

Upanishads-1

1- Ishavasya Upanishad

Even though this is the smallest among the Upanishads, it is like a pillar for the Jananakanda (knowledge section). Its name comes from the words 'Isha' (Lord/Supreme Soul) and 'Avasyam' (indwelling/pervading). This belongs to the Shukla Yajurveda. With just 18 verses, it beautifully explains the synthesis between knowledge (knowledge of Ishvara) and action (performance of action/Karma), indicating the path that leads to liberation (Moksha).

Ishavasya Upanishad: Synthesis of Knowledge and Action The main message of this Upanishad is to know the truth that the entire universe is enveloped by the Supreme Soul, and while living with that knowledge, to fulfill one's duty (Dharma) in the world.

1. First Verse: All-pervasiveness and the Attitude of Renunciation

"Isha vasyamidam sarvam yat kinchit jagatyam jagat | Tena tyaktena bhunjitha ma gridhah kasyasviddhanam ||"

Meaning: Whatever there is that moves or does not move in this world, all that is enveloped by Ishvara (belongs to Isha). Therefore, enjoy it with an attitude of renunciation. Do not desire (crave) anyone's wealth.

Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective): the entire creation is the very form of the Supreme Soul. When one possesses this knowledge, the objects in the world should be accepted not with the arrogance of 'mine', but with the attitude of renunciation that 'these belong to Ishvara, I am merely an instrument to receive them'. Desire and greed must be abandoned, because when everything belongs to Ishvara, there is nothing called 'mine', and there is no need to desire anything. This teaches one to remain detached from the fruits of actions while performing them.

2. Second Verse: Living for a Hundred Years While Performing Actions

"Kurvanneveha karmani jijivishechhatam samah | Evam tvayi nanyathetossti na karma lipyate nare ||"

Meaning: Wish to live for a hundred years in this world only while performing actions. There is no way other than this for you. If you live in this manner, actions will not cling to you.

Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective): This does not teach abandoning the performance of actions after gaining knowledge. Instead, it says that one must perform actions with the thought of Ishvara, detachedly. While performing actions, if done without the arrogance of 'I am the doer' and 'this is my fruit' and without the desire for fruits, those actions will not cause bondage. This indicates Karma Yoga combined with knowledge.

3. Third to Eighth Verses: Ignorance and the Nature of Atman

These verses explain the miserable state of living beings filled with ignorance (going to blind dark worlds after death).

Thereafter, they make known the true nature of the Atman: the Atman does not move but is faster than everything, it is beyond the reach of the senses, it is all-pervading, pure, bodiless, flawless, sinless, omniscient, the controller of the mind, ever-existing, and the creator of everything.

Ultimate Meaning: Due to ignorance, living beings consider themselves as the body and mind and become bound. The Atman is in fact beyond all these bondages; it is Brahman itself. To the person who has attained this self-knowledge (Atmajnanam), his own Atman is seen in all living beings.

4. Ninth to Fourteenth Verses: Synthesis of Vidya and Avidya

This section explains the importance of correctly understanding both Vidya (knowledge) and Avidya (action/Karma). It says that those who practice only rituals (Avidya) fall into darkness, and similarly, those who speak only about knowledge (Vidya) and abandon actions fall into even deeper darkness.

Meaning: He who understands both Vidya (knowledge) and Avidya (action) together, crosses death through Avidya and attains immortality through Vidya.

Ultimate Meaning: Knowledge (Atmajnanam) is mandatory for liberation. However, even after gaining self-knowledge, as long as the body exists, performing actions cannot be avoided. But those actions must be done without desire for fruits, with an attitude of offering them to Ishvara. This indicates the theory of the combination of knowledge and action (Jnana-Karma Samuchchaya Siddhantam). Actions cause purification of the mind (Chittashuddhi) and pave the way for knowledge; knowledge bestows liberation.

5. Fifteenth to Eighteenth Verses: The Golden Vessel and Prayer

These final verses pray to the Sun to remove the vessel and show the truth, stating that truth (Brahman) is covered by the bright golden vessel of the Sun.

Meaning: "O Sun (Pushan), you have covered the face of truth with your golden screen. Remove that screen and make me behold the truth. O Agni (Fire), lead us on the good path, destroy the sins committed by us." Here, the living being prays to burn away his past actions (sins) and lead him on the path of knowledge to attain Brahman.

Ultimate Meaning: These verses are prayers made to remove the obstacles to the knowledge of Brahman and to make one behold the ultimate truth. The 'Golden Vessel' (Hiranmaya Patra) is a symbol of Maya or ignorance. When this ignorance is removed, the living being knows his true nature, which is Brahman. Through the final verse "*Krato smara, kritam smara*" (O mind, remember the actions performed by me), the wise one (Jnani) declares that even if the body perishes, his knowledge and actions remain, and ultimately, he is Brahman itself.

Summary of the Ishavasya Upanishad:

The Ishavasya Upanishad is the foundation for the Jananakanda. It teaches one to live by performing actions detachedly with that knowledge, realizing the truth that the entire universe is enveloped by Ishvara. It emphasizes that knowledge and action are not different, and the synthesis of these two (Jnana-Karma Samuchchaya) is necessary for liberation. Actions lead to purification of the mind, and knowledge leads to liberation. This Upanishad frees the living being from greed and ultimately indicates the path to attaining oneness with the Supreme Soul.

2- Kena Upanishad

This is one of the most important among the Upanishads, and its name comes from the Sanskrit word 'Kena', which means "By whom?" or "From whom?". This Upanishad belongs to the Samaveda and explains the ultimate nature of the Supreme Soul, its existence which is beyond the senses, mind, and intellect. The Kena Upanishad is divided into four sections (Khandas), each section answering deep philosophical questions.

Kena Upanishad: Consciousness Beyond the Senses

The primary goal of the Kena Upanishad is to question—what is the root energy behind the functioning of all the senses, mind, and life-force (Prana)?—and to establish that this ultimate consciousness is Brahman.

First Khanda: The Question - What is the Source of Energy?

This section begins with questions asked by a disciple to the Guru:

- "Impelled by what does the mind grasp its objects?"
- "Impelled by what does the life-force (Prana) perform its duty?"

- "Impelled by what are the eyes seeing, the ears hearing, and the speech speaking?"

The Guru answers these questions by explaining that the senses, mind, and life-force cannot function on their own, and that there is a root consciousness behind them. That itself is Brahman.

- **Meaning:** The eyes we see with, the ears we hear with, the tongue we speak with, the mind we think with, the life-force we live with – the ultimate energy driving all of these is Brahman alone. If the eyes are seeing, it is only due to the Brahman behind the eyes; if the ears are hearing, it is only due to the Brahman behind the ears.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** Brahman is not perceptible to the senses. It is beyond the senses, mind, and intellect. No sense can grasp it, no mind can imagine it. It is self-luminous, and it illuminates everything.

Second Khanda: Brahman is Unknown, Yet Well Known

This section explains the unknowable nature of Brahman. No one can say, 'I have known Brahman completely.' Nor can anyone say, 'I have not known it completely.'

- **Meaning:** "If you think 'I know Brahman well', you know it only a little. Whoever thinks 'I know Brahman well' has, in reality, not known it. To those who think they 'know' Brahman, it is not known; only to those who think they 'do not know' it, is it known."
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** Brahman is not an object, it is not a subject of objective knowledge, therefore 'grasping' it through the senses or through the mind is impossible. It is knowledge beyond knowledge. Saying 'I have known it' means limiting it. A true wise person (Jnani) knows experientially that he is one with Brahman, but cannot explain it in words. This indicates that Brahman can be reached only through the feeling of 'I' itself, through internal experience.

Third Khanda: Yaksha Gatha - The Shattering of the Gods' Arrogance

This section explains the supremacy of Brahman in the form of a story. After achieving victory over the demons (Asuras), the gods (Agni, Vayu) become arrogant about their power. Then, Brahman appears before them in the form of a 'Yaksha' (a magnificent form). The gods, failing to recognize it, try to test it.

- **Meaning:** Agni (Fire) fails to burn a blade of grass with his power. Vayu (Wind) fails to move the blade of grass with his power. Then they tell Indra about that power which is unknown to them. As Indra approaches that Yaksha, it disappears. Later, through Uma Haimavati (the goddess of knowledge), Indra learns that the Yaksha is Brahman itself.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** The deities of the senses (Agni - speech, Vayu - life-force, Indra - mind) become arrogant by considering their powers as their own. But the source of all those powers is Brahman alone. Without Brahman, the senses, life-force, and mind have no power whatsoever. Until the power of Brahman is known, no matter how powerful they are, they fall prey to arrogance and cannot know the truth.

Fourth Khanda: Worship of Brahman (Brahmo-pasana) and Liberation

This final section explains how to worship Brahman, and what the fruit of knowing it is.

