

SUMMARY

108 UPANISHADS



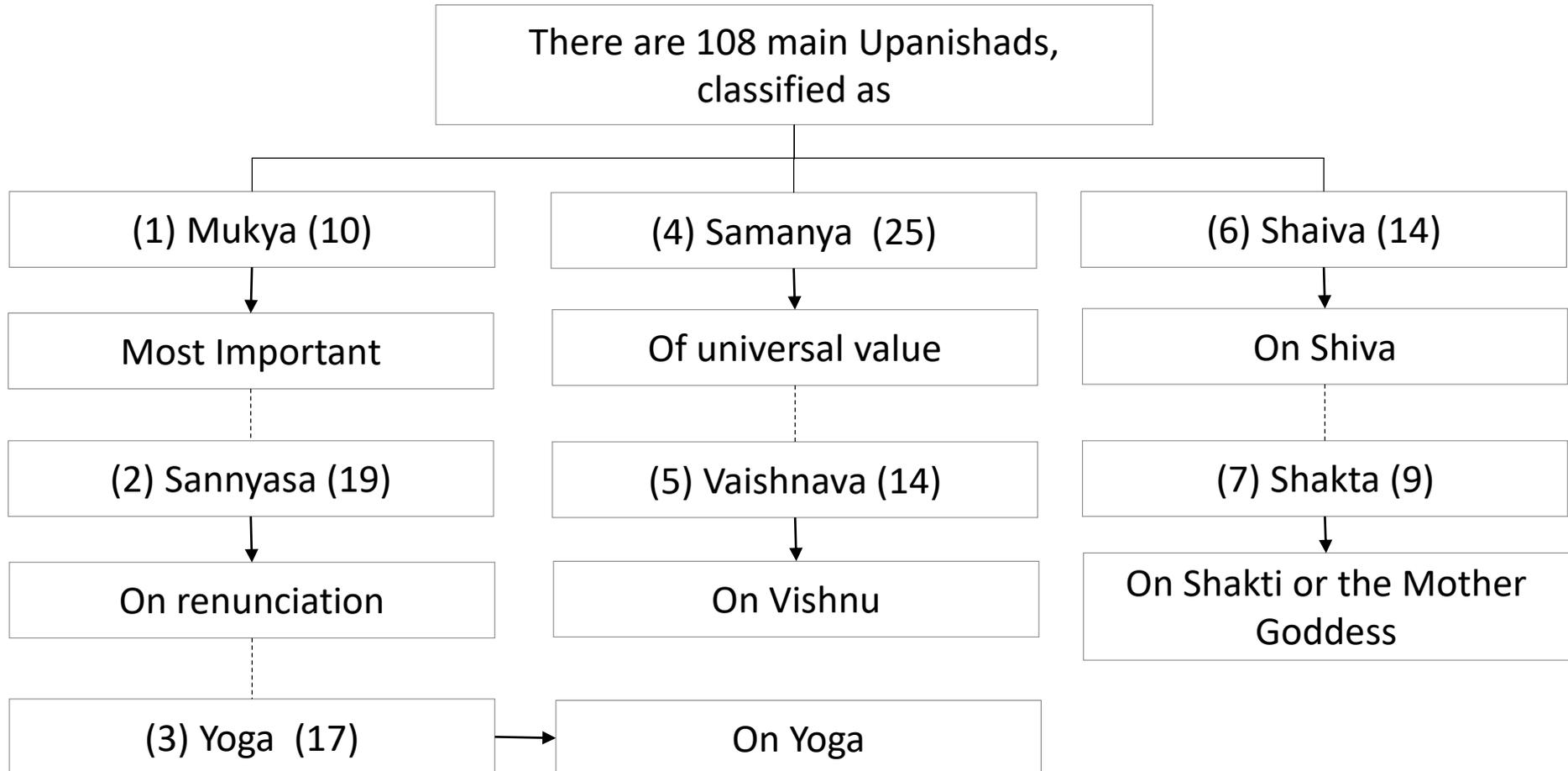
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INTRODUCTION

- Not less important or vast than the Puranas or Itihasas, the Upanishads have a greater wealth of philosophical teachings compared to the stories and are individually shorter, because they are appendixes to the four Vedic samhitas ("collections" of hymns). Together with the Bhagavad gita and the Vedanta sutra they constitute the most fundamental texts on Hinduism.



Rig Veda	Suklya Yajur Veda	Krishna Yajur Veda	Sama Veda	Atharva Veda
1. Mukhya Upanishad (10)				
Aitareya Upanishad (1)	Isavasya Upanishad (4)	Katha Upanishad (6)	Chandogya Upanishad (2)	Prasna Upanishad (8)
	Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (5)	Taittiriya Upanishad (7)	Kena Upanishad (3)	Mundaka Upanishad (9)
				Mandukya Upanishad (10)
2. Sannyasa Upanishad (19)				
	Yajnavalkya Upanishad (16)	Teji Bindu Upanishad (22)	Nirvana Upanishad (11)	Parivrata (Narada Parivrajaka) Upanishad (27)
	Satyayani Upanishad (17)	Avadhuta Upanishad (23)	Maitreya or Maitrayaniya Upanishad (12)	Paramahamsa Parivajaka Upanishad (28)
	Jabala (Yajur) Upanishad (18)	Katha Rudra Upanishad (24)	Sannyasa Upanishad (13)	Para Brahma Upanishad (29)
	Paramahamsa Upanishad (19)	Varaha Upanishad (25)	Kundika Upanishad (14)	
	Bhikshaka (or Bhikshuka) Upanishad (20)	Brahma Upanishad (26)	Aruneya Upanishad (15)	
	Turiyatita Upanishad (21)			

