

Selections from the *Upaniṣads*

बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

CHAPTER 2

1. Śvetaketu Āruṇeya came to an assembly of the Pañcālas. He approached Jaivali Pravāhaṇa, who was being waited on by his entourage. Seeing him, the prince called, 'Young man!'

'Sir?' he called back.

'Have you been educated by your father?'

'OM,' he said.

2. 'Do you know,' cried the prince, 'how people, when they depart, go in different directions?'

'No,' he said.

'And do you know how they come back to this world again?'

'No,' he said.

'And do you know how that world does not become full with the many people who depart to it again and again?'

'No' was all he said.

'And do you know how many offerings have to be offered before the waters take on a human voice, rise up, and speak?'

'No' was all he said.

'And do you know how to reach the path that leads to the gods or the one that leads to the ancestors — what they do to reach the path that leads to the gods or the one that leads to the ancestors? For we have heard the saying of the Ṛṣi:

I have heard of two ways for mortals,
To the ancestors and to the gods:
By them goes everything that moves
Between the father and the mother.'

'I do not know a single one of these things,' he said.

3. The prince invited him to stay with him, but the young man, not honouring his hospitality, ran away. He came to his father and said, 'Now, father, you said before that we had been educated!'

'What of it, clever one?'

'A princeling asked me five questions, and I do not know a single one of them.'

'What are they?'



Ṛṣi in Meditation

'These' — and he told him the subjects.

4. He said, 'You should know me, son: whatever I know, I have taught you. But come, we two will go to him and live with him as his students.'

'You go, father.'

Gautama went to Pravāhaṇa Jaivali's house. The prince offered him a seat, had water brought for him, and welcomed him as an honoured guest. He said, 'We grant a boon to the blessed Gautama.'

5. He said, 'I accept the boon. Tell me the words you spoke in the presence of the young man.'

6. He said, 'Gautama, that falls among boons for the gods. Name something that belongs to human beings.'

7. He said, 'It is well known, that I have plenty of gold, cows and horses; slave-women, coverings and clothing. Sir, do not stint me of what is great, endless, unlimited.'

'Then, Gautama, you should ask for it in the proper way.'

The ancients used to go to their teachers by saying, 'I come to you, sir': and so Gautama became his student by announcing that he was going to him.

8. He said, 'Gautama, may you not be displeased with us, nor your grandfathers either, but this knowledge

has never before lived in any Brāhmaṇa. But I will teach it to you: for who could refuse you when you ask in this way?

9. 'That world is a fire, Gautama., The sun is its fuel; the rays its smoke; the day its flame; the directions its embers; the intermediate directions its sparks. In that fire the gods offer faith (*śraddhā*). From that offering King Soma arises.

10. 'Parjanya is a fire, Gautama. The year is his fuel; the clouds his smoke; the lightning his flame; the thunderbolt his embers; the hailstones his sparks. In that fire the gods offer King Soma. From that offering rain arises.

11. 'This world is a fire, Gautama. The earth is its fuel; fire its smoke; the night its flame; the moon its embers; the constellations its sparks. In that fire the gods offer rain. From that offering food arises.

12. 'A man (*puruṣa*) is a fire, Gautama. The open mouth is his fuel; breath his smoke; speech his flame; the eye his embers; the ear his sparks. In that fire the gods offer food. From that offering the seed arises.'

13. 'A young woman is a fire, Gautama. The loins are her fuel; the body-hairs her smoke; the vagina her flame; what one does inside, her embers; the pleasures her sparks. In that fire the gods offer the seed. From that offering a person arises. He lives as long as he lives, and when he dies —

14. 'They carry him to the fire. Then his fire becomes the fire; his fuel the fuel; his smoke the smoke; his flame the flame; his embers the embers; his sparks the sparks. In that fire the gods offer the person. From that offering a person of the colour of light arises.

15. 'Those who know this, and those who in the forest worship faith as truth, go into the flame, from the flame into the day, from the day into the waxing fortnight, from the waxing fortnight into the six months in which the sun goes northward, from the months into the world of the gods, from the world of the gods into the sun, from the sun into that which is made of lightning. The person of mind goes to those beings of lightning and leads them to the world of Brahmā. Exalted, far above, they dwell in the worlds of Brahmā. For them there is no returning.

