



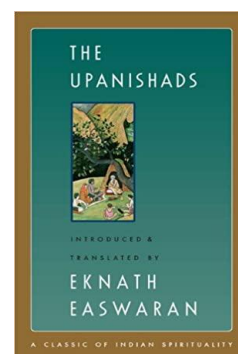
The Shvetashvatara Upanishad - The Commentary

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.

The Shvetashvatara Upanishad-The Faces of God

In this beautiful Upanishad, we see the Self described in a more personalised way, similar to the Bhagavad Gita. We hear of the Lord of Love, of Shiva and other names for the Omnipresent Self. It is perhaps this theme that gives the Shvetashvatara its devotional feel and we could almost read some parts of it as a prayer to the Self or a plea to be rescued and lifted out of suffering. The beautiful verses describe the power of maya, the illusion of the One appearing as many. Maya is powerful and seductive when we believe that we are but one of many beings and yet is powerless when we have truly seen the glory of Shiva.

The text of the full Upanishad appears in six sections. The original author of this Upanishad is said to be the sage Shvetashvatara and it appears to be one of the last written (or spoken) of the Upanishads. This Upanishad is different from many others because it does not have titles for the individual chapters, nor is it dialogue between teacher and student. We can perhaps imagine the words pouring forth from the sage in his Divine Ecstasy as he spoke from the heart of the Self, lost in a deep loving reverence for Shiva and desperate to try to show his gratitude somehow. Perhaps this Upanishad could be another way we can “sit down near” the Truth and allow it to sweep us up into Divine reverie.

We will begin as always with the invocation:

All this is full. All that is full.

From fullness, fullness comes.

When fullness is taken from fullness,

Fullness still remains

OM shanti shanti shanti

Chapter 1

The Shvetashvatara begins with powerful questions about Reality. “What power governs the duality of pleasure and pain by which we are driven?” This awe inspiring and very direct question cuts at the root of all suffering. If human beings are duty bound to pursue pleasure and try to avoid pain, at least whilst they are lost in the illusion of apparent multiplicity and diversity, what is the cause of that duty? And how can we escape it? In verse 2, the universe of time, space and nature is cited as the mechanism for the Self to pull itself out of illusion. If we view the purpose of the cosmos as being to help us come out of illusion, we will envision a friendly universe that shows us the sets of opposites we must experience and then transcend. Could it be that the whole universe is helping us to awaken from the dream of mortality? We can see the “Lord of Love” who is the essence of every created being in our deepest meditation. The formless Presence of the Self that is everywhere and nowhere in particular is the cause of all manifestation. We must be careful how we use the word “cause” here, so as not to perpetuate the idea of duality. “Cause” as we use it here can be likened to how boiling water “causes” steam to arise from it. The water is the same whether it is liquid and boiling or vapour and moving through the air. The Lord of Love “causes” the universe to appear but they are both synonyms for each other. There are not two substances. The universe is the way that the Lord of Love perceives itself. It seemingly creates many points of awareness so that it can experience looking at itself from many angles. An infinite number of perspectives of itself, all whilst remaining in its original unity. How amazing and beautiful! The cosmos is your infinite reflection! (1-5)

Whilst we think we are separate from the Self, the Lord of Love, we go around and around this “Wheel of God” and experience birth, life and death in a seemingly endless cycle, identifying with the body that we inhabit time and time again. Only when we finally see that we are Omnipresence itself and not just a separate entity are we free of the cycle and experience and end to suffering. This Omnipresence that appears as the universe creates all the sets of opposites as its play. Duality seems to be born as the Lord of Love pretends to divide itself into “Conscious spirit and unconscious matter. Both have existed since the dawn of time, with maya appearing to connect

them". An important clue here is given when we realise that duality is born when we begin to feel there are two substances; the conscious spirit and the unconscious matter. Time begins when duality begins and the sense of illusion begins the moment that we believe in duality. When there is only One appearing two different ways, there is no maya, no time or bondage. The Lord of Love is changeless and timeless and so there can be no moment in which He changed from formlessness into form. These verses are urging us to see that creation of form is maya itself. The illusion that form arises out of formless essence is where all our troubles begin. Conscious spirit does not give birth to unconscious matter. To heal the sense of duality and rise above maya we must see these two terms are different names for the same essence. The Lord of Love can appear as form or disappear as formlessness. (6-10)