Rig Veda	Suklya Yajur Veda	Krishna Yajur Veda	Sama Veda	Atharva Veda
3. Yoga Upanishad (17)				
Nada Bindu Upanishad (30)	Hamsa Upanishad (33)	Amrita bindu Upanishad (36)	Yoga Chudamani Upanishad (31)	Sandilya Upanishad (44)
	Trishika or Trishiki Brahmana Upanishad (34)	Amrita Nada Upanishad (37)	Darshana Upanishad (32)	Pashupata Upanishad (45)
	Mandala Brahmana Upanishad (35)	Kshurika Upanishad (38)		Mahavakya Upanishad (46)
		Dhyana bindu Upanishad (39)		
		Brahma Vidya Upanishad (40)		
		Yoga Tattva Upanishad (41)		
		Yoga Sikha Upanishad (42)		
		Yoga Kundali Upanishad (43)		

Rig Veda	Suklya Yajur Veda	Krishna Yajur Veda	Sama Veda	Atharva Veda
4. Samanya Upanishads (25)				
Kausitaki Upanishad (47)	Subala Upanishad (54)	Svetasvatara Upanishad (60)	Maitreyani or Maitreyi Upanishad (50)	Atma Upanishad (70)
Atma bodha Upanishad (48)	Mantrika or Chulika Upanishad (55)	Garbha Upanishad (61)	Vajra suci Upanishad (51)	Surya Upanishad (71)
Mugdala Upanishad (49)	Niralamba Upanishad (56)	Narayana Upanishad (62)	Maha or Mahata Upanishad (52)	
	Paingala Upanishad (57)	Sarvasara Upanishad (63)	Savitri Upanishad (53)	
	Adhyatma Upanishad (58)	Suka rahasya Upanishad (64)		
	Muktika Upanishad (59)	Skanda (Tripada vibhuti) Upanishad (65)		
		Sariraka Upanishad (66)		
		Ekakshara Upanishad (67)		
		Akshi Upanishad(68)		
		Pranagni hotra Upanishad (69)		

Rig Veda	Suklya Yajur Veda	Krishna Yajur Veda	Sama Veda	Atharva Veda
5. Vaishnava Upanishads (14)				
	Vasudeva Upanishad (72)	Kali santarana Upanishad (76)		Nrisimha tapani Upanishad (77)
	Avyakta Upanishad (73)			Mahanarayana Upanishad (78)
	Advaya taraka Upanishad (74)			Rama rahasya Upanishad (79)
	Tarasara Upanishad (75)			Rama tapani Upanishad (80)
				Gopala tapani Upanishad (81)
				Krishna Upanishad (82)
				Hayagriva Upanishad (83)
				Dattatreya Upanishad (84)
				Garuda Upanishad (85)

Rig Veda	Suklya Yajur Veda	Krishna Yajur Veda	Sama Veda	Atharva Veda
6. Shaiva Upanishads (14)				
Akshamalika Upanishad (86)		Pancha brahma Upanishad (89)	Jabala (Sama) Upanishad (87)	Atharva sira Upanishad (94)
		Kaivalya Upanishad (90)	Rudraksha jabala Upanishad (88)	Atharva sikha Upanishad (95)
		Kalagni rudra Upanishad (91)		Brihajjabala Upanishad (96)
		Dakshinamurti Upanishad (92)		Sarabha Upanishad (97)
		Rudra hridaya Upanishad (93)		Bhasma (or Bhasma jabala) Upanishad (98)
				Ganapati Upanishad (99)
7. Shakta Upanishads (9)				
Tripura sundari Upanishad (100)		Sarasvati rahasya Upanishad (103)		Sita Upanishad (104)
Saubhagyalakshmi Upanishad (101)				Annapurna Upanishad (105)
Bahuricha Upanishad (102)				Tripura tapani Upanishad (106)
				Devi Upanishad (107)
				Bhavana Upanishad (108)

Other less famous Upanishads are listed here in alphabetical order:

Achamana Upanishad (109)	Chakra Upanishad (121)	Heramba Upanishad (133)	Krishna uttaratapani Upanishad (145)
Advaita Achamana Upanishad (110)	Chakshu Upanishad (122)	Kalaghni Upanishad (134)	Langula Upanishad (146)
Aranya Upanishad (111)	Chaturveda Upanishad (123)	Kalika Upanishad (135)	Laghu jabala Upanishad (147)
Aruni Upanishad (112)	Chiti Upanishad (124)	Kalimedha adikshita Upanishad (136)	Linga Upanishad (148)
Arsheya Upanishad (113)	Dasasloki Upanishad (125)	Kamalaka Upanishad (137)	Maha chakra varana Upanishad (149)
Ashrama Upanishad (114)	Dvaya Upanishad (126)	Kama raja kilitoddhara Upanishad (138)	Mahavajya vivaraha Upanishad (150)
Atmapuja Upanishad (115)	Gayatri Upanishad (127)	Kathasruti Upanishad (139)	Mantra Upanishad (151)
Baskalamantra Upanishad (116)	Gayatri rahasya Upanishad (128)	Kanthasruti Upanishad (140)	Mathamnaya Upanishad (152)
Batuka Upanishad (117)	Gopichandana Upanishad (129)	Kathasika Upanishad (141)	Mrityulangala Upanishad (153)
Bilva Upanishad (118)	Goraksha Upanishad (130)	Kathaka siksha Upanishad (142)	Narada parivrajaka Upanishad (154)
Brahma bindu Upanishad (119)	Guhyakali Upanishad (131)	Katyayani Upanishad (143)	Nilarudra Upanishad (155)
Brahma jijnasa Upanishad (120)	Guhya shodanyasa Upanishad (132)	Kaula Upanishad (144)	Nirukta Upanishad (156)