16. 'But those who win worlds by sacrifice, giving and asceticism go into the smoke, from the smoke into the night, from the night into the waning fortnight, from the waning fortnight into the six months in which the sun goes southward, from the months into the world of

the ancestors, from the world of the ancestors into the moon.

'Reaching the moon, they become food. There the gods partake of them, as they do of King Soma, saying, "Grow full!": "Wane!"

'When that passes away for them, they enter into space, from space into the air, from the air into the rain, from the rain into the earth.

'Reaching the earth, they become food. They are offered again in the fire of a man, and from that are born in the fire of a young woman, rising again to the worlds. So they circle around. But those who do not know the two paths become worms, flying things, and everything that bites.'

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कठ उपनिषद्

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

BOOK I

1. OM. Uśan Vājaśravasa once offered a sacrifice entailing the giving away of all his possessions. He had a son called Naciketas.
2. Though he was just a boy, when the gifts of cattle were being led away, faith entered him and he thought:
3. 'They have drunk their water and eaten their grass,
Have given their milk, senseless ones:
"Joyless" are the worlds called
To which goes the one who gives these.'
4. And he said to his father, 'Daddy, to whom will you give *me*?' A second and a third time he said it.
'I give you to Death!'
5. 'First of many I go;
Midst of many I go.
What work has Yama to do
That he will be doing with me?
6. 'Looking towards those before me
And looking back at those who come after —
Like the crops a mortal ripens
And like the crops springs up again.'

7. As fire a *Brāhmaṇa*
 Guest enters a house,
 And so they quench him.
 Bring water, son of *Vivasvat*!
8. From that man of little wit
 In whose house he stays, unfed,
 A *Brāhmaṇa* takes hope and expectation,
 Friendship, happiness, action and merit, sons and
 cattle — everything.
9. 'Brahmā, since you, a guest to be honoured,
 Have stayed three nights in my house, unfed, —
 Homage to you, Brahmad! May it be well with me!
 Choose three boons.'
10. 'May Gautama, his mind at peace, well-disposed,
 His anger towards me gone, O Death,
 Greet me, content, when I am released by you.
 I choose this as the first of the three boons.'
11. 'Auddālaka Āruṇi, released by me,
 Shall be content as before.
 He shall sleep well nights, his anger gone,
 Once he has seen you set free from the mouth of
 Death.'
12. 'In the heavenly world there is no fear:
 You are not there, nor does one fear old age:
 Having crossed over both hunger and thirst,
 One rejoices in that heavenly world beyond
 sorrow.
13. 'You teach me, Death, about the heavenly fire.
 Tell it to me, who have faith.
 The heavenly worlds share in immortality.
 I choose this by way of my second boon.'
14. 'I will tell you, Naciketas, so listen to me
 And learn of the heavenly fire.
 Know of this, which is kept in a secret place —
 How to win an endless world, and remain there.'
15. He taught him of the fire, the beginning of the
 world,
 What bricks to use and how many, and how to
 build it —
 And he repeated it back as it had been told to him.
 Then Death, satisfied, spoke again.
16. The great-hearted (*mahātman*) one, pleased, said,
 'Today I give you another favour:
 This fire will be known by your name.
 Grasp this chain with its many forms.
17. 'The one of three Nāciketa-fires, who has attained
 union with the three,
 Who does the three works, crosses over birth and
 death.
 Knowing the god, worthy of offerings, who knows
 all that is born from *brahman*,
 And building the fires, he reaches this surpassing
 peace.
18. 'The one of three Nāciketa-fires, knowing this
 threesome,
 Who, knowing this, builds up the Nāciketa,
 Thrusting Death's snares from before him,
 Going beyond sorrow, rejoices in a heavenly
 world.
19. 'Naciketas, since you chose the heavenly fire
 By way of your second boon,
 Folk will speak of this fire as yours.
 Naciketas, choose your third boon.'
20. 'There is doubt concerning a man who has
 departed.
 Some say, "He is", and others say, "He is not."
 Taught by you, I would know this.
 This is the third of my boons.'
21. 'This was doubted here too, by the gods before:
 It is a subtle *dharma*, not easily understood.
 Choose a different boon, Naciketas.
 Do not, do not insist: release me from this.'
22. 'So this was doubted here too, by the gods!
 Since you, Death, tell me it is not easily
 understood,
 And no one else can be found who can teach this as
 you can,
 There is no boon to equal this.'
23. 'Choose a hundred years, sons and grandsons,
 Many cattle, elephants, gold, horses:
 Choose a great estate of land,
 And yourself live as many autumns as you will.

