



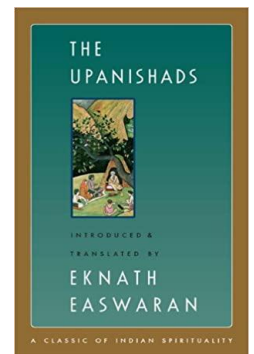
The Aitareya Upanishad - Commentaries

Introduction to the Upanishads

This is the edition I have and it has wonderful introductions on each chapter also. It is not necessary to get the same version (unless you want to). You can find it on Amazon and most major book stores:

The Upanishads (Easwaran's Classics of Indian Spirituality, 2) – by Eknath Easwaran [link](#).

There is also an abridged audio version available on Audible and Apple Books.



In the Bhagavad Gita, we find a more practical description of the natural state of human beings when they have realised the Truth. The Gita also describes the main pathways of meditation, devotion and wisdom as the fastest ways to Truth. By contrast, in the Upanishads we see a collection of writings that have much less instruction of how to actually realise what you are but are rich in descriptions of that essence of Truth and what it is like to live it. The Upanishads are some of the oldest scriptures known to us and they are so old we do not even really know who wrote them. We can place them in a different category to the Gita if we see their function is to inspire us, light a fire or even to make us jealous of the Rishis (ancient seers) who wrote them. If the Gita is here to help us understand the power of devotion to the Truth, then the Upanishads are here to make the flame of our devotion a raging fire.

We could think of the Gita as the “How to reach it and why it’s worth making the journey” and the Upanishads as the “Here’s what you are missing out on - Love letters from the Self” If we look at the meaning and etymology of “Upanishad” we will see it is describing a transmission from Truth directly into the illusion of our thoughts and penetrating it deeply. Infusing our minds and hearts with the power of Truth, the Upanishads are legendary in their power to pierce the veil of illusion. If we read them softly, gently and with reverence we will feel more focused, devoted and inspired that we too can live in freedom. The Upanishads are not to be read to try to understand or to achieve deeper knowledge (although that may happen) and are best taken in as if you are listening to some beautiful music that moves you. Simply letting them into your heart, they will work their magic on you.

Some of the Upanishads come in a story form and some are the records of a dialogue between teacher and student. Often the teacher can come in a very surprising form and so we can see immediately that the Upanishads are already pointing to a pivotal understanding that Truth can come from anywhere at any time and need not necessarily come in a formal way. Each Upanishad is complete on its own and does not rely on any other teaching or even any other Upanishad. We are going to study eleven main Upanishads and allow them to infuse us with their wisdom, power and love. You will notice there are some that you resonate more with and some you may feel an indifference to at first. I would urge you to pay special attention to the ones you do not feel a

resonance with at first as these will be the ones that have potential to provide the greatest breakthroughs. The spiritual power of these great writings is such that our mind senses it and may immediately offer resistance to the words. Your mind may say "I don't like the names and the language used" or it may think that this information is too old to be relevant today but let's not let this type of resistance stop us from reaping the rewards of diving deeper into this powerful body of scriptures.

The Upanishads are teachings based on the description of the One Being/Self of all/Noumenon and so whilst the Gods may be mentioned (such as Brahma, Agni and more) they are mentioned as individual aspects of this One Consciousness and are not to be taken to be separate entities. If we can see the Infinite Self can show itself in an infinite number of ways, we can come to think of these Gods (and even demons) as aspects of our own Divinity.

It is important to note also that whilst the Upanishads have often been associated with ritual and religion, they are describing the Reality that is beyond any such religion (and all religions). They are also beyond philosophy and mind and stand alone in their wisdom. The wisdom in these writings is powerful enough to cause a shift in our spiritual understanding of Reality (as is any authentic non-duality teaching) and as such can be as powerful as any teaching, teacher, retreat, prayer or otherwise. They are a true Darshan or blessing. We must read the words of each Upanishad and then meditate upon them until we bring them into our actual experience. It is with this in mind that I am offering these commentaries on this revered body of scripture, so that you may fall in love with the Upanishads as much as I have and maybe even more. I initially had resistance to these great teachings just like we may all do and I thought they would hold no relevance to me as a seeker of Truth and I am overjoyed to admit how utterly wrong I was. I would not be writing these words without the insight, inspiration and power of the Upanishads and they infused my being with love for the great Sages and Seers of ancient India that I will never know but will eternally offer my gratitude to.