Parayana Upanishad (157)	Satachakra Upanishad (170)	Svetamritika Upanishad (183)
Panchabrahma Upanishad (158)	Srikrishna purushottama siddhanta Upanishad (171)	Tripad vibhuti mahanarayana Upanishad (184)
Parabrahma Upanishad (159)	Shiva Upanishad (172)	Tulasi Upanishad (185)
Parama Upanishad (160)	Sodha Upanishad (173)	Turiya Upanishad (186)
Pitambara Upanishad (161)	Srividyanmaya Upanishad (174)	Urdhvapundra Upanishad (187)
Pinda Upanishad (162)	Srividyatataka Upanishad (175)	Vanadurga Upanishad (188)
Pranava Upanishad (163)	Syama Upanishad (176)	Vastu sutra Upanishad (189)
Rama Upanishad (164)	Siddhanta Upanishad (177)	Visrama Upanishad (190)
Rama Krishna Upanishad (165)	Siddhanta sara Upanishad (178)	Vridha jabala Upanishad (191)
Rudra Upanishad (166)	Siddhanta sikha Upanishad (179)	Yajnopavita Upanishad (192)
Sadananda Upanishad (167)	Sumukhi Upanishad (180)	Yogaraja Upanishad (193)
Saunaka Upanishad (168)	Suvarnadharma Upanishad (181)	
Shaktayana Upanishad (169)	Svasamedhya Upanishad (182)	

- Some also mention a Radhika Upanishad, a Chaitanyopanishad and even one Allahopanishad (that is supposed to speak about Allah), but these are not in the traditional lists. Bhagavad gita, too, is sometimes considered one of the Upanishads because of its rich philosophical content; in this perspective it is called Gitopanishad. Due to obvious space limitations we will just give a summary of the most important and famous Upanishads and quote some of their passages.

1. Aitareya Upanishad

- It is part of the *Aitareya Aranyaka* in the *Rig Veda* and is constituted by 3 chapters (beginning with chapter 4 of the second *Aranyaka*), and it explains the inner or symbolic meaning of the sacrifice rituals described in the previous chapters of the *Aranyaka*. Particularly famous is the *maha vakya* ("great aphorism") *prajnanam brahma* (3.3), "Brahman is perfect knowledge", considered the essence of the *Rig Veda*.

Here are other extracts :

- "Om! May my words be in accordance with my thoughts, and may my thoughts follow my words. O Resplendent, reveal yourself to me. May both (thoughts and words) bring the *Veda* (knowledge) to me, and may what I have heard remain (in my memory). I will join day and night in this study, and I will say what is true, verbally and mentally. May the Brahman protect me, may it protect he who speaks." (invocation)
- "In the beginning there was only Brahman. The Brahman thought, 'I will create the worlds', and created *ambhas* (the "higher" or the subtle waters, also known as the ocean Karana "of the causes"), *marici* (the space), *mara* ("what is mortal", or the worlds that are subject to the cyclic destruction) and *apah* (the "lower" waters, or the gross material element of water, that is common to the bodies of all species of life)." (1.1.1.2)

- From the waters of the causal ocean, the Brahman created an egg - the Virat Purusha or universal form (also called *brahmānda*, "the egg of Brahman"). The egg opened in the middle like a mouth, and Sound emerged, then from Sound Fire emerged and so on, one by one from the causal elements the material elements manifested, including the mind and the various components of the universe. The Devas (the archetypes of the powers that constitute the universe) chose the human form to express their activities, and this first primeval form of the universal Brahman was called Indra. In a similar way the human beings are born - as we find in the explanation by Vamadeva Rishi in hymn 4.28 of *Rig veda* ("In the womb of my mother I contemplated all the generations of these Gods. Surrounded by a hundred iron fortresses, I soared quickly into the sky, as a Falcon, leaving the demons behind, and while surpassing the winds my strength increased...").
- This Brahman manifested in the universe takes the form of Prajapati ("the Lord of the creatures"), of the Visvedeva ("all the Devas of the universe"), of the human beings and all living beings, as conscious and sentient beings. Therefore the conscious omnipresent Spirit is the beginning, the middle and the end of all life; through this awareness we can attain immortality.

2. Chandogya Upanishad

- It is the longest of the *Upanishads*, and consists of 8 chapters attached to the first part of the *Chandogya Brahmana* in the *Sama Veda*, describing ritual sacrifices. It contains (6.8.7) the *maha vakya* considered the essence of *Sama Veda*: *tat tvam asi*, "you are That (Brahman)".
- It also narrates the famous story of Satyakama Jabala, a boy son of a maidservant, who was recognized as *brahmana* due to the sense of truthfulness he had demonstrated. Other *Upanishads* contain the teachings of Satyakama Jabala, but here (4.4.1) we find the story of how he entered the *gurukula* of Haridrumata Gautama. Within the text we also find many explanations on Vedic symbolism, especially in regard to the fire sacrifice and the *mantras* in relation to the life energy in the human body and in the senses, and in relation to the Sun.
- "If someone offers the sacrifice to the fire without knowing these (things), it is as if he was removing the blazing embers and pouring the clarified butter into the ashes... If someone knows these (things) even the act of offering one's food leftovers to a *chandala* becomes an offering to Vaisvanara Atman (the sacred fire of the Self)." (5.24.1, 4)

