

Īśāvasya

Upaniṣad

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॥ श्रीः ॥

The Upaniṣads

The Upaniṣads are the pinnacle of Vedic knowledge. They are the core teachings found at the 'end' portion of the four Vedas (Ṛg, Yajur, Sāma and Atharva) and are known collectively as Vedānta; 'vedasya-antāḥ iti Vedānta'. The knowledge revealed by the Upaniṣads is Self-knowledge (Brahma vidyā). The veda pūrva bhāga (the materialistic/ritualistic beginning section of the Vedas) deals with how a human being may acquire the three material goals; Dharma (the Grace of the Lord), artha (security) and kāma (pleasure/entertainment). The Upaniṣads, being highly esoteric in nature, deal with 'You' as non-material-infinite-intelligence being; this realization manifesting after one 'attains' the ultimate human goal of mokṣa.

The word Upaniṣad is a compound word consisting of the Sanskrit root 'ṣad' and two prefixes 'upa' and 'ni'. There are numerous ways to unfold the word Upaniṣad. In the context of this booklet, the word Upaniṣad will be unfolded in this manner: Upa means 'near/close to' and ni means 'definite/certain/absolute'. Put together, upani may be understood to mean 'that which will bring closer' or 'that which is closer than the closest'. The two 'objects' that are (as-though) brought together in this context (as the teaching of Vedānta reveals by the mahāvākya tattvamasi) are the jīvātma (the microcosm/individual) and the paramātma (the macrocosm/total). This already-attained-immediate-fact (of one-ness) can only be 'revealed' through jñānam (knowledge), and not by some time-bound experience or experienced event.

This cognitive 'oneness' may only happen if these two objects are separated by ignorance (avidyā vyavahitattvāt). If ignorance is the cause of the 'problem' (and we agree that ignorance is not only a problem but is also a product of the intellect), then the immediate solution to this 'as-though' problem is knowledge; a cognitive shift brought about by listening to a qualified teacher unfolding the Vedāntic scriptures for a long period of time. From the knowledge

'gained' regarding the essential nature of God (Brahma vidyā), the jīvātma and paramātma are revealed to be one.

The Sanskrit root word ṣad means 'that which removes/destroys'. Saṁsāra ava ṣadayati iti sat; 'Pure-existence is revealed through the destruction; elimination; sloughing off; cutting away of ignorance'. The implication being that what is 'destroyed' is the ignorance regarding one's true nature, which in turn 'removes' this 'as-though' cognitive separation between the jīvātma and the paramātma. The primary meaning of the entire word Upaniṣad may be unfolded to mean 'through the destruction of ignorance, that which was (as-though) divided, now has the ontological status of non-dual being.'

A secondary meaning of the root (dhātu) ṣad is 'that which takes one to...'. The secondary meaning of the word Upaniṣad may therefore be unfolded to mean 'that (means of knowledge) which will, in certainty, take one to what is nearest (to you)'. In the scope of Vedānta, that which is nearest to you is 'You'. As the 'as-though' distance between you and 'You' is reduced and ultimately 'removed', the truth of the 'underlying' nature regarding 'You', God and the Universe is 'revealed'.

उपनि येम मात्मनं ब्रह्म पस्तद् द्वयम् पुणः

निहन्त्यविद्यं तद्जंच तस्मद् उपणिषन्मता

upani yema mātmanam brahma pastad dvayam puṇaḥ
nihantya vidyaṁ tadjamca tasmad upaniṣanmatā

The Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad

This booklet focuses on a special Upaniṣad called the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad. It is called the Īśāvāsya because it begins with the word Īśāvāsyam. The Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad is often written Īśāvāsyopaniṣad, and is sometimes referred to as the Īśā Upaniṣad. The opening statement of the Īśāvāsya may be unfolded to mean "This entire

universe is clothed/covered by the Lord/Īśvara..."; a very auspicious beginning to a very esoteric Upaniṣad.

One cannot simply pick up a copy of the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad, read it (either in Sanskrit but especially in a 'translated' version) and expect to understand its hidden meanings. One requires a tremendous amount of preparation even to begin what Bhagavan Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā calls jñāna yoga. Jñāna yoga (Self-inquiry) requires not only a long period of preparation, but also the grace of a traditional Vedāntic teacher or guru, who, through the use of Vedic scripture, unlocks the implied meanings coded within the Upaniṣad; it being the editors' opinion that this sacred text may only be thoroughly understood through live teaching from a qualified ācārya. That is the main reason why this publication of the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad has no English translation. This booklet offers a version of the Īśā that is suitable for chanting; intonation marks given for both the Devanāgarī and IAST transcriptions.

The Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad may be found in two versions; one with 17 verses (the Mādhyandina Recension) and one with 18 verses (the Kāṇva Recension). This booklet contains the Kāṇva Recension of the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad. It is one of the shortest Upaniṣads, yet happens to be one of the most profound in its poetry and implications. It is also different from many other Upaniṣads in that it is neither a dialog between a student and teacher, nor is it praising the glory of God in one of Īśvara's infinite forms; yet the praising and dialog-ness in the Īśāvāsya are implied. That is to say that for knowledge of the hidden teaching within the Īśāvāsya to take place, a teacher (in the form of Īśvara) is required to unlock the scripture for the student. The Īśāvāsya is a transmission; a revelation; a step-by-step unfolding regarding the nature of Truth.

The Īśāvāsya is one of ten Upaniṣads for which the great teacher/saint Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's commentary (bhāṣyam) is available. The Īśā belongs to the Śukla (white) Yajur Veda; one of two Upaniṣads from the Śukla Yajur Veda which have a commentary by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya; the other being the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad.

For all the Upaniṣads found in the Śukla Yajur Veda, the śānti pāṭha (invocation for peace chanted before and after the Upaniṣad proper) is the same; the highly esoteric pūrṇamadaḥ mantraḥ.

Pūrṇamadaḥ Mantra Śānti Pāṭha

The pūrṇamadaḥ mantra śānti pāṭha is unique among śānti pāṭhas, in that it neither asks for any boon from the Lord/Īśvara in the form of prayer, nor is it extolling any virtues (of the student, the teacher, the teaching or Īśvara). It is, in fact, a distillation of all Vedāntic knowledge and teaching (mahāvākya) into two, pithy lines. The scope of the pūrṇamadaḥ mantra covers the entire scope of the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad (and the scope of all the Upaniṣads) in a nutshell. Thus, the pūrṇamadaḥ mantra is called 'vastu nirdeśa śānti pāṭha'.

A literal translation of the pūrṇamadaḥ mantra may be rendered this way:

"That is Fullness. This is full.

From Fullness this full is made manifest. Removing this full from Fullness, Fullness alone remains."

It is not surprising that many 19th century British 'scholars' who studied the pūrṇamadaḥ mantra wrote it off as utter nonsense. Yet, it is only nonsense from the standpoint of ignorance regarding the truth of the 'unity' between 'You' and 'the Lord'.

To crack the code of the pūrṇamadaḥ mantra, one requires the knowledge of a few Vedāntic technical terms and a clear understanding of both their immediate and implied meanings. A more thoughtful 'translation' might read something like this:

Īśvara's (1) essential nature is Brahman (2) (sat-cit-ānanda svarūpa) (3). The essential nature of the jīva (4) is also Brahman (sat-cit-ānanda svarūpa). From Brahman, both Īśvara and the jīva are made manifest through the 'function' of māyā (5). When the essential nature (Brahman/ātmā) (6) of both Īśvara and the jīva is 'removed', 'no thing' (Brahman alone) remains. Om, peace, peace, peace.

- (1) Īśvara; the Lord; God; the total; macrocosm; that which may be 'understood' from two 'points of view': 1) nirguṇa-Brahman; God as pure-existence, having no material or philosophical attributes, and 2) saguṇa-Brahman; God with all attributes; most importantly, the attribute of karma-phala-dhāta; the law of karma; specifically, the 'function' that processes all actions, rendering the fruits of ones actions.
- (2) Brahman; bigger than the biggest; the 'God-head'. Īśvara with no attributes (nirguṇa-Brahman). From the Sanskrit root br; that which is really, really big.
- (3) Sat-cit-ānanda svarūpa: Another 'description' of nirguṇa-Brahman (or simply Brahman). Sat-cit-ānanda svarūpa may be unfolded to mean 'the nature of existence-awareness-fullness'.
- (4) The jīva; the individual; microcosm; 'I' with the attribute of complete ignorance as to my 'true' nature.
- (5) Māyā; the 'as-though function' of Brahman which makes manifest all material in the universe.
- (6) Ātmā; another name for Brahman. Ātmā (oftentimes written ātman), may be unfolded to mean 'that which pervades everything'. From the Sanskrit root āp; all-pervasive.