Notes for reading these commentaries.

The numbers in brackets/parentheses refer to the verse numbers in the translation in the book itself. I have added comments on sections of each Upanishad that directly affected and inspired me when I have studied these and absorbed them, however this does not mean that if I have not commented on a particular verse that it contains no wisdom or something that may inspire you. For this reason, I would urge you to read each verse slowly and feel inside your body which ones feel most relevant. For some of the Upanishads that may be all or a lot of the text. For others it may be less. After some time has passed you may find you resonate with other sections that you did not before and so with such great works of scripture it is worth revisiting over time.

It has been the most beautiful opportunity for me to do the same in writing these commentaries and I am grateful

Introduction

This final major Upanishad that we will study deals with the lofty subjects of creation, desire and evolution. The theme of creation is explored from the perspective of the Creator and so this is quite an unusual Upanishad and has differences in the way it expresses and explains the Truth. Let us note that the Upanishads are always non-dual in their wisdom and expression. True non-duality is “not two but one”. If we were to say “Creation isn’t real and manifestation is only the Self” then we would be back in duality again because we would be excluding manifestation as unreal. Anything that we exclude we divide ourselves from. True non-duality must be inclusive of all as its very own Self. If we imagine for a moment what would happen if all the Upanishads and scriptures just said “There is no student or teacher so there is no need to talk about anything”, we will see that even though this is absolutely true, it is also relatively useless at certain points in our path. The Self takes the form of teacher and student in order to understand itself better and this play of duality is actually very useful. The deepest awakening to Truth occurs when we no longer have any definitions of what Truth is and isn’t.

We will begin as always with the invocation:

May my word be one with my thought and my thought be one with my word. O Lord of Love, let me realise you in my consciousness.

May I realise the truth of the scriptures and translate it into my daily life.

May I proclaim the truth of the scriptures

May I speak the truth.

May it protect me and may it protect my teacher.

OM shanti shanti shanti

Part 1 Section 1

“Before the world was created, the Self alone existed; nothing whatever stirred. Then the Self thought: ‘Let me create the world’. “This is the first line of the Aitareya Upanishad and it immediately points into the deepest heart of the teachings. If there is no thing to stir, there is only no-thing-ness or formless Presence of Divinity. The Lord of Love is all there is, without any form to perceive Himself with. So, what is creation then and where does it happen? Does it happen as the manifestation of physical and visible forms of sentient and insentient objects? Is creation a physical act? If creation is only a physical act, how would it begin? There must be some subtle form, even that of the Creator, Brahma, to begin the process. To even have a beginning to something indicates the presence of forms, time and change. If the Self thought “Let me create the world” then there must have already been thoughts present. Could creation be more than just a physical act?

Could creation happen inside our minds then? When I think about something I perceive what is actually occurring there? If I see my body, can my thoughts about it be holding it in its shape? Could desire energy be the first Creator? My desire to transcend duality creates a human body and uses it for that purpose. If I see another being-where is that other being? Are they outside in the world or are they inside my mind as my thoughts about them? All of these questions may simply be irrelevant, important, exciting or urgent but they will make us question what the very act of creation is and where it happens. If we are very lucky, they may also make us question why creation occurs.

Ultimately, we are left with the possibility that creation may be a many faceted thing, expressing itself in as many ways as it can. “Creation” ultimately becomes a synonym for the Self.

Perhaps creation can be seen even more clearly as we read verse 3. “As the Self brooded over the form, a mouth opened, as does an egg, giving forth speech and fire”. The Self brooding over the

form shows us that this creation is an act of loving expression, nourishment and joy. We see this loving expression and nourishment in the chicken brooding over her egg. Perhaps the whole universe is the egg of the Self, the child that grows and matures with loving encouragement and nurturing. How beautiful then that the Self mirrors its own act of creation inside the creation itself. Even the Upanishads themselves are creations borne out of joyous expression and love. Whatever the Self broods over, it will come into form somehow. Let us ensure then that we brood over something we would like to experience more of. (1-3)

