



Shvetashvatara Upanishad

UNKNOWN

Plain English Translation

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Translated by Michael Berardi

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THIS EDITION

Complete machine-assisted translation made independently 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 protect the two of us and provide for us. May we put our strength into our work together. May what we learn be clear and bright. May neither of us hate the other.

Om. Let there be peace, peace, peace.

¹ Om. People discussing Brahman ask:

What causes things? Is Brahman the cause? Where did we come from? What keeps us alive? What supports us?

You who know Brahman, who governs the way we live, with happiness and unhappiness, in our different situations?

² We must consider time, the nature of things, fate, chance, the elements, the source of birth and the person.

A combination of these is not enough, because there is a self. The self is not in control either, since it experiences happiness and pain.

³ They followed the practice of meditation and saw the divine Self's power, concealed by its own qualities.

It alone controls all those causes, including time and the self.

⁴ We consider it a wheel with a single rim, three surrounding bands, sixteen ends, fifty spokes and twenty smaller spokes going the other way; it has six groups of eight, a single rope in many forms, three different routes and one delusion with two causes.

- 5 We consider a river: five streams of water, five birth-sources as fierce mouths,
five life-breaths as waves, five kinds of awareness as its original root;
it has five whirlpools, five sorrows rushing like a flood, fifty divisions and five
stretches.
- 6 The swan travels around in this great wheel of Brahman, which gives life to
everything and holds everything.
It thinks of itself as separate from the one who moves it. Then, accepted by
him, it becomes immortal.
- 7 This is sung as the highest Brahman. The three are firmly based in it, along with
what never perishes.
People who know Brahman understand the distinction within it. Focused on
Brahman, they merge into it and are freed from birth.
- 8 The Lord sustains the world, where what perishes is joined to what does not,
and what is visible to what is not.
The self lacks control and is tied down by being the one who experiences
things. Knowing the god releases it from all its ties.
- 9 There are two unborn beings: one knows and rules, the other does not know or
rule. There is also one unborn female, connected to the experiencer and
the things experienced.
The limitless Self has every form and does not act. Discovering these three is
discovering Brahman.
- 10 Basic nature breaks down; Hara does not die or break down. A single god
controls both perishable nature and the self.
Meditating on him, connecting with him and sharing his real nature eventually
brings an end to all illusion.
- 11 When the god is known, every tie is removed. When suffering's causes are
exhausted, birth and death are abandoned.
Meditation on him brings a third condition when the body breaks apart: power
over everything, being alone, with every desire satisfied.

- ¹² This is what needs to be known. It is always present in oneself, and there is nothing further to find out beyond it.
Recognize the experiencer, what is experienced and the one who moves them: this threefold Brahman is everything that has been described.
- ¹³ You cannot see the shape of fire while it is hidden in its source, but that does not mean its characteristic power is lost.
It can be found again in the wood that produces it. In the same way, both can be found in the body by using Om.
- ¹⁴ Treat your body as the lower stick for making fire and Om as the upper one. Keep practicing the churning of meditation, and see the god who is hidden there.
- ¹⁵ Oil is in sesame seeds, butter in curds, water in streambeds and fire in the sticks that produce it.
In the same way, a person who looks through truth and disciplined effort discovers the Self within themselves.
- ¹⁶ The Self is present everywhere and contained within, as butter is contained in milk.
Based on self-knowledge and disciplined effort, that is Brahman, the highest secret teaching. That is Brahman, the highest secret teaching.

Adhyaya 2



- ¹ Savitr first directed his mind and thoughts toward reality.
He saw fire's light and brought it up out of the earth.
- ² With our minds directed to their task, under the guidance of the god Savitr,
we use our strength to reach heaven.
- ³ Savitr directs the gods, who seek heaven with their thoughts, by bringing their
minds to the task.
He sends them forward to produce the great light.
- ⁴ The inspired thinkers direct their minds and thoughts toward the great
inspired one who sees clearly.
He alone knows the ways and has arranged the priests' duties. The god Savitr is
praised far and wide.
- ⁵ Bowing in respect, I take up your ancient sacred words. Let the song spread out
as the sun follows its route.
Let all who are children of immortality listen, including those who live in
heaven.
- ⁶ Where people rub sticks to make fire, where they hold the air back,
where Soma flows over, that is where the mind comes into being.
- ⁷ Through Savitr's guidance, turn to the ancient Brahman.
Make your home there, and the value of your good actions will not be lost.

- ⁸ Keep the body straight, with its three parts held up, and use the mind to bring the senses into the heart.

A person with knowledge should use Brahman as a raft to cross all the frightening currents.

- ⁹ Control your breathing here and keep your movements steady. When the breath has weakened, breathe out through the nose.