24. 'If you think fit, choose another boon, equal to this,
Wealth and long life too.
Naciketas, enter a great realm of desires:
I will make you the enjoyer of your desires.
25. 'Whatsoever desires are hard to obtain in the
mortal world,
Ask for them all, at your ill.
Here are fair ladies, with chariots, with musical
instruments,
Their like not to be won by men.
Enjoy yourself with them — I give them to you —
Naciketas, but do not ask me about dying.'
26. 'Ephemeral things, Ender! Since they wear out
The potency of all a mortal's faculties,
And all life is so short,
The chariots are yours, the dance and song yours
still.
27. 'A human being cannot be satisfied by wealth.
Shall we get wealth if we have seen you?
We shall live just as long as *you* decree.
That boon of mine is the only one to choose.
28. 'Once he has encountered the agelessness of the
immortals,
How could the ageing mortal, dwelling on earth
below, understanding this,
Contemplating their beauty, pleasures and
delights,
Find pleasure in very long life?
29. 'Tell us, Death, what people are doubtful of
In the great matter of their passing away.
Naciketas chooses no other boon but this one
That is so deeply hidden.'
- BOOK II**
1. 'The better is one thing, the pleasanter another:
Both bind a man, to different ends.
Of the two, it is well for the one who chooses the
better.
The one who chooses the pleasanter fails of his
end.
2. 'When both have examined the better and the
pleasanter human course,
The wise one discriminates between the two.
- The wise one chooses the better over the
pleasanter;
The foolish one chooses the pleasanter, for the
sake of getting and enjoying.
3. '*You*, Naciketas, contemplating desires
Both pleasant and pleasant-appearing, have let
them go.
You have not taken on this chain made of wealth
Into which many human beings have plunged.
4. 'These two are far apart, disparate,
Ignorance and what is called wisdom.
I think Naciketas is a seeker of wisdom:
Many desires have not distracted you.
5. 'Living in the midst of ignorance,
Wise in their own view, thinking themselves
learned,
The foolish rush about,
Like blind men led by one who is blind.
6. 'Intoxicated, deluded by the glamour of riches,
The childish one does not see that he must pass
away:
Thinking, "This is the world: there is no other",
Again and again he comes into my power.
7. 'What many will not get the chance even to hear of,
What many, though hearing, do not know —
Wonderful is the speaker of it, skilled the winner of
it,
Wonderful the knower of it, taught by a skilled
one.
8. 'Through the teaching of an inferior man it cannot
easily be known,
Though it be thought about in many ways:
There is no way to it without another's teaching,
For it is subtler than the subtle, not to be
reasoned out.
9. 'This thought, which cannot be grasped by
reasoning,
Yet is easily known when taught by another,
You, my dear, have grasped. How steadfast in
truth you are!
May we find another questioner like you!'

[Naciketas:]

10. 'I know that what is called treasure is
impermanent,
That what is constant cannot be got through
inconstant means,
So I have built the Naciketa-fire:
Through impermanent objects I have won the
permanent.'

[Yama:]

11. 'Fulfilment of desire, a firm foundation in the
world,
Infinity of power, the further shore of
fearlessness,
Greatness of praise, a wide-ranging foundation,
Naciketas, you have seen, and, being wise, have
steadfastly let go.
12. 'By the study of the yoga of the self, the wise one
knows as god
That which is hard to see, that is deeply hidden,
That lies in a secret place, that rests in the depths,
ancient,
And abandons joy and sorrow.
13. 'Hearing and grasping this, a mortal,
Drawing out that which belongs to *dharma*,
attains this subtle one.
Then he rejoices, for he has won what is worthy of
rejoicing.
I consider Naciketas a fitting home for this.
14. 'It is different from *dharma*, different from *not-*
dharma,
Different from this that is made and unmade,
Different from both past and future.
Tell me what you see!'

[Naciketas cannot, so Yama continues:]

15. 'The word which all the Vedas recollect, .
Of which all ascetic practices speak,
Searching for which folk live as students of
brahman,
I will tell you in brief.
It is OM.