The sage of this Upanishad is urging us to meditate upon the Lord of Love and come to realise He is everywhere. When we come to see this then we realise the world IS the Self. "Fire is not seen until one firestick rubs against another, though the fire remains hidden in the firestick. So does the Lord remain hidden in the body until He is revealed through the mystic mantram". Realising that the Lord of Love is omnipresent we find that He was always here but we have not been able to see him clearly. When we want to see objects and phenomena, we see the world. When we look as a separate being we see a world full of objects and people. When we look as the Self, we see the Self everywhere at all times. When we look as the Lord of Love, we see only Love.

Chapter 2

Chapter two of this Upanishad takes various forms and has a mixture of instruction, encouragement and inspiration. This beautiful passage gives us all the inspiration that we need: "Hear, O children of immortal bliss! You are born to be united with the Lord. Follow the path of the illumined ones and be united with the Lord of Life". Our awakening to Divine Love is not in question at all here, we are being told it is our birthright and our reason for this incarnation, there is no room for doubt here, it is simply not an "if" but a "must be". We can all take deep comfort in the certainty here if we need it.

Meditation on the Self is the way to freedom and this Upanishad is very clear that we must use the body and mind to realise the Self. We must become one pointed in our attention and use our ability to focus on one goal for as long as we need. When we have a body and mind, we have the ability to focus on something and to choose what to focus on. This is the most important choice we will ever make because if we do not consciously choose to bring attention to the Self then we are unconsciously choosing to stay fascinated by the world of phenomena and trying to find our love and joy from the outside world. (1-7)

As we progress into this chapter, we notice a change in the tone of the words. If chapter one has lifted us up and inspired us, we may feel a stronger desire to wake up fully to the Truth, chapter 2 serves as the instruction on how to meditate and takes on a practical theme. "Be seated with spinal column erect and turn your mind and senses deep within. With the mantram echoing in your heart, cross over the dread sea of birth and death". When we read the word "mind" here we may also substitute it with "attention". We are asked to turn inwards, to the background of all experience, to find that in which all thoughts, emotions, sensations and even the body itself is appearing in. When thoughts arise and disappear again, where do they come from and go to? From what are they formed? The Shvetashvatara urges us to focus on that which is not a thing and yet all things have their existence inside. The mantram can be a line of a sutra, a powerful thought such as "I am the Absolute Reality" or simply the knowing that there is something here that is not a thought and that the mantram appears in. A mantra appears and disappears in a particular space inside us (and outside us). What is that space? Is it inert? Is it sentient? "Hold the reins of your mind as you hold the reins of restive horses". We are encouraged and instructed to bring the mind (attention) back to the mantram or directly to the formless Self if we can. It is helpful to remember that the Upanishads were recorded in the culture that favoured the use of mantra at that time. It takes an advanced being to be able to focus on the formless nothingness of Brahman/Self and so quite often a mantra