A person with knowledge must stay alert and hold the mind in check, like a vehicle pulled by badly trained horses.

- ¹⁰ Practice in a clean, level place without stones, fire or sand, away from the disturbance of noise, water and similar things.

Choose somewhere that suits the mind without straining the eyes, with the shelter of a cave free from wind.

- ¹¹ Mist, smoke, sunlight, wind, fire, fireflies, lightning, crystal and moonlight: these appearances come first in yoga and bring Brahman into view.

- ¹² When earth, water, light, air and space appear, and yoga's fivefold character becomes active,
a person who has gained a body made of yoga's fire has no illness, aging or death.

- ¹³ They say the first signs of yoga are a light body, good health, lack of greed, clear skin and a good voice,
a pleasant smell, and small amounts of urine and stool.

- ¹⁴ A shining image covered in dirt shines again when it has been thoroughly cleaned.

In the same way, someone in a body who sees the Self's true nature becomes one, reaches their goal and loses their grief.

- ¹⁵ Someone practicing the discipline sees Brahman's reality by means of the Self's reality, which acts like a lamp here.

By knowing the god, who is unborn, constant and free of all the constituents of things, that person is freed from every wrong.

¹⁶ This god is in every direction. He was the first to be born and is inside the womb.

He himself has been born and will be born. He faces people everywhere, with his face turned to every side.

¹⁷ The god who is in fire and water, who has entered the entire world, who is in plants and trees—we bow to that god, and bow again.

Adhyaya 3



- ¹ The one with the net uses his powers to rule. He uses those powers to govern every world.
He alone is present when things arise and come into being. Anyone who knows this becomes immortal.
- ² There is only one Rudra. They have not taken their stand beside a second one.
He controls these worlds through his powers.
Facing all people, he guards all the worlds he created and takes them back into himself at the end.
- ³ He has eyes, faces, arms and feet on every side.
This one god brings things together with arms and wings as he produces heaven and earth.
- ⁴ Rudra is the great seer who governs everything, the source from which the gods come.
He produced the Golden Embryo at the beginning. May he give us sound and fortunate understanding.
- ⁵ Rudra, you have a kindly form that is not frightening and does not show evil.
You who live in the mountains, look at us with that most peaceful form.
- ⁶ You who live in the mountains, you hold an arrow in your hand, ready to shoot.
You who guard the mountains, make it harmless. Do not hurt a person or the living world.

- 7 Beyond that is Brahman, the highest and greatest, hidden in every being according to its body.
Knowing that Lord, the single one who surrounds the universe, makes people immortal.
- 8 I know this great Person, bright like the sun and beyond darkness.
Only knowing him takes you past death. There is no other way to reach that destination.
- 9 There is nothing above or below him, nothing smaller or bigger than him.
He stands alone in heaven, motionless like a tree. That Person fills everything here.
- 10 What is still higher than that has no shape and no suffering.
Those who know this become immortal. Other people go only into suffering.
- 11 He has every face, head and neck, and lives in the hidden space inside every being.
The blessed one is present everywhere; so Shiva is in all places.
- 12 The Person is indeed a great ruler, who causes existence to develop.
He controls this completely pure attainment and is a light that never runs out.
- 13 The inner Self is the Person, the size of a thumb, always located in people's hearts.
The heart, understanding and mind can grasp him. People who know this become immortal.
- 14 The Person has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet.
He covered the earth on every side and reached ten fingers beyond it.
- 15 Everything here is the Person, both what has happened and what will happen.
He is the ruler of immortality and of everything that grows by feeding.
- 16 It has hands, feet, eyes, heads and faces everywhere.
It has ears all around the world and remains there, surrounding everything.
- 17 It appears through the abilities of all the senses but has none of the senses itself.
It rules and governs everything, gives everything shelter and is a friend to all.
- 18 The embodied swan plays out toward the world from the city with nine gates.
It controls everything in the world, both things that stay still and things that move.

- 19 He has no hands or feet but moves quickly and takes hold. He has no eyes but sees, no ears but hears.
He knows whatever there is to know, but nobody knows him. They call him the first and the great Person.
- 20 The Self is smaller than small things and larger than large things, hidden in this creature's inner space.
A person without desire or grief sees the Lord's greatness through the Creator's favor.
- 21 I know this ancient one who never ages, the Self of everything, present everywhere because he extends through everything.
Those who speak about Brahman say he ends birth. They also say he is eternal.