16. 'This syllable is *brahman*.
This syllable is supreme.
Knowing this syllable,
Whatever one wishes for one has.
17. 'This support is the best.
This support is supreme.
Knowing this support,
One is honoured in the world of Brahmā.
18. 'The wise one is not born, nor does it die.
It is not from anywhere, nor was it anyone.
Unborn, everlasting, eternal, primeval,
It is not slain when the body is slain.
19. 'If the slayer thinks it slays;
If the one who is slain thinks *it* is slain:
Neither of them understands.
It does not slay, nor is it slain.
20. 'Subtler than the subtle, greater than the great,
The self is hidden in the secret place of a being.
One without will, through the creator's favour,
Sees the greatness of the self, his sorrow at an
end.
21. 'Sitting, it travels far.
Lying down, it goes everywhere.
Who else but I (*mad-*) is able to know
The god who is ever delighted (*madāmada*).
22. 'Knowing this great all-pervading self —
Bodiless among bodies,
Stable among the unstable
The wise one does not grieve.
23. 'The self cannot be won by speaking,
Nor by intelligence or much learning.
It can be won by the one whom it chooses.
To him the self reveals its own form.
24. 'Neither the one who has not ceased from
wrongdoing,
Nor the unpeaceful nor the unconcentrated,
Nor the one of unpeaceful mind
Can win it through knowing.

25. 'The one for whom priesthood (*brahman*) and royalty (*kṣatra*),
Both, are the rice
And death is the sauce:
Who, truly, knows where he is?

BOOK VI

1. 'There is an eternal pipal tree
With its roots above, its branches below.
It is the bright; it is *brahman*;
It is called the immortal.
On it all the worlds depend:
No one goes beyond it.
This is that.
2. 'Whatever there is that moves,
The breath impels it as it is sent forth.
It is a great terror, an upraised thunderbolt.
They who know this become immortal.
3. 'From fear of it, Agni burns.
From fear, Sūrya shines.
From fear both Indra and Vāyu,
And Death, as fifth, run on.
4. 'If one has been able to wake up to it here
Before the break-up of the body,
One is fitted to attain a body
In the worlds of creation.
5. 'In oneself, it appears as though in a mirror;
In the world of the ancestors, as though in a dream;
In the world of the *gandharvas*, as though it appeared in water;
In the world of Brahmā, as though in bright light and shadow.
6. 'Knowing the senses to be separate,
Likewise the rising and setting
Of things that arise separately,
The wise one does not grieve.
7. 'The mind is higher than the senses,
Being (*sattva*) higher than the mind:
The great self is above being,
The unmanifest higher than the great.
8. 'Above the unmanifest is the person,
Pervading and without mark,
Knowing which, a being is liberated
And reaches immortality.
9. 'Its form is not present to the sight
No one sees it with the eye.
The wise one, adept in mind, sees it in his heart.
Those who know it become immortal.
10. 'When the five knowings cease,
Together with the mind,
And the intelligence does not stir,
They call that the highest bourn.
11. 'This steadfast control of the senses
Is known as "yoga" —
Then one becomes undistracted:
For yoga is the origin and the passing away.
12. 'It cannot be won
By speech or mind or eye.
How can it be grasped in any other way
Than by one saying, "It is!"
13. 'It can be grasped so: "It is!"
Through the real nature of both.
When it has been grasped so: "It is!"
Its real nature becomes clear.
14. 'When all the desires that dwell
In one's heart are let go,
Mortal becomes immortal:
One reaches *brahman* here.
15. 'When all the knots of
The heart here are broken,
Mortal becomes immortal:
This is the teaching.
16. 'A hundred and one are the channels of the heart.
Of them, one flows out through the head.
Going up by it, one reaches immortality.
Others, on departing, go in all directions.
17. 'The person, a thumb in length, in the midst of the self,
Ever resting in the hearts of people,

One should by wisdom draw out from one's own body

Like the cane from a *muñja*-reed.

One should know it as the bright, the immortal.

One should know it as the bright, the immortal.'

18. Naciketas, having received this knowledge, taught by Death,

And the complete method of yoga,

Attaining *brahman*, became free of impurity, deathless,

And so will any other who knows it in relation to the self (*ātman*).