would be given first for the student to repeat internally. The internal repetition of the mantra makes it become ever more subtle and begins to feel more like an energy than a formed thought, then it dissipates even more to the merest hint of vibration and then Brahman reveals itself to the student. This happens because they have replaced the fascination for all thoughts for only one thought, the mantra and this leads to the mind emptying and cleansing itself due to the power of such intense focus. The word “intense” in this context does not mean a lot of effort but rather a lot of consistency. Of course, when we begin to meditate we will notice a lot of intrusive thoughts interrupting our focus on the mantra or on the Silence of our being and this is very normal. Over time the predominant thought will be only the mantra or awareness of Brahman itself, whether seated in meditation or doing activities in the world. Eventually the mantra merges into Brahman and reveals what it is pointing to. All words and thoughts are only a representation of what they point to, symbols or metaphors for the object they represent. The word “tree” is not a tree but only a word meant to stimulate remembrance and understanding. In the same way as it is possible to say the word “tree” without ever having seen a tree, it is possible to repeat a mantra and it begins as just a thought. Over time and with intense repetition, we will find we come to know directly what the mantra represents. We will see it is the Universal Being, the Lord of Love who is right here in our hearts even now but has been overlooked by the confusion of maya. We must become fascinated with Brahman more than we are fascinated with our own thoughts.

Verses 11 to 13 describe some of the signs that we are progressing in our realisation of Truth. We may notice some of these along the way, although as we are reminded in this Upanishad, they are only subtle phenomena and signposts pointing us further into our hearts. As phenomena become ever more subtle, we may feel we are making progress but we are also never more at risk of getting caught in illusion. Some of these subtle phenomena can be so appealing or attractive, we may even begin to experience some of the Siddhis (powers or miracles) manifesting or we may notice we are beginning to have an ability to influence others. This is the time to guard our practice with our intense devotion and consistency. No phenomena can ever be as amazing as Brahman itself, nothing in the phenomenal can replace the knowing of what you really are. We must not be distracted. When we are suffering intensely it may be easier to keep your focus and dedication than when you are blissed out and experiencing a lot of abundance, miracles and synchronicity! (8-14)

“In the supreme climax of samadhi they realise the presence of the Lord within their heart. Freed from impurities, they pass forever beyond birth and death.” This emotional and exciting sentence calls to us to realise the presence of the Lord is our very own presence. The Lord of Love is the one looking for herself as she meditates. “I am the Lord of Love” becomes the only conclusion we can draw. The word “samadhi” has many subtle differences in meanings over various scriptures but in this context we could take it to mean that goal of all meditation, which is to realise the meditator and the object of meditation are One. We are meditating upon the Lord of Love and come to realise we are Him. In this realisation we will begin to see all beings are Him too. We will see His face in the plants, animals, sentient beings, insentient objects and in the very fabric of the universe. Anywhere and everywhere we look, including in our own bathroom mirror, we will see Brahman, the Lord of Love looking back at us. (15-17)

Chapter 3

The third chapter forms a description of the Lord of Love, revealing to us over and over what it means to be omnipresent. We all may begin our journey to awakening resisting this kind of repetition and yet soon we do not mind it so much because we see the need to saturate the mind and attention with the Truth. Later, we will actively participate in the repetition and choose it. Later still, we will revel in Divine Bliss of repetition as it soothes, caresses and uplifts our soul into ecstasy. The merest hint of words of Truth can be enough to send us into the highest rejoicing. For now though, it is enough to allow this repetition to pervade you, let the words be imbibed deep in your heart. Welcome as best you can the differing ways that the Lord of Love is pointed to and revered in this great scripture. It is, after all, the only thing we ever speak about whether we realise it or not!

“He was before creation; he will be after dissolution. He alone is. Those who know him become immortal.” (v1) “He projects the cosmos from himself, maintains and withdraws it back into himself and the end of time”. (v2) Both of these quotes show us that the Self is beyond creation and destruction and that it always exists whether there are forms present or not. The Self is equally the same whether there is a universe or not. We can use the metaphor of a still lake to help us here. The Self is like the lake and the ripples on the surface of the lake are the phenomenal objects. All the ripples on the lake represent the whole universe. The lake remains unaffected by the presence or absence of ripples, the same in movement or stillness. It is just water. If the ripples are made of water, just like the lake is, are there really any ripples at all?

