

*Cosmogony – A Philosophical Odyssey: Juxtaposition of the Cultural Legend of the Shukla and Krishna Yajur Veda With Their Upanishadic Literary Genre*

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**Abstract**

Despite the abundance of investigations on Upanishads, there is a need for more research on their cosmogonical ideas in the framework of a causal relationship between the creator and creation. This study is significant because of its purpose and method of inquiry: it compares the primary Upanishads associated with the Shukla and Krishna Yajur Vedas within the premise of their cultural legend. The authors assert that such an approach can help determine whether the cosmogonical considerations in the Upanishads reflect the known cultural (geographical and historical) differences between the two branches of the Yajur Veda. Based on its findings, this paper concludes that: (i) not only are notions of creator-causality-creation embedded in the Upanishads, but they are also interconnected; (ii) the discussion of causality has an element of association with anthropocentric considerations; and (iii) a discernible pattern of cosmogonical conceptions emerges, consistent with the cultural legend of Shukla and Krishna Yajur Veda. Furthermore, the Upanishads demonstrated similarities in their perspectives of the omnipresent creator, the creator's causal role, and the creation process. In comparison, the Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads predominantly focus on the creator's description, whereas the Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads mainly focus on the transformation of the creator into the creation.

Keywords: Cosmogony, Creator, Causality, Creation, Yajur Veda, Upanishads, Cultural Legend

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## 1. Introduction

One of ancient India's most remarkable contributions is the Vedic genre of literature<sup>1</sup>, which has not only engaged the religious and philosophical mind space for millennia but also enticed literary scholars and enthusiasts. The beauty of the Sanskrit language in the Vedic texts reveals itself in refreshing greatness whenever anyone engages, underscoring their perpetuity. The Vedic corpus comprises the Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva Vedas arranged in four different sub-genres: the Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads, depending on their purpose. The following infographic (Figure 1) provides an overview of the textual arrangement of the Vedic corpus. Intriguingly, only the Yajur Veda has two versions: the Shukla (SYV) and Krishna (KYV).

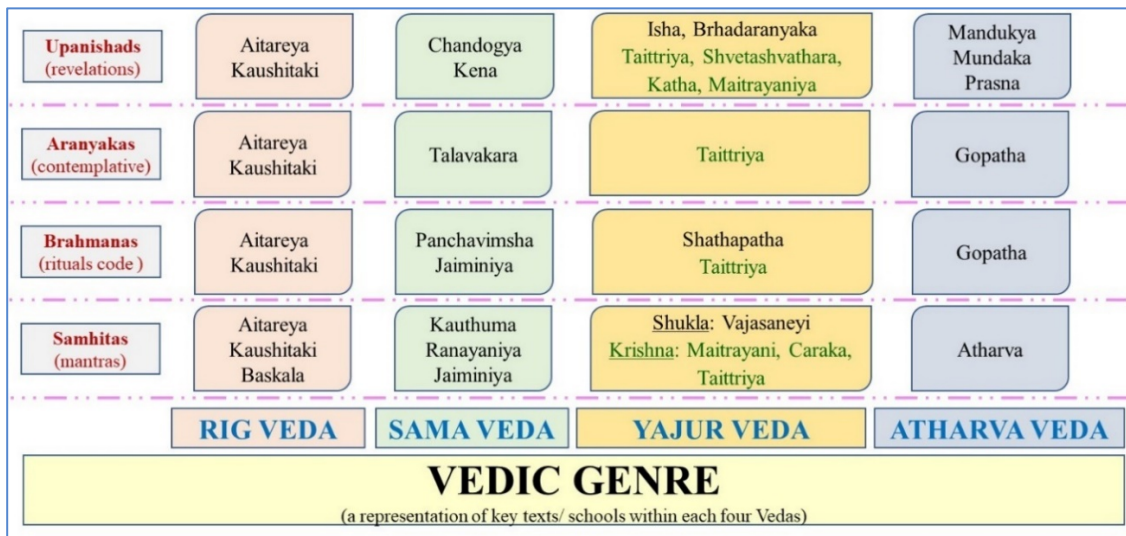


Figure 1: Overview of Vedic Genre of Literature<sup>2</sup>

Although the cultural legend associated with the SYV and KYV has a vital connection to the Puranic genre of literature, the predominant view among the extant literature<sup>3</sup> points to the differentiation in terms of (a) extensive geographical usage – Shukla in the north and Krishna in the south India; (b) arrangement of contents; and (c) the primary purpose of the application of the texts. The following infographic (Figure 2) summarizes the cultural legend of SYV and KYV using a concept map.