The pūrṇamadaḥ mantra is so loaded with meaning that, in almost all cases, a traditional teacher is required to unlock its 'secret' using Upaniṣadic scripture. The student who has fully comprehended the implied meaning of the mantra may be referred to as a jīvan-muktaḥ; one who is liberated from the prison of saṃsāra while still 'wearing' a material form.

This introduction was inspired by two separate discourses. The first, called 'Īśāvāsya', was given by Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī (most likely recorded at Sandipany West in Piercy, California, USA). The second, called 'Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad Bhāṣyam' was given by Śrī Svāmī Paramārthānanda Sarasvatī (most likely recorded at Arśa Vidyā Pīṭham in Rishikesh, India). We humbly thank these two great teachers for their insights and passion.

॥ हरिः ॐ ॥

ॐ अथ इति ईशावस्योपनिषद्

om atha iti īśāvasyopaniṣad

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ

पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

pūrṇāt pūrṇamudatcyate ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय

pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya

पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

ॐ ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्वां जगत् ।

om īśā vāsyamidagṁ sarvaṁ yatkiñca jagatvāṁ jagat ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥ १ ॥

tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasvidghanam ॥ 1 ॥

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतः समाः ।

kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣecchatagṁ samāḥ ।

एवं त्वयि नांयथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे ॥ २ ॥

evaṁ tvayi nānyatheto'sti na karma lipyate nare ॥ 2 ॥

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसाऽवृताः ।

asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasā'vṛtāḥ ।

तास्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ३ ॥

tāgṁsste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ ॥ 3 ॥

अने॑जदे॒कं॒॑ मन॑सो॒ जवी॑यो॒ नै॒नद्दे॑वा
आ॑प्नु॒वन्पूर्व॑मर्षत् ।
तद्वा॑व॒तोऽ॒यान॑त्येति॒ तिष्ठ॑त्तस्मि॒न्नपो॑ मा॒तरि॑श्वा
दधा॑ति ॥ ४ ॥

तदे॑जति॒ तन्ने॑जति॒ तद्दू॑रे॒ तद्व॑न्तिके ।
तद॑न्तर॒स्य॒ सर्व॑स्य॒ तदु॑ सर्व॒स्यास्य॑ बा॒ह्यतः॑ ॥ ५ ॥

यस्तु॑ सर्वा॑णि॒ भू॒तान्या॑त्म॒न्येवा॒नुप॑श्यति ।
सर्व॑भू॒तेषु॑ चा॒त्मानं॑ ततो॒ न वि॒जुगु॑प्सते ॥ ६ ॥

यस्मि॑न्सर्वा॑णि॒ भू॒तान्या॑त्मै॒वाभू॑द्वि॒जान॑तः ।
तत्र॑ को॒ मोहः॑ कः शो॒क॑ ए॒कत्व॑म॒नुप॑श्यतः ॥ ७ ॥

स पर्य॑गा॒च्छु॒क्रम॑का॒यम॑व्र॒णम॑स्त्रा॒विर॑ग्ं
शु॒द्धम॑पा॒पवि॑द्धम् ।

ane॑jadeka॒m ma॒naso॒ javi॑yo॒ naina॑ddevā
āpnu॑vanpū॒rvama॑rṣat ।
taddhā॑vato॒m'yāna॑tyeti॒ tiṣṭha॑ttasmi॒nnapo॑ mā॒tari॑śvā
dadhā॑ti ॥ 4 ॥

tade॑jati॒ tanne॑jati॒ taddū॑re॒ tadvan॑tike ।
tada॑ntarasya॒ sarva॑sya॒ tadu॑ sarva॒syaśya॑ bā॒hyataḥ॑ ॥ 5 ॥

yastu॑ sarva॑ṇi॒ bhū॒tānya॑tma॒nyeva॒nupa॑śyati ।
sarva॑bhū॒teṣu॑ cā॒tmāna॑m॒ tato॒ na vi॒juga॑psate ॥ 6 ॥

yasmi॑nsarva॑ṇi॒ bhū॒tānya॑tmaivā॒bhūdvija॑nataḥ ।
tatra॑ ko॒ mohaḥ॑ kaḥ śo॒ka॑ e॒katva॑manupa॒śyataḥ॑ ॥ 7 ॥

sa parya॑gā॒cchu॒krama॑ka॒yamavra॑ṇama॒snāvirag॑m
śuddha॑mapā॒pavid॑dham ।

कविर्मनीषी परिभूः स्वयम्भूर्याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्
व्यदधाच्छाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः ॥ ८ ॥