Can we see that the “ripple” represents the lake? Whether we see a lake of water or a ripple on its surface we are looking at the same essence of water. So it is with the omnipresent Self too, whether we think we are looking at a human being or a tree, we are really seeing the Self. We can look at the parts or the whole but it is the same thing. There is nowhere to look where we would not see the Self. (1-5)

“O Lord, from whom we receive the mantram as a weapon to destroy our self-will, reveal yourself, protector of all.” Here we see further reference to self-will being the cause of our inability to see the Lord of Love. Self-will means the thoughts we tend to hold as a separate being and what we want and need. Even the desire of a separate someone trying to reach awakening must eventually be given up and replaced by the realisation that the Lord of Love is trying to recognise itself through and as us. Here we find our self-will is replaced by Self-will. “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” as we hear in the Lord’s prayer. When self-will is extinguished by realising there is no self but only Self, we will experience life on earth “as it is in heaven”. (6-9)

We see the whole spiritual journey simplified and explained elegantly in the following words: “Those who know him leave all separateness, sorrow and death behind. Those who know him not live but to suffer.” These wise words point to the fact that to live as a separate being, unaware of our true nature as the Lord of Love, is the cause of all suffering. The remedy then is simple but must be done consistently. We must resolve to focus our attention as often as possible on the Self that is everywhere, until it becomes a habit, effortlessly and continuously. The Self is everywhere and is changeless, formless, deathless and timeless and yet it is experiencing itself as death, birth, change and evolution through time. It remains at all times unblemished and ever perfect and yet it is playing with the sense of coming and going, of perfection and imperfection. “He resides in the city of nine gates, which is the body. He moves in the world enjoying the play of his countless forms. He is the master of the universe, of animate and inanimate. He runs without feet and holds without hands. He sees without eyes and hears without ears. He knows everyone but no one knows him. He is called the First, the Great, the Supreme.” Here we see another important clue that no one can know him. Nobody who thinks they are a separate being can recognise the Self of all because they will see separate beings everywhere. Nobody who looks as a separate someone can see that which is everywhere all at once. When we think of ourselves as a “someone”, we will see only “someones” and “somethings” everywhere. Such is the power of maya, the illusion of diversity and not understanding that the appearance of multiplicity is not actual multiplicity and diversity. We can take flour and make it into many different foods but it has not changed from being flour even when we give it another name. We can take silver and make it into a watch, a necklace and a ring but it is still just silver. Maya makes us believe the ring is a ring and makes us forget it is silver! Is it a ring or is it silver? Is this even a valid question? Does the ring exist without the silver it is made from? Is the ring any different than the silver? Could they be two names for the same substance then? (10-21)

Chapter 4

This chapter begins with a description of how the Lord of Love can appear. We will begin to see him everywhere as we realise maya has lost her power over us. Our eyes may see forms but our heart sees the Lord of Love. We see him appearing as fire, the sun, the moon, the oceans, the

creator himself. He is the seasons, the moods of human beings, he is the mind, he is resistance. The Lord of Love is appearing even as our desire to recognise him and the insight that comes from it. He is peace and suffering; he is duality and non-duality (the concepts of). He is all concepts and his is the unknowing and the knows. If we were to continue to name all the ways he could of, has and is appearing it would be an endless task.

“From his divine power comes forth all this magical show of name and form, of you and me, which casts the spell of pain and pleasure. Only when we pierce through this magic veil do we see the One who appears as many.” Right here in this statement we can see the power and effect of maya or illusion and how to break free of it. Our fascination with the names we give things clouds us from seeing the essence of all things, the Lord of Love. Maya loses her power over us when we see she only functions in the world of names and labels. When we openly just experience something without labelling it with a name, or as wanted or not wanted we will be at peace immediately. The labels of “good and bad”, “wanted or not wanted” all depend on what we think something is and not on what it actually is. In verse 6, we see the analogy of two birds who are inseparable sitting on the same tree, one eats the fruits of pleasure and pain and the other just sits and watches. The word “inseparable” is important here as it suggests the two birds are not actually two but are two aspects of the same One. We can function as a separate being, duty bound to find momentary happiness in the pleasures of the world and suffer the pains of being a “someone”. We can also just watch and observe as the Self itself, observing all the passing phenomena and effortlessly being. The Self can appear as someone or as Nothingness. The Lord of Love can play as being a separate being or as the Infinite One. Even now these birds are not two, even now the sense of “either/or” or choice of which way to be is not true. Even now you rest as the Lord of Love who watches the passing phenomena passively and even watches the sense of someone playing out in front of you and the joys and pains of that. You are already appearing these two ways. (1-9)