- "One must meditate on the syllable Om, that gives origin to the *Udgita* (the songs of the *Sama Veda*). The essence of all bodies is the earth, the essence of earth is water, the essence of water is vegetation, the essence of vegetation is the human being, the essence of the human being is speech, the essence of word is *mantra (rik)*, the essence of *rik* is *Sama*." (1.1.1)
- Then the text illustrates meditation on sound and *prana* and their identity with the Sun, that is *svara* and *pratyasvara* ("coming and going", i.e. cyclic) and states that the realization of the Pranava Omkara, its subtle manifestation, awards immortality.
- Then it explains the symbolic meaning of syllables in vedic definitions, the power of *prana* and sound, and the subtle element known as *akasha* ("etheric space") that supports both.
- The 4th chapter repeats the explanation of creation starting from Brahman (Being), that from One wanted to become many. Thus he created fire, then from fire water was created and from water the nutritious substances, and then these 3 divine essences manifested all the bodies of the beings, when Brahman entered into them, in the form of Jiva Atman.
- What is red is fire (passion), what is white is water (goodness or purification) and what is black is food (earth, ignorance), both in fire and in the sun and in the qualities of material nature in general.

- The text also offers the conversation between Svetaketu and his father Uddalaka Aruni, rich with teachings and practical examples to understand the nature of Brahman-Atman. We also find the mystic etymology of the word *satyam*, "truthfulness" or "truth": *sa* indicates what is eternal, *ti* indicates what is temporary, and *ayam* is the connection between the two.
- Then the 8th chapter teaches that only *brahmacharya* ("behaving as Brahman") enables one to realize Brahman, and that the difference between Devas and Asuras is that Asuras identify with the material body and consider it the true self.

3. Kena Upanishad

- It takes its name from the first word in the first verse, *keneshitam*, "by whom it is desired", with reference to the activity of awareness. The text is short and divided into 4 parts, of which 2 are in verse (describing the *nirguna* Brahman, or Brahman "without attributes") and 2 in prose (describing the *saguna* Brahman, or Brahman "with attributes").

Here are some extracts:

- "By whom is directed (by desire or will) the movement of the mind (towards the object of contemplation)? Who directs the life force that precedes each action (towards duty)? By whom the act of speaking is desired, when a person is expressing himself? Who is the resplendent being that directs (the activities of) eyes and ears? This (Atman/ Brahman) is the ear's ear, the mind's mind, the word of speech, life's life, and the eye's eye, therefore those who are intelligent abandon (the identification with the gross body) and thus become immortal... What man does not comprehend by the mind, but by which the mind is pervaded, know that this is Brahman, and not what people worship as an object." (1.1, 2, 6)
- "I do not think, 'I know Brahman well'. I think, 'It's not that I do not know it - I know it and I do not know it at the same time.' One who understand this (statement) knows (Brahman)... It is really known when it is known internally in each of the states of awareness, because in this way one attains immortality." (2.2, 4)

- "Indeed it was Brahman who obtained victory for the Devas, and in that victory of Brahman, the Devas rejoiced... And he asked, 'Who are you?' and he answered, 'I am known as the Fire, as Jataveda.'" (3.1, 4).
- The manifestation "with attributes" of Brahman is therefore initially perceived as Fire (Agni, from whom Knowledge is born), and as Indra (the masculine active principle called Purusha). Meditation (*dhyana*), austerity (*pratyahara*), rituals (*yajna* and *sadhana*) are its feet, knowledge (*veda*) is in all its limbs and truthfulness (*satyam*) is its abode.

4. Isa Upanishad

- Also known as *Isavasya Upanishad* from the first word in the text: *isavasyam idam sarvam*, "all this belongs to God".
- The preliminary invocation is very famous and is often chanted or sung in *bhajans*: *om purnam adah purnam idam, purnat purnam udacyate, purnasya purnam adayah, purnam evavasishyate*, "From this (Brahman) who is eternally complete (in itself), all complete (things) emanate, and even after that, what was complete remains complete."
- The text is composed by 18 verses only, each of them a true masterpiece deserving to be quoted in full.

Here are some extracts:

- "One who properly performs his duties (*karmani*) can wish to live for hundreds of years, because he always remains free from the consequences of actions. The dark and dull dimensions are called asuric and constitute the destination for those who kill the Atman. Although (the Atman) is immovable, it is faster than the mind and cannot be grasped by the senses, yet it sustains all activities. It moves and does not move, it is very far and very near, it is inside everything and outside everything. One who sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings is free from hatred, due to this realization."
(1-7)

- "The face of Truth is hidden by a golden disc; I pray you, o Lord, remove it so that I will be able to contemplate you. May my life energy merge with the immortal Air, and this body be turned to ashes. O Lord, remember everything that I have done (in this lifetime)." (15-16)

5. Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad

- It begins with the explanation of the meaning of the Vedic sacrifice, and states that Vac (the creative word, the Logos) is the origin of the universe. Then it explains Dharma (the ethical law), the four *varnas* (social categories) and the nature of *prana* (life energy). The second *adhyaya* continues by speaking of the nature of Brahman and Atman, the third speaks of the process of death and the destination of the living being after death, and the nature of Antaryami (the Supreme Soul in every being's heart). Here (1.3.28) we find the famous verse *asato ma sad gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya, mrityor ma amritam gamaya*, "from what is temporary lead me to what is eternal, from the darkness lead me to the light, from death lead me to eternal life." This quote constitutes the refrain (*adhyaroha*) of the *stutis* called *Pavamana*.
- At verse 1.4.10 we find the famous *maha vakya* considered the essence of the *Yajur Veda*: *aham brahmasmi*, "I am Brahman".
- Next the text defines the food produced by meditation and sacrifices as composed of 7 parts: 2 are destined to the Devas (through the rituals of the full moon and the black moon), 1 is destined to the animals (through their mother's milk), and 3 are destined to oneself (the mind, senses and life energy). The Devas are Speech, the Pitris are the Mind and the human beings are the Life Energy; Speech is the Mother, the Mind is the Father, and the Life Energy is the Son. To these, there is a correspondence of Earth, Fire and Sun; the Moon, the Water and Food.