- **Meaning:** Brahman is so subtle that the mind can settle upon it in the blink of an eye, flashing like lightning and disappearing. To the person who worships it, all desires are fulfilled. One should know it as 'Tadvanam' (that which is adorable). This should be meditated upon.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** Rather than looking at Brahman as an object, it is important to know that it is the ultimate consciousness within ourselves. It must be experienced as the 'Atman'. A person who has attained the knowledge of Brahman (Brahmajnanam) has no worldly greeds; he becomes liberated from all bonds and attains eternal bliss (liberation). This Upanishad also informs that austerity (Tapas), self-control (Dama), action (Karma), the Vedas, and truth are the feet (foundations) of the knowledge of Brahman.

Summary of the Kena Upanishad:

The Kena Upanishad clarifies that what we see, hear, speak, think, and live by—the root consciousness behind all of these is Brahman alone. That Brahman is beyond the senses, beyond the mind, and is indescribable. This Upanishad teaches that when one abandons arrogance and knows it through self-knowledge, the living being attains eternal bliss and freedom, becoming liberated from worldly bonds. This is a magnificent guide to enlightenment and self-realization.

3 – Katha Upanishad

This is very important and well-known among all the Upanishads. It belongs to the Krishna Yajurveda. Its main theme is the conversation that took place between Yamadharmaraja (the Lord of Death) and Nachiketa, which explains deep spiritual matters such as the secret of death, the nature of the Atman, the path of knowledge, and liberation (Moksha).

Katha Upanishad: The Secret of Death and Self-Knowledge

The Katha Upanishad is divided into two chapters (Adhyayas), and each chapter is divided into three Vallis (sections).

First Chapter: Nachiketa's Questions and Yama's Test

1. Vajashravasa's Sacrifice and Nachiketa's Desire

The Katha Upanishad begins with a Brahmin named Vajashravasa performing the Vishvajit sacrifice (Yajna). In this sacrifice, all possessions must be donated. However, Vajashravasa

donates old, barren, and useless cows. Seeing this, his son Nachiketa (wise and inquisitive) feels that what his father is doing is not right, and asks repeatedly, "To whom will you donate me?". Finally, the father says in anger, "I will donate you to the Deity of Death."

Nachiketa goes to the world of Yama (Yamaloka) to keep his father's word. Since Yama is not at home, Nachiketa waits for three nights without food. Yama, upon returning, repents for causing disrespect to the guest who came to his house, and grants three boons to Nachiketa.

2. Nachiketa's Boons

The three boons (varas) asked by Nachiketa make known the key aspects of the Upanishad:

- **First Boon:** He wishes that his father should leave his anger toward him, become pacified, and recognize and affectionately welcome him when he returns from the world of Yama.
 - **Ultimate Meaning:** This indicates interest in worldly relations and the desire for good association (Satsangam).
- **Second Boon:** He wishes to know about the fire ritual (Nachiketagni) that bestows heaven.
 - **Ultimate Meaning:** This indicates the desire for temporary meritorious worlds (heaven) obtained through rituals (Karmakandas). Yama explains this knowledge.
- **Third Boon:** What happens to a living being after death? Does the soul exist? Does it perish with the body itself? He asks this most profound question.
 - **Ultimate Meaning:** This indicates inquisitiveness toward true self-knowledge, the secret of rebirth, and liberation. Yama initially refuses to give this boon, tests Nachiketa by showing temptations of many worldly pleasures and enjoyments, but Nachiketa stands firmly by his boon. Seeing Nachiketa's inquisitiveness and dispassion (Vairagya), Yama is satisfied and agrees to instruct him on self-knowledge.

Second Chapter: Instruction of Self-Knowledge

1. Explanation of Shreyas and Preyas

Before teaching the knowledge, Yama explains the difference between Shreyas (spiritual elevation, liberation) and Preyas (worldly pleasures, temporary joy). He says that though the path of Preyas appears easy, it leads to bondage; though the path of Shreyas appears difficult, it leads to liberation. He appreciates Nachiketa for choosing Shreyas.

- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This emphasizes that knowledge is the only path to liberation, and dispassion toward worldly enjoyments is necessary.

2. The Nature of Atman: Anoraniyan Mahato Mahiyan

Yama explains the nature of the Atman. Even though the Atman is in the body, it is not the body. It is eternal, birthless, deathless, and changeless.

- *"Anoraniyan Mahato Mahiyan Atmasya Jantor Nihito Guhayam"* (Subtler than the subtle, greater than the great, the Atman resides in the heart-cave of living beings.)
- **Ultimate Meaning:** The Atman is the most subtle, but that itself is the basis of the entire creation. It is not perceptible to our senses or mind. Immortality is attained only by knowing this.

3. The Chariot of the Senses: Body, Mind, Intellect, Atman

Yama uses a magnificent chariot analogy to explain self-knowledge:

- **Atman:** The master of the chariot (owner).
- **Body:** The chariot.
- **Intellect:** The charioteer (driver).
- **Mind:** The reins.
- **Senses:** The horses.
- **Objects:** The paths where the horses travel.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Only if the charioteer (intellect) controls the reins (mind) and guides the horses (senses) on the path, the chariot (body) will reach its destination (liberation). That means, controlling the mind by the intellect, and the senses by the mind, is essential for self-knowledge.

4. Internal Experience: Vision of the Atman

The Atman cannot be seen with the senses, nor can it be grasped with the mind. We can behold it only through a pure, concentrated intellect, and through internal experience. Above the senses is the mind, above that is the intellect, above it is the unmanifest (Prakriti), and above the unmanifest is the Purusha (Brahman).

- **Ultimate Meaning:** This indicates that self-knowledge is possible only through meditation, dispassion, and constant practice.

5. Method of Yoga and Liberation

The Katha Upanishad explains concentrating the mind and senses through the practice of Yoga, and entering into a state of stillness (Nirvikalpa Samadhi). Then the five senses of knowledge, the mind, and the intellect become pacified and dissolve into the Atman.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** In this state, the living being conquers death and attains immortality. Reaching the head through the Brahma Nadi (Sushumna), he merges into the unmoving Brahman. Nachiketa obtains this Brahma Vidya from Yama, becomes purified, crosses death, and attains Brahman.

Summary of the Katha Upanishad:

The Katha Upanishad, beginning by questioning the secret of death, beautifully explains the eternal, immortal nature of the Atman. It teaches that self-knowledge is possible only through

dispassion toward worldly pleasures (choosing Shreyas), sense-control, controlling the mind using the intellect, and constant meditation. Ultimately, this Upanishad clarifies that only by knowing the Atman, one can gain freedom from the fear of death, and attain eternal liberation and immortality.

4 - Prashna Upanishad

Among the Upanishads, this is very special because its knowledge is told in the form of six questions and answers to them. It belongs to the Atharvana Veda. This Upanishad explains deep spiritual matters such as the creation of the Jivatma (individual soul), the importance of the life-force (Prana), the functioning of the senses, the glory of Omkara, and ultimately the knowledge of the Supreme Soul.

Prashna Upanishad: Six Questions, Six Paths of Knowledge

The Prashna Upanishad is in the form of a dialogue that took place between a Guru (Sage Pippalada) and six inquisitive disciples. As each disciple asks a question, the Guru gives the answer to it.

1. First Question: What is the Source of Creation? (Kabandhi Katyayana's Question)

- **Question:** "O Holy Lord, from where are all these living beings born?"
- **Guru's Answer:** The source of creation is Prajapati (the Supreme Soul). He created day and night (Rayi - Moon/Matter, and Prana - Sun/Consciousness). From the conjunction of these two alone, all the living beings in creation were born.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** Creation is not born from merely inert nature (Prakriti) or from merely consciousness. The universe was formed only by the combination of both matter (Rayi) and consciousness (Prana). Both this Rayi and Prana are ultimately manifest forms of Brahman. Brahman itself, with its Maya power (Mayashakti), created these dualities and expanded the creation.

2. Second Question: The Greatness of the Life-force (Prana)? (Bhargava Vaidarbhi's Question)

- **Question:** "O Holy Lord, how many deities (powers) support the body? Which among them is the greatest?"
- **Guru's Answer:** There are many deities (senses, the five elements) that support the body. But, among all of them, the life-force (Prana) is the most greatest. Without the life-force, no sense will function. When there is no life-force, all the powers in the body become useless. The life-force alone upholds the body and keeps the living being alive.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** The externally visible senses and powers are all dependent upon a single energy called the life-force. The life-force is a manifestation of Brahman, that

which makes known the power of Brahman in the living being. This explains the importance of the life-force energy and its supremacy.

3. Third Question: How does the Life-force Enter the Body and How does it Function? (Kausalya Ashvalayana's Question)

- **Question:** "O Holy Lord, from what is this life-force born? How does it enter this body? How does it divide itself? How does it depart from the body? How does it support itself in the external universe? And how does it support itself spiritually?"
- **Guru's Answer:** The life-force is born from the Atman itself and enters the body through the resolve of the Atman (Manasoprakramat). It divides itself into five life-forces (Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana, Samana) and functions in different permanent parts of the body. The Udana life-force leads the living being to meritorious worlds (due to meritorious deeds), to sinful worlds (due to sinful deeds), or to the human world (due to mixed deeds).
- **Ultimate Meaning:** The life-force is not merely a gas; it is the power of the conscious Atman. The movement of the life-force according to the deeds of the living being determines the state after death. The life-force energy is the basis of everything, and behind it is the Atman.

