



# Eschatology

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# Definition

- Eschatology- doctrine of an end
- The word 'Eschatology' is derived from the Greek root '*eschatos*' meaning 'the last things'.
  1. On micro level it deals with the individual after death.
  2. On macro level it deals with the whole universe.
- Eschatology is the department of theological science concerned with the four last things: death, judgment, heaven and hell.

# Key-points

- **Psychology**: standpoint regarding the soul-body relation
- **Myths and Rituals**: significance of last rituals
- **Transmigration** : journey of the *jiva* through different paths and realms, rebirth
- **Liberation** : freedom from the sufferings

# Vedic ideas about death

- Funeral hymns in tenth mandala of *Rgveda* (RV X.14-18)
- Addressed to Yama, Mrtyu, dead and ancestors
- Different ideas about the eternal principle- Atman
- Some “immortal” principle remains even after death
- Significance of burial and cremation
- Positive outlook towards death

# Yama- king of the otherworld

- Yama – first mortal finding a path to the other world
- Two dogs- finding whose death is near and guiding to the dead
- Benevolent, kind, care taker and protector
- Yama - ‘Lord of the Dead’, ‘gatherer of people’ ‘king of the dead’

वैवस्वतं संगमनं जनानां यमं राजानं हविषा दुवस्व॥

- Dead is asked to rejoice in the company of the Yama  
सं गच्छस्व पितृभिः सं यमेनेष्टापूर्तेन परमे व्योमन् ।

# Transmigration

- At the cremation of the dead-
- eyes of the dead are asked to go to the Sun, his vital breath to the wind, the spirit has been directed to go to the heaven or earth or to waters or to the trees according to its *dharma* (good or bad actions) *RV. X.16.3*
- Dead is ask to again come in the mortal world with new body and lustre after enjoying *ishtapurta* in other world

# Upanishadic concept of *Atman*

- Soul-body dualism
- Soul is imperishable and body is temporary
- *IśaUp* 8 states the different nature of the soul from body-the soul is all pervasive, pure, bodiless, without wound, without sinews, taintless, untouched by sin, omniscient, ruler of mind, transcendent and self-existent.
- Concept of *sthula* and *sukshma* sharira
- Subtle body follows the soul till the liberation

# Departure of the *Jivatman*

- All organs get merged into *Prana* and *Prana* departs
- *Prana* departs from the nerve of the heart (which are hundred and one in number)
- One of the nerve is called as *sushumna*- liberation
- Other nerves – transmigration and rebirth
- *Prana* departs through particular limb- association with good or bad realms
  - शतं चैका हृदयस्य नाड्यस्तासां मूर्धानमभिनिःसृतैका
  - तयोर्ध्वमायान्नमृतत्वमेति विष्वङ्ङन्या उत्क्रमणे भवन्ति ॥ *KaṭhUp* ॥.3.16



# Five fires

(Chandogya Upanishad- Pancagnividya)

- **Eschatology is explained with the metaphor of *Yajna***

Fire	Offering	Creation
Heaven	Śraddhā	King Soma
Rain	King Soma	Rain
This world	Rain	Food
Man	Food	Seed
Woman	Seed	Man

# Paths of the dead

- Dead follows the path according to one's actions
- *Devayana*- path of liberation (no ascending)
- *Pitryana*- path of rebirth (ascending and descending)
- *Jayasva Mriyasva*- path of recurrent births and sufferings
- Symbolism of paths

# Paths of gods

- ***Devayāna*: path of liberation – a man of knowledge**
- Light→ Day→ Bright fortnight→ Six months of northern path of the Sun→ Year→ Sun→ Moon→ Lightening→ ***Brahman***. (ChāUp V.10.2)
- There is no descent again in worldly life by this path. Those who go by *devayāna*, do not return to this world again and attain *mokṣa*.
- *Sankaracharya*- *Devayāna* is only meant for the worshipper of *Saguṇa Brahman*. This path is applicable for only who meditate on the qualified *Brahman* by means of *upāsanās*

# Path of ancestors

- Path of fathers : ancestors have departed by the same path and this path leads to the world of *pitṛs*.
- **Ascending of the soul:**  
Smoke→Night→Dark fortnight→Six months of the southern path of the sun→Region of Fathers→Ether→Moon.  
(*ChāUp* V.10.3,4 ; *BṛUp* VI.2.16)
- **Descending of the soul :**  
Ether→ Air → Smoke→ White cloud→ Rain→ Rice/barley →man→ woman→ born on the Earth  
(*BṛUp* VI.2.16 ; *ChāUp* V.10.5,6)

# Third path

- ***Jāyasva mriyasva* :**
- Path of recurrent births
- Performance of heinous deeds leads to third path
- ‘One who steals gold, one who drinks wine, one who dishonours the teacher’s bed and one who injures a *Brahmin* -all these four fall, as also the fifth one who associates with them also attains this third state.’
- ***Panchagnividya*- Therefore the world of moon is never filled up. (ChāUp V.10.9)**

