

Īśāvasya Upaniṣad



॥ श्रीः ॥

**Introduction inspired by talks given by
Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī and
Śrī Svāmī Paramārthānanda Sarasvatī**

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 God (Brahma vidyā), the essential nature of the jīvātma and the paramātma are understood to be the same.

The Sanskrit root word ṣad means 'that which removes/destroys'. Saṁsāra ava ṣādayati 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
nihantyavidyam tadjanca tasmad upaniṣanmatā

The Īśāvasya Upaniṣad

This booklet focuses on a special Upaniṣad called the Īśāvasya Upaniṣad. It is called the Īśāvasya because it begins with the word Īśāvasyam. The Īśāvasya Upaniṣad is often written Īśāvasyopaniṣad, and is sometimes referred to as the Īśā Upaniṣad. The opening statement of the Īśāvasya 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 Īśāvasya 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 Īśāvasya 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 Īśāvasya Upaniṣad may be found in two versions; one with 17 verses (the Mādhyandina Śākhā) and one with 18 verses (the Kāṇva Śākhā). This booklet contains the Kāṇva Śākhā (the recension/lineage of Kāṇva). 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 Īśāvasya are implied. That is to say that for knowledge of the hidden teaching within the Īśāvasya to take place, a teacher (in the form of Īśvara) is required to unlock the scripture for the student. The Īśāvasya is a transmission; a revelation; a step-by-step unfolding regarding the nature of Truth.

The Īśāvasya 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 Īśāvasya 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 one's 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 saṁsāra while still 'wearing' a material form.

This introduction was inspired by two separate discourses. The first, called 'Īśāvasya', was given by Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī (most likely recorded at Sandipany West in Piercy, California, USA). The second, called 'Īśāvasya Upaniṣad Bhāṣyam' was given by Śrī Svāmī Paramārthānanda Sarasvatī (most likely recorded at Arśa Vidyā Piṭham 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 pūrṇamidam

पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय

pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya

पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

ॐ ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

Om īśā vāsyamidam sarvaṁ yatkiñca jagatyāṁ 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 tamasāvṛtāḥ

तास्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥ ३ ॥

tāgṁsste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ (3)

अने॑ज॒देकं॑ मन॒सो॑ ज॒वीयो॑ नै॒नद्दे॒वा आ॑प्नु॒वन्पूर्व॑मर्षत् ।
तद्भा॑वतो॒ऽयान॑त्येति॒ तिष्ठ॑त्तस्मि॒न्नपो॑ मा॒तरि॑श्वा॒ दधा॑ति ॥ ४ ॥

तदे॑जति॒ तन्ने॑जति॒ तद्दरे॑ तद्व॒न्तिके॑ ।
तद॒न्तर॑स्य॒ सर्व॑स्य॒ तदु॒ सर्व॑स्यास्य॒ बाह्य॑तः ॥ ५ ॥

यस्तु॑ सर्वा॑णि भू॒तान्या॑त्म॒न्येवा॑नुपश्यति ।
सर्व॑भू॒तेषु॑ चा॒त्मानं॑ ततो॒ न विजु॑गुप्सते ॥ ६ ॥

यस्मि॑न्सर्वा॑णि भू॒तान्या॑त्मै॒वाभू॑द्विजान॒तः ।
तत्र॑ को॒ मोहः॑ कः शो॒क एक॑त्वम॒नुपश्य॑तः ॥ ७ ॥

स पर्य॑गाच्छु॒क्रम॑का॒यम॑व्र॒णम॑स्त्रा॒विरं॑ शुद्धमपा॑पविद्धम् ।
क॒विर्म॑नी॒षी परि॑भूः स्व॒यम्भू॑र्याथा॒तथ्य॑तो॒ऽर्थान्॑
व्य॑दधाच्छा॒श्वती॑भ्यः॒ समा॑भ्यः ॥ ८ ॥

anejadekaṁ manaso javīyo nainaddevā āpnuvanpūrvamarṣat
taddhāvatoṁ'yānatyeti tiṣṭhattasminnapo mātariśvā dadhāti (4)

tadejati tannejati taddūre tadvāntike
tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsya bāhyataḥ (5)

yastu sarvāṇi bhūtānyātmanyevānupaśyati
sarvabhūteṣu cātmānaṁ tato na vijugupsate (6)

yasminsarvāṇi bhūtānyātmaivābhūdvijānataḥ
tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvamanupaśyataḥ (7)

sa paryagācchukramakāyamavraṇamasnāviraṅṁ śuddhamapāpavidham
kavirmanīṣī paribhūḥ svayambhūryāthātathyato'rthān
vyadadhācchāśvatībhyaḥ samābhyaḥ (8)