<sup>1</sup> A general introduction to the Vedic literature is available in many books, journals, and compendiums. Some useful references include (i) Dandekar, R. N. "VEDIC LITERATURE: A Quick Overview." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 81, no. 1/4 (2000): 1–13. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41694604>; (ii) Jamison, S. W., & Witzel, M. (2003). *Vedic Hinduism. The study of Hinduism*, 65-113. <https://www.ms.uky.edu/~sohum/sanskrit/vedica.pdf>; (iii) *The Vedas*. (2016). 12th edition. India: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.; (iv) Paliwal, B. B. (2005). *Message of the Vedas*. Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 reproduced from my PhD thesis. Sivaram, S. (2023). *Cosmological Aspects in Scriptures limited to Vedas Puranas and Yoga Vasishta*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/523872>

<sup>3</sup> The following are valuable references involving discussions on cultural legend of SYV and KYV. (i) KARNAWAT, D. R. (2022). RELEVANCE OF VEDIC CONCEPTS IN THE PRESENT SCENARIO. *corpus*, 9(6).; (ii) Sharma, K. C. (2024). *Vedic Literature and Its Universal Concepts: Rishi, Devata and Chanda. The Harvest*, 3(1), 39-48.; (iii) Dalal, R. (2017). *Hinduism and its basic texts: The Vedas, Upanishads, Epics and Puranas*. In *Reading the Sacred Scriptures* (pp. 157-170). Routledge.; (iv) *The story of two Yajur Vedas – The Mythology Project*. (n.d.). <https://themythologyproject.com/the-story-of-two-yajur-vedas/>; and (v) <https://vedicheritage.gov.in/introduction/>.

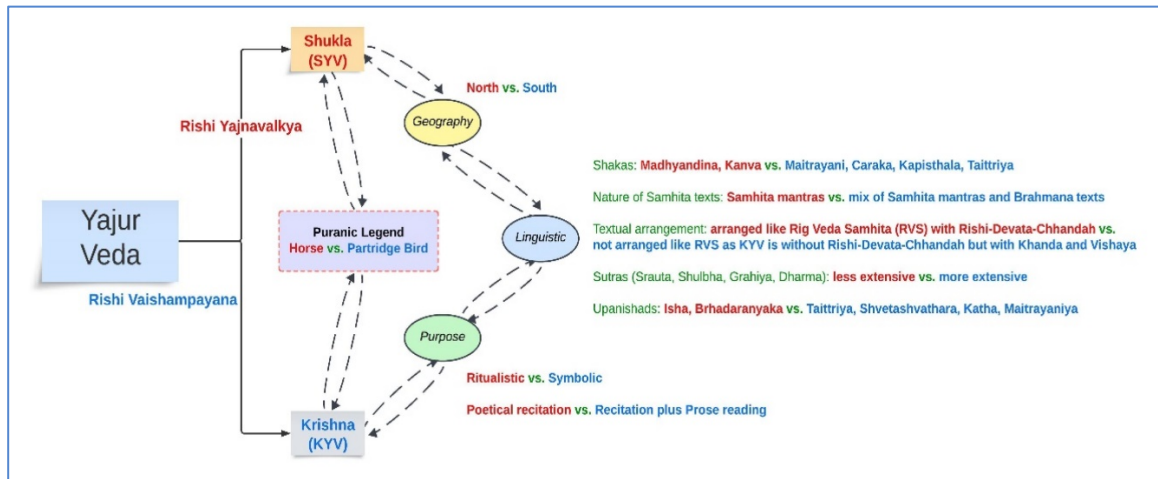


Figure 2: Concept Map of Cultural Legend of SYV and KYV

### 1.1 Purpose and Scope

This research paper aims to anchor on the cultural legend associated with the SYV and KYV and specifically explore select texts of the Upanishadic sub-genre of the two versions of Yajur Veda for cosmogonical notions. This topic can bring Science, Religion, Philosophy, and Literature on the same interaction platform, highlighting the study's potential interdisciplinary nature study. Given the nature of the contents conducive for analysis, the Upanishads present themselves as a promising sub-genre for such discussions.

