

“hīranmayena patrena  
satyasyāpīhitam mukham  
tat tvam pushann apavrinu  
satya-dharmaya drishtaye”

**The non-necessity of seeing the Golden Effulgence of Yahweh: preliminary thoughts on the Isha Upanishad’s effect on contemporary Hinduism.**

Contemporary Hinduism has failed to keep up with the times. It is really a potpourri of monism, theism, deism and burdened with the detritus of superstitions. Right wing fanatics are unwilling to structurally scrutinise Hinduism and without having the techne of the likes of Wendy Doniger they attack her. Unless we apply well established Biblical methods of scholarship (specifically, Biblical hermeneutics) to the *Upanishads* we will be still debating what finally went wrong with Hinduism and soon enough, it will be relegated to mythology as has happened to both the Egyptian and Greek religions. This is where the *Isha Upanishad* will be of use. At least, in three counts it can serve contemporary Hinduism. Firstly, it can be used, as will be shown below, as a method to dialogue with the Semitic religions. We will have scope to discuss this Upanishad with the *Gospel of Glory* and therefore show how Hinduism is a religion which foresees the coming of Christ. Secondly, we will use this *Upanishad* to construct a Hindu theology thereby debunking the myths of the likes of R. S. Sugirtharajah who believe that Hinduism really does not exist (see his *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001). Finally, we will have scope to see this *Upanishad* as a tool to interrogate literary texts produced now both in India and in the US.

The beginning of John’s *Gospel* tells us that it was the Word which was *sui generis*. *Genesis* tells us that in the beginning was *Tohu wa bohu*. This *Upanishad* tells us that in the beginning was everything that was necessary: *purnam*. As is in *Genesis*, this

*Upanishad* says that God is in everything, envelopes everything and is the self-emanating Creator. Further as is found in the *Psalms*, Yahweh is even in Hell. So we see that from *Genesis*, to the *Psalms* of the Bible, to the *Gospel* of St. John, the essence of this particular *Upanishad* is elaborated. This is not how Biblical exegetes see the *Upanishads* (see the works of the Jesuits Johannes and Dandoy). They try to show how the *Upanishads* are complementary to the Christ-event. But the point here is that a close reading of this *Upanishad* will show how it may have influenced the Biblical corpus in its entirety through paths yet unmapped. This *Upanishad* even clarifies that there are hells; there are hellish beings and yet God is everywhere. It is generally understood that the Bible had little to do with Hinduism in its days of canonical formation. But we now need to show how through accretion, movement of peoples like the Hittites, this *Upanishad* may have influenced the entire Bible. To do so here is beyond the scope of this paper.

Theology is not a very well understood term within Hinduism. But this author had tried to gesture towards the need for a Hindu theology in his own [\*Reflections on Hindu Theology\*](#), the *Isha Upanishad* is one of the most nuanced *Upanishads* regarding the nature of the Supreme Godhead: verses 4 & 5 condense the theistic understanding of the Supreme Godhead. It is a claim made by the Semitic religions that the Supreme Godhead intervenes in history, both the metanarratives of history and narrative of one's own salvation, in very personal manner. Christian theologians debate on the attributeless nature of God and God's nature with attributes. This *Upanishad* shows that God is faster than the mind; very close to us (akin to the theology of Jürgen Moltmann) and yet, very far indeed from those who are enmeshed in the senses (again we can refer to Thomas Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*). The point here is that this *Upanishad* is the beginning of what is known as systematic theology within Christianity. It simultaneously engages with eschatology and at the end reinforces what much later the Rhineland mystics will advocate: devotion to God. Again I am

eschewing the *bhakti* movement in India in reference to this Upanishad since one needs to prove how this *Upanishad* may be of use to contemporary Hinduism.

Now the greatest tragedy that contemporary Hinduism faces is that our intellectuals know their Agamben from their Derrida. But they simply cannot go beyond Vedanta, at the most, to interrogate say the works of Stephen King. It is interesting to note that this *Upanishad* speaks of various categories of beings which are to be also found in the various *Tantras*. In verse 14, we have this mention of this creation which cannot be certainly said to be a sublation (sic). It is very real in the sense that as I type this paper in hinterland India, a beast called ISIS is slouching toward London to destroy it (W. B. Yeats reworked!). In this sense the world is very real. No monistic stand can prove that someone is not reading this paper while grading it. So by the very act of reading, we negate Advaita Vedanta and give credence to dualism and in this case tri-logism. I write, you read and the Word processor carries forth this message to you. So a triad is formed. Which means that the *Tantras* may be more true to reality as experienced in the here and the now than the truth of the immediate need to *see* God's dazzling effulgence (verse 15). Therefore, when we read the works of Stephen King and watch his gory movies why do we only refer to Freud's understanding of the uncanny? Why not also refer to Jung's understanding of the much misunderstood concept of synchronicity? Is it possible that this *Upanishad* should be taught globally as a methodological lens for interrogating cult horror fiction? Hinduism is not the patrimony of sectarian crackpots. It is the ontological method of finding knowledge; that is, it is the methodology of *seeing* (it is epistemic ontology). This *Upanishad* is short enough, deep enough and culturally replete with ancient and contemporary signifiers to be now included in non-Indic syllabi globally. That is how it can help modern Hinduism. It will do not good to be confined either to this course; or to Indologists who speak Sanskrit, but should be out in the open for a more thinking audience to consume.