The Shvetashvatara now begins to call the Lord of Love by the name of Shiva and adds a hint of an even more personal note. We see him described as the “Supreme Magician” appearing as the entire cosmos. As we come to realise that Shiva is the very nature of our being and of Reality itself, we begin to notice certain qualities of Shiva that we must begin to embrace as our very own. This section is very important as it is showing us that which perhaps we have not yet fully accepted about ourselves. If we have not begun to allow the Divine attributes to shine through as our lives, we can start now. The Divine Splendour is inside every single of our bodies and minds. Shiva’s peace, wisdom, grace and protection is also ours. He is the “Supreme Pervader” and his essence is appearing as us all. There is nowhere inside the cosmos where he does not reside. The cosmos resides in him. To recognise this allows us to feel that same power, wisdom, love and compassion is waiting inside to be called forth in all beings, including the one reading this. It may seem that we have to try to reach that wisdom, grace or compassion but it is latent within even now and we can step into what it really means to be Shiva. Anything that we see in any awakened being must be what is already inside us. Anything we value about them, whether they still have a body or shed their body a long time ago, is only to show us what potential we have inside us waiting to be evoked. Let Shiva protect you as you realise you and he are One and that you must be safe, loved, free and full of light already. “Know him to be the Supreme guardian of the cosmos, protecting all creatures from within. May he, Shiva, in whom all are one, free us from the bonds of death.” Do you really know what it means to be Shiva then? What does it mean if you are the Lord of Love trying to learn about itself through this Upanishad and this writing? How would you move about, talk and think if you knew you were Shiva? What is stopping you from living as that now? (10-17)

In verse 18, we see perhaps one of the most important aspects of this whole Upanishad as it describes how we can recognise Shiva. “Neither what is nor what is not, but only Shiva. He is far beyond the reach of the mind. He alone is. His glory fills all worlds.” Shiva is not “what is” which is the world of forms and manifestation. He is also not “what is not” which is the unmanifested, invisible formlessness. When we refuse to label Shiva as either of these, we realise he is both of them, the manifest and unmanifest are One. He is “Only Shiva” and not two. He can show up both ways, firstly as the invisible formless Silence that is our essential nature AND as the form of the human being that is trying to discern what Shiva is! “He alone is” meaning there is nothing that is

not him, neither what exists in manifestation nor what has yet to exist in the unmanifest. He is not either form or formless but is inclusive of both. "He is far beyond the reach of the mind" because he cannot be described in concepts or words. Shiva is unknowable because as we begin to define him, we end up creating the opposite. If we say he is formless, then we create the label of form immediately. If we say he is invisible then we rule out the visible. If we feel Shiva is knowable, we cannot accept the mystery he is. If we say he is unknowable, then we rule out of our search all that can be known through the mind and senses. Is Shiva beyond definition then? He is indeed beyond definition and he is also definable, we can describe him and we can rest in the mystery. These paradoxes are not meant to be thought about too much (although our mind will try to of course because that is all it can do with the words here) but just to be exposed to over and over until they just seem to make a kind of sense that wasn't arrived at through logical thought.