छान्दोग्य उपनिषद्

Chāndogya Upaniṣad

BOOK VI

CHAPTER I

1. OM. There once was a boy called Śvetaketu Āruṇeya. His father said to him, Śvetaketu, go and live as a *brahmacārin*. Good lad, there is no one in our family who is just a Brāhmaṇa by birth, without learning.'

2. So at twelve years old he went, and at twenty-four years old he returned, having learned all the Vedas, haughty, proud of his learning, and opinionated. His father said to him, Śvetaketu, good lad, since you are haughty, proud of your learning, and opinionated, did you ask for the symbolic statement

3. 'by which the unheard becomes heard, the unthought thought, and the unknown known?'

'Blessed one, what sort of symbolic statement is that?'

4. 'Good lad, just as through one lump of clay everything made of clay is known, so difference of shape is just name,' dependent on speech: "clay" is the reality.

5. 'Good lad, just as through one copper ornament everything made of copper is known, so difference of shape is just name, dependent on speech: "copper" is the reality.

6. 'Good lad, just as through one nail-clipper everything made of iron is known, so difference of shape is just name, dependent on speech: "iron" is the reality. Such, good lad, is the symbolic statement.'

7. 'The blessed ones certainly did not know this, for, if they had known it, how would they not have told me? Blessed one, *you* tell me about it.'

'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 8

1. Uddālaka Āruṇi once said to his son, Śvetaketu, 'Good lad, learn from me about the state of sleep. When a person "sleeps", as it is called, then, good lad, he has entered into being; he is merged with his own. That is why they say of him, "He sleeps" (*svapiti*), for he is merged with his own (*svam apīta*).

2. 'Just as a bird, tied by a thread, flies in every direction but, failing to reach a home elsewhere, returns to its bondage, so, good lad, the mind flies in every direction but, failing to reach a home elsewhere, returns to the breath. For, good lad, the mind is bound to breath.

3. 'Good lad, learn from me about hunger and thirst. When a person here "is hungry", as it is called, then water leads the food (*aśitam nayante*). So they call water "the leader of food" (*aśanāya* = hunger), just like a leader of cows (*gonāya*), a leader of horses (*aśvanāya*), a leader of men (*puruṣanāya*). Good lad, learn from me where this shoot has sprung from: it cannot be rootless.

4. 'Where else could its root be, but in food? Good lad, through food as the shoot seek for water as the root. Good lad, through water as the shoot seek for heat as the root. Good lad, through heat as the shoot seek for being as the root. Good lad, all creatures have being as their root, being as their home, being as their base.

5. 'When a person "is thirsty", as it is called "then heat leads the drink. So they call heat "leader of water" (*udanyā* = thirst), just like a leader of cows, a leader of horses, a leader of men. Good lad, learn from me where this shoot has sprung from: it cannot be rootless.

6. 'Where else could its root be, but in water? Good lad, through water as the shoot seek for heat as the root. Good lad, through heat as the shoot seek for being as the root. Good lad, all creatures have being as their root, being as their home, being as their base.

'Good lad, I have said before how those three deities each become threefold — each one threefold — when they come into contact with the person. Good lad, when the person departs, his speech enters into mind, his mind into breath, his breath into heat, his heat into the highest deity.

7. 'This subtle part is what all this has as self (*ātman*). It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that (*tat tvam asi*), Śvetaketu.'
 'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
 'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 9

1. 'Good lad, just as bees secrete honey by collecting the nectars from different kinds of trees, and combine the nectar into oneness,
 2. 'and just as there they do not keep any distinction, so as to be able to say, "I am the nectar of that tree", "I am the nectar of *that* tree", so, good lad, all creatures, once they have entered into being, do not know that they have entered into being.
 3. 'Whatever they are here — a tiger, a lion, a wolf, a boar, a worm, a flying thing, a gnat or a mosquito — they become *that*;
 4. 'This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
 'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
 'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 10

1. 'Good lad, the eastern rivers flow east and the western rivers flow west, and from the sea merge into the sea: That is just sea. Just as there they do not know "I am that river", "I am *that* river",
 2. 'so, good lad, all creatures, once they have come forth from being, do not know that they have come forth from being. Whatever they are here — a tiger, a lion, a wolf, a boar, a worm, a flying thing, a gnat or a mosquito — they become *that*.
 3. 'This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
 'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
 'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 11

1. 'Good lad, if someone were to strike at the root of this great tree, it would ooze sap but live. If someone were to strike at the middle, it would ooze sap but live. If someone were to strike at the top, it would ooze sap but live. Pervaded by the life, by the self, it stands, happy, everdrinking.
 2. 'If the life leaves one branch of it; that branch dries up. If it leaves a second, that dries up. If it leaves a third, that dries up. If it leaves the whole tree, the whole dries up. Good lad, know that this is the same,' he said.

