



Shvetashvatara Upanishad

UNKNOWN

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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Complete machine-assisted translation made directly from Sanskrit.

TRANSLATOR

Michael Berardi

THE WORK

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GAPS AND UNCERTAINTIES

Pinned Sanskrit Wikisource digital transcription; provider identifies no named print edition. Chapter revisions and extraction changes are recorded in the manifest. No scan collation is claimed. Difficult readings are retained rather than silently corrected, including the light-bearing ox image in 5.4. Chapter-local verse numbers are preserved in leading house-format markers.

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Adhyaya 1



Om. May he guard us both. May he nourish us both. May we work together with vigor. May our study shine. May we bear no hatred toward each other.

Om. Peace, peace, peace.

¹ Om. Those who speak of Brahman ask:

What is the cause? Is it Brahman? From where were we born? By what do we live? On what do we stand?

Under whose rule, you knowers of Brahman, do we pass through pleasure and its opposite, each in our appointed state?

² Time, inherent nature, necessity, chance, the elements, the womb, the person—these must be considered.

Their union cannot be the cause, for the self exists; nor is the self sovereign, since it is subject to pleasure and pain.

³ Following the discipline of meditation, they saw the power of the divine Self, hidden by its own qualities:

the one who rules over all those causes, bound up with time and the self.

⁴ We contemplate it as a wheel with one rim, three bands, sixteen ends, fifty spokes and twenty counterspokes,

six sets of eight, one cord of many forms, three distinct paths, and one delusion arising from two causes.

- 5 We contemplate it as a river with five streams, five fierce mouths of birth, waves
of five breaths, its source in five kinds of awareness,
five whirlpools, the rushing flood of five sorrows, fifty branches and five
reaches.
- 6 In that vast wheel of Brahman, the life and resting place of all, the swan
wanders,
thinking itself apart from the mover. Welcomed by him, it then attains
immortality.
- 7 This is proclaimed as supreme Brahman; in it the three are firmly established,
and the imperishable.
Knowing the distinction within it, the knowers of Brahman merge in
Brahman, intent on that, released from the womb.
- 8 The Lord upholds this whole world, the perishable joined with the
imperishable, the manifest with the unmanifest.
The self, not sovereign, is bound through its condition as enjoyer; knowing the
god, it is freed from every bond.
- 9 Two are unborn, knowing and unknowing, sovereign and not sovereign; one
unborn female is joined to the enjoyer and what is enjoyed.
The infinite Self takes every form yet does not act. When one discovers these
three, this is Brahman.
- 10 Primal nature perishes; Hara is immortal and imperishable. One god rules over
perishable nature and the self.
By meditating on him, joining with him, becoming what he truly is, at last all
illusion falls away.
- 11 Knowing the god cuts every bond; with afflictions spent, birth and death are
cast aside.
Meditating on him brings a third state when the body breaks: sovereignty over
all; alone, one's desires fulfilled.
- 12 This must be known, eternally abiding in the self; beyond it there is nothing
more to know.
Know the enjoyer, the enjoyed and the mover: all has been declared as this
threefold Brahman.

- 13 As fire's form is unseen when hidden in its source, yet its sign is not destroyed, and it may be seized again in its source, the wood, so both are to be grasped in the body through Om.
- 14 Making your own body the lower firestick, and Om the upper firestick, through the repeated churning of meditation, see the god, hidden there.
- 15 As oil in sesame, butter in curds, water in riverbeds, and fire in firesticks, so this Self is grasped within oneself by one who beholds it through truth and austerity.
- 16 The all-pervading Self, laid within like butter in milk, rooted in self-knowledge and austerity—that is Brahman, the highest hidden teaching; that is Brahman, the highest hidden teaching.

Adhyaya 2



- ¹ First harnessing mind and thought toward truth, Savitr,
discerning the light of fire, brought it up from the earth.
- ² With minds harnessed, under the impulse of the god Savitr,
we strive with all our strength to reach heaven.
- ³ Having harnessed the gods with mind, as they seek heaven through thought,
Savitr impels them to make the great light.
- ⁴ The inspired harness their minds and harness their thoughts to the vast,
discerning inspired one.
He alone, knower of the ways, has ordered the priestly offices. Great is the
praise surrounding the god Savitr.
- ⁵ With reverence I harness your ancient sacred utterance. May the song travel
abroad like the sun's own path.
Let all the children of immortality hear, even those who stand in heavenly
dwellings.
- ⁶ Where fire is churned out, where wind is held in,
where Soma overflows, there the mind is born.
- ⁷ Through Savitr's impulse, embrace the ancient Brahman.
Make your dwelling there; then your good work will not fall away.
- ⁸ Holding the body level, its three parts raised, gathering the senses into the heart
with the mind,
let the wise cross every fearsome current on the raft of Brahman.