Adhyaya 4



- ¹ The one god has no color, but by combining his powers he takes on many colors, keeping his purpose hidden.
At the end the universe dissolves in him, and at the beginning it arises in him.
May he give us sound and fortunate understanding.
- ² That is fire itself, the sun, the wind and the moon.
It is the bright one, Brahman, the waters and Prajapati.
- ³ You are a woman and a man. You are a young boy and a young girl.
You are an old person leaning on a walking stick. You are born with your face turned everywhere.
- ⁴ You are a blue bird, a green one with red eyes, lightning's womb, the seasons and the oceans.
You have no beginning and exist everywhere. All worlds have come from you.
- ⁵ A single unborn female, red, white and black, gives birth to many beings that look like her.
One unborn male stays beside her and enjoys her; another has enjoyed her and leaves her behind.
- ⁶ Two birds with beautiful wings are close companions. They cling to the same tree.
One eats the sweet fig growing there. The other does not eat but watches.

- 7 On that same tree, the person is caught up in things, confused and grieving because he has no control.
When he sees the other, the Lord who is loved, and recognizes his greatness, his grief goes away.
- 8 The sacred verses are in the highest space, in what cannot perish, where all the gods have settled.
What can someone do with a verse without knowing that? The people who know it sit together here.
- 9 Verse meters, sacrifices, ritual acts, vows, past and future things and everything the Vedas describe:
from this the one with the power of illusion produces the whole world. In it another is held fast by illusion.
- 10 Understand nature as illusion, and the great Lord as the one who uses illusion. Beings that form parts of him fill this entire world.
- 11 There is one who controls every source of birth. Everything here comes together in him and breaks up in him.
Recognizing that god, the ruler who grants gifts and deserves praise, brings this peace that has no end.
- 12 Rudra, the great seer and ruler of everything, is where the gods originate and come into being.
Look at the Golden Embryo as it is born. May he give us sound and fortunate understanding.
- 13 He governs the gods, and the worlds depend on him.
He rules the two-legged and four-legged beings here. To which god should we give our offering?
- 14 He is finer than the finest thing, within the tangle, the many-formed maker of the world.
Knowing Shiva, the one who surrounds everything, brings peace that has no end.

15 He alone guards the world through time, rules everything and is hidden inside all beings.

Know him in this way, the one with whom the seers of Brahman and the gods are united, and you cut the ties of death.

16 Know Shiva, hidden in every being, extremely fine, like an essence finer than clarified butter.

Know the god who alone surrounds the universe, and all your ties are released.

17 This god made everything. He is the great Self, always present in people's hearts.

He can be recognized through the heart, understanding and mind. People who know this become immortal.

18 When there is no darkness, there is no day or night, nothing that is or is not. There is only Shiva.

That cannot perish; it is Savitr's, worthy of being chosen. Ancient wisdom has come out of it.

19 Nobody has taken hold of him above, to the side or in the middle. There is no image of the one whose name is great glory.

20 His shape is not something you can see. Nobody sees him with their eyes. He is in the heart. People who know him this way, through heart and mind, become immortal.

21 A frightened person turns to him and says, "You have never been born."
Rudra, always protect me with your kind face.

22 Do not hurt our children, their offspring, our lives, our cattle or our horses. Rudra, do not kill our warriors in anger. We always call on you with offerings.

Adhyaya 5



- ¹ Two things, knowledge and ignorance, are hidden in the highest Brahman, which is limitless and cannot perish.
Ignorance is something that passes away; knowledge does not die. The ruler of knowledge and ignorance is different from either.
- ² One being governs every womb, every form and every source of birth.
At the beginning he supports the sage Kapila with knowledge as Kapila is born, and sees him coming into being.
- ³ This god changes each net into many different forms, then draws it back into this field.
After creating the lords again, the Lord, the great Self, takes charge of everything.
- ⁴ The ox shines and gives light in all directions, above, below and to either side.
In the same way the blessed god, worthy of being chosen, is the single ruler of the natures that come from the different sources of birth.
- ⁵ As the source of the universe, he brings each thing's own nature to maturity and develops everything that can mature.
He alone directs this whole world and puts all its qualities in their places.
- ⁶ This is hidden in the Upanishads, which contain the Veda's secret. Brahma knows it as the source of Brahman.
The gods and seers who knew it long ago became one with it and became immortal.

7 The one who acts is connected with the qualities and performs actions that have results. He himself experiences the results of what he has done.

He takes all kinds of forms, has three qualities and follows three paths. He governs the life-breaths and moves on according to his own actions.

8 He is as big as a thumb and looks like the sun. He is accompanied by intentions and the sense of being “I.”

Through the qualities of understanding and of the self, he is also seen differently, as only the size of the point of a goad.

9 Divide the tip of a hair into a hundred parts, then divide one of those parts into a hundred again.

That is how small the living self should be understood to be, but it can become infinite.