"I seek refuge at your feet. Protect me; protect us man and woman, cow and horse. May the brave ones who seek you be released from the bondage of death." We finish this chapter of the Shvetashvatara with this powerful statement that to seek Shiva is to be courageous already. To want the Lord of Love we are already brave to not choose what the rest of the world wants but to choose awakening. To take refuge at the feet of Shiva simply is to keep this wisdom in our hearts as often as we can until it becomes automatic. Shiva's feet are where he is grounded and rooted to the earth and where his awakening is lived as he walks through the world as us. The stay at his feet means to keep it as simple as we can and watch it all unfold for us. Shiva is the Self, the Lord of Love and his power, radiance and grace is shining right now as the one reading this. We are free already, safe and loved even now. Nothing could change this and nothing can go wrong for us.

May Shiva live in our hearts forever.

Chapter 5

In this chapter we move even deeper into our seeing. The secret to realising our immortality and moving beyond fear and suffering is made very clear here. "To know the unity of life leads to deathlessness; to know not leads to death. Both are hidden in the infinity of Brahman, who is beyond both." This one sentence alone contains all the wisdom we need. When we know the unity or oneness of life we realise that we are formless and immortal, we lose our fear of death. We must also be careful though not to exclude from that the appearance of that oneness as multiplicity or diversity. Included in the unity is the sense of diversity and multitudes of beings. If we can respect both aspects of our Self, we will be free. I am infinite, everywhere, eternal and already completely free. I am also appearing as this human being, one of seeming many, on a neverending unfolding of wisdom in and as my life. The word "hidden" means they are contained inside Brahman, which is truly all possibilities.

We come to know the unity of life through the sense of time and evolution, says verse 2. Through the contrast of time, birth, death and evolution we can come to realise the deathless, changeless and timeless essence that we are. Perhaps that is the purpose of this life then, to come to recognise our real nature and then to fall in love with every way it is appearing as our human existence. We need this contrast of seeming to be a person so that we can recognise That which is everywhere by the sense of opposites. Paradoxically, the Self recognises itself, by Itself and has no need of a mind and body but without the mind and the body, there is no need to recognise Itself and it is already at peace.

"He is the supreme creator, hidden deep in the mystery of the scriptures." What is the mystery in the scriptures? Where does scripture stop and experience start? The scriptures can point to the Self and inspire and instruct us but we must actually experience it ourselves. We must look and apply what the great Rishis are talking about in these Upanishads. If we simply read the Upanishads (or any great scripture or teaching) we will feel inspired and our desire to realise the Self will increase. If we read enough scripture, we will eventually have to taste that supreme Self

for ourselves. This is something each one of us must do for ourselves. This is the mystery in the scriptures as we read about what cannot be described but only experienced directly. (1-9)

Verse 10 makes an important point and we see the reason and the process of transcendence explained. The Self has no need to incarnate in another human form because it is already at peace and does not see anything other than itself. When we have another human lifetime, we see that only in the manifestation can lower frequencies such as hate, anger, doubt, apathy, shame and fear be felt and allowed to come back to peace also. This is the truest reason for our incarnation, to recognise the Truth and then to allow that to pervade our whole existence. As we do that we are allowing all of our emotions, thoughts and experiences to be an expression of that Truth and peaceful. (10-12)

This chapter finishes with this beautifully simple instruction to “Love the Lord and be free.” Meditation on the unity and oneness of the Self invokes the freedom that is our birthright to come to the forefront of our experience. Meditation on the unity destroys the tendency to imagine separation and we experience freedom. Shiva is described here as the creator and the destroyer because he is that in which all forms arise out of and merge back into. He is the ground of Being. (13-14)

Chapter 6

The final chapter of the Shvetashvatara does not disappoint and in fact steps up the intensity of the teaching and the impact. One of the powerful aspects of this Upanishad is its directness in combination with the repetition. Let us resolve to read the powerful wisdom whilst being ever more open to the power of these words. We can allow the words to invoke the Truth in our own heart.