- 9 Restraining the breaths here, with movements governed, breathe out through the nostrils when the breath grows faint.
Watchfully let the wise hold the mind, as one holds a carriage drawn by unruly horses.
- 10 On level, clean ground, free of pebbles, fire and sand, away from noise, water and other disturbances,
in a place pleasing to the mind and not painful to the eyes, sheltered in a windless cave, practice the discipline.
- 11 Mist, smoke, sun, wind and fire,
fireflies, lightning, crystal and moon: these forms precede the revelation of Brahman in yoga.
- 12 When earth, water, radiance, air and space arise, when the fivefold quality of yoga unfolds,
there is no sickness, old age or death for one who has gained a body made of yoga's fire.
- 13 Lightness, health, freedom from craving, clear complexion and a beautiful voice,
sweet scent, little urine and excrement: these are said to mark yoga's first unfolding.
- 14 As a radiant image smeared with earth shines brightly when thoroughly cleansed,
so the embodied one, seeing the truth of the Self, becomes one, fulfilled, free of sorrow.
- 15 When, through the truth of the Self as through a lamp, the disciplined one sees the truth of Brahman here,
knowing the god, unborn, steadfast, pure of every constituent, one is freed from every evil.
- 16 This god extends through all the quarters. He was born first; he is within the womb.
He alone has been born and will be born. He stands facing all people, his face turned everywhere.

17 The god in fire, in waters, who has entered the whole world,
who is in herbs and in the trees—to that god, homage, homage.

Adhyaya 3



- ¹ The one who holds the net rules through his powers, rules all the worlds through his powers.
He alone is there at their arising and becoming. Those who know this become immortal.
- ² Rudra is one; they have not stood beside a second. Through his powers he rules these worlds.
He stands facing all people; at the final hour he draws back all the worlds he has brought forth, their guardian.
- ³ Eyes everywhere, faces everywhere, arms everywhere and feet everywhere, with arms and wings he brings them together, the one god bringing heaven and earth to birth.
- ⁴ Rudra, the great seer, source and origin of the gods, sovereign of all, who first brought forth the Golden Embryo—may he join us to auspicious understanding.
- ⁵ Rudra, that gracious form of yours, not terrible, revealing no evil— with that most peaceful form, mountain-dweller, look upon us.
- ⁶ Mountain-dweller, the arrow you carry in your hand to shoot— make it gracious, mountain-guardian; do not harm the human being or the living world.

- 7 Beyond that is supreme Brahman, vast, hidden in all beings according to their
bodies,
the one Lord who encompasses the universe. Knowing him, they become
immortal.
- 8 I know this great Person, radiant as the sun, beyond darkness.
Knowing him alone, one passes beyond death; no other path leads to that
journey's end.
- 9 Beyond him there is nothing higher or lower, nothing smaller or greater.
Alone he stands in heaven, still as a tree. By that Person all this is filled.
- 10 What is higher still than that is without form, without affliction.
Those who know this become immortal; the others enter sorrow alone.
- 11 All faces, heads and necks are his; he rests in the secret heart of every being.
All-pervading is the blessed one; therefore Shiva is everywhere.
- 12 Great indeed is the sovereign Person; he sets existence in motion.
He rules this perfectly pure attainment, the light that does not fade.
- 13 The Person, a thumb's breadth in measure, the inner Self, is always lodged in
people's hearts.
He is apprehended by heart, discernment and mind. Those who know this
become immortal.
- 14 The Person has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.
Enfolding earth on every side, he extended ten fingers beyond it.
- 15 The Person alone is all this, what has been and what will be.
He is also lord of immortality, and of what grows through food.
- 16 Its hands and feet are everywhere, its eyes, heads and faces everywhere;
with ears everywhere in the world, it stands enveloping all.
- 17 Shining through the powers of every sense, yet free of every sense,
sovereign and lord of all, refuge of all, a loving friend.
- 18 Within the city of nine gates, the embodied swan plays outward,
master of the whole world, of what stands still and what moves.

19 Without hands or feet, he is swift and grasps; without eyes he sees, without ears he hears.

He knows what can be known, yet no one knows him. They call him the foremost, the great Person.

20 Smaller than the small, greater than the great, the Self lies hidden in this creature's heart.

Free of desire and sorrow, one sees the Lord's greatness through the Creator's grace.

21 I know this ageless, ancient one, Self of all, present everywhere through his pervasiveness.

The speakers of Brahman declare him the ending of birth; indeed, they declare him eternal.