4. Fourth Question: The State of the Living Being in Sleep, Dreams, and Waking State? (Saurayani Garga's Question)

- **Question:** "O Holy Lord, when this living being (person) sleeps, who sleeps? Who remains awake? Who dreams? Who experiences happiness? And in whom does everything become established?"
- **Guru's Answer:** In sleep, the senses sleep, but the life-forces remain awake. The mind dreams. The true living being (Atman), leaving everything behind in the state of Sushupti (deep sleep), becomes established in its blissful Atman form. In that state, there are no desires, there are no dreams, only bliss.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Even though we have waking, dream, and sleep states, this indicates that there is an eternal Atman (Turiya state) which transcends these three states. The Atman is always the same. The happiness we experience in deep sleep is the nature of the Atman.

5. Fifth Question: The Fruit of Omkara Meditation? (Satyakama Shaibya's Question)

- **Question:** "O Holy Lord, whoever meditates on the syllable Om until death, which world do they attain?"
- **Guru's Answer:** Om is a symbol for both Parabrahman and Aparabrahman.
 - Those who meditate on one syllable in Om return quickly.

- Those who meditate on two syllables in Om attain the lunar world.
- Those who completely and with concentration meditate on the three syllables (A-U-M) in Om cross the solar world, attain the Supreme Soul (Brahman), and are not born again. They become freed from sins and, just as a snake sheds its skin, they shed the bodily bondage and become established in Brahman.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Omkara is not just a sound; it is a symbol of Brahman. By meditating on it in the correct method and with concentration, one can rise from the worship of Saguna Brahman to the knowledge of Nirguna Brahman. This is a great meditation tool that helps to concentrate the mind and experience the ultimate truth.

6. Sixth Question: Explanation of the Sixteen-Part Person (Shodashakala Purusha)? (Suksha Bharadvaja's Question)

- **Question:** "O Holy Lord, where is the Shodashakala Purusha?"
- **Guru's Answer:** The Shodashakala Purusha is right in this body, within every living being. Those sixteen parts (Kalas) depend upon the Purusha (Atman):
 1. Life-force (Prana)
 2. Faith (Shraddha)
 3. Space (Akasha)
 4. Air (Vayu)
 5. Fire (Agni)
 6. Water (Jalam)
 7. Earth (Prithvi)
 8. Sense (Indriyam)
 9. Mind (Manassu)
 10. Food (Annam)
 11. Virility (Veeryam)
 12. Austerity (Tapas)
 13. Mantra
 14. Action (Karma)
 15. Worlds (Lokalu)
 16. Name (Namam)

From the Atman, the life-force is born; from the life-force, faith, space, air, fire, water, earth, senses, mind, food, virility, austerity, mantra, action, worlds, and names are born. Just as rivers dissolve in the ocean, these sixteen parts dissolve in the Purusha.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** These sixteen parts are various expressions of the Atman. Everything in creation, every part of the body, and all energy manifest from the one Atman alone and ultimately dissolve into it alone. This emphasizes the Advaita truth that the Atman is all-pervading and the Atman alone is the truth. Knowing Brahman means knowing the pure Atman which transcends these parts.

Summary of the Prashna Upanishad:

The Prashna Upanishad, through six questions, explains the source of creation (Brahman), the importance of the life-force, the state of the Atman in various conditions (waking, dream, deep sleep), the glory of Omkara, and the supremacy of the Atman which is the basis of all arts/parts. It clarifies the Advaita philosophy, namely the truth that "Atman is Brahman", from various angles, and indicates the method of attaining liberation through the path of knowledge.

5 - Mundaka Upanishad

This is one of the most important among the Upanishads, and it belongs to the Atharvana Veda. Its name comes from the word 'Mundakam', which means "shaving one's head" or "attaining liberation." This Upanishad indicates how ignorance and bondages are removed after attaining knowledge. It clearly explains the difference between Para Vidya (higher knowledge) and Apra Vidya (lower knowledge), making known the path that leads to liberation (Moksha).

Mundaka Upanishad: Para and Apra Vidya

The Mundaka Upanishad is divided into three Mundakas (chapters), and each Mundaka is divided into two Khandas (sections). It is in the form of a dialogue that took place between the Guru Angiras and the disciple Shaunaka.

First Mundaka: Two Types of Knowledge - Para and Apra

1. Shaunaka's Question

The Upanishad begins with a question asked by Shaunaka to Angiras: "O Holy Lord, by knowing what is everything known?"

- **Ultimate Meaning:** This indicates the profound inquisitiveness to know the ultimate truth, Brahman, which is the root of everything.

2. Angiras's Answer: Two Knowledges

In answer to that question, Angiras explains two types of knowledge:

- **Apra Vidya (Lower Knowledge):** This indicates the knowledge of secular and Vedic rituals such as the Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda), Shiksha (phonetics), Kalpa (rituals), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Chhandas (metrics), and Jyotisha (astrology).

- **Ultimate Meaning:** This knowledge is limited; it does not give eternal liberation. It bestows only meritorious worlds or temporary pleasures.
- **Para Vidya (Higher Knowledge):** This is the knowledge by which the imperishable Brahman (Akshara Brahma) is known. That imperishable Brahman is beyond the reach of the senses, ungraspable, without lineage (Gotra), formless, without eyes and ears, without hands and feet, eternal, all-pervading, unmoving, subtle, and imperishable. This is the source of all living beings.
 - **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This itself is self-knowledge (Atmajnanam) or the knowledge of Brahman (Brahmajnanam). Through this knowledge alone, ultimate liberation is attained. Para Vidya is knowing the attributeless (Nirguna), formless (Nirakara) Brahman, which is the source of creation and is pervaded everywhere.

3. Process of Creation: From the Imperishable Brahman

In this Mundaka, it is explained how creation took place: from the imperishable Brahman, life-force (Prana), mind, truth (the five elements), worlds, and actions were born. Just as sparks come from fire, living beings emerged from Brahman. Brahman itself is fire, the sun, the moon, the stars, the directions, speech, life-force, the heart, and the universe.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** This emphasizes that Brahman itself is the efficient (Nimitta/Doer) and material (Upadana/Substance) cause of creation. The entire creation came from Brahman alone, exists in Brahman alone, and dissolves in Brahman alone.

Second Mundaka: Atman - Brahman Relationship and Meditation

1. All-pervasiveness of the Atman

This Mundaka explains the all-pervasiveness of the Atman. The Atman is subtler than the mind and fills the entire creation. Just as a bird is in its nest, the Atman is in the heart, but it is pervaded in all living beings and in all directions.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** The Atman is not limited merely to the body. It is the very form of the Supreme Soul pervaded throughout the entire creation.

2. Meditation and Omkara: Chariot-Bow-Arrow Example

The Upanishad recommends Omkara meditation to know the Atman.

- Om is the bow.
- Atman is the arrow.
- Brahman is the target.
- **Meaning:** Just as placing an arrow on a bow, taking aim, and releasing the arrow, one must pierce the target called Brahman with the arrow called the Atman using the bow called Om. The mind must be fixed upon Brahman.

- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This analogy makes known the importance of concentration and continuous meditation. Omkara is not merely for chanting, but a tool to target Brahman and dissolve into the Atman.

3. Removal of Ignorance and Vision of the Atman

This Mundaka explains the sufferings of living beings filled with ignorance, and the freedom attained when knowledge is gained. To the person who has known the Atman, the knots of the heart (bonds of ignorance) are broken, all doubts are destroyed, and actions are diminished.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** Liberation is attained only by beholding the Atman. When ignorance is removed, the living being knows himself as Brahman and attains eternal bliss.

Third Mundaka: Truth, Austerity, Knowledge - The Path to Liberation

1. Two Birds: Jivatma-Paramatma

In this Mundaka, the analogy of two birds is famous:

- Two birds are sitting on the same tree. One eats the fruits of actions (Jivatma), and the other merely watches (Paramatma).
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** Due to ignorance, the living being thinks that he is performing actions and experiencing their fruits. But the Atman (Paramatma) remains merely as a witness, detachedly. When the living being knows himself to be one with the Supreme Soul, he becomes freed from actions and from sorrow.

2. Truth, Austerity, Knowledge, Celibacy

The Upanishad says that Brahman can be known only through truth, austerity, Samyak Jnanam (complete knowledge), and continuous celibacy (Brahmacharya/sense-control). Brahman is very subtle; it cannot be seen with the senses, nor can it be known by logic.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** For liberation, merely intellectual knowledge is not enough. Practical disciplines (Shama, Dama, Vairagya) are also necessary.