Accordingly, this research paper aims to compare and analyse the similarities and differences of cosmogonical perspectives among the six principal Upanishads of Yajur Veda. This study is significant not just because of its purpose but also due to the method of comparative inquiry. Moreover, the authors assert that such an approach can help determine how the cultural legend associated with the two versions of the Yajur Veda represents cosmogonical considerations in the Upanishads. This work's objectives are:

- a) To understand and compare how the six principal Upanishads of SYV and KYV have dealt with fundamental thoughts on theological (that focuses on the nature of the creator) and cosmogonical (that focuses on creation - origin, nature and fate) aspects.
- b) To decipher the causal relationship (cosmogony) between the creator and creation of the six principal Upanishads.
- c) To juxtapose the insights derived from the first and second objectives within the context of the cultural legend associated with the Shukla and Krishna Yajur Veda.

The current research work considers science to be concerned with the study of creation for better clarity, ease of comprehension, and differentiation. However, for the scope of this research paper, creation deals only with cosmogony. On the other hand, theology studies the creator as expressed in the select Upanishads. The authors consider such a simple distinction between creator and creation, which allows this research study to explore the causal relationship more clearly and easily. This understanding is crucial for a more precise comparison of how the chosen Upanishads deal with the creator-causality-creation relationship in the context of the cultural legends associated with the two branches of the Yajur Veda.

## 1.2 Scope and Purpose-Oriented Introduction to Principal Upanishads of Yajur Veda

Among the Vedic genre of literature, many consider Upanishads (Puligandla, 1996; Brereton, 2019; Singh, 2001) as either direct teachings or revelations or self-inquired wisdom. Perhaps this is why Upanishads are an essential philosophical foundation (Rao, 2008) required for 'Shada Darshanas (six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy) – Nyaya, vaisheshika, yoga, Samkhya, Vedanta, and Mimamsa' which play a critical role in communicating the Upanishadic wisdom to society. Of the thirteen principal Upanishads across the four Vedas, SYV has two, and KYV has four.

Brhadaranyaka Upanishad (BrhU) is associated with the SYV; its name translates to 'the great forest'. It occurs as part of Sathapatha Brahmana of the SYV. BrhU is known for many philosophical ideas, including the mahavakya (great sayings) "*aham brahmasmi*" – a key phrase of Advaita, a non-duality philosophical school (BrhU\_1.4.10). BrhU also has the popular invocation prayers "*purnamadah purnamidam...*" (BrhU\_5.1.1) and "*asato ma sadgamaya...*" (BrhU\_1.3.28).

BrhU consists of three khandas (sections) – Madhu Khanda (understanding the individual Self-Atman and Universal Self-Brahman), Muni Khanda (philosophical justification of the teachings), and Khila Khanda (specific modes of worship and meditation). Furthermore, the second Brahmana of the first khanda deals with the Vedic approach to the creation of the Universe (cosmogony).

Ishopanishad (IsU) is also associated with SYV. It is the final (40th) chapter of the Shukla Yajur Veda Samhita and begins with the mahavakya "*īśāvāsyam idam sarvam*" – asserting the omnipresent nature of *brahman*, another famous phrase of Advaita.

Kathopanishad (KaU) is associated with the KYV and is also known as '*kathaka*' Upanishad, which translates to the recitation of a story. KaU's structure is like narration, predominantly involving conversation between Yama and Nachiketa. The '*kathaka*' can also relate to the '*kathaka shakha*' (shakha means a traditional gurukul school for Vedic learning) of the KYV. KaU has the famous slogan, 'Arise, Awake!' (KaU\_3.14).

Maitrayaniya or Maitri Upanishad (MaiU) is also associated with the KYV. It discusses the nature of the mortal elemental Self (matter), which has three gunas (*saguna* – innate nature – sattva, rajas, tamas) and the immortal true Self (Soul), which is *nirguna* (a state beyond gunas). This Upanishad talks about how the union of *saguna* and *nirguna* is achievable. Intriguingly, MaiU asserts that all three trinities, namely the Vedic Trinity (*agni*-Fire, *vāyu*-Air, *āditya*-Sun), the Hindu Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra), and the Trinity of Beings (*kāla*-Time, Praana-Vital Breath, Annam-Food) are the manifestations of one supreme immortal and formless *brahman* (MaiU\_4.5-6).

