



# Aitareya Upanishad

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UNKNOWN

*Plain English Translation*

MOUSEIA



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*Plain English Translation*

Translated by Michael Berardi

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## THIS EDITION

Complete machine-assisted Plain English translation, made independently and directly from the Sanskrit, covering all three chapters, the opening invocation and closing colophon.

## TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

## THE WORK

Written c. 1st millennium BCE · Upanishad

## SOURCE

Original text from [sa.wikisource.org](http://sa.wikisource.org).

## GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

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## Invocation

Let what I say be grounded in my mind, and let my mind be grounded in what I say. Make yourself visible to me, clearly visible. Let the two of you support my knowledge of the Veda. Don't let me lose what I have learned by listening. With this learning I bring day and night together. I will say what is right. I will tell the truth. Let that protect me and the person teaching me. Let it protect me. Let it protect the teacher. Let it protect the teacher.

Om. Peace, peace, peace.

## Chapter 1, Section 1

- <sup>1</sup> At first, everything here was just the Self. There was absolutely nothing else. The Self thought, "I will make worlds."
- <sup>2</sup> It made these worlds: Ambhas, the Rays, Mara, and the Waters. The world called Ambhas lies above heaven, with heaven as its base. The space between heaven and earth is the Rays. Earth is Mara. The Waters are below it.
- <sup>3</sup> The Self thought, "The worlds are here now. I will make their protectors." It took a human figure out of the waters and shaped it.
- <sup>4</sup> It heated this figure. Under that heat, the figure's mouth opened like an egg breaking open. Speech came out of the mouth, and fire came from speech. The nostrils opened. Breath came from them, and wind came from breath. The eyes opened. Seeing came from them, and the sun came from seeing. The ears opened. Hearing came from them, and the directions came from hearing. The skin opened. Hair came from the skin, and plants and trees came from hair. The heart opened. The mind came from it, and the moon came from the mind.

The navel opened. The downward-moving breath came from it, and death came from that breath. The penis opened. Semen came from it, and water came from semen.

## Chapter 1, Section 2

- <sup>1</sup> These gods had been created, and they fell into this vast ocean. The Self made the person subject to hunger and thirst. The gods said to the Self, “Find us somewhere to live, where we can settle and eat.”
- <sup>2</sup> It brought them a cow. “This isn’t suitable for us,” they said. It brought them a horse. “This isn’t suitable for us,” they said.
- <sup>3</sup> It brought them a human. “This is really well made!” they said. A human is indeed well made. The Self said to them, “Each of you must go into the place that belongs to you.”
- <sup>4</sup> Fire took the form of speech and went into the mouth. Wind took the form of breath and went into the nostrils. The sun took the form of seeing and went into the eyes. The directions took the form of hearing and went into the ears. Plants and trees took the form of hair and went into the skin. The moon took the form of the mind and went into the heart. Death took the form of the downward-moving breath and went into the navel. Water took the form of semen and went into the penis.
- <sup>5</sup> Hunger and thirst said to the Self, “Find somewhere for us too.” It answered, “I will give you a share in these same gods. You will share in what they receive.” That is why hunger and thirst both have a share whenever an offering is presented to any god.

## Chapter 1, Section 3

- <sup>1</sup> The Self thought, “Now there are worlds and their protectors. I will make food for them.”
- <sup>2</sup> It heated the waters. As they grew hot, something took shape in them. What took shape was food.
- <sup>3</sup> As soon as the food was made, it tried to get away. The person tried to catch it by speaking, but speaking couldn’t catch it. If that had worked, simply talking about food would have filled him up.
- <sup>4</sup> He tried to catch it by breathing, but breathing couldn’t catch it. If that had worked, simply breathing toward food would have filled him up.
- <sup>5</sup> He tried to catch it by looking, but looking couldn’t catch it. If that had worked, simply looking at food would have filled him up.
- <sup>6</sup> He tried to catch it by listening, but listening couldn’t catch it. If that had worked, simply hearing food would have filled him up.
- <sup>7</sup> He tried to catch it with his skin, but his skin couldn’t catch it. If that had worked, simply touching food would have filled him up.
- <sup>8</sup> He tried to catch it with his mind, but his mind couldn’t catch it. If that had worked, simply thinking about food would have filled him up.
- <sup>9</sup> He tried to catch it with his penis, but his penis couldn’t catch it. If that had worked, simply releasing semen would have filled him up with food.
- <sup>10</sup> He tried to catch it with the downward-moving breath. With that, he swallowed it. This air is what takes hold of food. This air has food for its life.