3. The State of the Knower of Atman (Jivanmukta)

The wise one (Jnani) who has known Brahman becomes freed from all bonds and attains eternal bliss. Even after casting off the body, he dissolves in Brahman alone and is not born again.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** To the person who has attained knowledge, the concepts of name, form, and body are destroyed. He becomes unified in Brahman, just as rivers merge into the ocean. In this way, those who have attained liberation do not need to go to a world of liberation after death; they are already one with Brahman.

Summary of the Mundaka Upanishad:

The Mundaka Upanishad divides knowledge into Para Vidya (knowledge of Brahman) and **Apara Vidya (knowledge of secular and ritualistic matters)**, clarifying that Para Vidya alone

leads to liberation. It explains Brahman as the root of the entire creation and the Atman as one with Brahman. It teaches that this self-knowledge can be obtained only through practices like Omkara meditation, truth, austerity, knowledge, and celibacy. Ultimately, this Upanishad declares that through knowledge, the living being breaks the bonds of ignorance, conquers death, merges into Brahman, and attains eternal liberation.

6 – Mandukya Upanishad

This is the smallest among all the Upanishads, containing only 12 mantras. Nevertheless, it is considered the most important because, through Omkara (Pranava), it explains the truth of the Atman and Brahman, especially the four states of the Atman, in the most subtle and profound manner. This belongs to the Atharvana Veda.

Mandukya Upanishad: Vision of the Atman through Omkara

The primary goal of the Mandukya Upanishad is to experientially prove the Mahavakya "*Ayam Atma Brahma*" (This Atman is Brahman) through Omkara. By analyzing the different consciousness states of the living being, it introduces the Turiya state (the fourth state), which transcends them, as Brahman.

1. Explanation of Omkara (Mantra 1)

"Omītiyetaḍakṣaramidaṁ sarvaṁ, tasya upavyakhyānaṁ bhūtaṁ bhavadbhaviṣyadīti sarvaṁomkāra eva | yacchanyat trikālā teetaṁ tadapyomkāra eva ||"

Meaning: The syllable Om is all this (the entire universe). Its explanation is that everything comprised of the three periods of time—past (that which has happened), present (that which is happening), and future (that which is going to happen)—is Omkara alone. Whatever there is that transcends the periods of time is also Omkara alone.

Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective): Omkara is not merely a sound. It is a symbol of Saguna and Nirguna Brahman. It is a symbol of the entire creation (that which is subject to the three periods of time), and also of the Nirguna Brahman which transcends creation. Through Omkara alone creation manifested, and in it alone it dissolves.

2. The Four Quarters (States) of the Atman and the Letters of Omkara (Mantra 2-7)

The Upanishad divides the Atman into four quarters (states of consciousness) and applies them to the letters of Omkara (A, U, M) and to the silence (Amatra).

Waking State (Jagrat Avastha - Sthula Bhuk - Akara):

"Jagarīta sthāno bahiṣprajñāḥ saptaṅga ekaviṁśatimukhaḥ sthulabhuk vaiśvānarah prathamah padaḥ ||"

Meaning: This is outward-moving consciousness, the state of experiencing the external world through the senses. It possesses seven limbs (body parts) and twenty-one mouths (ten senses, five life-forces, mind, intellect, chitta, and ego). It experiences gross objects. This is Vaishvanara (the fire present in the universe / the ordinary person). This is associated with the 'A' kara (the first letter) of Omkara.

Ultimate Meaning: This is our ordinary state of being awake. Here, the Atman is associated with the body and senses, and considers the external world to be real.

Dream State (Svapna Avastha - Pravivikta Bhuk - Ukara):

"Svapnasthanosntahprajnah saptanga ekavimshatimukhah praviviktabhuk taijasah dvitayah padah ||"

Meaning: This is inward-moving consciousness, the state of experiencing internal impressions and thoughts in a dream. It also possesses seven limbs and twenty-one mouths, but it experiences subtle objects. This is Taijasa (the luminous form). This is associated with the 'U' kara (the second letter) of Omkara.

Ultimate Meaning: In this state, the Atman creates and experiences its own mental world. Even though external objects are absent here, the experiences feel real.

Deep Sleep State (Sushupti Avastha - Ananda Bhuk - Makara):

"Sushuptasthana ekeebhutih prajnanaghana evanandamayo hi anandabhuk cheto mukhah prajnah tritayah padah ||"

Meaning: This is unified consciousness, a state in deep sleep where there are no desires or dreams. Here, the mind and senses cease their respective operations and exist in a certain unmanifested state. This is the condensed form of knowledge, full of bliss. It experiences bliss. This is Prajna (the knower of all). This is associated with the 'M' kara (the third letter) of Omkara.

Ultimate Meaning: This is a state temporarily devoid of dualism. Here, the living being experiences its true blissful form, but it is devoid of awareness and filled with ignorance.

Turiya State (Amatra / Silent Omkara):

"Nantahprajnam na bahishprajnam nobhayatahprajnam na prajnanaghanam na prajnam
naprajnam
Adrishtamavyavaharyamagrahyamalakshanamachintyamavyapadeshyamekatmapratyayasara
m prapanchopashamam shantam shivamadvaitam chaturtham manyante sa atma sa vijneyah
||"

Meaning: This is not inward-moving consciousness, not outward-moving consciousness, not both together, not a condensed mass of knowledge, not knowledge, and not ignorance. It cannot be seen, it cannot be interacted with, it cannot be grasped, it is without traits, unthinkable, and indescribable. It is the essence of the experience of the one Atman. It is the state where the world ceases to exist, peaceful, auspicious, and non-dual. This is considered the fourth state. This is the Atman, this is what is to be known.

Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective): The Turiya state alone is the true nature of the Atman. It transcends the three states of Jagrat, Svapna, and Sushupti. It transcends time,

space, and forms. This itself is Parabrahman. This is a state without dualism, where the living being experiences itself as Brahman. The silent part of Omkara (the soundless part that follows the letters) is a symbol of this Turiya state.

3. Knowing the Turiya State (Mantra 8-12)

These mantras synthesize the four states of the Atman with the letters of Omkara, A-U-M, and the silence that follows them (Amatra).

- **'A' kara:** Is associated with the waking state (Vaishvanara).
- **'U' kara:** Is associated with the dream state (Taijasa).
- **'M' kara:** Is associated with the deep sleep state (Prajna).
- **Amatra (the soundless part):** This is a symbol of the Turiya state (Nirguna Brahman). This is without dualism, devoid of worldly activities, auspicious, and non-dual. He who knows this dissolves the Atman into himself.

Summary of the Mandukya Upanishad:

The Mandukya Upanishad, using Omkara as a tool, explains the four states of consciousness of the Atman (Jagrat, Svapna, Sushupti, Turiya). It teaches that the three states are comprised of the external world, the mental world, and temporary bliss, but the Turiya state which transcends them is the true, attributeless, formless nature of the Atman. This Upanishad clarifies that by continuous meditation on Omkara to experientially know the Mahavakya "*Ayam Atma Brahma*", the living being realizes himself to be one with Brahman and attains eternal liberation. This is considered the essence of Vedanta because it explains the most profound non-dual truth with very few mantras.

7 – Taittiriya Upanishad

Among all the Upanishads, this is very extensive, deep, and the most important in Advaita Vedanta. It belongs to the Krishna Yajurveda. Its name comes from the name of the sage 'Tittiri'. This Upanishad primarily explains the knowledge of Brahman (Brahmajnanam), the theory of the five sheaths (Panchakosha Siddhantam), the order of creation, the nature of bliss, and the Guru-disciple tradition.

Taittiriya Upanishad: The Panchakosha Path to Brahman-Realization

The Taittiriya Upanishad is divided into three chapters (Vallis):

1. **Shiksha Valli (Science of Phonetics/Knowledge):** The importance of pronunciation, sound, and Vedic chanting.
2. **Brahmananda Valli (Nature of Bliss):** The theory of the five sheaths and the analysis of bliss (Ananda Mimamsa).

3. **Bhrigu Valli (Seeking Brahman):** The conversation between Bhrigu and Varuna, which explains the process of discovering Brahman.

1. Shiksha Valli (Science of Phonetics/Knowledge)

This Valli primarily explains the importance of chanting and pronouncing the Vedas in the correct method, and grasping their meaning. This establishes the necessary foundation for the listener to attain the knowledge of Brahman.

Key Points:

- Focus on aspects such as sound, tone, syllable, and the order of chanting. It emphasizes that the knowledge within the Vedic mantras is obtained only by pronouncing and understanding them correctly.
- Getting prepared for self-knowledge: This is the preliminary stage, which purifies the mind and prepares it to grasp the higher knowledge.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** The study of the Vedas and Upanishads is the first step to the knowledge of Brahman. Without proper hearing (Shravana), knowledge is incomplete.

2. Brahmananda Valli (Nature of Bliss)

This Valli is the most crucial part of the Taittiriya Upanishad. It explains the theory of the five sheaths and the Ananda Mimamsa (the measure of bliss).