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽविद्यामुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायां रताः ॥ ९ ॥

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्ययाऽन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥ १० ॥

विद्यां चाविद्यां च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययाऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ ११ ॥

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति येऽसम्भूतिमुपासते ।
ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ सम्भूत्यां रताः ॥ १२ ॥

अन्यदेवाहुः सम्भवादन्यदाहुरसम्भवात् ।
इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥ १३ ॥

kavirmanīṣī paribhūḥ svayambhūryāthātathyato'rthān
vyadadhācchāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ ॥ 8 ॥

andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'vidyāmupāsate ।
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyāgm̐ ratāḥ ॥ 9 ॥

anyadevāhurvidyayā'nyadāhuravidyayā ।
iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire ॥ 10 ॥

vidyām cāvidyām ca yastadvedobhayagm̐ saha ।
avidyayā mṛtyuṃ tīrtvā vidyayā'mṛtamāśnute ॥ 11 ॥

andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'sambhūtimupāsate ।
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyāgm̐ ratāḥ ॥ 12 ॥

anyadevāhuḥ sambhavādanyadāhurasambhavāt ।
iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire ॥ 13 ॥

सम्भूतिं च विनाशं च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा सम्भूत्याऽमृतमश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ १५ ॥

पूषन्नेकर्षे यम सूर्यं प्राजापत्य व्यूह रश्मीन् ।
समूह तेजो यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि
योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥ १६ ॥

वायुरनिलममृतमथेदं भस्मांतं शरीरम् ।
ॐ क्रतो स्मरं कृतं स्मरं क्रतो स्मरं
कृतं स्मरं ॥ १७ ॥

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि
विद्वान् ।

sambhūtim ca vināśam ca yastadvedobhayagṃ saha ।
vināśena mṛtyuṃ tīrtvā sambhūtyāṃṛtamāśnute ॥ 14 ॥

hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitam mukham ।
tatvam pūṣannapāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye ॥ 15 ॥

pūṣannekarṣe yama sūrya prajāpatya vyūha raśmīn ।
samūha tejo yatte rūpam kalyāṇatam tatte paśyāmi
yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi ॥ 16 ॥

vāyuranilamamṛtamathedaṃ bhasmāntaṃ śarīram ।
om krato smara kṛtagassmara krato smara
kṛtagassmara ॥ 17 ॥

agne naya supathā rāye asmān viśvāni deva vayunāni
vidvān ।

युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नमऽउक्तिं
विधेम ॥ १८ ॥

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं
पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय
पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

॥ ॐ इति ईशावस्योपनिषद् संपूर्णम् ॐ ॥

॥ हरिः ॐ श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः हरिः ॐ ॥

yuyodhyasmajjuhurāṇameno bhūyiṣṭhām te nama'uktiṁ
vidhema ॥ 18 ॥

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ
pūrṇāt pūrṇamudatcyate ।
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya
pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ॥
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

॥ om iti īśāvasyopaniṣad sampūrṇam om ॥

॥ hariḥ om śrī gurubhyo namaḥ hariḥ om ॥

श्री स्वामी वागीशानन्द सरस्वती

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī is a senior disciple of Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī, and has been studying and teaching Vedānta since 1975.

Svāmī jī was in his teens when he became fascinated with mystical poetry and non-dualistic philosophies. In 1975, at the age of 19, he left his home in the United States and traveled to India to study in a traditional gurūkulam. After graduating from a three-year residential course in Vedānta and Sanskrit, he attended four subsequent three-year courses in the United States and in India.

Using the traditional methodology called sampradāya, Svāmī Vāgīśānanda 'unlocks' the scriptures of Vedānta, thereby removing the veil of ignorance; the cause of all human suffering. He is a traditional samnyāsi (a renunciant who is committed to a life of knowledge and has taken a vow of non-injury). A master of the South Indian Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda style of chanting, Svāmī jī has traveled the world teaching Sanskrit, Vedic chanting and Vedānta.

ॐ Press

॥ हरिः ॐ ॥