- Follow (2.1.1 - 2.3.6) the conversation between Gargya (Balaki) and Ajatasatru (the king of Varanasi), the conversation between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi (2.4.1 - 2.6.3, 4.5.1 -), the conversation between Janaka (king of Videha) and various *brahmanas*, such as Yajnavalkya and Gargi (3.1.2 - 4.4.25).
- We also find the description of the three states of awareness, and the explanation of reincarnation and the symbolism of Gayatri mantra. Follows the conversation between Svetaketu and king Pravahana (6.2.1 - 6.2.16). There is also a list of the 10 grains used for fire oblations: rice, barley, sesame, wheat, beans, lentils, white lentils, fava beans, *anu* and *priyangu*; these seeds are crushed, soaked in yogurt, and mixed with honey and clarified butter. There are suggested rituals to have a son of white complexion (and expert in one *Veda* only) or of golden complexion (and expert in two *Vedas*) or of black complexion (and expert in three *Vedas*), or a daughter expert in all scriptures, as well as the rituals to be observed at birth.

6. Katha Upanishad

- It consists in 2 parts divided into sections (respectively of 29, 25, 17, 15, 15, 18 verses) for a total of 119 verses, and contains the *katha* or "conversation" between Yamaraja and the young *brahmana* Nachiketa, son of Auddalaki Aruni also known as Vajasravasa.
- Nachiketa's father was performing the Visvajit sacrifice, that consists in distributing in charity everything that we possess; the boy asked his father to whom he would donate him, and irritated, his father told him he was donating him to Yamaraja, the Lord of Death. Nachiketa took this statement very seriously and left for Yamaloka, where he discussed with Yamaraja about many important teachings, and then he returned home with Yamaraja's blessings.
- The opening invocation of this *Upanishad* is a famous *mantra* chanted to propitiate harmony among people: *om saha navavatu saha nau bhunaktu, saha viryam karavavahai, tejasvi navadhitamastu, ma vidvishavahai*, "May (Brahman) protect us together, may we obtain strength together, may what we study give us strength, may we remain free from hostility." Here are some extracts from the text:
- "O Nachiketa, because I know well the Fire that takes to the sky, I will speak about it to you, and you (please) understand, by carefully following my words. That Fire by which one attains heaven, and that sustains the word, it established in a hidden place (*nihitam guhayan*)... The fools live in the midst of ignorance but consider themselves intelligent and enlightened, and they keep going around and around, following complicated paths, just like blind leading the blind." (1.1.14, 2.5)

- "Of this (Atman) many never hear, many do not understand it even when they hear about it, but wonderful are those who speak and who hear about it, and wonderful is one who knows it through the guidance of a realized soul... The Self that is not born and does not die, does not have an origin and does not give origin, it is unborn, eternal, free from decay, and extremely ancient. It is not touched even by the death of the body." (1.2.7, 18)
- "One who has not ceased to perform negative actions, who has not controlled the senses, who does not concentrate the mind, who has not become free from anxiety, cannot achieve the knowledge of the Self." (1.2.24)
- "Know that the Self is the master of the chariot, and the body is the chariot. Know that the intelligence is the chariot driver, and the mind is the bridle." (1.3.3) "Awaken, rise and learn by approaching the best (teachers). The wise describe this path as difficult to walk on, as sharp as a razor's blade." (1.3.14) "He sees Brahman, who understands that Aditi, where all the Devas reside, was born as Hiranyagarbha, manifested by the contact with the elements and residing in the secret place within the heart... The Purusha that lives in the heart is one thumb tall. Knowing that he is the Lord of the past and the future, one does not fear to lose this awareness any more." (2.1.7, 12)
- "Fire burns for the fear of this (Purusha), and so the Sun shines, and Indra, Vayu and Mrityu (death) perform their duties." (2.3.3)

- "When the five senses of perception and the mind attain peace, and intellect stops: that is the highest state... When all the desires that were clinging to the heart fall off, a mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman. When all the knots in the heart are dissolved even in this very lifetime, a mortal becomes immortal: this is the essence of the teachings of all the *Upanishads*." (2.3.10, 14-15)

7. Taittiriya Upanishad

- After an invocation to Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman, Indra, Brihaspati and Vishnu Trivikrama, the first verse addresses Vayu as the direct manifestation of Brahman, Dharma and Satya, asking for his protection. In fact, Vayu or Air is the focus of the teachings in this text, that deals about sound and pronunciation, and the letters composing the *mantras*. The verses 4.1-3 of *Siksha valli* ("section on instructions") contain a ritual prayer to receive all the required blessings for a teacher's progress. Then there is a brief description of the levels of existence, of the composition of the body and the daily duties.
- The second chapter, entitled *Brahmananda valli* ("section of spiritual happiness") briefly speaks about the manifestation of the material elements, the importance of respecting food and the joy that comes from spiritual realization. Here is an extract: "Knowledge (*vijnana*) is the fundamental ingredient of sacrifice (*yajna*) and the performance of one's duties (*karmani*). It is in knowledge that the Devas meditate on Brahman; by knowing it without misunderstandings all the negative reactions are destroyed and one fully enjoys all good things. The Self (Atman) is part of the Ancient and remains in it through knowledge even when it incarnates in a body. The inner Self is constituted by pure happiness (*ananda*)." (2.5.1)