3. 'When separated from the life, *it* dies, but the life does not die. This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
 'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
 'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 12

1. 'Bring a banyan-fruit from this tree.'
 'Here it is, blessed one.'
 'Break it.'
 'I have broken it, blessed one.'
 'What do you see there?'
 'Tiny seeds, blessed one.'
 'Now break one of them.'
 'I have broken it, blessed one.'
 'What do you see there?'
 'Nothing, blessed one.'
 2. He said to him, 'Good lad, on this subtle part — the subtle part which you do not see — rests the great banyan-tree. Good lad, have faith.
 3. 'This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
 'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
 'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 13

1. 'Put this salt in water, and come to me in the morning.'
 He did so. His father said to him, 'Now, bring me the salt that you put in water last night.'
 He felt for it, but did not find it.
 2. 'Quite,' said his father, 'for it has dissolved. But sip from the side of it. What is it like?'
 'Salt.'
 'Sip from the middle of it. What is it like?'
 'Salt.'
 'Sip from the other side of it. What is it like?'
 'Salt.'
 'Throw it away, then come to me.'
 He did so, and said, 'It is there all the time.'
 His father said to him, 'You do not see *being* here, but it *is* here.
 3. 'This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
 'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
 'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 14

1. 'Suppose, good lad, that someone were to lead a man blindfold from Gandhāra and then release him in a deserted place; and suppose that he were to be blown to east, north, south or west, crying, "I have been led blindfold and released blindfold!"
2. 'And suppose that someone were to undo the blindfold and tell him, "Gandhāra is in this direction. Walk in this direction." And he, being wise and intelligent, by asking from village to village would reach Gandhāra. In the same way a person who has a teacher knows, "It is only so long until I am released. Then I will reach my goal."
3. 'This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 15

1. 'Good lad, if a man is ill, his relatives wait around him saying, "Do you know me? Do you know me?" So long as his speech has not entered into mind, his mind into breath, his breath into heat, his heat into the highest deity, he knows them.
2. 'But when his speech *has* entered into mind, his mind into breath, his breath into heat, his heat into the highest deity, he does not know them.
3. 'This subtle part is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
'Blessed one, explain it to me further.'
'I will, good lad,' he said.

CHAPTER 16

1. 'Good lad, suppose they bring a man with his hands bound, saying, "He has stolen! He has committed a theft! Heat up an axe for him." If he is the culprit he makes himself false. Joined with falsehood, hiding himself behind falsehood, when he seizes the heated axe he is burnt, and then he is executed.
2. 'But if he is not the culprit he makes himself true. Joined with the truth, hiding himself behind truth, when he seizes the heated axe he is not burnt, and then he is set free.
3. 'As he would not then be burnt. . . It is what all this has as self. It is truth: it is the self. *You* are that, Śvetaketu.'
Then he understood his teaching: he understood.