- <sup>11</sup> The Self thought, “How could all this go on without me?” It thought, “Which way should I go in?” It thought, “If speaking is done by speech, breathing by breath, seeing by sight, hearing by hearing, touching by the skin, thinking by the mind, drawing in by the downward-moving breath, and releasing semen by the penis, then who am I?”
- <sup>12</sup> The Self split open this seam and went in through the opening. This doorway is called the Split. It is the place of happiness. The Self has three places to live and three dreams: “This is a place to live. This is a place to live. This is a place to live.”
- <sup>13</sup> After being born, he looked over the beings. “What else could anyone speak about here?” He saw this very person as Brahman, present everywhere. “I have seen this!”
- <sup>14</sup> That is why he is called Idandra. His name really is Idandra. Although he is Idandra, people call him Indra, using an indirect name. The gods seem to prefer indirect speech. The gods seem to prefer indirect speech.

## Chapter 2

- <sup>1</sup> This being first exists in a man as an embryo, in the form of semen. The semen is the strength collected from every part of his body. He carries his own self inside himself. When he releases it into a woman, he causes it to be born. That is his first birth.
- <sup>2</sup> It becomes part of the woman herself, just as one of her own limbs is part of her. That is why it does not hurt her. She cares for this self of his that has entered her.
- <sup>3</sup> The woman who provides this care must also be cared for. She carries him as an embryo. The father cares for the boy right from the start, before he is born. In caring for the boy before birth, he is caring for himself, so that these worlds can

continue. This is how the worlds are kept going. That is his second birth.

- <sup>4</sup> This self of his takes his place to carry out good actions. His other self has finished its work and grown old, and then it leaves. As he leaves here, he is born again. That is his third birth.
- <sup>5</sup> A seer spoke of this: “Even while I was in the womb, I learned all the ways these gods are born. A hundred iron strongholds guarded me. Then I flew out at speed as a hawk.” Vamadeva said this while he was still lying in the womb.
- <sup>6</sup> With this knowledge, he rose up when this body broke apart. In that heavenly world he fulfilled every desire and became immortal. He became immortal.

## Chapter 3

- <sup>1</sup> Who is this Self that we worship? Which one is the Self? Is it what lets us see, hear, smell things, put speech into words, and tell sweet tastes from tastes that are not sweet?
- <sup>2</sup> It is this heart and mind: awareness, authority, understanding, consciousness, intelligence, seeing, persistence, thinking, reasoning, drive, memory, deciding, intention, life, wanting, and control. All of these are names for consciousness.
- <sup>3</sup> This is Brahma. This is Indra. This is Prajapati. It is all these gods. It is the five great elements: earth, air, space, water, and light. It is what seem to be these small, mixed forms of life and the different kinds of seeds: things born from eggs, from wombs, from moisture, and things that sprout. It is horses, cows, people, elephants, and anything here that is alive, whether it walks, flies, or stays in one place. Everything is led by consciousness and rests on consciousness. Consciousness leads the world. Consciousness is its support. Consciousness is Brahman.

<sup>4</sup> Through this Self that knows, he rose out of this world. In that heavenly world he fulfilled every desire and became immortal. He became immortal. The Aitareya Upanishad ends here.