- "To give an idea of such happiness, let us consider a young man, in the prime of his strength, kind, learned, expert, healthy and energetic, who has plenty of wealth: this could be the unit of measure of human happiness. By multiplying it 100 times we obtain the unity of measure of a Gandharva of the lower rank, which multiplied by 100 gives the measure of a Gandharva of higher rank. This measure, when multiplied 100 times, gives the happiness of a Pitar (resident of Pitriloka), and this multiplied by 100 gives the happiness of one who is born on the heavenly planets. A Deva of the lower rank enjoys a happiness 100 times greater, but even this must be multiplied by 100 to get the happiness of a Deva of the higher rank. Indra enjoys happiness 100 times greater than the Devas', but Brihaspati's happiness is 100 times greater than Indra's, the happiness of the Virat is 100 times greater than Brihaspati's, and 100 times greater than this is the happiness of Hiranyagarbha and a follower of the *Vedas* who is free from desires... The wind blows for the fear of this (Purusha) and for fear of him the Sun rises, and Indra, Vayu and Mrityu (death) rush to their work." (2.8.1-5)
- The *Brighu valli* contains the conversation between Brighu Rishi and his father Varuna on Brahman, that is realized through food, *prana*, eyesight, hearing, the mind and the speech. One who wishes to achieve prosperity should never disrespect food, water and fire, or one who asks for help." (3.8.1, 3.10.1)

8. Prasna Upanishad

- It is composed by 6 chapters, each containing one question (*prasna*) asked from Pippalada Rishi by one of his disciples Sukesha, Satyakama, Gargya, Kousalya, Bhargava and Kabandhi. These sons of illustrious families approached the Rishi to obtain knowledge, and in observance of the tradition they brought firewood for the fire sacrifice that would officialize their acceptance in the teacher's school.
- The Rishi asked them to live in his *ashrama* for one year before asking questions, and when the time came, Kabandhi asked the first question: "Whence come those who take birth?"
- "The Prajapati ("Lord of the creatures") created a couple - Anna and Prana (food and life energy) that are the Moon and the Sun, the two halves of the year and the month, night and day. Food has two dimensions: the subtle and the gross. Knowing all this, one can give birth to worthy children."
- The second question was asked by Bhargava: "How many are the Deities that sustain the existence of a creature, and which one is the most important?"
- "Space, air, fire, water, earth, speech, mind, eyesight and hearing, but the most important is the *prana*, the life energy, that incarnates the manifestation of all the Devas."

- The third question was asked by Kousalya: "From where this *prana* is originated, how it enters the body and how it resides within it, how it leaves it, and how it sustains the physical elements?"
- "*Prana* comes from the Atman, just like a shadow is generated by the real object that projects it. Like a king instructing his officers, the Atman directs the secondary manifestations of the *prana* - Apana, Prana, Samana, Vyana and Udana. One who knows the *prana* becomes immortal."
- The fourth question was asked by Gargya: "Which organs sleep and which remain awake? Who perceives the dreams?"
- "The five *pranas* are the fires of the sacrifice and the officiants. Just like the sun rays at sunset merge into the sun disc and again are emanated at sunrise, all the forms of awareness are contained within the mind; therefore when the senses are inert, we say that a person is sleeping. Actually it is the Purusha who is established in the supreme and immutable Self. One who becomes aware of it achieves omniscience."
- The fifth question was asked by Satyakama: "What is obtained by meditating on the *pranava* Omkara?"

- "Trascendence manifested in the *pranava* Omkara is Brahman itself. One who meditates on Om as one syllable only obtains a further human birth. The *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* grant a virtuous rebirth, the *mantras* of the *Yajur* grant birth on the Moon level, while one who meditates on Om as Purusha attains the level of the Sun. The *mantras* of the *Sama* lead to the level of Brahma (Hiranyagarbha)."
- The sixth and last question was asked by Sukesha: "Where is the 16-limbed Purusha?"
- "Within the human body itself. The 16 components of the Purusha are *prana*, faith, space, air, fire, water, earth, organs, mind, food, strength, self-control, *mantras*, rituals, worlds and names of the worlds."

9. Mundaka Upanishad

- It has 6 chapters and contains the teachings of Angira Rishi to Saunaka, regarding the two types of knowledge - the lower type about the material universe, and the higher knowledge about the transcendental Brahman, that cannot be described or perceived by the senses, the mind or intellect.
- "Like a spider expands and withdraws its web, like earth makes the plants grow, and like the body grows hair, similarly the Imperishable produces the universe from itself. Knowledge expands Brahman, and from it the food originates (*mahat tattva*), from food the life *prana* (*hiranyagarbha*) originates, and from this the cosmic mind, then from this the 5 elements, the words, and the immortality that resides in prescribed duties." (1.1.7-8)
- "Fire destroys the 7 existences of one who performs the *Agnihotra* without the proper knowledge and vision, without the correct rituals, without austerity, without offering homage to those who should be respected, without honoring the guests and without worshiping the Deity. On the other hand, when the ritual is performed properly, the 7 tongues of fire - Kali, Karali, Manojava, Sulohita, Sudhumravarna, Sphulingini and Visvaruci - rise to the Sun and nourish it." (1.2.3-5)

- "What is resplendent and subtler than the subtle, that sustains all the worlds and the creatures, the unchangeable Brahman, the living force, is the speech and the mind. It must be penetrated by the arrow of the soul sharpened by meditation: so take the bow that is Om, and by focusing your attention, become One with the target." (2.2.2-4)
- "The supreme and resplendent covering is Brahman, spotless and free from duality, pure, the light or lights, and it is known by those who know the Atman. In that, there is no sun, moon, stars or lightning. Everything radiates of its light." (2.2.10)
- "Two birds have always been companions and have similar names, and live on the same tree. One eats the fruits and enjoys their many tastes, and the other simply watches. On that tree, the individual soul remains entangled and laments his helplessness, but when he turns his eyes towards the other bird, the Lord, he is liberated from sufferings by his glory." (3.1.1)