The Theory of the Five Sheaths (Panchakosha Siddhantam): It explains the five layers or sheaths that cover the Atman. It teaches that the Atman transcends these sheaths and is the witness to them.

1. **Annamaya Kosha (The sheath consisting of food):** The gross body. This is born from food, lives through food, and dissolves in food itself.
 2. **Pranamaya Kosha (The sheath consisting of life-force):** The life-force energy (breath, vital energy). This is the cause for movements and metabolic activities in the body.
 3. **Manomaya Kosha (The sheath consisting of mind):** The mind, resolves (Sankalpas), emotions, and thoughts.
 4. **Vijnanamaya Kosha (The sheath consisting of intellect/knowledge):** The intellect, discrimination, smartness, and the sense of karthuthva (doership).
 5. **Anandamaya Kosha (The sheath consisting of bliss):** The causal body, bliss, and the subtle form of ignorance. We experience this in the state of Sushupti (deep sleep). This is the sheath closest to Brahman.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** The Atman transcends these five sheaths. Through the discrimination of the five sheaths (Panchakosha Vivekam), the practitioner realizes that he is not the body, life-force, mind, intellect, or the blissful sheath, but the

pure consciousness (Atman) which is the witness to all of these. The Atman is eternal, pure, awake, and free.

The Order of Creation: This Valli explains how the entire creation emerged from Brahman alone:

- From the Atman, space (Akasha) was born.
- From space, air (Vayu).
- From air, fire (Agni).
- From fire, water.
- From water, earth (Prithvi).
- From earth, herbs (plants).
- From herbs, food (Annam).
- From food, the person (man).
- **Ultimate Meaning:** This emphasizes that Brahman itself is the efficient and material cause of creation.

Ananda Mimamsa (The Measure of Bliss): This Upanishad, beginning from human bliss, explains a hierarchy of bliss up to the bliss of the gods and the bliss of Brahman. It says that a hundred thousand human blisses are equal to the bliss of one Gandharva, and going upwards in this manner, ultimately the bliss of Brahman is the highest, limitless, and is beyond the reach of the senses.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** Brahman itself is the very form of supreme bliss (Paramananda). The person who has attained self-knowledge experiences this limitless bliss.

3. Bhrigu Valli (Seeking Brahman)

This Valli explains the process through which a disciple named Bhrigu attains the knowledge of Brahman from his father Varuna (the Guru). Bhrigu, upon realizing at each stage that 'this is Brahman', returns and requests his father that it is not sufficient and that he needs to know more deeply.

Bhrigu's Order of Investigation:

1. **That food is Brahman:** First, he thinks food (food/gross body) is Brahman.
2. **That life-force is Brahman:** Next, he thinks life-force is Brahman.
3. **That mind is Brahman:** Then, he considers mind to be Brahman.
4. **That Vijnana (intellect) is Brahman:** Afterward, he grasps that Vijnana (intellect/understanding) is Brahman.
5. **That bliss is Brahman:** Finally, he realizes that bliss is Brahman.

- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This journey explains how to transcend the five sheaths and realize the true blissful form of the Atman. Bliss is the ultimate truth; that itself is Brahman.

Summary of the Taittiriya Upanishad:

The Taittiriya Upanishad, while giving importance to the synthesis of knowledge and action, teaches that the knowledge of Brahman is the ultimate goal. By explaining the theory of the five sheaths, it makes known that the Atman transcends the sheaths such as the body, mind, and intellect, and is the witness to them. Through Ananda Mimamsa, it establishes that Brahman is the very form of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Existence-Consciousness-Bliss), and bliss is its ultimate form. Through the story of Bhrigu, it explains how to attain Brahman-realization stage by stage and experientially. Ultimately, this Upanishad declares that by knowing himself as Brahman, the living being attains eternal bliss and liberation.

8 – Aitareya Upanishad

This is very important among the Upanishads, and it belongs to the Rigveda. This Upanishad primarily explains the order of creation, the supremacy of the Atman, and the Mahavakya "*Prajnanam Brahma*". It makes known the existence of the Atman, how it enters into living beings, and ultimately the truth that it itself is Brahman.

Aitareya Upanishad: Creation, Atman, and 'Prajnanam Brahma'

The Aitareya Upanishad is divided into three chapters, which teach the knowledge of Brahman (Brahmajnanam) in a single flow.

First Chapter: The Order of Creation and the Emergence of the Purusha

This chapter explains how creation began.

- **Before Creation:** The Upanishad declares that before creation, the Atman alone existed, and there was nothing else. That Atman resolved, "I shall create the worlds."
- **Creation of the Worlds:** Through its resolve, that Atman created various worlds:
 - **Ambhas (Water):** That which is above heaven.
 - **Marichi (Rays):** The atmosphere (space).
 - **Maram (The world of death):** The earth.
 - **Apah (Water):** That which is below the earth.
- **The Emergence of the Purusha:** After creating these worlds, the Atman created a person (the Primeval Person / Virat Purusha) as their master. From the body of this Purusha, various deities (senses and the powers ruling them) emerged. For example, fire

from his speech, air from his nostrils, the sun from his eyes, the directions from his ears, etc.

- **Hunger and Thirst:** It created hunger and thirst for these deities. These hungers and thirsts impel the living being to perform actions and to experience the world.
- **Creation of Food:** The Atman created food to satisfy hunger and thirst.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** The entire creation emerged from the resolve of Brahman alone. Nothing is different from the Atman (Brahman). This entire creation is a manifestation of Brahman. This world was created for living beings to experience the fruits of their actions.

Second Chapter: The Entry of the Atman into the Living Being

This chapter explains how the Atman enters the created bodies.

- **Entry of the Atman:** After the worlds, deities, and food were all created, the Atman thought, "How shall I enter into these bodies?", and entered through the head (Brahmarandhra / the soft part in the head of infants) of the body. After the Atman entered, it began to control the various parts and senses of the body.
- **The Vision of the Wise One:** When a wise one (Jnani) sees himself in this body, he realizes, "I have seen all this."
- **The Nature of Jivatma:** This chapter also indirectly indicates the existence of the Atman in the unborn fetus and the process of rebirth.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** The Atman present in the living being is different from the body, senses, and mind. It is independent and the basis of everything. The Atman enters into its own creation and makes it live.

Third Chapter: Prajnanam Brahma and Liberation

This chapter delivers the main message of the Upanishad: "*Prajnanam Brahma*" (Prajnanam is Brahman).

- **What is Prajnanam?:** The Upanishad explains that 'Prajnanam' does not mean merely thoughts, memories, or sensory knowledge. It is the internal consciousness which is the root of all vital forces and knowledge, such as the power to see, the power to hear, speech, the power of smell, taste, distinguishing good and bad, love, desire, thought, memory, resolve, life, hope, and fear.
- **Prajnanam itself is Brahman:** This ultimate Prajnanam (pure consciousness) is Brahman. It is the creator, the basis of all worlds, the source of all deities, and the truth underlying all living beings.
- **Liberation (Moksha):** Whoever experientially knows that this Prajnanam is Brahman, after departing from this world, leaves behind all desires, attains immortality, and becomes one with Brahman.

- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This is a proof for the Mahavakya "I am Brahman". This pure consciousness (Prajnanam) within us is not a characteristic of a limited living being; it is the Nirguna Brahman itself, which is the root of the entire universe. Knowing this truth is liberation. This is experiential knowledge that transcends the senses and the mind.

Summary of the Aitareya Upanishad:

The Aitareya Upanishad explains that before creation, the Atman (Brahman) alone existed, and from its resolve alone, all worlds, deities, and food were created. It makes known that the Atman entered into those created bodies and made them live. Ultimately, through the Mahavakya "*Prajnanam Brahma*", it declares the truth that the pure consciousness, which is the source of all knowledge and powers within us, is Parabrahman. This Upanishad teaches that only by knowing this truth experientially, the living being becomes freed from worldly bonds and attains liberation and immortality.

9 – Chandogya Upanishad

Among all the Upanishads, this is one of the largest and most extensive, belonging to the Samaveda. It has provided many key principles and examples to Advaita Vedanta, especially being well-known through the Mahavakya "*Tat Tvam Asi*". This Upanishad deeply explains self-knowledge, knowledge of Brahman (Brahmajnanam), the order of creation, the glory of Omkara, the Panchagni Vidya, and the oneness of the Jivatma and Paramatma.

Chandogya Upanishad: "Tat Tvam Asi" and Brahman-Realization

The Chandogya Upanishad is divided into eight chapters (Prapathakas), which contain many stories, dialogues, and instructions.

First Chapter: The Glory of Omkara (Udgitha)

This chapter explains the importance of Omkara (Udgitha) and meditation upon it. Udgitha is a part of the Samaveda chanting, comprised of Omkara. The Upanishad connects Omkara with the Supreme Soul.

- **Main Message:** Omkara is the source of the entire creation and a symbol of the ultimate truth. By meditating upon it, the living being can attain higher worlds and knowledge.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** Omkara is a symbol of the Saguna and Nirguna forms of Brahman. Omkara meditation concentrates the mind and paves the way for Brahman-realization.

