



Four Minor Upanishads-The Tejobindu, Atma, Amritabindu and The Paramahansa Upanishads

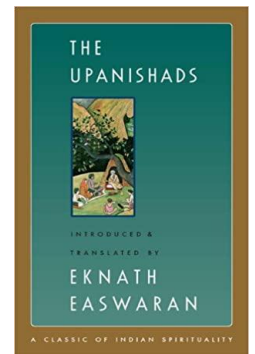
The Aitareya Upanishad - Commentaries

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

To complete our study of the Upanishads we will take a look at four of the minor Upanishads. Let us be clear before we begin, the translation by Eknath Easwaran and commentaries by him and myself are not the final word on these epic scriptures. There are many other Upanishads we could study (there are approximately 200 of them) and some people dedicate their entire lives to these powerful epic teachings. To have a fuller understanding we may consider revisiting whichever of the major or minor Upanishads have caught our eye in this set of translations, looking at other translations and commentaries of the same Upanishads as we find here or studying other Upanishads not covered here. There are many beings that have translated and written commentaries on the Upanishads and each one brings their own unique flavour to the texts and highlights different aspects of the scriptures based on what they perceive. The major Upanishads are only “major” because the great sage Shankara wrote detailed commentaries on them and the selection that he favoured has become somewhat of a required reading list for aspirants on the pathway. That does not mean that his selection and commentaries cover all the useful information and we do not even know that we have even seen all the Upanishads. Who knows what has been lost to the ravages of time?

My suggestion is that if in reading these scriptures, a fire has ignited in your heart for their profound knowledge, perhaps consider looking at these commentaries again, along with the original texts, finding another translation that also ignites your passion and generally remaining open for deeper insight. Every time I read these beautiful scriptures there is a clearer insight into them. These are “minor” Upanishads not because they are less important but perhaps they simply have not become so famous and elevated in stature as yet. Could they be “major” Upanishads for you?

There are four minor Upanishads in this translation and they are the Tejobindu, the Atma, the Amritabindu and the Paramahansa Upanishads. Let’s take a look at each one in turn.

We will begin as always with the invocation:

*Lead me from the unreal to the Real
Lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from death to immortality
OM shanti shanti shanti*

The Tejobindu Upanishad

The Tejobindu begins immediately at the highest level, urging us to go beyond limitations into the deepest awakening we can access. “Let us meditate on the shining Self, changeless, underlying the world of change and realised in the heart in samadhi”. This instruction is typical of the Upanishads in their direct assertion of the most important thing. Meditating upon the Self is really the only thing to do and as we do it over and again, we will come to see what the Self really is. Just as importantly perhaps, we will see what the Self is not; it is not separate to anything, cannot exclude anything; it does not have any limitations or impossibilities.

The end point of meditation is called “samadhi” and this is where we can effortlessly maintain attention on the Self and not be drawn back into the illusion of a separate self full of limitations and inadequacies. This is where we have lost the ability to pay attention to objects because we have seen so clearly that objects are also the very same Self appearing as “something”. The Self can appear as the invisible formlessness or as all visible and perceptible objects (including subtle objects like thoughts and emotions). When we deeply know what all the objects are, they lose their

specialness and are all equally valued as appearance in the Self. None are treated any more importantly than anything else, even our own body is just another beautiful sculpture of the Divine Presence, made out of the Self, for the Self to enjoy itself. (1-4)

“To be united with the Lord of Love, imperishable, changeless, beyond cause and effect, is to find infinite joy. Brahman is beyond all duality, beyond the reach of thinker and of thought.” This is a powerful description of what it is to be awakened. To be beyond cause and effect is really only to move beyond the idea that we are doing anything at all. The Self simply is and it is everywhere all at once. It is formless and form and its appearance as forms is constantly changing. To know the Self/Brahman is to know that all possible forms, actual forms and previous forms are indeed our own Self. To know the Self is infinite joy because there is nothing to do or to change now in this understanding. We are simply watching the enfolding parade of shapes and forms, appearing and disappearing to our senses against the backdrop of changeless infinity.