10. Mandukya Upanishad

- The shortest of all, consists of only 12 verses explaining the passage of the living being through the states of wakefulness (Vaisvanara), dream (Taijasa), deep sleep (Prajna) and in transcendental consciousness (Turiya) in which it is possible to realize the Self. Here we find the *maha vakya* considered as the essence of the *Atharva Veda*: *ayam atma brahma*, "Atman e Brahman are the same".
- The text of this *Upanishad* is often accompanied by the elaboration by Gaudapada entitled *Mandukya karika*.

11. Svetasvatara Upanishad

- It contains 6 short chapters with philosophical explanations on Atman, Brahman, Paramatma, and Prakriti. The text begins with the questions: "What is the cause (of the existence of the universe)? What is Brahman? From where are we coming (before birth)? Why do we live? What is our final destination?" Here are some extracts:
- "Like oil in sesame seeds, like butter in yogurt, like water in subterranean springs, like fire in wood - the Self is perceived in the Self, through truthfulness, austerity and meditation..." (1.15-16)
- "Striving to control one's senses, regulating the activities of the body, one must exhale from the nostrils when the body functions slow down... One must focus the attention, living in a cave or in some other pure place where the ground is level and free from pebbles and the view is pleasing, where there is no wind, dust, fire, humidity or distracting noises. In the practice of yoga, before the manifestation of Brahman there will be the appearance of forms similar to snow, smoke, sun, wind, fire, glow-worms, lightning, crystal and moon." (2.9-11)
- "You are woman, you are man, you are the boy and the girl, you are the old man who slowly walks leaning on the staff. Your face is in all directions." (4.3)

- "Knowing what is the origin and the dissolution of the universe, the source of all virtues that destroys all faults, the master of all qualities, the immortal support of the universe - situated in our self, transcendent and separate from the tree of the *samsara*, from time and space - we want to realize him, the transcendental Lord of the universe, worthy of worship, the supreme Lord of all Lords, the God of the Devas, and the ruler of all rulers... Although he is One, he fulfills the desires of many." (6.6-7, 13)
- Here too (4.6, 7) we find the metaphor of the two birds on the same tree, and the measure of the individual soul as a small fraction of the tip of a hair (5.8), found in *Gita* and in other *Upanishads*.

12. Kausitaki, or Kausitaki Brahmana Upanishad

- The conversation between the king Chitra Gargyayani, the Rishi Kausitaki and his son Svetaketu is about reincarnation, the attainment of the heavenly planets and Brahman. The teachings of Kausitaki are as follows (2.1): *prana* is Brahman, and in order to realize it, one must leave the mental platform of aspirations. Then we find the explanation of the 5 faces of Soma Rudra (the *brahmana*, the king, the falcon, fire and time), a meditation for the protection of one's wife and children, and the ritual to leave one's family.
- The third chapter speaks about king Pratardana who obtained a boon from Indra, the killer of the 3-headed Tvasti, who delivered the Arunmukha ascetics to the wolves, who killed Prahlada's people in the sky, the Paulomas in the atmosphere and the Kalakanjas on earth. The fourth chapter narrates the conversation between Gargya Balaki and Ajatasatru of Kashi regarding Brahman and the effect of meditation on its various aspects.

13. Kaivalya Upanishad

- It consists of 26 verses with the conversation between Asvalayana Rishi and Brahma - about the knowledge of Brahman and how to attain it through faith, devotion, meditation, the knowledge of *Vedanta* ("the purpose of knowledge") and renunciation.
- "He is Brahma, Shiva, Indra, the unchangeable, supreme and radiant, Vishnu, *prana*, time, fire and the moon. He is everything that was and will be, the Eternal. One who knows him transcends death. There is no other way to attain liberation. Seeing the Atman in all beings, and all beings in the Atman, one attains the Supreme Brahman: this is the only way." (8-10)

14. Maitri, Maitrayani or Maitrayaniya Upanishad

- It consists of 7 short *prapathaka* (prose sections); it begins with the conversation between king Brihadratha (who had retired into the forest) and Sakayana Rishi, that illustrates the teachings of Maitreya. The text speaks of the temporary nature of the body, of the 5 *pranas*, of rebirth and the 3 *gunas*.

15. Subala Upanishad

- Divided into 10 "lessons": 1. creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe, 2. the "fourth principle", i.e. Transcendence, the Dahara lotus that is within the heart of the human being, and the components of the body, 3. Narayana contains all universal manifestations, 4. The nature of Paramatma, 5. the Atman in the body, 6. The path upwards (to the heavenly planets), 7. *samadhi*, 8. the material elements, 9. how the elements are consumed at the time of death, 10. the knowledge of Brahman.

16. Jabala Upanishad

- It consists of 14 short prose sections on renunciation, reporting the conversations between Yajnavalkya and Brihaspati (on the *brahma randhra* as Avimukta Kurushetra), Atri Rishi (on Avimukta Shiva residing in the *ajna chakra* Vara-nasi), his *brahmachari* disciples (the Satarudriya hymn), Janaka (on *sannyasa* and fire sacrifice) and again Atri Rishi (it is the level of awareness and not the sacred thread, to determine if one is a *brahmana*, therefore a *sannyasi* does not wear it any more; one may leave his body in a battle, by fasting to death, by drowning, by entering the fire, or by walking until complete exhaustion).

