



Mundaka Upanishad

UNKNOWN

Plain English Translation

MOUSEIA



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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Mouseia's complete machine-assisted Plain English edition, made independently and directly from the Sanskrit, covering all three mundakas, six khandas and 64 verses, with the opening peace invocation, colophons and abbreviated closing invocation. Source-language review by GPT-6.1 Sol.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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SOURCE

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GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

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Mundaka 1, Khanda 1

Om. Gods, may we hear what is good with our ears; gods worthy of worship,
may we see what is good with our eyes.

Praising you with steady limbs and bodies, may we live out the lifespan the gods
have allotted us.

May Indra, whose fame is great, bring us well-being; may Pushan, who knows
everything, bring us well-being.

May Tarkshya, whose wheel-rim is unharmed, bring us well-being; may
Brihaspati bring us well-being.

Om. Peace, peace, peace.

Om. Homage to Brahman.

1.1.1 Om. Brahma came into being first among the gods, the maker of the universe,
the guardian of the world.

He taught the knowledge of Brahman, the foundation of all knowledge, to
Atharvan,
his eldest son.

1.1.2 The knowledge of Brahman that Brahma taught Atharvan—
Atharvan long ago taught it to Angir.

He taught it to Satyavaha Bharadvaja,
and Bharadvaja taught Angiras this knowledge of the higher and the lower.

1.1.3 Shaunaka, a man with a great household, approached Angiras in the proper
way and asked,

“Revered sir, what is it that, once known, makes all this known?”

1.1.4 He said to him,

“There are two kinds of knowledge to be learned. This is what
those who know Brahman say: the higher and the lower.

1.1.5 “The lower is the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda, the Atharva Veda, pronunciation, ritual procedure, grammar, word origins, meter, and the study of the stars.

The higher is the knowledge by which the imperishable is understood.

1.1.6 “It cannot be seen or grasped; it has no family or color, no eyes or ears, no hands or feet.

It is eternal, all-pervading, present everywhere, extremely subtle, undecaying: the wise see it as the source of all beings.

1.1.7 “As a spider sends out its web and draws it back, as plants grow on the earth, as hair grows on a living person’s head and body, so the universe here comes from the imperishable.

1.1.8 “Brahman grows through inner heat; from it food comes into being.

From food come life-breath, mind, what is real, the worlds, and the undying result of actions.

1.1.9 “From the one who knows everything, who knows each thing, whose inner heat consists of knowledge, come this Brahman, name, form, and food.”

Here ends the first khanda of the first mundaka in the Mundaka Upanishad.

Mundaka 1, Khanda 2

1.2.1 “This is the truth: the rites that the seers saw in the sacred verses have spread in many forms in the threefold ritual. Practice them regularly, you who want the truth. This is your path to the world of good deeds.

1.2.2 “When the flame flickers in the well-kindled fire that carries offerings, place the offerings between the two portions of clarified butter.

- 1.2.3 “If someone’s fire offering lacks the new-moon and full-moon rites,
the four-monthly rites, the first-harvest rite, or hospitality to guests,
if it has no offerings, lacks the rite for all the gods, or is offered against the rules,
it destroys that person’s worlds, up to the seventh.
- 1.2.4 “Kali, the black one, Karali, the terrifying one, Manojava, swift as thought,
Sulohita, deep red, and Sudhumravarna, the color of thick smoke,
Sphulingini, scattering sparks, and the goddess Vishvaruchi, shining
everywhere—
these are the seven flickering tongues.
- 1.2.5 “Whoever acts at the proper time among these shining flames,
bringing the offerings—
these offerings, the sun’s rays, lead that person to where
the one lord of the gods lives.
- 1.2.6 “Calling, ‘Come, come,’ the brightly shining offerings
carry the sacrificer on the sun’s rays.
They honor the sacrificer with welcoming words:
‘This is your holy world of Brahma, won by good deeds.’
- 1.2.7 “But these eighteen supports in the form of sacrifice are unstable boats;
the action described as resting on them is of the lower kind.
The fools who welcome this as the highest good
return once again to old age and death.
- 1.2.8 “Living in the middle of ignorance,
thinking themselves wise and learned,
the fools wander about, battered,
like blind people led by someone blind.
- 1.2.9 “Living in ignorance in many ways, these childish people
proudly think, ‘We have achieved our goal.’
Because attachment keeps those devoted to rites from understanding,
they suffer and fall when their worlds are used up.