10 It is not female, not male, and not neuter.

Whichever body it takes on is the body it is joined to.

11 Intention, touch, sight and confusion, food, water and rain bring growth and birth to the self.

In one place after another, someone living in a body takes on forms in the order set by their actions.

12 Through its own qualities the embodied self chooses many bodies, some coarse and some fine.

Through the qualities of their activities and of their selves, another being is also seen as the reason for their connection.

13 He has neither a beginning nor an end. He is within the tangle, makes the world and has many forms.

Knowing this god, the one who surrounds the whole universe, frees a person from every tie.

14 Those who know the god through inner feeling, the one called nestless, Shiva, who produces both existence and nonexistence, who creates the parts of things, have given up the body.

Adhyaya 6



- ¹ Some thinkers are confused and say that things come from their own nature.
Others say time is the cause.
But what turns this wheel of Brahman is the god's greatness at work in the world.
- ² He always surrounds everything here. He knows, makes time, possesses qualities and has all knowledge.
Actions develop under his direction. We must consider earth, water, light, air and space.
- ³ After doing that work and then turning away from it, a person comes into union with the true nature of reality,
through one, two, three or eight, and through time and the self's subtle qualities—
- ⁴ the one who sets actions with their qualities in motion and puts all conditions of existence in order,
when those conditions disappear and past actions are destroyed, goes beyond them as action runs out, truly different from them.
- ⁵ He is the beginning and the cause of things coming together. He is beyond past, present and future and is seen as having no parts.
First worship this god, who takes every form, is the source of existence, deserves praise and is present in your own mind;

- ⁶ he is different from and beyond the tree, time and forms. This whole expanded world turns because of him.
Know him within yourself: immortal, the home of everything, bringing what is right, removing evil and ruling good fortune.
- ⁷ Let us know the god who deserves praise and rules the world: the highest Lord over all rulers, the highest god over the gods, the master over every master, the highest one beyond them all.
- ⁸ He has no task to do and no tool for doing it. Nobody can be seen who is equal to him or better than he is.
We hear of his higher power in many forms. Knowledge, strength and action belong to his own nature.
- ⁹ There is nobody in the world who is his master or who directs him, and there is no mark that defines him.
He is the cause and rules the rulers of the senses. Nobody produced him and nobody has authority over him.
- ¹⁰ By his own nature, the one god covers himself with threads that come from basic nature, just as a spider does with its threads. May he let us merge into Brahman.
- ¹¹ One god is hidden in every being. He is everywhere and is the inner Self of all beings.
He oversees actions and is the home of every being, the witness who is aware, alone and without qualities.
- ¹² One ruler of the many who do not act turns one seed into many forms.
Wise people who see him inside themselves have happiness that lasts. Others do not.
- ¹³ Among those who last, he is eternal; among those who are aware, he is conscious. He alone provides what the many desire.
Knowing that god, the cause reached through analysis and yoga, frees a person from every tie.

- 14 The sun does not shine there, nor do the moon and stars, nor these flashes of lightning. How could this fire shine there?
Everything else shines by following his shining. His light makes all of this bright.
- 15 The single swan at the center of this world is also the fire contained in water. Only knowing him takes you past death. There is no other way to reach that destination.
- 16 He makes the world and knows it. He produces himself, knows, is the time of time, possesses qualities and has all knowledge.
He governs basic nature and the knower of the field, rules the qualities and causes rebirth, release, continued existence and bondage.
- 17 He consists of that, does not die, is established in rule, knows and is everywhere. He guards this world.
He is always the one who governs it. There is no other cause of its being governed.
- 18 The god first created Brahma and gave him the Vedas.
He lights up our understanding of the Self. I want to be free, so I take refuge in him:
- 19 he has no parts and does not act. He is at peace, free of fault and free of stains, the highest bridge to immortality, like a fire that has burned up all its fuel.
- 20 When people manage to roll up space as if it were a piece of hide, then they will be able to end suffering without knowing the god.
- 21 Through the force of disciplined effort and the god's favor, the wise Shvetashvatara
fully taught the highest, purest Brahman, welcomed by the gathered seers, to people beyond life's stages.
- 22 This deepest secret at the end of the Veda was taught in an earlier age.
It must not be given to someone whose mind is not calm, or to someone who is neither a son nor a student.

23 Someone with a great soul who is deeply devoted to the god, and equally devoted to the teacher,
will see these teachings clearly when they are explained.
The person with a great soul sees them clearly. That is what is said.
Om. May he protect the two of us and provide for us. May we put our strength into our work together. May what we learn be clear and bright. May neither of us hate the other.
Om. Let there be peace, peace, peace.
The Shvetashvatara Upanishad is now complete.