into it.

His proofs in Phaedo from recollection and from the soul’s kinship with God prove the eternity of impersonal reason and not of the individual self.
There is another doctrine in Phaedo involving pre-existence and post-existence which are concepts possessing meaning only with regard to the temporal life of the soul. There is a doctrine in Symposium, which is not concerned about future life, but on timeless existence, attainable here and now by escaping from the flux of time. These two conceptions, that is perpetuity which is a form of time is different from eternity which is timeless is a jump across the abyss, a mysterious escape from time itself. This paradox of time and eternity exists for the destiny both of the world and of the individual. Eternal and immortal life may be objectified and naturalized and then it is spoken of as a life in the world beyond. The eternal and immortal life may be regarded from within and need not be objectified, as we usually do, is essentially different in quality from the natural and even the supernatural existence. It is a spiritual life in which eternity is attained while still in time. Eternal life then is also revealed in time; it may unfold itself in every instant as an eternal present. Looked at in this way, we may say that eternal life need not be a future life but life in the present or so to say life in the depths of an instant of time. Positively considered, eternity and immortality are a deliverance from time.

When the Upanisads and Plato affirm the reality of divinity in man, they have in mind the possibility of releasing the divine quality through the apparatus of mind and body.
There is a similarity of thought between Plato and the prophets of the Upanisads. Such similarities are all the more interesting and perhaps so as we cannot ascribe them either to the community of languages or to historical traditions. We can only account for them by the common human nature which seems to frame these ideas by certain inward necessities, though without any tangible evidence in support of any of them.

Further there is a similarity in the ethical dimension of Phaedo and Kathopanisad. The argument of ethical character may be described as the aspiration of the soul towards a higher being. Like the Oriental mystic or Christian Saint, the philosopher or the seeker in the world is seeking to withdraw from impurities of the senses to leave the world and the things of the world and find his higher self. Plato recognises in these aspirations the foretaste of immortality. This is similar to the concepts of ‘Sreyas and Preyas’ in Kathopanisad.

Plato like the authors of the Upanisads emphasizes the fate of the soul after death with authority. Similarity between Plato’s language and that of the Upanisads is sometimes very startling as both traditions like to cloth their views on the soul in mythological phraeseology. They used such language to express a deep truth which is difficult to express otherwise in plain and simple language.
3.5. CONCLUSION

This chapter was purported to examine the notion of death and transcendence so as to examine and understand the puzzling phenomenon of Immortality. Resultantly we have scanned the literature choosing Phaedo from Greek tradition and Kathopanisad from Indian tradition, to bring to our attention some of the pitfalls to which one is prone to while trying to determine the character of death and immortality. It is understood that Immortality as contemplated in the past is absolutely different from what we think about it in the present time. Since Renaissance on the advent of Humanism and scientific inquiry, man no more believes in Immortality in the sense of life - hearafter in heaven or in some transcendent being beyond itself. Rather the idea of personal Immortality is altogether alien to man’s consciousness. Once man is certain that life on earth is the ‘be all and end all’ of his existence, he becomes aware of his finiteness and time-consciousness follows as a result in one’s being. Death as the other end of life is conceived in terms of temporality. For Existentialists, existence and temporality becomes synonymous. Hence the next chapter of our thesis is oriented to explicate the notions of death and temporality in order to inquire whether human existence as a temporal phenomenon has some meaning or value in the life of an individual?
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