Shvetaashvatara Upanishad (SvetU), the third associated with the KYV, is attributed to Shvetaashvatara Maharishi, as his name appears in verse 6.21. 'Shvetaashvatara' can be a title given to a rishi – 'shveta' means 'bright/ white' and 'ashvatara' means 'better horse'. Here, the horse symbolizes the sacrificial temperament, renouncing sensory attraction/ repulsion. Thus, Shvetaashvatara can symbolically mean 'one who has attained the brightness (enlightenment) through control of senses and when compared with others is a better human'. Such a derivation aligns with the subject matter explained in this Upanishad. SvetU declares *brahman* (the supreme Soul) as the primal cause of all existence and discusses yoga.

Taittiriya Upanishad (TaittU), the fourth associated with the KYV, is part of Taittiriya Aranyaka and contains the famous mantra "*māṛdevo bhava, pitṛdevo bhava, ācāryadevo bhava, atithidevo bhava*" (TaittU\_1.11.4). It consists of 3 Vallis (sections) – Siksha Valli (educational instructions), Brahma-Ananda Valli (focuses on the importance of realising the Self and discusses five Koshas), and Bhrgu Valli (discusses atman-brahman and what it means to be self-realised).

Beyond elaborate discussions of philosophical concepts, Upanishads are also known for narrations of intriguing metaphysical thoughts (Frazier, 2019), especially relating to cosmology narrated as similes, stories, and analogies. Surprisingly, despite the wealth of knowledge, cosmogonical conceptions in Upanishads still need to be examined, with only a few studies available. One such example (Humphrey, 2015) explores cosmogenesis in Chandogya Upanishad by analysing the teaching of Uddalaka Aruni to his son Svetaketu. Another example (Höchsmann, 2016) combines the study of Upanishadic cosmology with spirituality but not specifically on cosmogony.

Hence, deciphering cosmogonical conceptions in Upanishads calls for more research, especially analysing a possible causal relationship between the creator and creation. This research paper builds on this opportunity.

### **1.3 Methodology**

The nature of this research work requires using a suitable methodology that is amenable to both the (a) versatile interpretation of Upanishadic texts in the context of creator-causality-creation and (b) comparative analysis. Accordingly, the methodology chosen for this work involves using *Pramāṇa Śāstra* (modes of knowledge and understanding – Indian epistemology<sup>4</sup>) to interpret Upanishadic texts.

The Vedic texts are the source of the conceptual basis for using *pramāṇas*. Taittiriya Aranyaka (TaittA\_1.2.1) mentions *pratyaksha* (direct perception), *aitihya* (traditional instructions), and *anumana* (inference, consideration). KaU (2.8 and 2.9) discusses *tarka* (suppositional reasoning, inquiry, confutation). The authors contend that employing *pramaanas* as a methodological framework for comprehending Upanishadic wisdom facilitates a more effective investigation of the research question and helps synthesize insights on creator-causality-creation and deduce thematic patterns.

### **1.4 Textual Analysis**

The analysis section follows the sequence below that establishes the thematic pattern reflecting the essence of the subject matter of the corresponding Upanishadic content. However, due to the texts' voluminous nature, only a few verses are highlighted here based on their significance for this research study:

- Exposition of Creator
- Process of Creation
- Creator-Causality-Creation
- Cyclical Creation and Dissolution

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<sup>4</sup> Phillips, Stephen and Anand Vaidya, "Epistemology in Classical Indian Philosophy", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2024 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2024/entries/epistemology-india/>>.

### 1.4.1 Exposition of Creator

Upanishads' core idea is the creator's omnipresent nature (*brahman* – the unmanifest Supreme Spirit). Ishopanishad (IsU) affirms that One (*ekaṃ*), *brahman*, is all-pervading, unmoving yet moves faster than the mind, is far and near, and is also within and outside everything. Such an explanation of *brahman* is possible through direct perception (*pratyaksha*) of how human minds work and observing the world around us.