The last part of the Tejobindu urges us to go beyond any separation at all in our thinking in order to realise the Self. We must let go of the idea that we want or need something that is outside of us, separate to us and we must let go even of the pride of feeling that we have realised the Self. Even this will keep us separate to the Infinite Self and diminish our samadhi. Only one who is willing to give up all thoughts will be free but we do not have to do all this at once. Each time some idea that is in illusion is presented to us by life, we can simply choose to transcend this and be free. Moment by moment then, we enhance our ability to understand and live from the freedom that we already are. (5-6)

The Atma Upanishad

This Upanishad is describing to us the teachings of the sage Angiras, who we have met before in the Mundaka Upanishad. Angiras says that Purusha manifests itself three ways as the inner, the outer and the Self which envelops and includes both outer and inner. When we begin to consider everything that we would have called “outer” (outside of us) as our very own Self then we are close to awakening fully. It is just a simple recognition from here, then that everything is my own Self, whether it is “inner” for other beings or “outer.” All is my own Self from my own body, to all others too. Our usual perspective is that only the inner is “myself.” (1-2)

“Subtler than a banyan seed, subtler than the tiniest grain, even subtler than the hundredth-thousandth part of a hair, this Self cannot be grasped, cannot be seen.” What is it that is smaller than small? What is it that is smaller than the smallest object we can think of? Surely we must be venturing into the realms of that which has no size at all, the Self is not big or small, although it can include big and small objects. It has no dimensions at all and without objects to reference, we cannot say anything about it at all. Sizeless, dimensionless and beyond all qualities, the Self is smaller than any definition we may have and yet larger than the entire universe.

“He is omnipresent, beyond all thought, without action in the external world, without action in the internal world. Detached from the outer and the inner, this supreme Self purifies the impure.” This beautiful closing verse points to the effortless nature of the Self. The Self is not doing anything in the external world for it is the body that is doing all actions and not the individual. When we consider that the body is the Self, we must then ask if there really are any actions occurring at all? For there to be action, there must be a body present and we are back into names and concepts. What is this body really? “Without action in the internal world” points us to the powerful realisation that there is no separate entity choosing to make decisions, deciding what thoughts to have etc. There is no action going on in the inner subtle world of our thoughts or emotions. Our experiences are simply happening and thoughts and emotions are present. There is nobody managing this

process and there never was. Detached finally from the ideas of “outer” and “inner” we find ultimate freedom. (3)

The Amritabindu Upanishad

This wonderful Upanishad begins with a study of what the mind actually is, although we could also substitute the word “attention” for “mind”. The Amritabindu says mind is either pure or impure and perhaps we can see this impurity or purity as an expression of the three gunas. A pure mind would be mostly silent, sattvic and harmonious and an impure mind would be beset by tamas and rajas, with many thoughts about what to do or how to do things. “It is the mind that frees or enslaves” shows us that mind can function from an egoic level where it is obsessed with thoughts about how to get what “I want or need”. Mind can also function from a higher level of intellect where it asks intelligent questions, such as those found in self-inquiry, contemplation or other practices. This is the gradual shift from obsessive, noisy mind to silent and contemplative mind that only speaks when we want it to and then returns to Silence after. Only when mind is quieter can we see what is beyond it but we must not think that the goal is to quieten the mind, rather to notice that this is an outcome of Self-realisation. When mind serves the Self, mind is happy and peaceful. When mind serves the separate sense of self, it remains disturbed and fractured, forever trying to fix issues that do not exist. (1-6)

“He is immanent and transcendent. Realising him, sages attain freedom and declare there are no separate minds. They have but realised what they always are.” To realise the Self is all forms and formlessness too is freedom. To see Krishna everywhere, appearing in his infinite number of disguises is to be free now and forever more. (7-12)