We begin this chapter with a reference to two perspectives on how life begins that are popular in various schools of thought. The Truth of how life evolved is not obvious to our mind. “The Lord brought the cosmos out of himself” explains how form seems to arise out of the formlessness of the Lord. We can see the Shapeless Self likes to make shapes out of itself, without losing anything in the “creation” that seems to appear. If we take the example of water, which has no shape of its own as such, we see that we can do many things with the water but the structure and essence of it never changes. We may pour the water into a round or square bowl and it will take the shape of that container. We can freeze the water and it will look like a cube. We can let it run down a mountain side and it will never stop changing shape. What is the shape of water then? Can we answer that question, or do we have to admit it has infinite shapes and yet remains essentially shapeless? So it is with the Self too; all of this universe arises out of it and yet nothing at all has happened to it.

“He is pure consciousness, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, creator of time and master of the three gunas. Evolution takes place at his command.” This intensely powerful teaching in verse 2 can remove all effects of maya if we allow it to and is worth diving deeper into. The Lord of Love is omnipresent, he is everywhere at all times and is constantly experienced by us all the time. There is no place we could go to where the Lord of Love is not there already, including right where we are sitting, reading this. Omnipresence means that the Self cannot be absent from anywhere at all in the entire universe. The Self is small enough to appear as a subatomic particle and large enough to appear as the universe as a whole. It can appear as a rock, a human being, a speck of dust, the vast expanse of deep space and a rainbow. It is in every single particle AS every particle. This means that the Self is right here, right now, present as the one writing and the one reading this. There is only one Self and so this means that what you are made of is also the essence of the black hole, of Krishna and all the great sages. Your essence is the same as all objects in the universe, the one Self appearing as infinite forms, undivided and indivisible. No such separation from grace ever occurred, nor could it ever. This powerful scripture is urging us to see that we are the Lord of Love in disguise, just as it disguises itself as a bird, a flower or an argument between friends. The Lord of Love is an expert at hiding in plain sight! Hidden completely until we lose our fascination with naming things and become more interested in their source and essence.

The Self is also omnipotent. It has unlimited power and that power is not even slightly diminished when it moves into a form. Creation of manifestation costs no energy; it is effortless and nothing is lost in that process. This means that inside our own cells, atoms and subatomic particles there is still that infinite and unlimited power. Just ponder that for a moment; every single cell in your body, your thoughts, emotions, organs and words are made with infinite power. Doesn't that give a whole new meaning to this passage from the Gospel of John from the Bible: ""In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The "word" represents the created or the manifested and directly contradicts this idea human beings hold on to that we are less than our source. We cling to the idea that we have somehow lost some power, perfection and grace in the creation process. Here, we see the Bible agreeing with the Shvetashvatara Upanishad. Will you let the impact of this really influence you? "The word was with God and the word IS God", says the author of the Gospel of John. The Lord is omnipotent and everywhere his power is distributed equally in every single atom. The same infinite power is even found in the empty recesses of space and in the furthest galaxy as seen appearing as our own thoughts. Notice we did not say "in our own thoughts" but "as our own thoughts", There is nothing that can be powerless or limited in any way then it can only appear to be powerless but never actually is. Have you ever really stopped to contemplate what "omnipotent" means to you and for you? If you really let this hit you, you will have a much deeper reverence for your thoughts, your life and even your resistance! All created forms are merely a mask or disguise for this omnipotence that you are.