# Heaven

- Heaven- joy everywhere and place resounds with the music of flutes and songs. *Soma*, *honey* and *ghee* are always flowing in heaven.
- Yamaloka is on par with heaven
- Highest footstep of Vishnu – heaven
- This region of eternal bliss can only be attained by those who perform meritorious deeds -*Sukrutām lokah*. (RV X.16.4)  
– सं गच्छस्व पितृभिः सं यमेनेष्टापूर्तेन परमे व्योमन् ।
- Upanishadic philosophy revolves around knowledge
- *Upasanas* are connected with different auspicious realms
- Attainment of particular *loka* associated with particular deity

# Hell

- Yaska derives the word *naraka* as 'going below'.
- There is no little of happiness at all. (*Nirukta* I.11)
- There is a concept of *gabhīram padam* i.e. the dark deep pit where evil-doers go after death. *RV* IV.5.5
- World of darkness (*Asurya*) and (*andham tamah*) world of sorrows (*Ananda*)
- *Puranas* have increased number of *narakas*
- *Bhagavata Purana* gives twenty one *narakas*

# Rebirth

- Man decays and dies like a corn and emerges like a corn
  - सस्यमिव मर्त्यः पच्यते सस्यमिवाजायते पुनः ॥ *KaṭhUp* (I.1.5)
- Rebirth-philosophical significance
- Single and double retribution
- Causes of rebirth-
  - Actions
  - Desire
  - Ignorance
  - Last moment
- Analogy of king, caterpillar and goldsmith



# Orphism- a mystery cult

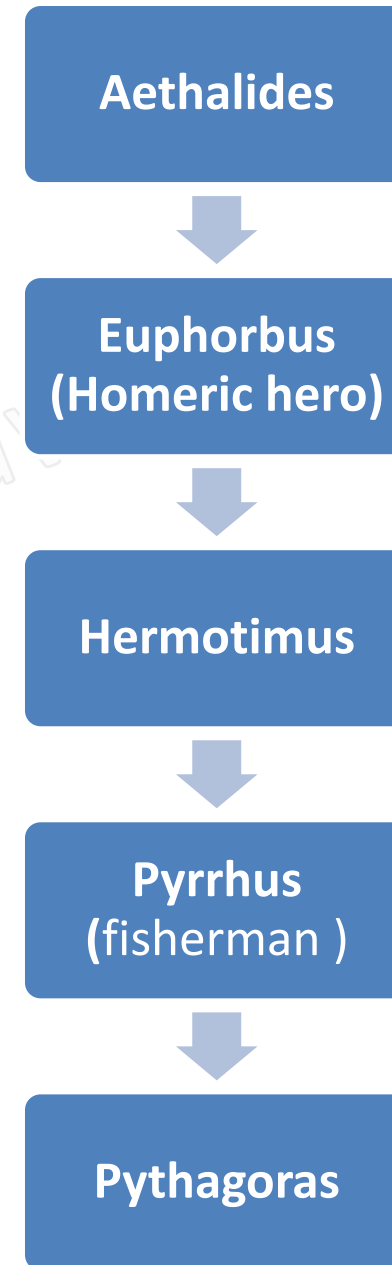
- Secret knowledge necessary- to traverse the other world
- Gold tablets buried with the dead- guide in the nether world
- Forgetting was the main obstacle
- “Forgetting is the real death. a death within the death”
- Spring of memory is checked by guardians asking questions
- Answering the questions –passwords and then requesting the water from Mnemosyne
- “I’m the son of earth and starry heaven”

# Pythagorean Eschatology

- Pythagoras- philosopher and mathematician
- *Akousmatikoi* and *mathematikoi*- two groups of followers
- List of Mystic formulae in *Golden verses*
- *Nous, Phren and thumos* – tripartite nature of the soul
- Pythagoras remembered all his births and could know others'
- Theory of retro-cognition- significant in eschatology
- Cycle of transmigration- fixed for 3,000 years

# Heraclides

- The reference to Pythagoras's memory is due to the boon given by Hermes in an early reincarnation.
- Power of Retro-cognition  
By Pythagoras
- Capable of reminding previous births

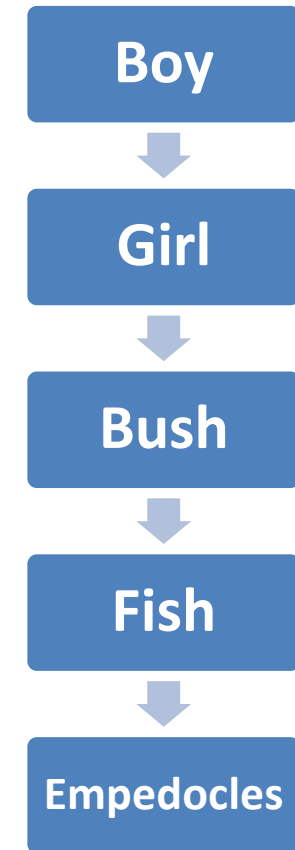


# Xenophanes

- Xenophanes makes fun and laughs at Pythagoras but shades some light on the Pythagorean metempsychosis.
- He reports that Pythagoras once heard the dog's howling and appealed to its master not to beat it, as he recognized the voice of a departed friend.
- Pythagoras attributed psychological functions such as thinking and feeling to the souls.

