

The Upanishads:  
One and Many

# Upanishads are also known as End of Vedas

- Vedas focused on ritualistic details, uses and traditions.
- Upanishads focused on Spiritual and philosophical enlightenment.
- Upanishads are in the last section of any Vedas. Upanishads are a subcategory of a Veda.
- There are 4 different Vedas – Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda.
- More than 201 Upanishads have been discovered. Each Upanishad is associated with Vedas. There are 13 Upanishads which are most well known or most important – Katha, Kena, Isa, Mundaka, Prasna, Taittiriya, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Mandukya, Aitareya, Kaushitaki, Svetasvatara and Maitrayani.

# *Upa* (near) + *ni* (below) + *shad* (sit)

- These are the recorded notes of students sitting “below” or “near” an illumined sage.
- Knowledge cannot be transmitted through books.
- It is transmitted by example, by experience and by life.

# The principal Upanishads

- *Isa*
- *Kena*
- *Katha*
- *Prasna*
- *Mundaka*
- *Mandukya*
- *Taittiriya*
- *Aitareya*
- *Chandogya*
- *Brhadaranyaka*
- *Svetasvatara*
- *Kausitaki*
- *Mahanarayana*
- *Maitri*

# Mundaka Upanishad (1.1.3)

- What is that by knowing which everything is known?
- The core message of the Upanishads is that there is an ultimate Reality or Universal Awareness that they label as *Brahman*.

**The Upanishads are a continuation of the Vedic philosophy.** They elaborate on how the *Atman* (Soul) can be united with the ultimate truth (*Brahman*) through contemplation and meditation.

# *Tat tvam asi* = You are That

- At a fundamental level, we are That which is vast and expansive.
- To indicate that dimension of the ultimate Reality at the individual level, the Upanishads use the term *atman*.

*Tat Tvam Asi - (That thou art) Teaches us that God and ourselves are one and the same.*

- *Ayam Atma Brahma* – (This Self is Brahman) It refers to the consciousness within. Atman and Brahma are the same. Atman is consciousness that activates and moves your body and enables you to perceive and act.
- *Aham Brahma Asmi* – (I am Brahman) As Brahma stands for reality, a supreme God, this teaching is about the declaration of one's enlightenment. This means that the one that's been enlightened declares *his Self to be God*.
- These main teachings of the Upanishads aim to help us reach a higher state of being. How? By helping us liberate ourselves from bondage through losing our identities and becoming one with God.

अहं ब्रह्म अस्मि <i>aham brahmāsmi</i>	<a href="#">Brihadaranyaka Upanishad</a>	"I am Brahman"
अयम् आत्मा ब्रह्म <i>ayam ātmā brahma</i>	Brihadaranyaka Upanishad	"The Self is Brahman"
सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म <i>sarvam khalvidam brahma</i>	<a href="#">Chandogya Upanishad</a>	"All this is Brahman"
एकमेवाद्वितीयम् <i>ekam evadvitīyam</i>	Chandogya Upanishad	"That [Brahman] is one, without a second"
तत्त्वमसि <a href="#">tat tvam asi</a>	Chandogya Upanishad	"Thou art that" ("You are Brahman")
प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म <i>prajnānam brahma</i>	<a href="#">Aitareya Upanishad</a>	"Wisdom is Brahman"



# *ātman*

- One who clearly perceives the *ātman* in all beings, and all beings in the *atman* does not separate oneself from the cosmic principle.
- What sorrow, what delusion is there for one who sees intimately the unity of existence and knows all beings to be one's own Self (*ātman*).
- It is all pervasive, radiant, indivisible, without a body, without a scar of imperfection, without sinews. It is pure and uncontaminated by ignorance. The poet is the ruler of the mind, the ruler of nature, and self-existent. It has assigned all things properly.

# *ātman*

- The eye cannot see it; the mind cannot grasp it. The deathless Self has neither caste nor race, neither eyes nor ears nor hands nor feet. Sages say this Self is infinite in the great and in the small, everlasting and changeless, the source of life.
- — *Mundaka Upanishad 1.1.6*
- It is possible to completely silence all mental modifications so that one may “perceive” the underlying awareness.
- It cannot be objectified. It can be experienced. This is the meaning of “I am That.”

# *Brahman*

- *Brahman* means the concept of the transcendent and immanent ultimate reality.
- The term 'Brahman' etymologically means the Great, the Supreme.
- Brahman is the cosmic principle of the ultimate unifying and integrating principle of the universe. inseparable aspects or modes of existence: *Nirguna* and *Saguna*

Impersonal and personal,

Indeterminable and self-indeterminable

- Brahman, in its indeterminable aspect, is the great Silence in so far as it outsoars all logical conception and verbal characterization.
- No words are adequate to describe it; no human notion is able to penetrate its inmost essence; no philosophical system can pronounce the last word about the fathomless mystery of its beings.

# Not Agnosticism...

- But this is not to be construed as agnosticism.
- Even though Brahman is inaccessible to the relational way of thinking, or to our conceptual understanding, it is possible for man to attain a direct vision of Brahman by transcending the trammels of the intellect. Brahman can be immediately apprehended by what has been called knowledge-by-identity or knowledge-by-being.
- One can realize Brahman by being one with Brahman. The vision of Brahman is in the nature of super sensuous and supra-rational immediate experience born of the complete integration of personality

# Brahman is indeterminable

- Brahman is indeterminable, not in the sense that it is incapable of self-determination, but in the sense that though it is capable of endless self-determination, it cannot be limited to, or identified with, any specific determination, or sum of determinations, or the collectivity of all determinations.
- Unfathomable and inexhaustible in its essence, Brahman as the ineffable Supreme transcends the limitations of all self-expression, whether cosmic or individual.
- As inexhaustible and illimitable, the Supreme is called Nirguna Brahman; but, as endowed with the power of endless self-determination and revealed as the universal creative principle, it is called Saguna Brahman.

# Analysis