Taittiriya Upanishad (TaittU) takes this further. It declares that after creating this Universe, the *brahman* entered it and enveloped everything as form and formless, finite and infinite, defined and undefined, sentient and insentient, real and unreal. Therefore, the following verses imply that the Upanishads view this creation as a manifestation of the unmanifest creator and do not distinguish between creator and creation.

*īśāvāsyam idaṃ sarvam* (IsU\_1)

*anejad ekaṃ manaso javīyo nainaddevā āpnuvanpūrvamarṣat | taddhāvato  
'nyānatyeti tiṣṭhat tasminn apo mātariśvā dadhāti || tad ejati tan najati tad dūre  
tad v antike | tad antar asya sarvasya tad u sarvasyāsyā bāhyataḥ ||* (IsU\_4 and 5)

*idaṃ sarvamasṛjata / yadidaṃ kiñca / tatsṛṣṭvā / tadevānuprāviśat / tadanupraviśya /  
sacca tyaccābhavat / niruktaṃ cāniruktaṃ ca / nilayanaṃ cānilayanaṃ ca / vijñānaṃ  
cāvijñānaṃ ca / satyaṃ cānrtaṃ ca satyamabhavat /* (TaittU\_2.6.1)

Furthermore, Upanishads expand on the unmanifest nature of the creator with an epithet of incomprehensibility using expressions that clearly illustrate the use of *pramaanas* – describing that imperceivable by negating what can be perceived. For example, Kathopanishad (KaU) pronounces that the supreme spirit is primeval (*purāṇo*), neither born nor dies (*ajo*), is eternally present (*nityaḥ śāśvato*), and is beyond reasoning. Maitrayaniya Upanishad (MaiU) posits that the supreme spirit is ungraspable, invisible, and dwelling inside all and visualizes the supreme spirit as Virat Purusha, a concept familiar to the Rig Veda Samhita Purusha Sukta (RV\_10.90).

*na nareṇāvareṇa prokta eṣa suvijñeyo bahudhā cintyamānaḥ / ananyaprokte gati  
atra nāsty añīyān hy atarkyam anupramāṇāt //* (KaU\_2.8 and 2.9)

*na jāyate mriyate vā vipaścin nāyaṃ kutaścin na babhūva kaścit / ajo nityaḥ śāśvato  
'yaṃ purāṇo na hanyate hanyamāne śarīre //* (KaU\_2.18)

*sa vā eṣa sūkṣmo'grāhyo'drśyaḥ puruṣa* (MaiU\_2.5)

In addition to envisioning the *brahman* as omnipresent, Upanishads also forward another unique premise by proclaiming that the supreme spirit is verily the *OM* (also represented as *AUM* phonetically), *akṣaram param*, the absolute supreme sound.

*etad dhy evākṣaram brahma etad dhy evākṣaram param / etad dhy evākṣaram jñātvā  
yo yad icchati tasya tat //* (KaU\_2.16)  
*omiti brahma / omitīdaṃ sarvam /* (TaittU\_1.8.1)

### 1.4.2 Process of Creation

Yajur Veda Upanishads vividly describe the creation process, including the state before the Universe's origin. In this way, the texts indicate that the creator existed before the creation began; there was something and not nothing. MaiU explains that there was darkness (implying imperceptibility) before creation began, and only the Supreme One (that *ekam*) was present. Further, MaiU adds that the One, through self-power, commenced the process by differentiating and manifested itself in manifold creation.

*tamo vā idamekamāsa tatpaścātpareṇeritaṃ viṣayatvaṃ prayātyetadvai rajaso rūpaṃ tadrajaḥ khalvīritaṃ viṣamatvaṃ prayātyetadvai tamaso rūpaṃ tattamaḥ khalvīritaṃ tamasaḥ* (MaiU\_5.2)

The Brhadaranyaka and Taittiriya Upanishads explain how the *atman* (verily the *brahman*) manifests as creation, amounting to the process of transformation of the creator. BrhU explicates that the *atman* divides first into heat (*agni*), then to light (*āditya*), wind (*vāyu*), and finally as life force (Praana). Then *atman* sets forth the time (*kāla*) and expands in every direction in space (verses symbolize this in an anthropocentric manner with various body parts of Viraj – the embodied supreme *brahman*). TaittU elucidates that space was born first from the *atman*, then in the sequence air, fire, water, earth, plants, food, and humans were born. Undoubtedly, TaittU's elucidation also entails an element of anthropocentric consideration while describing the creation process.