Part 1 Section 2

Section 2 tells us the story of evolution as an act of unfolding creation. The old perspective of some religions and history suggest that creation was a one-time act and that God created the world in one moment of sheer power. Later in our human history, as science became the dominant and trusted authority, we saw Darwin's Theory of evolution revealed to us. Finally, the advanced science of the current era is beginning to show us that creation and evolution are one and the same thing. Perhaps Darwin is describing the physical manifestation of creation in the animal kingdom appearing as evolution, unfolding over time. Evolution is simply changing appearances of the forms. The Self has its quest to use the forms to become ever more conscious of its own nature. The understanding that creation and evolution are one and the same, two different names for the same thing, is the deepest wisdom embodied by the Upanishads and other sacred scriptures. (1-5)

Part 1 Section 3

Section 3 reveals how the Self manifests as a living physical body through the unfolding of life force or prana. Prana performs all the vital functions in the body and maintains the body completely, but it is the intelligence of the Self that is the source of prana. "How can this be without me?" speaks of the link between the Self and prana. Prana may seem to be intelligent but even prana relies upon the Self. The very first creation of the Self is prana which runs the whole body and mind.

As this section ends, we see reference to Indra, the king of the devas(gods) as being the "one who sees". "Indra" is another form of "Idamdra" which literally translates to "it seeing" or the act of seeing. Could this perhaps be a metaphor for seeing or vision being the highest attribute of all? If Indra is the seeing and is king of the devas then seeing, perception or vision must be the king of attributes too. Seeing the Truth is the highest act we can perform then. (1-14)

Part 2

Part 2 of the Aitareya describes the act of conception, pregnancy and birth in humans as a sequence of three births. This is a unique perspective and it may help us to look at this in more details. A soul or astral individual who is wanting to incarnate again will find itself energetically attracted to suitable parents and enters into form through the sexual fluid of the man, which then merges with the egg (ovum) and conception occurs. This is the first birth, says the Aitareya, where the soul becomes physical form as an embryo but it is still one with the mother.

Later, when the child is born, it continues the generational line and is the offspring of the Self appearing as the parents. This is the second birth, says the Aitareya. The third birth occurs when the child has grown to maturity, then to old age and eventually leaves the body. The third birth may seem initially to be the exact opposite as it is also the death experience. From the perspective of the soul or astral self/subtle body however, we can see this is a rebirth into purely an energetic existence (no longer physical AND energetic). From here the soul is greeted by familiar beings or ancestors and has the opportunity to review what happened during the physical incarnation and what it would like to do now, if anything. The third birth is also of the physical body too because as

it is shed by the soul exiting it, it returns to its elemental nature and is reborn into another form, appearing again as something later on. (1-4)

The final part of this section tells of a sage named “Vamadeva” who was born fully illumined and lived in joy. This is unusual because in most cases, when we decide to incarnate again the process of identifying with the body we are using is involuntary and happens without our knowing. The effect is that we come into this physical existence with a kind of amnesia and our memories of existing in the subtle realms are seemingly gone. “While dwelling in the womb I understood the birth of all the gods. A hundred forms as strong as steel, held me prisoner. But I broke loose from them, like a hawk from the cage and came out swiftly”. Perhaps the hundred forms could be our resistance or tamasic energy holding us back? Perhaps the hundred forms represent the power of the illusion or maya to hold us fascinated by the perception of forms. As we incarnate into this physical experience, we become fascinated and obsessed with phenomena, the moving and the changing entrance our attention. Perhaps also those one hundred forms are subtle beings that guide our evolution as an individual through the many incarnations. Realising our unity with all forms and beings, subtle and physical, we find freedom to move beyond anything that holds us back. We break loose and come swiftly out of illusion. (5-6)

Part 3

The final section of the whole Upanishad brings us to a beautiful viewpoint when it describes the faculties of the senses and mind as servants of the Self. This paints a unique picture of the mind and body as a vehicle for the conscious human being, an expression of Self-awareness moving through the world. “Prajna is pure consciousness, guiding all. The world rests on Pranja and Prajna is Brahman.” “Prajna” is defined as the wisdom, intelligence or the knowing of the real nature of form and phenomena. Prajna is that Sentience that knows all form and its essence. (1-4)

Chapter 3

OM shanti shanti shanti May the power of the Aitareya Upanishad take root in your heart and blossom into deep illumination. Let it be so.