Second Chapter: Samaveda and Brahman-Experience

This chapter explains the various forms of Udgitha in the Samaveda and meditations upon them. This helps the listener to know the deep meaning of the Vedic mantras and the spiritual truth behind them.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** Transcending external rituals and mantra chantings, it is important to know Brahman, which is their inner meaning.

Third Chapter: Meditation on Brahman and Aditya-Worship (Adityopasana)

This chapter explains how to meditate on Brahman in the mind. It explains various worships (Upasanas) such as worshipping the Sun as Brahman, and meditating on the universe by considering it as madhu (honey). It says that Brahman should be worshipped as "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*" (All this is indeed Brahman).

- **Main Message:** "*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma, Tajjalan*" (All this is indeed Brahman. It is born from that, it dissolves in that, and it lives through that).
- **Ultimate Meaning:** This is a way to understand that the entire creation is Brahman, and the living being is not different from Brahman. This is the foundation for the concept of Advaita.

Fourth Chapter: The Story of Satyakama Jabala and Prana-Worship (Pranopasana)

This chapter explains the story of a youth named Satyakama who goes searching for a Guru and attains the knowledge of Brahman. Due to his honesty and inquisitiveness, the knowledge of Brahman is instructed to him through cows, through fire, and through a swan. It also explains the importance of Prana-worship.

- **Main Message:** The knowledge of Brahman is obtained by those who have commitment toward truth and selfless curiosity.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** This story indicates the importance of the Guru-disciple lineage, and that the internal Brahman can be known even through externally visible things.

Fifth Chapter: Panchagni Vidya and the State of the Living Being

This chapter explains the Panchagni Vidya, which makes known how a living being undergoes rebirth after death. In this knowledge, five fires (the heavenly world, cloud, earth, man, woman) successively receive offerings, explaining the process that leads the living being back to birth. Also, explaining the greatness of Prana-worship, it tells which life-force is the greatest in the body (the chief life-force / Mukhya Prana).

- **Main Message:** Actions (merit, sin) determine the rebirth of the living being. Those without knowledge get caught in the recurring cycle of birth and death as a result of actions.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** This indirectly indicates that due to ignorance alone, the living being gets caught in the worldly bondage, and freedom from this is obtained only through knowledge.

Sixth Chapter: "Tat Tvam Asi" - The Essence of Advaita

This chapter is the most famous and crucial part of the Chandogya Upanishad. This is the story of Uddalaka Aruni instructing Brahman to his son Shvetaketu. When Shvetaketu is filled with pride after studying the Vedas, his father explains the Mahavakya "*Tat Tvam Asi*" to him through nine examples.

- **"Tat Tvam Asi" (That thou art):**
 - **Main Message:** You (Tvam) are that Supreme Soul (Tat) which is the basis of the entire universe. You are not different from that Supreme Soul.
 - **Examples:**
 1. **Mud, gold, iron:** Even though objects made of mud appear as different forms, their root is mud alone. Similarly, the root of all forms is Brahman alone.
 2. **Bees collecting honey:** Just as rivers lose their distinctiveness when they merge into the ocean, all living beings are integral parts in Brahman alone.
 3. **The essence of a tree:** Just as the essence of a large tree is present in a tiny seed, the entire universe is present in the unseeable Atman alone.
 4. **Salt dissolving in water:** Even if salt dissolves in water and is not visible, its taste is everywhere. Similarly, even though Brahman is not visible, it is pervaded everywhere.
 5. **The living being in sleep:** In sleep, the living being becomes freed from karmic bonds and dissolves into the Atman.
 6. **The living being through the life-force:** Knowing the life-force as the Atman.
 7. **The rabbit and the bark:** Even if the living being is in the body, it is transcendent to it.
 8. **The person without thirst:** Quenching thirst with knowledge.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This chapter most powerfully and elaborately teaches the non-dual truth that the Jivatma and Paramatma are one. This is the instruction that leads to the realization of "*Aham Brahmasmi*".

Seventh Chapter: Narada-Sanat Kumara Dialogue (Bhuma Vidya)

This chapter begins with Narada seeking knowledge from his Guru Sanat Kumara. Sanat Kumara explains about the 'Bhuma' (the most extensive, infinite) Brahman to Narada.

- **Main Message:** Bhuma is happiness, there is no happiness in that which is limited. The infinite alone is happiness.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Brahman is that which is limitless, infinite, and that itself is the very form of bliss. Eternal happiness is not obtained from limited objects.

Eighth Chapter: Dahara Vidya and Liberation

This final chapter explains the Dahara Vidya (meditating on Brahman existing in the small space inside the heart). It says that the entire universe, worlds, and Brahman are present right in the small space within the lotus of the heart.

- **Main Message:** Through self-knowledge, the living being gains sovereignty over all worlds and attains happiness. After death, he attains the world of Brahman and becomes one with Brahman.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** The path to liberation and immortality is self-knowledge alone. The living being who has attained the knowledge of Brahman has no fear of death; he merges into the Supreme Soul. This explains the state of dissolving into Brahman after casting off the body.

Summary of the Chandogya Upanishad:

The Chandogya Upanishad is an extensive source text for Vedanta. It deeply explains the importance of Omkara, the order of creation, various paths of worshipping Brahman, the cycle of rebirth, and most importantly, the oneness of the Jivatma and Paramatma through the Mahavakya "*Tat Tvam Asi*". It clarifies that eternal bliss, freedom, and liberation are obtained only through knowledge (Brahmajnanam). It simplifies complex philosophical concepts through many stories and examples.

10 – Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

Among all the Upanishads, this is the largest and the oldest, belonging to the Shukla Yajurveda. Its name comes from the words 'Brihat' (great/extensive) and 'Aranyaka' (forest book), which indicates its extensive scope and deep knowledge. In Advaita Vedanta, this is an Upanishad of the highest importance, teaching the Mahavakya "*Aham Brahmasmi*". This Upanishad explains the oneness of the Jivatma and Paramatma, the order of creation, the theory of Karma, rebirth, and the method of attaining liberation (Moksha) through self-knowledge, in the form of dialogues, stories, and philosophical discussions.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: "Aham Brahmasmi" and the Journey of Self-Knowledge

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is divided into six chapters (Adhyayas), and each chapter is composed of Brahmanas (sections) and mantras.

First Chapter: Creation and Philosophical Explanation of Ashvamedha Yajna

This chapter explains the symbolic meaning of the Ashvamedha Yajna, making known that it is not merely a ritual, but indicates the process of the creation of the universe and the all-pervasiveness of Brahman.

- **Main Message:** Before creation, the Atman (Brahman) alone existed. It resolved, 'I am.' From that, everything in creation emerged. That Brahman, becoming everything, manifests in all forms.
- **Mahavakya:** Right in this chapter, the Mahavakya "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (I am Brahman) is mentioned.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** The entire creation came from the Supreme Soul alone. The Atman, which is the root of the feeling of 'I' in the living being, is the very Brahman which is the root of the universe. Leaving behind the ego of 'I', knowing that one's true Atman form is the limitless Brahman, is knowledge.

Second Chapter: Self-Knowledge and Transcendence of the Senses

In this chapter, there is the Ajatashatru - Balaki dialogue, where Ajatashatru explains that the Atman, which transcends the states of sleep, dream, and waking, is the true truth. Also, it tells that the reason everything is dear to a person is because of loving the Atman, and that wife, husband, wealth, worlds, deities, and Vedas are all dear only for the sake of the Atman.

- **Main Message:** "*Atma va are drashtavyah shrotavyo mantavyo nididhyasitavyah*" (O Maitreyi, the Atman indeed should be seen, heard, reflected upon, and meditated upon).
- **Ultimate Meaning:** It emphasizes that three stages—Shravana (hearing), Manana (analyzing), and Nididhyasana (meditation / becoming established in the Atman)—are necessary to attain self-knowledge. The Atman is the dearest of all, because that itself is our true nature.

Third Chapter: Yajnavalkya and the Quest for Knowledge

In this chapter, there are philosophical discussions that Sage Yajnavalkya holds with many great sages, especially with those like Gargi and Uddalaka Aruni. It explains deep questions on actions, rebirth, and the definition of Brahman.

- **Yajnavalkya - Gargi Dialogue:** Gargi successively asks Yajnavalkya questions like, 'What is the root of everything in the universe?'. Yajnavalkya ultimately tells that there is an imperishable (Brahman) which transcends time and space, and is invisible and ungraspable. Liberation is attained only by knowing that imperishable.
- **Yajnavalkya - Uddalaka Aruni Dialogue:** When Uddalaka asks about the Antaryami Brahmana, Yajnavalkya explains that existing inside the earth, inside the water, inside the fire, and inside all living beings, there is an Antaryami (indweller / Atman / Brahman) that controls them. Even if that Antaryami is unknown to the body, it controls the body. That itself is the immortal Atman.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** These dialogues clarify that the root and controlling power of the externally visible world and of all living beings is the one and only Brahman. Self-knowledge is not merely a thought; it is knowing the Antaryami present in every object and in every living being.