*sa tredhātmānaṃ vyakurutādityaṃ tṛtīyaṃ vāyuṃ tṛtīyam | sa eṣa prāṇas tredhāvihitaḥ | tasya prācī dik śiro 'sau cāsau cermāu | athāsya pratīcī dik puccham asau cāsau ca sakthyau | dakṣiṇā codīcī ca pārśve | dyauḥ pṛṣṭham antarikṣam udaram iyam uraḥ | sa eṣo 'psu pratiṣṭhitaḥ | yatra kva caiti tad eva pratiṣṭhaty evaṃ vidvān ||* (BrhU\_1.2.3)

*tasmādvā etasmādātmana ākāśaḥ sambhūtaḥ / ākāśādvāyuḥ / vāyoragniḥ / agnerāpaḥ / adabhyaḥ pṛthivī / pṛthivyā ośadhayaḥ / ośadhībhyonnam / annātpuruṣaḥ /* (TaittU\_2.1.1)

### 1.4.3 Creator-Causality-Creation

The chosen Upanishads consistently explain that the *brahman* (verily the *atman*) is the creator that causes the creation to begin and is the source of everything. BrhU clearly sets this idea and asserts that the *brahman* is the unmanifest (*avyakta*) that self-manifests as the creation. The IsU goes a step further and declares that the One (*ekam*), while remaining unchanged and eternal, causes the constantly changing creation to come into existence, and yet it exists without any cause (*svayambhū*) as a self-existing entity.

*ātmaivedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhaḥ | so 'nuvīkṣya nānyad ātmano 'paśyat | so 'ham asmīty agre vyāharat |* (BrhU\_1.4.1)

*tad dhedaṃ tarhy avyākṛtam āsīt | tan nāmarūpābhyām eva vyākriyatāsau nāmāyam idaṃrūpa iti |* (BrhU\_1.4.7)

*yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāny ātmaivābhūd vijānataḥ | tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvam anupaśyataḥ || sa paryagāc chukram akāyam avraṇam asnāviraṃ śuddham*

*apāpaviddham | kavir manīṣī paribhūḥ svayambhūr yāthātathyator 'thān vyadadhāc chāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ || (IsU\_7 and 8)*

Shvetaashvatara Upanishad (SvetU) has detailed narrations on the unmanifest (*avyakta*) and imperishable (*akṣaram*) creator as the cause (*kāraṇam*) of the manifest (*vyakta*) and perishable (*kṣaram*) creation. SvetU emphasizes how the creator, the one ultimate and primal source, results in this diverse creation (*eko vaśī niṣkriyānām bahūnām ekaṃ bījaṃ bahudhā yaḥ karoti* and *eko bahūnām*).

*saṃyuktam etat kṣaram akṣaram ca vyaktāvyaktaṃ bharate viśvam īśaḥ anīśaś cātmā badhyate bhokṭrbhāvāj jñātvā devaṃ mucyate sarvapāśaiḥ // (SvetU\_1.8)*

*na tasya kaścit patir asti loke na ceśitā naiva ca tasya liṅgaṃ sa kāraṇam karaṇādhipādhipo na cāśya kaścij janitā na cādhipaḥ // (SvetU\_6.9)*

*eko vaśī niṣkriyānām bahūnām ekaṃ bījaṃ bahudhā yaḥ karoti tam ātmasthaṃ ye 'nupaśyanti dhīrās teśāṃ sukhaṃ śāśvataṃ netareśāṃ // nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām eko bahūnām yo vidadhāti kāmān tat kāraṇam sāmkhyaयोगādhighamyam jñātvā devaṃ mucyate sarvapāśaiḥ // (SvetU\_6.12 and 13)*

Intriguingly, SvetU contemplates the causal role of the creator in the creation coming into existence and, in a scientific manner, eliminates possible choices one by one before finally declaring the creator's (*brahman*'s) self-sustaining energy (*devātmaśakti*) as the primal cause.