Adhyaya 4



- ¹ The one without color, through the union of his powers, bears many colors, his purpose hidden;
the god in whom the universe dissolves at the end and arises at the beginning—
may he join us to auspicious understanding.
- ² That alone is fire; that is the sun, that is wind, that is the moon.
That is the bright one, that is Brahman, that is the waters, that is Prajapati.
- ³ You are woman; you are man; you are the boy and also the girl.
You are the old one who walks bent over a staff; born, you turn your face in every direction.
- ⁴ You are the dark-blue bird, the green one with red eyes, the womb of lightning, the seasons, the seas.
Without beginning, you abide in your pervasiveness; from you all worlds were born.
- ⁵ One unborn female, red, white and black, brings forth many offspring resembling her.
One unborn male lies beside her in delight; another leaves her after enjoying what she offers.
- ⁶ Two fair-winged birds, companions joined together, clasp the same tree.
One of them eats its sweet fig; the other, not eating, looks on.

- 7 Sunk in that same tree, the person grieves, bewildered by helplessness.
When he sees the other, the beloved Lord, and his greatness, he is free of
sorrow.
- 8 The verses abide in the imperishable, the highest heaven, where all the gods
have taken their seats.
What will one do with a verse who does not know that? Those who know it sit
assembled here.
- 9 The meters, sacrifices, rites and vows, what has been, what will be, and what the
Vedas tell—
from this the wielder of illusion creates the whole universe; within it another is
bound by illusion.
- 10 Know nature as illusion, and the great Lord as illusion's wielder.
This whole world is pervaded by beings that are his members.
- 11 The one who presides over every womb, in whom all this comes together and
dissolves—
perceiving that Lord, giver of blessings, god worthy of praise, one reaches this
peace forever.
- 12 Rudra, the great seer, source and origin of the gods, sovereign of all,
behold the Golden Embryo coming to birth—may he join us to auspicious
understanding.
- 13 The ruler of the gods, on whom the worlds rest,
who rules the two-footed and four-footed here—to which god shall we offer
our oblation?
- 14 Subtler than the subtle, amid the tangle, creator of the world, taking many
forms,
the one who encompasses the universe—knowing Shiva, one reaches peace
forever.
- 15 He alone is the world's guardian in time, sovereign of all, hidden in all beings.
Knowing him thus, with whom the seers of Brahman and the gods are joined,
one cuts the bonds of death.

- 16 Knowing Shiva, subtler than the cream of clarified butter, hidden in all beings,
knowing the god who alone encompasses the universe, one is freed from every
bond.
- 17 This god, maker of all, the great Self, is always lodged in people's hearts.
He is apprehended by heart, discernment and mind. Those who know this
become immortal.
- 18 When darkness is absent, there is neither day nor night, neither being nor
nonbeing, only Shiva alone.
That is the imperishable, that is Savitr's, worthy of choice; from that ancient
wisdom has streamed forth.
- 19 No one has grasped him above, across or in between.
There is no likeness of him whose name is great glory.
- 20 His form does not stand within sight; no one sees him with the eye.
Those who know him thus, by heart and mind, dwelling in the heart, become
immortal.
- 21 Someone fearful takes refuge, saying, "You are unborn."
Rudra, with that gracious face of yours, guard me always.
- 22 Do not harm our children or descendants, our span of life, our cattle or our
horses.
Do not strike down our warriors in your anger, Rudra. Bearing offerings, we
call to you always.

Adhyaya 5



- ¹ In the imperishable, infinite, supreme Brahman, two lie hidden: knowledge and ignorance.
Ignorance is perishable; knowledge is immortal. The one who rules knowledge and ignorance is other than both.
- ² The one who presides over every womb, all forms and all sources of birth, who at the beginning sustains with knowledge the sage Kapila brought forth—he sees him being born.
- ³ Transforming each net in many ways, this god gathers it back into this field. Having again created the lords, the great Self, the Lord, exercises sovereignty over all.
- ⁴ As the ox shines, lighting every direction, above, below and across, so that blessed god, worthy of choice, alone presides over the natures arising from each womb.
- ⁵ The womb of all ripens each inherent nature and brings everything that can ripen to maturity;
he alone presides over this whole universe and assigns all its qualities.
- ⁶ That lies hidden in the Upanishads, the secret of the Veda; Brahma knows it as the womb of Brahman.
The gods and seers who knew it of old became that, and truly became immortal.

7 Bound to the qualities, the doer of deeds that bear fruit is himself the enjoyer of what he has done.

Taking every form, bearing three qualities, traveling three paths, lord of the breaths, he wanders through his own deeds.

8 A thumb's breadth in measure, radiant as the sun, joined to intention and the sense of "I,"

through the quality of understanding and the quality of the self, he is also seen as another, no larger than a goad's tip.