Fourth Chapter: Characteristics of a Knower of Brahman and Liberation

This chapter explains the highest state of knowledge, and the characteristics of a knower of Brahman (Jivanmukta).

- **Main Message:** A knower of Brahman is one without fear, one without desire, and one without ignorance. Whatever action he performs, it does not cling to him, because he knows that he is not the doer, but that he is the Atman.
- **Videhamukti:** After casting off the body, the wise one (Jnani), being without any desires, dissolves in Brahman alone and is not born again. Because to the living being who has known Brahman, there are no bonds.
- **The Nature of Atman:** The Atman is known only through the method of 'Neti Neti' (not this, not this). That means, it is not perceptible to the senses or mind, and it transcends all adjectives.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** This explains the nature of liberation, and the states of Jivanmukti and Videhamukti. Knowledge destroys ignorance and the bondage of actions, and leads the living being into eternal bliss.

Fifth Chapter: Prana Offering (Pranahuti) and Omkara

This chapter explains the mention of various rituals, the philosophical meanings related to them, and meditation on Omkara and the life-force (Prana).

- **Main Message:** Everything in the universe is connected with 'Om'. The life-force is a manifestation of Brahman, and by meditating upon it, higher levels can be reached.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Transcending external rituals, it is important to grasp their internal spiritual truth.

Sixth Chapter: The Greatness of the Life-force and Continuation of Creation

This final chapter explains that the life-force is greater than all the senses in the body, because without the life-force, no sense functions. Also, it explains the order of human creation, rebirth, and the importance of children.

- **Ultimate Meaning:** The life-force is the vital energy of Brahman. This indicates the continuous existence of the individual soul, and the role of the life-force in worldly bondage.

Summary of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is like an encyclopedia for Advaita Vedanta. It most deeply and elaborately teaches the oneness of the Jivatma and Paramatma through the Mahavakya "*Aham Brahmasmi*". It emphasizes the eternity, unknowability, and all-pervasiveness of the Atman, and the importance of Shravana, Manana, and Nididhyasana to know it. Through the dialogues of sages like Yajnavalkya and Gargi, it explains aspects such as Karma, knowledge, creation, and liberation. It clarifies that through knowledge alone, the bonds of ignorance are removed, and the living being attains eternal bliss, fearlessness, and liberation.

11 - Shvetashvatara Upanishad

This holds a very special place among all the Upanishads. It belongs to the Krishna Yajurveda. While other major Upanishads mostly emphasize the Advaita (non-dual Brahman) philosophy, the Shvetashvatara Upanishad stands as a bridge between the concepts of Dvaita (dualism) and Advaita in philosophy. It glorifies Shiva (Rudra) as Parameshvara (the Supreme Lord) and Brahman, and also mentions the path of Bhakti (devotion/surrender). This Upanishad explains the triad (Triputi) of Ishvara (the controller), Jiva (the enjoyer), and Prakriti (that which is enjoyed), but teaches that ultimately the source of these three is the one and only Supreme Soul (Brahman).

Shvetashvatara Upanishad: Ishvara, Jiva, Prakriti, and Liberation

The Shvetashvatara Upanishad is divided into six chapters (Adhyayas).

First Chapter: Who is the Cause of the Universe?

This chapter begins with sages who are inquisitive of knowledge asking questions such as: "Who is the cause of this universe? From where are we born? By what are we living? By whose command are we experiencing pleasure and pain?". They discuss various potential causes such as time, inherent nature, necessity, chance, elements, the womb (creator), and the person (Purusha).

- **Main Message:** Ultimately, the sages discover that there is a single divine power (Brahman) that transcends all these causes and created the universe with its own power of illusion (Mayashakti). Even though that power is covered with dense smoke like fire, it can be known through knowledge.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Even if many causes appear for creation, the source of all of them is the one Supreme Soul. This emphasizes the creativity of Brahman.

Second Chapter: Practice of Yoga and Self-Knowledge

This chapter explains the importance of Yoga practice to know Brahman. It tells how a yogi can behold Brahman by controlling his senses and mind, and meditating in a certain sacred place.

- **Main Message:** The Atman can be beheld through Pranayama (breath control), meditation, and sense-control. Prior signs such as improved health, luster, and purity arise in meditation.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Merely philosophical discussions are not sufficient; practical meditation practice is necessary to attain self-knowledge. This indicates the physical and mental discipline that leads to self-knowledge.

Third Chapter: Glorifying Rudra as Parabrahman

This chapter glorifies Rudra (Shiva) as the sole Ishvara of the entire universe, and as Parabrahman. He alone is the one who created all living beings, the bestower of knowledge to them, and the protector.

- **Main Message:** Rudra controls all worlds and living beings with his power of illusion (Mayashakti). There is no second to him. Immortality is attained only by knowing him.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Here, the Nirguna Brahman is worshipped as the Saguna Ishvara (Rudra/Shiva). This also provides a foundation for the path of devotion, indicating the path to reach the Supreme Soul through a personal deity (Ishtadevata). Even if Rudra created the world with his illusion, he remains immanent within it, while at the same time controlling it.

Fourth Chapter: Maya and the Forms of Brahman

This chapter explains the supremacy of Brahman, the power of illusion (Mayashakti), and how Brahman manifests in all forms. It says that Brahman alone exists in the form of woman, man, boy, girl, old man, bird, and animal.

- **Main Message:** Maya is the power of Brahman. The one who created this Maya is Mayin (Ishvara). The living being performs actions being subject to Maya.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** All the diversity in the world is merely the work of Brahman's illusion. Brahman is the ultimate truth that transcends all these forms, yet exists in all forms. Freedom from the bondage of Maya is obtained through knowledge.

Fifth Chapter: Karma, Time, and Brahman

This chapter explains the theory of Karma and the importance of time. Time determines the fruits of actions. Also, mentioning the three states of the living being (waking, dream, deep sleep), it explains about knowing the Atman which transcends them.

- **Main Message:** The living being becomes bound through his own actions. However, freedom from these karmic bonds can be obtained through knowledge.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Actions are temporary, subject to time. Eternal liberation is obtained only by knowing the Brahman which transcends actions and is beyond time.

Sixth Chapter: The Greatness of Parameshvara and Liberation

This final chapter once again emphasizes the supremacy of Parameshvara (Rudra/Shiva). It says that he has no agency (doership), there is no equal or superior to him, and he alone is the one who created, sustains, and destroys the entire universe.

- **Main Message:** Freedom from the worldly bondage is obtained only by knowing this Parameshvara. This knowledge is obtained only through unwavering devotion toward God, as well as devotion toward the Guru.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Along with knowledge, this emphasizes the importance of devotion. The knowledge obtained through the Guru-disciple lineage, and complete surrender toward God leads to liberation.

Summary of the Shvetashvatara Upanishad:

The Shvetashvatara Upanishad, while explaining the three aspects of Ishvara, Jiva, and Prakriti, establishes the **one and only Supreme Soul (Brahman)** which is the source and basis of these three. It glorifies Rudra (Shiva) as Parameshvara, the creator, sustainer, and bestower of knowledge for the entire creation. Explaining the path to attain self-knowledge through Yoga practice and meditation, it teaches that along with knowledge, devotion to the Guru and devotion to God are also necessary for liberation. Ultimately, this Upanishad declares that only by knowing the Supreme Soul, the living being becomes freed from the bonds of Maya, and attains eternal bliss and immortality.

12 - Kaushitaki Upanishad

This is important among the Upanishads and belongs to the Rigveda. This Upanishad primarily explains Pranopasana (worshipping the life-force), the supremacy of the Atman, the conversation between Indra and Prataardana, and the post-death journey endowed with the knowledge of Brahman (Brahmajnanam).

Kaushitaki Upanishad: Life-force, Atman, and the World of Brahman

The Kaushitaki Upanishad is divided into four chapters (Adhyayas).

First Chapter: The Life-force and the Path to Living

This chapter explains the two primary paths that living beings attain after death: Devayana (the path of the gods) and Pitruyana (the path of the manes/ancestors). It explains how a person who has attained the knowledge of Brahman goes to the world of Brahman (Brahma Loka), and how those without knowledge undergo rebirth.

- **Devayana (The Path to the World of Brahman):** Those who have attained knowledge and those who have worshipped the life-force, after death, cross the lunar world, cross the worlds of Varuna, Indra, and Prajapati, and ultimately reach the world of Brahman. There they attain the divine vision of Brahman and become one with Brahman. In this journey, they leave behind their ignorance and sins through various deities.
- **Pitruyana (The Path of Rebirth):** Those without knowledge, who have performed merely rituals (sacrifices, charities), after death go to the lunar world, and after experiencing their merit, are born again on this earth as humans or as other living beings.
- **Main Message:** Liberation (attaining the world of Brahman) is possible only through knowledge; that which is obtained through rituals is merely temporary meritorious worlds.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This emphasizes the importance of the Jananakanda (knowledge section). The knowledge of Brahman is the only path to become freed from the worldly bondage. Only those who possess self-knowledge (Atmajnanam) will have no rebirth.