- 1.2.10 “Thinking sacrifices and public works are best,
these deluded people know no other, greater good.
After enjoying the height of heaven, earned by good deeds, they enter this
world or a lower one.
- 1.2.11 “But those who practice austerity and faith in the forest,
peaceful, knowledgeable, living by begging,
go free from stain through the sun’s door
to where that immortal Person is, whose Self does not decay.
- 1.2.12 “After examining the worlds built up by action, a Brahmin
should become disenchanted: action cannot produce what is unmade.
To understand that, one should go to a teacher,
carrying firewood in hand, a teacher learned in scripture and grounded in
Brahman.
- 1.2.13 “To the student who has approached properly, the learned teacher—
to one whose mind is peaceful and who has self-control—
explained the knowledge by which one knows the imperishable, the real Person:
the knowledge of Brahman as it truly is.”
Here ends the second khanda of the first mundaka in the Mundaka Upanishad.

Mundaka 2, Khanda 1

- 2.1.1 This is the truth:
as sparks from a brightly blazing fire
come out by the thousand, sharing its nature,
so, dear friend, beings of many kinds
come from the imperishable and return to it.
- 2.1.2 The Person is radiant and without form, both outside and inside, unborn,
without life-breath or mind, pure, beyond even the higher imperishable.
- 2.1.3 From this Person come life-breath, mind, and all the senses,
space, air, fire, water, and earth, which supports everything.

- 2.1.4 Fire is his head; the moon and sun are his eyes;
the directions are his ears; the revealed Vedas are his speech.
Air is his life-breath; the universe is his heart; from his feet
comes the earth. He is the inner Self of all beings.
- 2.1.5 From him comes the fire whose fuel is the sun;
from Soma comes rain; plants grow on the earth.
A man pours seed into a woman.
Many offspring have come from the Person.
- 2.1.6 From him come the Rig verses, the Sama chants, the Yajur formulas, initiation,
all sacrifices and rituals, the gifts to the priests,
the year, the sacrificer, and the worlds
where Soma is purified and where the sun is.
- 2.1.7 From him have come the gods in their many kinds,
the Sadhyas, humans, animals, birds,
the inward and outward breaths, rice and barley, austerity,
faith, truth, celibacy, and the rules of conduct.
- 2.1.8 From him come the seven life-breaths,
seven flames, seven kinds of fuel, seven offerings,
and these seven worlds in which the life-breaths move,
resting in the cave, set there in groups of seven.
- 2.1.9 From him come the seas and all the mountains; from him
flow rivers of every kind.
From him come all plants and their sap,
by which this inner Self lives among the elements.
- 2.1.10 The Person alone is this whole universe: action, austerity, Brahman, the highest
immortal.
Whoever knows this, hidden in the cave,
breaks apart the knot of ignorance here, dear friend.
Here ends the first khanda of the second mundaka in the Mundaka Upanishad.

Mundaka 2, Khanda 2

- 2.2.1 It is manifest and close, known as what moves in the cave,
the great resting place. In it is set all this—
whatever moves, breathes, and blinks. Know it:
what is and what is not, worth choosing, beyond understanding, the highest
for all creatures.
- 2.2.2 It shines; it is smaller than the small;
in it the worlds and their inhabitants are set.
It is imperishable Brahman; it is life-breath, speech, and mind.
It is truth; it is immortal; it is to be pierced. Pierce it, dear friend.
- 2.2.3 Take the bow, the great weapon of the Upanishads,
and set on it an arrow sharpened by meditation.
Draw it with a mind absorbed in that reality,
and pierce that very imperishable as your target, dear friend.
- 2.2.4 Om is the bow, the Self is the arrow, and Brahman is said to be the target.
Pierce it without distraction; become one with it, like the arrow.
- 2.2.5 In it are woven heaven, earth, and the space between,
together with the mind and all the life-breaths.
Know that one alone as the Self; let go of other talk.
This is the bridge to immortality.
- 2.2.6 Where the channels meet like spokes at a chariot's hub,
this Self moves within, coming into being in many forms.
Meditate on the Self as Om. May you fare well
in crossing beyond the darkness.
- 2.2.7 The one who knows everything, who knows each thing, whose greatness is here
on earth—
this Self is established in the space within the radiant city of Brahman.

Made of mind, guiding life-breath and body,
it rests in food, making its home in the heart.
Through understanding, the wise see it fully:
what shines as bliss itself, immortal.

2.2.8 The heart's knot breaks, all doubts are cut away,
and one's actions are exhausted when that which is both higher and lower is
seen.

2.2.9 In the highest golden covering is Brahman, without stain or parts.
It is pure, the light of lights; it is what those who know the Self know.

2.2.10 The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and stars;
these flashes of lightning do not shine there, much less this fire.
Everything shines by following its light alone;
by its light all this shines.