# Empedocles (Pythagorean)

- Previous incarnations
- Empedocles has thus undergone both **animal** and **vegetable** incarnations.
- A cycle of transmigrations, lasting 30,000 seasons, imposed by Necessity on spirits who **'sully their dear limbs with bloodshed.**
- Emphasizes the importance of vegetarianism in order to escape the cycle of necessity which lasts for 30,000 years.



# Plato's eschatology

- Plato proves the immortality of the soul giving logical proofs
  1. Doctrine of opposites
  2. The recollection argument
  3. The resemblance argument
  4. Soul is self-mover
  5. Destruction of soul is impossible

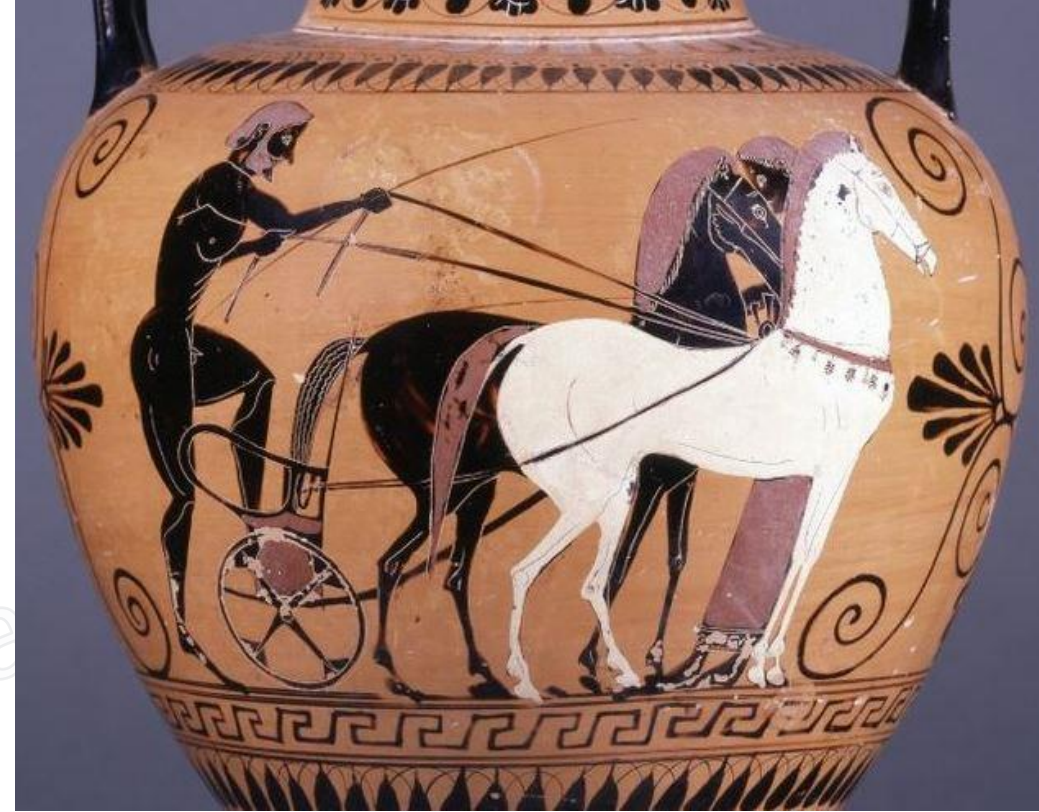
# Myth of Er

- Warrior name Er got killed in the battle – went to other world
- Two openings in right and left to heaven and earth
- “Spindle of Necessity”- attaining next birth
- Freedom of choice for future birth
- Some selected tyranny /human/animal-tame and wild
- Crossing the river of ‘forgetfulness’ before attaining new birth
- Self control –drink water in less quantity- “memory” is sustained



# Soul as winged charioteer

- Allegory of soul as winged charioteer in *Phadreus*
- Gods have both good horses and others have one good and one bad horse
- Souls traverse the whole heaven and behold the divine beauty as long as they have wings
- Wings get nourished by wisdom, truth and divinity whereas foulness and ugliness make their wings shrink and disappear
- One bad horse- obstacle in apprehending partial reality
- Those who see most of the truth– attain the birth of philosophers



Symbolism of tripartite soul



# Cave metaphor



# Key points

- *Karmans* – a factor which decides the journey after death
- Single as well as double retribution is seen in Vedic as well as Greek eschatology
- Paths of the dead or different realms are symbolic in nature
- Vedic as well as Greek eschatology is cyclic in nature
- “Memory” is very important in Greek eschatology