बृहदारण्यक उपनिषद्

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad

CHAPTER 4

1. 'When this self (*ātman*) becomes weak and, as it were, confused, the breaths come together with it. Taking with it particles of light (*tejas*), it goes down into the heart. When the person of the eye turns away from it, it ceases to know forms.
2. 'They say, "He is becoming one: he does not see." They say, "He is becoming one: he does not smell." They say, "He is becoming one: he does not taste." They say, "He is becoming one: he does not speak." They say, "He is becoming one: he does not hear." They say, "He is becoming one: he does not think." They say, "He is becoming one: he does not touch." They say, "He is becoming one: he does not know." The top of his heart lights up, and by its light the self departs, either through the eye, or through the head, or through other parts of the body. As he goes, the breath follows; as the breath goes, the senses (*prāṇa*) follow. He becomes a being of consciousness; he follows consciousness. His knowledge and action take hold of him, as does his former experience.
3. 'As a caterpillar, reaching the end of a blade of grass and taking the next step, draws itself together, so the self, dropping the body, letting go of ignorance and taking the next step, draws itself together.
4. 'As a weaver, unpicking a pattern from her weaving, fashions another, newer and more beautiful shape, so the self, dropping the body and letting go of ignorance, creates another, newer and more beautiful shape, either of the ancestors, or of the *gandharvas*, or of the gods, or of Prajāpati, or of Brahmā, or of some other beings.
5. 'The self, made of knowledge, made of mind, made of breath, made of sight, made of hearing, made of earth, made of water, made of air, made of space, made of light (*tejas*), made of darkness (*atejas*), made of desire, made of non-desire, made of anger, made of non-anger, made of right (*dharma*), made of wrong (*adharma*), made of everything, is *brahman*. It is "made of this, made of

that". As one acts, as one behaves, so does one become. The doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. By virtuous action one becomes virtuous, by evil action evil. They say, "As one desires, so does one become, for the person is made of desire." As he desires, so does his will become; as his will is, so is the action he does; as is the action he does, so is what he gets back.

6. There is a verse about it:

He, with his action, is attached
To that same mark to which his
mind is bound.

When he reaches the end
Of the action he did here,
He comes back from that world
To this one, to act again.

'That is about the one who desires. The one who does not desire, who is without desire, free from desire, whose desires are fulfilled, with the self as his desire, the breaths do not leave him. Being *brahman* he goes to *brahman*.

7. There is a verse about it:

When all the desires that dwell
In one's heart are let go,
Mortal becomes immortal:
One reaches *brahman* here.

'As the slough of a snake lies dead, abandoned, on an ant-hill, so the body lies. But the bodiless immortal breath is *brahman*, light (*tejas*).'

'Blessed one, I give you a thousand cows,' said Janaka of Videha.

8. There are these verses about it:

I have touched, I have found
The narrow, long and ancient way.
By it the wise, the knowers of *brahman*,
Go up to a heavenly world, freed from this.

9. On it, they say, are white and blue,
Yellow, green and red.
The way was found by *brahman*: by it goes
The knower of *brahman*, the doer of
good, the radiant.

10. They who worship ignorance
Enter blind darkness:

They who delight in knowledge
Enter darkness, as it were, yet deeper.

11. Those worlds, covered with blind darkness,
Are 'Joyless' by name.
People who are unknowing, unaware,
Go to them on departing.

12. But if a person knows the self
'I am this!'
Wanting what, for desire of what,
Would he burn up his body?

13. Whoever has found and woken up to the self
That has entered this dangerous, inaccessible place,
He is the 'All-Creator', for he is the maker of
everything:
His is the world — indeed, he is the world.

14. While we are here, we know this —
If not, ignorance, great destruction!
Those who know it become immortal:
The rest go to sorrow again.

15. When one sees it straight,
The self, the god,
'Lord of past and future,
One does not shrink from it.

16. The one before whom
The year revolves with its days
The gods worship
As the light of lights, immortal life.

17. The one in whom the five times five peoples
And space too are established
I honour as the self.
Knowing *brahman*, the immortal, I
am immortal.

18. Those who know the breath of the breath,
The eye of the eye, the ear of the ear,
The mind of the mind have discovered
The ancient supreme *brahman*.

19. It is to be seen only by mind:
There are no differences in it.
Whoever sees differences in it
Gets death after death.

20. It is to be seen as one,
Immeasurable, steadfast.

The self is dustless, beyond space,
Unborn, great, steadfast.

21. Knowing it, a wise Brāhmaṇa
Should cultivate wisdom.
He should not think on many words,
For that is mere weariness of speech.

22. 'It is the great, unborn self among the breaths that consists of knowledge. It lies in the space that is within the heart, controller of all, ruler of all, overlord of all. It does not become bigger by good actions, or smaller by bad ones. It is the lord of all, the overlord of beings, the protector of beings. It is the dam separating these worlds so that they do not run together. Brāhmaṇas try to find it through study of the Vedas, through sacrifice, through giving, through asceticism, through fasting; knowing it one becomes a 'silent one' (*muni*). Desiring it as their world, renouncers wander. Knowing it, the ancients did not desire offspring, for they thought, "What is offspring to us, when the self is our world?" Leaving behind desires for sons, desires for wealth and desires for worlds, they lived on alms. For desire for sons is desire for wealth, and desire for wealth is desire for worlds: both are merely desires. The self (*ātman*) is "not this, not this". Unseizable, it is not seized; indestructible, it is not destroyed; without clinging, it is not clung to; unbound, it does not suffer, does not come to harm. It is not overcome by the thoughts "Here I did wrong, here I did right": it overcomes both, and what has been done or not done does not burn it.