2.2.11 Immortal Brahman alone is here in front; Brahman is behind, to the south and
to the north.
It extends below and above. This whole universe is Brahman alone, the highest.
Here ends the second khanda of the second mundaka in the Mundaka
Upanishad.

Mundaka 3, Khanda 1

3.1.1 Two birds with beautiful wings, companions joined together, cling to the same
tree.

One eats the sweet pipal fruit; the other, not eating, watches.

3.1.2 In that same tree a person is sunk,
grieving helplessly, confused.
When he sees the other, the beloved Lord, and his
greatness, he is free of grief.

- 3.1.3 When the one who sees beholds the golden-colored one,
the maker, the Lord, the Person, the source of Brahman,
then, knowing, he shakes off good and evil,
and, without stain, reaches the highest equality.
- 3.1.4 This is the life-breath that shines through all beings.
Understanding this, the knowledgeable person does not make boastful claims.
Playing in the Self, delighting in the Self, active—
this person is the foremost of those who know Brahman.
- 3.1.5 This Self is reached through truth and austerity,
through right knowledge and celibacy, practiced continually.
Within the body it is pure and full of light;
those who strive, whose faults have dwindled away, see it.
- 3.1.6 Truth alone wins, not falsehood.
Through truth the path leading to the gods is laid out.
Along it travel the seers whose desires are fulfilled,
to where truth's highest treasure is kept.
- 3.1.7 It is vast and radiant; its form cannot be conceived.
It shines, subtler than the subtle.
It is much farther than the far, and also close at hand here.
Let them see it right here, hidden in the cave.
- 3.1.8 It is not grasped by the eye or by speech,
by the other divine powers, by austerity, or by action.
But through the clarity of knowledge, one whose inner being is pure
then sees it, without parts,
while meditating.
- 3.1.9 This subtle Self must be known through the mind,
into which life-breath has entered in five forms.
The mind of every creature is woven through with the life-breaths;
when it is purified, this Self shines forth.

- 3.1.10 Whatever world someone with a pure inner being
pictures in the mind, and whatever desires that person has,
that person wins that world and those desired things.
So anyone who wants prosperity should honor one who knows the Self.
Here ends the first khanda of the third mundaka in the Mundaka Upanishad.

Mundaka 3, Khanda 2

- 3.2.1 That person knows the highest Brahman, the home
where the whole universe is set; it shines pure.
Those who worship the Person without desire—
those wise ones pass beyond this seed of birth.
- 3.2.2 Whoever longs for desired things, thinking about them,
is born here and there through those desires.
But for one whose desires are fulfilled, whose Self is perfected,
all desires dissolve right here.
- 3.2.3 This Self cannot be reached by teaching,
by intelligence, or by hearing a great deal.
It can be reached only by the one this Self chooses;
to that person this Self reveals its own form.
- 3.2.4 This Self cannot be reached by one who lacks strength,
through carelessness, or through austerity without its mark.
But the knowledgeable person who strives with these means—
that person's Self enters the home of Brahman.
- 3.2.5 Having reached it, the seers are satisfied with knowledge,
their Selves perfected, free from attachment, at peace.
Reaching the all-pervading one from every side, those wise ones,
their Selves united, enter everything.

3.2.6 Through understanding Vedanta, firmly certain of its meaning,
those who strive have purified their inner being through the discipline of
renunciation.

In the worlds of Brahman, at the final end,
they all reach the highest immortality and are completely freed.

3.2.7 The fifteen parts return to their foundations,
and all the divine powers to their respective gods.
Actions and the Self made of understanding—
all become one in the highest, the undecaying.

3.2.8 As flowing rivers disappear into the sea,
leaving name and form behind,
so the one who knows, freed from name and form,
reaches the radiant Person, beyond the highest.

3.2.9 Whoever knows that highest Brahman
becomes Brahman itself. No one in that person's family is without knowledge
of Brahman.

That person crosses beyond grief and evil; freed from the knots in the cave,
that person becomes immortal.

3.2.10 This is declared in a sacred verse:

"Those who carry out the rites, are learned in scripture, are grounded in
Brahman,
and with faith offer to Ekarshi themselves—
only to them should one teach this knowledge of Brahman,
to those who have properly carried out the head vow."

3.2.11 This is the truth that the seer Angiras
taught long ago. No one who has not carried out the vow studies it.
Homage to the highest seers! Homage to the highest seers!
Here ends the second khanda of the third mundaka in the Mundaka
Upanishad.
Here ends the Mundaka Upanishad belonging to the Atharva Veda.
Om. May we hear what is good.
Peace.

Om. Peace, peace, peace.