अ॒न्धं त॒मः प्र॒वि॒श॒न्ति॒ येऽवि॒द्यामु॒पास॑ते ।
ततो॒ भूय॑ इ॒व ते तमो॒ य उ॑ वि॒द्यायां॑ र॒ताः ॥ ९ ॥

अ॒न्यदे॒वाहु॑र्वि॒द्यया॑ऽन्यदा॑हुरवि॒द्यया ।
इति॑ शुश्रु॒म धी॑रा॒णां ये न॒स्तद्वि॑च॒क्षिरे॑ ॥ १० ॥

वि॒द्यां चा॒वि॒द्यां च॒ यस्तद्वेदो॒भयं॑ सह ।
अवि॒द्यया॑ मृ॒त्युं ती॒र्त्वा वि॒द्यया॑ऽमृत॑मश्नुते ॥ ११ ॥

अ॒न्धं त॒मः प्र॒वि॒श॒न्ति॒ येऽस॒म्भू॑तिमु॒पास॑ते ।
ततो॒ भूय॑ इ॒व ते तमो॒ य उ॑ स॒म्भू॑त्यां र॒ताः ॥ १२ ॥

अ॒न्यदे॒वाहुः स॒म्भ॒वादन्यदा॑हुरस॒म्भवात् ।
इति॑ शुश्रु॒म धी॑रा॒णां ये न॒स्तद्वि॑च॒क्षिरे॑ ॥ १३ ॥

स॒म्भू॑तिं च वि॒नाशं॑ च॒ यस्तद्वेदो॒भयं॑ सह ।
वि॒ना॒शेन॑ मृ॒त्युं ती॒र्त्वा स॒म्भू॑त्याऽमृत॑मश्नुते ॥ १४ ॥

andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'vidyāmupāsate
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyāgm ratāḥ (9)

anyadevāhurvidyayā'nyadāhuravidyayā
iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire (10)

vidyām cāvidyām ca yastadvedobhayagm saha
avidyayā mṛtyum tīrtvā vidyayā'mṛtamaśnute (11)

andham tamaḥ praviśanti ye'sambhūtimupāsate
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u sambhūtyāgm ratāḥ (12)

anyadevāhuḥ sambhavādanyadāhurasambhavāt
iti śuśruma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire (13)

sambhūtiṁ ca vināśaṁ ca yastadvedobhayagm saha
vināśena mṛtyum tīrtvā sambhūtyā'mṛtamaśnute (14)

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

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

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

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् विश्वानि देव वयुनानि विद्वान् ।
युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूयिष्ठां ते नमऽउक्तिं विधेम ॥ १८ ॥

hiraṇmayena pātreṇa satyasyāpihitaṁ mukham
tatvaṁ pūṣannapāvṛṇu satyadharmāya dṛṣṭaye (15)

pūṣannekarṣe yama sūrya prajāpatya vyūha raśmīn
samūha tejo yatte rūpaṁ kalyāṇataṁ tatte paśyāmi
yo'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so'hamasmi (16)

vāyuranilamamṛtamathedaṁ bhasmāntaṁ śarīram
Om krato smara kṛtagassmara krato smara kṛtagassmara
(17)

agne naya supathā rāye asmān viśvāni deva vayunāni vidvān
yuyodhyasmajjuhuraṇamenobhūyiṣṭhāṁ te nama'uktiṁ vidhema
(18)

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

Om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidaṁ

pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate

pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya

pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate

Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

॥ ॐ इति ईशावस्योपनिषद् संपूर्णम् ॐ ॥

Om iti īśāvasyopaniṣad sampūrṇam Om

ॐ तत् सत् ॥
ब्रह्मार्पणं अस्तु ॥

Om tat sat

brahmārpaṇam astu

ॐPress

ॐPress