

Upanishads: An Incomplete Revelation



"Some have never heard of the Self, some have heard but cannot find Him. Who finds Him is a world's wonder, who expounds Him is a world's wonder, who inherits Him from his Master is a world's wonder."

— Katha-Upanishad

"In the beginning all things were Self, in the shape of personality. He looked round, saw nothing but Him-self. The first thing he said was, 'It is I.' Hence 'I' be- came His name. Therefore even now if you ask a man who he is, he first says, 'It is I', and gives what other name he has. He is the eldest of all. Because he destroyed all evil, he is called the first Person. He who knows this, destroys all evil, takes the first rank.

He became afraid; loneliness creates fear. He thought: 'As there is nothing but myself, why should I be afraid?' Then his fear passed away; there was no-thing to fear, fear comes when there is a second."

— Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad

"He is Spirit; without antecedent, without precedent, without inside, without outside; omnipresent, omniscient. Self is Spirit. That is revelation."

— Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad



What is the essence of the teachings of the Upanishads?

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* says: "Invisible, He sees; inaudible, He hears; unthinkable, He thinks; unknowable, He knows. None other can see, hear, think, know. He is your own Self, the immortal; the controller; nothing else matters."

The teacher refers here to our fundamental sense of self that is hidden beyond our psychosomatic existence. He is not speaking about great enlightenment, nirvana, becoming one with the cosmos, or anything equally exciting – he is pointing to something simple, so simple that it is too simple for most people to even care about. He is pointing to our fundamental subjectivity before it has become entangled in the world of appearances and forgotten itself.

The *Katha Upanishad* says: "God made sense turn outward, man therefore looks outward, not into himself. Now and again a daring soul, desiring immortality, has looked back and found himself."

The key here is to look back and find oneself. Seekers want to find the 'great self', emptiness, universal consciousness, god, or some other breathtaking reality, but they miss what is most important. They miss what is most sacred. They miss looking back at who they are. They miss their very me. It is the greatest tragedy of this world that no one looks for their me; no one – including most so-called seekers – cares about themselves. Seekers are like beggars, empty inside, searching for something that can fill this emptiness. They want to become 'everything', but they are not even themselves. A devotion that is devoid of devotion to me is no more than pitiful servitude to an external power, while giving up that greatest power which lies at the root of our very sense of self – such as it says in the *Katha Upanishad* "That boundless Power, source of every power, manifesting itself as life, entering every heart, living there among the elements, that is Self."

So the essence of the *Upanishads* is to turn one's attention back to oneself, and become one with pure subjectivity. This is certain. For the first time in human history, a message so simple and yet so revolutionary was put forth. It is quite surprising that enough people at that time were mature enough to appreciate it and that it did not fall on deaf ears. It appears that many evolved souls must have been living in the land that became India in that mysterious era, because the seers of the *Upanishads* were able to impress their message so profoundly on the collective consciousness of seekers.

But as we all know, awakening is not that simple. Turning one's attention back does not make one enlightened in an instant. The *Upanishads* do not explain the process of awakening clearly, but rather point us in the right direction. Some *Upanishads* give vague instructions that are similar to the teaching of yoga, which relies on opening different energy channels, rather than awakening through a direct insight into one's pure nature – and these may have been later additions which were based on yogic influences. As an



example, in the *Katha Upanishad*, it is written, "The heart has a hundred and one arteries; one of these—Sushumna—goes up into the head. He who climbs through it attains immortality; others drive him into the vortex." This is reminiscent of the kundalini theories, which propose that based on certain manipulations of energy, we can realize our true self. It seems that the writer of this *Upanishad* had already lost touch with the original revelation, and resolved to fill in the gaps with yogic theories. In this way, perhaps as a way of compensating for their absence of clear descriptive processes, the *Upanishads* gradually became confused with impure paths. The yogic influence on spirituality brought more harm than good, and many seekers have been damaged physically and spiritually as a result of manipulating energy channels in their bodies without any clear understanding of what they are doing.

The teachers of the *Upanishads* did not seem to have developed a proper science of awakening, and were content to use spiritual metaphors rather than show how one can actually awaken. They spoke of the need for introspection, or meditation, but did not tell us how to meditate or how to deepen the realization of pure subjectivity. They planted the seed of spiritual knowledge, but the spiritual community that followed struggled rather hopelessly to discover the how-tos of the path and to bring a semblance of clarity into the alchemical process of self-realization.