Second Chapter: Prana-Worship (Pranopasana) and the Life-force in the Body

This chapter explains the importance of Prana-worship. It tells that the life-force present inside the body is greater than everything, and it is the basis for all other sensory powers.

- **The Supremacy of the Life-force:** Once upon a time, when all the senses (speech, eye, ear, mind) argued among themselves as to who was the greatest among them, it was proven that nothing functions without the life-force, and without the life-force, all the senses along with the body become useless. Therefore, the life-force alone is the most important, and it controls all the senses.
- **Main Message:** The life-force itself is consciousness; that itself is Brahman. By worshipping the life-force, long life, good progeny, and wealth are obtained.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** The life-force is not merely breath; it is the power of the Atman, an expression of the cosmic consciousness. Prana-worship concentrates the mind and paves the way for self-knowledge.

Third Chapter: Conversation Between Indra and Pratardana - The Life-force itself is Brahman

This chapter is the most important part of the Upanishad. Indra (the king of gods), introducing himself as the 'life-force' (Prana) and as the 'Prasnatma' (conscious self), instructs the knowledge to a sage named Pratardana.

- **Indra's Declaration:** Indra says, "*Mamevavijanihi*" (Know me alone). Here, Indra is not merely a deity; he is a symbol of the principle called life-force and pragna (consciousness/knowledge) which is the root of all living beings.
- **The Life-force itself is Pragnatma:** The senses and the mind cannot function on their own. Without the life-force, the senses have no power, and without pragna

(consciousness), the life-force has no meaning. Therefore, life-force and pragna are both two aspects of the same principle. That which is a combination of these two is the Pragnatma; that itself is Brahman.

- **Main Message:** "*Na vacham vijignasita vaktaram vidyat*" (Do not desire to know speech, know the speaker (the Atman) who is the root of speech). In the same manner, instead of the eye, the ear, or the mind, one should know the seer, the hearer, and the thinker (the Atman) who is behind them.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** The life-force in our body and the consciousness (pragna) within us are both one and the same. This very Pragnatma is the true Atman; that itself is Parabrahman. This stands close to the Mahavakya "*Prajnanam Brahma*". Knowing oneself not as the body, senses, or mind, but as the Pragnatma which transcends them, is knowledge.

Fourth Chapter: Dialogue of Gurus-Disciples and Self-Knowledge

This chapter explains various dimensions of the knowledge of Brahman through different dialogues that take place between Gurus and disciples. It also contains a conversation between Ajatashatru and Gargya, which resembles a certain part in the Katha Upanishad.

- **Main Message:** Liberation is attained by knowing Brahman as 'eternal', 'pure', and 'limitless'.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** This chapter consolidates the main messages of the Upanishad and emphasizes the supreme importance of self-knowledge.

Summary of the Kaushitaki Upanishad:

The Kaushitaki Upanishad primarily explains the importance of the life-force and how it, combining with **pragna (consciousness)**, forms the Pragnatma. It emphasizes that this Pragnatma is the true Atman; that itself is Parabrahman. Through the Indra-Pratardana dialogue, it teaches that liberation is attained only by knowing the Atman, which transcends the senses and the mind and is the driving seer (the one who sees) and hearer (the one who hears). This Upanishad clarifies that living beings who have attained knowledge reach the world of Brahman after death and dissolve into Brahman without being born again. This proves that self-knowledge alone is the path to freedom from the worldly bondage.

13 - Maitrayani Upanishad

This is one of the Upanishads and belongs to the Krishna Yajurveda. This Upanishad is famous for its unique style and scope of subject matter. It teaches the knowledge of Brahman (Brahmajnanam) just like other Upanishads, but it also contains the influences of Samkhya and Yoga philosophies. This Upanishad primarily explains the nature of the Atman, the bondage of the mind, the order of creation, the importance of time, and the path to liberation (Moksha). It is in the form of a dialogue that took place between Rajarshi Brihadratha and Sage Shakayana.

Maitrayani Upanishad: Bondage of the Mind, Principle of Time, and the Path to Liberation

The Maitrayani Upanishad is divided into seven Prapathakas (lessons/chapters).

First Prapathaka: The Dispassion (Vairagyam) of Rajarshi Brihadratha

The Upanishad begins with an emperor named Rajarshi Brihadratha leaving his empire, coming to the forest, and performing intense austerity (Tapas) seeking liberation. The question he asks Sage Shakayana is: "O Holy Lord, this body is impermanent, full of sorrow. Instruct me on the path to attain freedom from this ocean of worldly existence (Samsara)."

- **Main Message:** Worldly pleasures are temporary; the body is perishable. True happiness and peace exist only in liberation.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** This emphasizes the importance of dispassion. For entering the path of knowledge, aversion toward worldly existence is necessary.

Second Prapathaka: Atman - The Chariot Analogy

In this Prapathaka, a chariot analogy is used to explain the Atman, which is close to the analogy in the Katha Upanishad, but with certain differences.

- **Analogy:** The Atman is the master of the chariot. The body is the chariot, the senses are the horses, the mind is the reins, and the intellect is the charioteer. However, here the Pradhana (Prakriti/Nature) is the one driving the chariot, and the Jiva (Atman) is merely the one sitting upon the chariot. This Jiva experiences objects through the senses, performs actions, and undergoes rebirth.
- **Main Message:** Because the living being does not know his true Atman nature, he deludes himself thinking that he is performing actions and experiencing their fruits.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** The living being, being subject to the influence of Prakriti (Maya), considers himself as the enjoyer (Bhokta) and falls into bondage. To become freed from this bondage, self-knowledge is necessary.

Third Prapathaka: Fire, Life-force, and Brahman

This chapter explains about the five fires (life-forces) present in the body of the living being, and tells about worshipping them. It also explains the creativity and supremacy of Brahman.

- **Main Message:** The source of the life-force energy is Brahman alone. That Brahman is all-pervading and the foundation for everything.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Transcending external actions, it is important to know the internal Brahman through Prana-worship (Pranopasana).

Fourth Prapathaka: Omkara and Self-Knowledge

This chapter explains the importance of Omkara and meditation upon it. It says that Omkara is the root of all Vedas and of all knowledge.

- **Main Message:** By meditating on Omkara, one can concentrate the mind and attain self-knowledge.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Omkara is a powerful tool that purifies the mind and leads to Brahman-realization.

Fifth Prapathaka: Brahman and Its States (The Trinity)

This chapter explains the three primary forms (powers) of Brahman:

- **Brahma:** The creator.
- **Vishnu:** The sustainer.
- **Rudra (Shiva):** The destroyer. It says that these three are merely different expressions of Brahman.
- **Main Message:** This Trinity ultimately indicates the various activities of the one and same Brahman.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** This indicates that the Nirguna Brahman itself manifests in Saguna forms, and diversity is not the ultimate truth.

Sixth Prapathaka: Bondage of the Mind and Liberation

This chapter is the most crucial part of the Maitrayani Upanishad. It explains the bondage of the mind and how to attain liberation by conquering it.

- *"Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh"* (Mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation for human beings).
- **Main Message:** The mind filled with desires binds the living being. The mind free of desires, pure, leads to liberation. Liberation is obtained by concentrating the mind upon the life-force, and the life-force upon the Atman.
- **Principle of Time:** Time alone is the cause for creation, preservation, and dissolution. Time alone controls all living beings. But, transcending even time, there is the immortal Atman (Brahman) which is the basis of time.
- **Ultimate Meaning (Advaita Perspective):** The primary obstacle to liberation is the mind alone. By controlling the mind, turning it back from objects, and fixing it upon the Atman, the living being becomes freed from ignorance and knows the eternal Atman which transcends time.

Seventh Prapathaka: Characteristics of a Knower of Brahman and Ultimate Freedom

This final chapter explains the characteristics of a knower of Brahman and the ultimate freedom caused by knowledge. It says that the person who has attained self-knowledge has no fears whatsoever, and he attains peace.

- **Main Message:** To the person who has known the Atman, there are no bodily bonds, sorrows, or fears. He attains supreme peace.
- **Ultimate Meaning:** Knowledge is not merely a philosophical understanding; it is an experiential realization. This experience takes the living being to the state of eternal liberation.

Summary of the Maitrayani Upanishad:

The Maitrayani Upanishad begins with the dispassion of Rajarshi Brihadratha, explaining the bondage of the mind and how it becomes the cause for liberation. Explaining the importance of the principle of time, it teaches that one must know the Atman (Brahman) which transcends time. Explaining aspects such as Omkara meditation, Prana-worship, and the Trinity being forms of the one and same principle, it clarifies that only by knowing his true Atman nature, the living being becomes freed from worldly bonds and attains eternal bliss and liberation. It especially emphasizes the importance of controlling the mind.

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