“The Self appears to change its location but does not, just as the air in a jar changed not when the jar is moved about. When the jar is broken, the air knows not; but the Self knows well when the body is shed.” The Self is not inside or outside of the body even though we begin our search for Truth feeling it is only inside. The Self, what we really are, is already everywhere and so when the body moves around in the world, the Self is not moving at all, even though it appears to be. We could say that the body is moving around in the Self. Eventually though, even this distinction will disappear as we realise the body is the Self. The jar and the air are made of the same thing and are non-different. When the body is shed, the Self knows as its subtle body (soul, individual self, astral form) is free to move around and no longer anchored to a particular physical body. (13-19)

“As butter lies hidden within milk, the Self is hidden in the hearts of all. Churn the mind through meditation on it; light your fire through meditation on it: the Self, all whole, all peace, all certitude.” The Self is within us all, as us all, simply waiting to be realised as not being “inside” but in fact everywhere. As butter seems different to milk but is not really, so the Self is the same as the ego when we deeply investigate. Light the fire of your devotion to Truth and watch it burn through all illusions, limitations and doubts to leave only freedom and joy. Stoke this fire constantly as you realise deeper that no matter what you see about the Self, there is always more to be revealed. This beautiful, never-ending is yours to discover. Fall in love with discovery and see yourself in all creatures. (20-22)

The Paramahansa Upanishad

The final Upanishad we shall study here is a beautiful description of the awakened state directly told to us by the Lord of Love himself. It is a profound answer to the powerful question from Narada who asks “What is the state of the illumined one?” The Lord of Love points directly to the power of the Infinite Self when he says “Hard to reach is the state of the illumined one. Only a few attain it,

but even one is enough.” Even one awakened being in each generation is enough because the power of that one awakened being is enough to stabilise the whole planet. What then would be the outcome of many awakened beings on the planet at the same time? Paradise, heaven on earth or Shambala where enlightenment is commonplace and human beings live in peace with themselves, all other humans and all species.

An important section in the first verse reminds us that the awakened being has “no rites or ceremonies, He has only minimal possessions and lives for the welfare of all.” This does not mean that an awakened being may not participate in a ritual or rite but there will be no sense of doing anything, the body of the sage will simply perform the ritual because that is what is happening. The reference to having minimal possessions applies on many levels because the sage may have very few physical possessions at all. What could you possibly need once you have seen who you are? It does not mean we must throw or give away all our stuff but really to see that none of these things belong to the sage because they are the same as the sage. On a mental level the sage will have very few possessions. She will know that she has no mind, no body or emotions. They will be simply appearances inside her as she manifests everywhere. Everything is the sage and nothing belongs to her, not even the concepts of “me and mine” are held onto by her. What possessions keep us from being a sage then? Do we still think about “my awakening” or “my karmic patterns”? Are we willing to let go of “me and mine” even here and be that Self which is already free, the one without a second? (1-3)

“For him the universe is his garment and the Lord not separate from himself.” What if the whole universe is simply our garment? If the whole of manifestation is an outfit we are wearing for a while, to make ourselves visible and perceptible then we are already free even now. We made this garment of infinite appearances in order to play with the sense of duality so that we can be a mirror for our very own Self appearing in disguise as other beings and the world of phenomena. How does this knowledge change our reason for having a family, going to work or even trying to awaken? What is life like from this understanding? Perhaps it would be experiencing the ever-changing faces of the garment of creation that we wear for a while and then later take off. In the closet there are infinite universal garments for us to try, each one different and unique in an endless dance of joy and creation.

“The world of change and the changeless Reality are one to him, for he sees all in God.” The final resting place then for our awakening is here, where duality ends or never began; where change and changeless are one and the same. The Lord of Love can appear as the changeless invisible formless ground of existence and as the ever-changing world of forms. The Self is not limited by having to choose one of these and neither will we be when we see they are two facets of the same Self. Freedom is to see God in the speck of dust, the animals, the angry person, the stars in the night sky and the infinite Silence that surrounds and embraces all things.