17. Paingala Upanishad

- The text consists in a conversation between Yajnavalkya and his disciple Paingala on the One without seconds, from whom the creation of the universe manifested. It explains how Brahman incarnates as Jiva Atman, speaks about the 5 coverings (*kosha*) of Atman (*annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, jnanamaya* and *anandamaya*), of the 5 states of awareness (wakefulness, dream, deep sleep, unconsciousness and death), the *mahavakyas* (*tat tvam asi, so 'ham, aham brahmasmi*), of the metaphor of the chariot representing the body, of the last stage of *sannyasa*, of the benefits accrued from the study of the *Upanishads*, and on the meditation on Vishnu's omnipresence.

18. Vajrasucika Upanishad

- The title ("diamond needle") refers to piercing ignorance, especially about the foolish prejudice on how to identify a *brahmana*. The position of *brahmana* is not due to the material body, that is made of the same elements in all human beings, or the color of the skin, or the family of origin - Rishyasringa was born from a female deer, Kausika from a reed, Jambuka from a jackal, Valmiki from an anthill, Vyasa from a girl of a fishermen tribe, Vasistha from the Apsara Urvasi and Agastya from a pot.
- Not even learning or charity are a guarantee for the qualification of a *brahmana*: only the direct realization of Brahman, demonstrated by overcoming material identification and attachments, by truthfulness and other divine qualities.

19. Kali santarana Upanishad

- This very short text reports Narada's question to Brahma: "How can one overcome the age of Kali?" and his answer: "Simply by chanting the name of Narayana: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. The recitation of these 16 names can destroy all the inauspicious effects of Kali yuga: there is no better method in all the *Vedas*. They are like the sun that shines brightly after the clouds have dissolved. There are no precise rules to practice this method. Anyone who chants these names, in a pure or impure state, becomes immersed in the consciousness of the Brahman and is purified from all faulty or impure action, transcending all temporary duties and attaining liberation."

20. Krishna Upanishad

- This very short prose text narrates how the Rishis who met Rama wished they could take birth as *gopis* during the *avatara* of Krishna in Gokula. All the defects (such as greed, anger etc) appeared as *Asuras*, while the *Upanishads* and the other vedic texts appeared as *gopis* (cowherd girls), and the divine qualities appeared as companions of the Lord, both movable and immovable.

21. Gopala tapani Upanishad

- In the first chapter (consisting of 54 verses) Brahma speaks about Krishna, who is also called Govinda and Gopijanavallabha, and explains the *mantra Svaha*, the *Kama Gayatri* and the *Ananga Gayatri*. He describes Krishna as a cowherd boy with a black complexion similar to a monsoon cloud, who dressed in lightning yellow clothes and is decorated by a garland of forest flowers. He is standing on a red lotus flower under a desire tree, surrounded by cowherd girls and boys, and *surabhi* cows. Brahma also explains how the *Kama Gayatri* is the origin of creation, and offers his prayers to Krishna.
- In the second chapter (118 verses) we find the conversation between Krishna and the *gopis* led by Gandharvi (Radha) and the *gopis'* visit to the *ashrama* of Durvasa Rishi, and the ensuing conversation. The text ends with a homage to all the Devas.

22. Narada parivrajaka Upanishad

- The conversation between Narada and Saunaka at Naimisharanya deals with the *40 samskaras*, *4 ashramas*, 10 dharmic virtues and especially with the rigid rules of *sannyasa*.
- For example, a *sannyasi* can never insult anyone (with attitudes or words or actions) but must tolerate all insults, he cannot tell lies, he can only possess very few personal items (a loincloth, a shawl obtained by stitching some rags together, a container for water and a staff that symbolizes his state) and nothing else. He must always stay alone (he cannot live in a city, a village, an *ashrama* or even with one companion), he must travel alone without attracting attention, and he must completely reject the identification with the body and the care and pleasures of the body - which he must consider as a corpse.
- This includes the prohibition of using oils and ointments, of shaving and cutting and combing hair, as well as the prohibition of using ornaments, nice clothing etc. He must not converse with anyone, must be insensitive to physical attraction, must always keep his eyes downcast, not looking further than 4 meters (16 cubits) in front of himself. Besides, he must only eat what he receives in charity by begging alms once a day, after lunch time, from a house of well-behaved people.

- He must eat while standing or walking, without attention for the taste of what he consumes. He must avoid all entertainment (dance, theater etc), gambling, the company of women or of people he used to know in the past, attractive foods, love and hatred, intoxicating substances, discussions about women, long journeys, frequent fasting, pilgrimages, gifts of all kinds (except the food that is strictly necessary) and attachment to academic scholarship. He stops wearing the sacred thread and cuts off his *sikha* (the tuft of hair on the back of the head, that is characteristic of *brahmanas*), he cannot have a following of disciples, he cannot attend ceremonies or functions of any kind, or belong to any organization or philosophical/ religious school.
- He must avoid honors and invitations, because these consume the benefits of his austerities. He must not sleep on a bed, wear white clothes, sleep during the day or travel in a coach. He must never answer those who ask about his name, family or home, birthplace, age, or the vows he observes. He cannot practice medicine or distribute blessings, correct the behavior of other people, invite others, ask for gifts, or visit a village for more than one day (except during the rainy season), travel by night or at midday or at dusk, swim across a river, climb on a tree (to pick the fruits), or purchase or sell anything.
- Those who want to engage in the study of Transcendence may establish themselves in some isolated place, preferably not accessible to the general people, and live under a tree or in some abandoned house, and subsist on fruits, roots, leaves and water.