*kiṃkāraṇam brahma kutaḥ sma jātā jīvāmaḥ kena kva ca saṃpratiṣṭhāḥ adhiṣṭhitāḥ kena sukhetareṣu vartāmahe brahmavido vyavasthām // kālaḥ svabhāvo niyatir yadrcchā bhūtāni yoniḥ puruṣeti cintyam saṃyoga eśāṃ na tv ātmabhāvād ātmā hy anīśaḥ sukhaduḥkhaheṭoḥ // te dhyānayogānugatā apaśyan devātmaśaktiṃ svaguṇair nigūḍhām yaḥ kāraṇāni nikhilāni tāni kālātmayuktāny adhiṣṭhaty ekaḥ // (SvetU\_1.1 to 3)*

Furthermore, SvetU has many enigmatic descriptions of the causal role of the creator (the supreme imperishable unmanifest *brahman*) by proclaiming that, (i) *brahman* is beyond the three divisions of time (implying eternal nature) and still controls time (*kāla*) (ii) *brahman* manifests as the creation of various components of the Universe – space, fire, star, air, moon, water, earth; (iii) *brahman* causes the expansion of this creation; and (iv) *brahman* causes all radiating objects (sun, moon, stars, lightning, fire) in the Universe to shine.

*ādih sa saṃyoganimittahetuḥ paras trikālād akalo 'pi dṛṣṭaḥ taṃ viśvarūpaṃ bhavabhūtam īḍyaṃ devaṃ svacittastham upāśya pūrvam // (SvetU\_6.5)*

*tad evāgnis tad ādityas tad vāyus tad u candramāḥ tad eva śukraṃ tad brahma tad āpas tat prajāpatiḥ // (SvetU\_4.2)*

*yo yoniṃ-yonim adhiṣṭhaty eko yasminn idaṃ saṃ ca vi caiti sarvam tam īśānaṃ varadaṃ devam īḍyaṃ nicāyyemām śāntim atyantam eti // (SvetU\_4.11)*

*yenāvṛtaṃ nityam idaṃ hi sarvaṃ jñāḥ kālakālo guṇī sarvavidyaḥ teneśitaṃ karma vivartate ha pṛthivyāptejo'nilakhāni cintyam // na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratāraḥ*



*nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto 'yam agniḥ tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvaṃ tasya bhāsā sarvaṃ idaṃ vibhāti // (SvetU\_6.2 and 14)*

KaU offers an analogy on the causality by comparing the creator with the invisible roots of the holy fig tree above and the creation as the visible branches below (envisioning an inverted tree). With the branches forming and falling, the roots continue providing the same life-supporting energy from the roots to the branches.

*ūrdhvamūlo avāksākha eṣo 'śvatthaḥ sanātanaḥ / tad eva śukraṃ tad brahma tad evāmṛtam ucyate / tasmiml lokāḥ śritāḥ sarve tad u nātyeti kaścana // etad vai tat // (KaU\_6.1)*

Finally, on the creator-causality-creation relationship, MaiU considers how the time cycle (eons after eons) impacts creation when great oceans go dry, mountain peaks fall, fixed pole stars move away, and the earth gets submerged. Despite the altering nature of this creation, the creator who caused this dynamism remains unaltered.

*atha kimetairvānyānām śoṣaṇaṃ mahārṇavānām śikhariṇām prapataṇaṃ dhruvasya pracalanaṃ sthānaṃ vā tarūṇām nimajjanaṃ pṛthivyāḥ sthānādapasaraṇaṃ // (MaiU\_1.4)*

#### **1.4.4 Cyclical Creation and Dissolution**

Yajur Veda Upanishads have some baffling details on the creation's cyclic nature; therefore, a need arises to describe the state before creation or between dissolution and re-creation. BrhU mentions there was nothing in the beginning, and darkness enveloped everything. Such a state of darkness implies the imperceivable nature of the unmanifest, and 'nothing' may not mean the non-existence of cause but simply an unfathomable state. In such a state, creation as the effect may be indistinguishable from the cause, the creator – when manifestation was yet to begin. TaittU envisions that the trigger for the beginning of creation came from heat (*tapas*) energy, inherent in the unmanifest state of the creator.