23. 'About this, the hymn says:

This eternal greatness of the Brāhmaṇa
By works neither increases nor grows less.
One should know its place: knowing it,
One is not smeared by evil works.

'So knowing this, and becoming calm, self-controlled, quiet, patient and concentrated, he sees the self (*ātman*) in himself, sees the self as all. Evil does not overcome him: he overcomes all evil. Evil does not burn him: he burns all evil. Without evil, without dust, free from doubt, he becomes a Brāhmaṇa. This is the world of Brahmā, your majesty: you have attained it,' said Yājñavalkya.

'Blessed one, I give you the Videhas, and myself to be your slave.'

24. This is the great unborn self, eater of food, giver of wealth. The one who knows this finds wealth.

25. This is the great unborn self (*ātman*), unageing, undying, immortal, fearless, *brahman*. *Brahman* is fearless: the one who knows this becomes fearless *brahman*.

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माण्डूक्य उपनिषद्

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad

1. The syllable (*akṣara*) OM is all this. To explain further: what is called past, present and future is all just OM. Whatever else there is, beyond the three times, that too is all just OM.

2. All this is *brahman*. The self (*ātman*) is *brahman*. The self has four feet.

3. The first foot is Vaiśvānara, with waking as its state, with consciousness turned outwards, with seven limbs, with nineteen mouths, eating coarse food.

4. The second foot is Taijasa, with dream as its state, with consciousness turned inwards, with seven limbs, with nineteen mouths, eating choice food.

5. When, sleeping, one desires no desire and dreams no dream, that is deep sleep. The third foot is Prājña, with deep sleep as its state, become one, a sheer mass of consciousness, made of bliss, eating bliss, with mind as its mouth.

6. It is the lord of all: it is the knower of all: it is the inner: it is the source (*yoni*) of all, for it is the arising and passing away of beings.

7. Not with consciousness turned inward, not with consciousness turned outward, not with consciousness turned both ways, not a mass of consciousness, not conscious, not unconscious folk consider the fourth to be unseen, inviolable, unseizable, signless, unthinkable, unnameable, its essence resting in the one self, the stilling of proliferation, peaceful, gracious (*śiva*),

without duality (*advaita*). That is the self (*ātman*): so it should be understood.

8. In terms of syllables, the self (*ātman*) is OM̐. In terms of elements, the feet are the elements and the elements are the feet: 'a', 'u', 'm'.

9. Vaiśvānara, whose state is waking, is the 'a', the first element from āp- ('to attain'), or from its being the first of all (*ādimattva*): for the one who knows this attains all desires and becomes the first (*ādi*).

10. Taijasa, whose state is dream, is the 'u', the second element from *utkarṣa* (rising up), or from its being both (*ubhaya*): for the one who knows this raises up a lineage of knowledge and becomes equal, and there comes to be no one in his family who does not know *brahman*.

11. Prājña, whose state is deep sleep, is the 'm', the third element from *mā-* ('to measure out', 'to create'), or from *api* ('to merge into', 'to dissolve'): for the one who knows this creates all this and becomes its dissolution.

12. The fourth, without an element, is inviolable, the stilling of proliferation, gracious, without duality. So OM̐ is the self (*ātman*). The one who knows this by self enters the self (*ātman*): the one who knows this.

OM̐. *Gods, may we hear good fortune with our ears!*
You worthy of sacrifice,
may we see good fortune with our eyes!
Having pleased you with bodies strong of limb,
May we attain, lifelong, what is ordained by the gods!
May Indra, of great swiftness,
May Pūṣan, the all-knowing,
May Tārṣya Ariṣṭanemi,
May Bṛhaspati ordain well-being for us!

OM̐. *Peace, peace, peace.*



All selections are from:

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 London and New York: Penguin Classics, 2003.