9 A hundredth part of a hair's tip, divided again a hundredfold—such a portion is the living self, know this; yet it is capable of infinity.

10 It is neither woman nor man, nor is it neuter.

Whatever body it takes up, with that it becomes joined.

11 Through intention, touch, sight and delusion, through food and drink and the rain, the self grows and is born;

following its deeds in due succession, the embodied one assumes forms in their several places.

12 The embodied one chooses many forms, gross and subtle, through its own qualities.

Through their qualities of action and qualities of self, another too is seen as the cause of their union.

13 Beginningless and endless, amid the tangle, creator of the world, taking many forms,

the one who encompasses the universe—knowing that god, one is freed from every bond.

14 Those who know the god, grasped by inward disposition, called nestless, Shiva, maker of being and nonbeing,

creator of the parts of existence, have left the body behind.

Adhyaya 6



¹ Some thinkers, bewildered, speak of inherent nature as the cause, and others of time.

But it is the god's greatness in the world by which this wheel of Brahman turns.

² By him all this is ever enfolded: the knower, maker of time, bearer of qualities, knower of all.

Governed by him, action unfolds. Earth, water, radiance, air and space must be contemplated.

³ Having done that work and turned back from it again, entering union with the truth of the real, through one, two, three or eight, through time and the subtle qualities of the self—

⁴ he who begins works joined to qualities and assigns all states of being, when these cease, his past work destroyed, at the exhaustion of action he departs, truly other than them.

⁵ He is the beginning, the cause that brings union about; beyond the three times, he is seen to be without parts.

First worship that god, taking every form, the source of existence, worthy of praise, abiding in your own mind;

⁶ he is beyond and other than the tree, time and forms; from him this unfolding world turns.

Know him within the self, bringer of right, dispeller of evil, lord of blessing, immortal dwelling of all.

⁷ Let us know him, supreme great Lord of lords, supreme divinity of the gods, master of masters, highest beyond the highest, god, lord of the world, worthy of praise.

⁸ He has no work to perform, no instrument of action; no equal or superior to him is seen.

His supreme power is heard of in many forms, and his knowledge, strength and action are inherent.

⁹ No master of his exists in the world, no ruler, and no distinguishing mark of him.

He is the cause, lord of the lords of the senses; no one begot him, and no one governs him.

¹⁰ Like a spider with its threads, the one god, by his own nature, wraps himself in threads born of primal nature. May he grant us dissolution into Brahman.

¹¹ One god, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the inner Self of all beings, watcher over action, dwelling of all beings, witness, conscious, alone and without qualities.

¹² The one ruler of the many who do not act makes the single seed manifold. The wise who behold him within the self have lasting happiness, and no others.

¹³ Eternal among the eternal, conscious among the conscious, the one who fulfills the desires of the many—

knowing that god, the cause, reached through discernment and yoga, one is freed from every bond.

¹⁴ There the sun does not shine, nor moon and stars; these flashes of lightning do not shine there, much less this fire.

All shines after him who shines; by his light all this shines forth.

- 15 The one swan in the midst of this world is the very fire lodged in the waters.
Knowing him alone, one passes beyond death; no other path leads to that
journey's end.
- 16 Maker of all, knower of all, source of himself, knowing, time's own time, bearer
of qualities, knower of all,
master of primal nature and the knower of the field, lord of qualities, cause of
wandering, liberation, continuance and bondage.
- 17 He is filled with that, immortal, established in lordship, knowing, everywhere,
guardian of this world.
He rules this world forever; no other cause of its governance exists.
- 18 The god who first brought Brahma into being and sent the Vedas forth to him,
who illumines understanding of the Self—to him I turn for refuge, longing for
release:
- 19 without parts, without action, peaceful, faultless, stainless,
the supreme bridge to immortality, like a fire whose fuel is burned away.
- 20 When human beings can roll up space like a hide,
then sorrow will end without knowing the god.
- 21 Through the power of austerity and the god's grace, the wise Shvetashvatara
fully declared to those beyond the stages of life the supremely pure Brahman,
cherished by the company of seers.
- 22 This highest secret at the Veda's end, taught in a former age,
must not be given to one who is not at peace, nor to one who is neither a son
nor a pupil.
- 23 For the great soul whose devotion to the god is supreme, and whose devotion
to the teacher is as to the god,
these meanings, once declared, shine forth.
They shine forth for the great soul. So it is said.
Om. May he guard us both. May he nourish us both. May we work together
with vigor. May our study shine. May we bear no hatred toward each
other.
Om. Peace, peace, peace.
Thus ends the Shvetashvatara Upanishad.