*naiveha kiṃ canāgra āsīt | mṛtyunaivedam āvṛtam āsīd aśanāyayā | aśanāyā hi mṛtyuḥ | (BrhU\_1.2.1) sa tapo 'tapyata / sa tapastaptvā / idaṃ sarvamasṛjata / yadidaṃ kiñca / tatsṛṣṭvā / (TaittU\_2.6.1)*

While explaining the creation process, SvetU describes that the cosmic creation (manifestation process) begins from the state of darkness due to intrinsic heat, and *brahman* spreads in all directions through expansion. At the time of dissolution, *brahman* withdraws all the creation through a contraction into itself. This Upanishadic notion indicates the cosmic cycle of creation-dissolution-re-creation. Remarkably, SvetU uses an analogy to explain this idea by saying that *brahman*, as the supreme radiance, is without any colour and, with its inherent power, distributes manifold colours in the creation process.

*ya eko 'varṇo bahudhā śaktiyogād varṇān anekān nihitārtho dadhāti vi caiti cānte viśvam ādau sa devaḥ sa no buddhyā śubhayā saṃyunaktu // yo yoniṃ-yonim adhiṣṭhaty eko yasminn idaṃ saṃ ca vi caiti sarvaṃ tam īśānaṃ varadaṃ devam īdyaṃ nicāyyemām śāntim atyantam eti // (SvetU\_4.1 and 11)*

*ekaikaṃ jālaṃ bahudhā vikurvann asmin kṣetre saṃharaty eṣa devaḥ bhūyaḥ sṛṣṭvā patayas tathēśaḥ sarvādhipatyam kurute mahātmā // (SvetU\_5.3)*

### 1.4.5 Key Inferences

Based on the analysis of select verses discussed in the previous section, the following infographic (Figure 3) summarizes the similarities and differences in the conception and expression of cosmogony notions between the Shukla (SYV) and Krishna (KYV) Yajur Veda Upanishads.

| Subject                           | Similarities between KYV and SYV Upanishads   | Differences between KYV and SYV Upanishads   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Exposition of Creator             | Omnipresence of the creator.<br>Incomprehensibility of the unmanifest state of the creator. | KYV focuses more on describing the attributes of the creator.                                |
| Process of Creation               | Anthropocentric considerations while describing the manifestation process.                  | While SYV highlights the larger dimensions of creation, KYV spotlights the creation of life. |
| Creator-Causality-Creation        | Causal role of the creator.   | KYV has more emphasis on the causality, especially using symbolism.                          |
| Cyclical Creation and Dissolution |   | Predominant in KYV Upanishads and has an alignment with Puranic cosmogonical ideas.          |

Figure 3: Cosmogony Similarities and Differences between SYV and KYV Upanishads

## 2. Conclusion

The selected Upanishads epitomize the unmanifest creator as the primal cause and this manifest Universe, along with its constituents, as an effect. In addition, the scriptures proclaim that the creator is supreme, absolute, imperishable, identity-less, and form-less, and the creation owes its existence to the creator.

Remarkably, the Upanishads support the notion of *satkāryavāda* as the manifest effect (creation) preexists within the unmanifest cause (creator). Further strengthening this notion, Upanishads declare that causation does not change the primal unmanifest cause in any way, and the creation as an effect is constantly changing and perishable. Hence, it also supports the idea that the effect is *vivarta*, a transformation through the manifestation process. Thus, the Upanishadic notion of creator-creation is the same as cause-effect, where the effect is dynamic and ever-changing, whereas the cause remains incomprehensible and immutable.

Based on the findings and inferences, this paper concludes that (i) not only are notions of creator-causality-creation embedded in the Upanishads, but they are also interconnected; (ii) the discussion of causality has an element of association with anthropocentric considerations; and (iii) a discernible pattern of cosmogonical conceptions emerges.

Also, the Upanishads show both similarities and distinctions. The parallels between the Shukla and Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads are invoking an omnipresent creator, a causal role of the creator, the creator's incomprehensibility, and the creation process. In comparison,

the Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads predominantly focus on the creator's description, although ironically, causality and cyclical creation with expressions relating to the direct perception of objects. Meanwhile, the Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads mainly focus on the transformation of the creator into creation through abstract comprehensions with emphasis on describing the unmanifest state of the creator.

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## Supplementary Reading

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