Lastly, let us look at what it means to be omniscient and how that can help us deepen our realisation of who we really are. In the dictionary, "omniscient" is defined as "having, or seeming to have, unlimited knowledge. Possessed of universal or complete knowledge". How can we have unlimited knowledge in our human form? Can we really know anything about anything? As we begin to realise what it really means to be omnipresent, we will see that because we are everywhere, we are everything. Once we know what we are, we know what everything is also. All forms are suddenly known to us on a level we did not understand before. All of creation is like an infinite database from which relative knowledge can be downloaded into each body and mind. There are yogis who are adept at this and we see evidence of this in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, in the sections on "accomplishments" which describe the Siddhis (miraculous powers) that may begin to emerge as our realisation deepens. Of course, we do not seek these powers for our own good as a separate being and if we try to know something about someone simply to have an advantage over them, we lose our sense of omnipresence and therefore, access to unlimited knowing is gone. We see the inherent safeguard in this omniscience as we come to understand that anyone who would misuse such knowledge is unable to access it by their very intention to harm others. The sages and rishis of the Upanishads would have had access to this knowledge, along with many other examples in all the scriptures. Here we are not interested in developing these powers but rather seeing them emerge spontaneously as an effect of knowing deeply that we are The Lord of Love.

The recognition that we are omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent makes us "master of time and the gunas". Nothing at all that happens to and by any form can impact the Lord of Love. Shiva lovingly watches the unfolding of manifestation as the play of time, space and evolution and yet remains undisturbed always. (1-4)

"Know him to be the cause without a cause, without a second, parent or master. May he, Lord of Love, who hides himself in his creatures like a spider in its web, grant us illumination." In verse 9 and 10 we see the metaphor of a spider in its web and we too have created all this out of us, we have spun the universe out of us and now we get seemingly trapped in our own creation. Knowing that we are the "cause without a cause" is the way to freedom. Nothing caused the Self to be, to exist. Nothing can cause it to cease existing either. Here is the peace that we are looking for then as we come to realise we are safe, safer than safe, because "safe" implies we might have been unsafe at one point or another. You are before all conditions, you exist permanently and only the modes of existence are changing. From invisible to the human senses only to visible AND invisible, then in due time you go back to invisible only. This is the cycle and you are always here as the invisible formless Lord of Love. You depend on nothing and everything depends on you. This is the ultimate security. Even time, change and evolution operate at your Will. (5-10)

Realising who we really are, the source of the cosmos, brings freedom, bliss and allows us to conquer death. "There is no other way to conquer death" says the Shvetashvatara. Why does realisation bring bliss and freedom? All the lower energies that we usually have, such as shame, fear, anger, sadness and grief are so normal to us that we have begun to think that these are normal for human beings. Our natural state is one of lightness, freedom, joy, peace and bliss. The recognition of the unity of all life allows us to release the ideas that we are separate to everything and everyone and we are surprised and delighted to find that all our fears are imagined. These lower frequencies can then continue their own journey to peace. When there is a total absence of fear and suffering, bliss emerges as a kind of "concentrated" happiness. It is our natural state when not believing thoughts. Conquering death and birth too, we realise these are just the appearance and disappearance of our visible form, one of many billions that unfold inside us all the time. Only the holding onto one body as "mine" is the cause of suffering. (11-17)

We are urged to take refuge in Shiva, the Oneness and Unity. There is no diversity, multiplicity or variation. All the colours in the rainbow of light appear to be different to each other and yet they are all just frequencies of light. Interestingly, none of the colours of the rainbow can exist without all of the others. Did you ever see a rainbow with no green or red? When we see one of the colours, we see them all because they are all expressions of the same light.

The Upanishad finishes with this beautiful verse: "This highest mystical experience, revealed at the dawn of time, must be shared only with one whose heart is pure or with a disciple or one's own child. If you have deep love for the Lord of Love and for your teacher, the light of this teaching will shine in your heart. It will shine indeed!" What does a disciple, our own child and one whose heart is pure have in common? They are feeling love and are loving. The sage Shvetashvatara tells us that the only thing that is needed for realisation to occur is love. Love for the Truth and love for the teacher is all that is needed for illumination. The teacher is the Lord of Love and so our love for them is love for the Lord himself. All that we can ever experience is the Lord of Love. We are constantly moving around in him, talking to him, laughing with him; all the while thinking we are just going about our daily lives.

The whole universe is made of love and is held together by it. Your heart is bigger than you may think. You are loved.

OM shanti shanti shanti

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