Because the *Upanishads* did not describe the reality of awakening in a precise manner, their teachings were susceptible to countless interpretations and conflicting philosophies. No one was really clear as to 'who' that self – from which our eyes see, our ears hear, and our mind cognizes – is. Even though some of the later commentators were able to interpret the *Upanishads* in a way that preserved the duality between the soul and the universal self, it seems fairly certain that what the *Upanishads* intended was more in alignment with non-duality. The self that is recognized by turning one's attention back is the same self which underpins all existence, and is the foundation and creator of the manifested world. While the revelation of the *Upanishads* was groundbreaking spiritually, its authors missed a step – they missed the most important link in their contemplative chain of introspection. They missed 'me'.

The rishis who wrote the *Upanishads* miraculously tapped into pure subjectivity, but they did not properly identify 'whose' pure subjectivity it was, because they did not have sufficient conceptual tools or an inner sense of orientation to differentiate between individual and universal subjectivity. How does that self which is underlying and beyond our body and mind recognize itself? It feels itself as me through pure attention. But is this me the complete pure subjectivity? No, it is not. It is only the individual dimension of pure subjectivity. So, did those Rishis experience individual or universal subjectivity when they referred to 'self'? Or did some of them experience one of these and other ones the other? No one will ever know the answer to these questions, and it would also be naïve to assume that all of them were realized on the same level. Some of them may have realized essential me, while others may have arrived at absorption in I am with or without



the realization of me. If one reaches samadhi in I am, one may assume that this I am is me if one's own me has not been properly met and actualized. Or one may realize me, and assume that it is universal because it exists beyond personality. There are too many possible scenarios here inviting confusion or mixing up of concepts to make it worth spending time speculating on. It is, of course, also likely that some of the Rishis realized both individual and universal subjectivity through grace, but were unable to distinguish between these two dimensions of enlightenment.

In short, the teaching of the *Upanishads* was one-dimensional. It did not differentiate between the awakening of me and the surrender to I am, nor did it address the evolution into wholeness, which requires embracing the concept of multi-layered awakening of different centers of individual pure subjectivity, together with attaining samadhi in the beyond.

The *Upanishads* did make the distinction between the soul (Atman) and the absolute (Brahman), but only to point to the fact that the individual is the essence of the absolute, and the absolute is the true identity of what appears to be the individual. Not only is there no duality between Atman and Brahman in the *Upanishads*, there is neither a unity between them – they are just the same.

Those commentators who interpreted the *Upanishads* in terms of dualism or non-dualism did quite a bad job, because they did not probe deep enough into their basic concepts and assumptions. To say that there is a duality between soul and god (as in the stream of Vedanta that is connected to the worship of Vishnu), one has to have a proper understanding of what 'me' is. But those thinkers did not contemplate the concept of 'me' intellectually, let alone experientially. So for them to have said that there is duality or qualified non-duality, as respects the soul and god, was like using words without understanding their meanings. In other words, such interpretations are meaningless; they are no more than intellectual gibberish. Similarly, for them to argue for the opposite – that non-duality represents the correct picture of reality – is equal gibberish when they lack even a basic comprehension about who the 'me' is, arguing that it is the same as Brahman. You cannot deny something that you do not understand. Furthermore, you cannot understand Brahman if you do not understand me, just as much as you cannot properly realize Brahman if you have not realized your me. These would be contradictions in terms.

However, Advaita was closer to the truth in the sense of interpreting the *Upanishads* according to their original intent. Unlike dualism, non-dual traditions were connected to Shiva, rather than to Vishnu, as their deity of choice. Shiva was a symbol of a perfect yogi who realizes his divinity through complete devotion to the one self. Shiva was also the symbol for the revealer of the secret of enlightenment to uncompromising seekers of truth. He was the destroyer of illusion and the gatekeeper to transcendence. Shiva was the name given to that aspect of the absolute self that revealed the knowledge of self through the sages of the *Upanishads*.



Why was the knowledge Shiva revealed incomplete? Because the discovery of the rest was left in the hands of the human soul, to test their intelligence, true desire, longing, and the sincerity of their spirit. Even if humanity failed in those times, and then even again later, the intention was that it would eventually wake up to a higher and more complete truth. And if it did not during this cycle of creation, then it might have to wait until the next. . . or perhaps it might even never complete its awakening in the created realm. If humanity has not only not evolved beyond the discoveries of the *Upanishads* in over two and a half thousand years, but, for the vast majority, actually regressed in many respects, our expectations for rapid progress can hardly be overly optimistic.

While Yoga and Shaivism at least tried to formulate some experiential tools to realize the self, the Vedantic schools became too intellectually dry and impractical. They spent their time arguing about concepts, instead of focusing on the essentials and helping seekers to reach awakening. For dualistic Vedanta, the worship of Vishnu or Krishna was believed to be the answer, despite this being at odds with the spirit of the principal *Upanishads*. For non-dualists, the futile intellectual inquiry based on self-denial was meant to make one realize one's identity as Brahman. Neither of the two schools added anything substantial to what had already been said in the *Upanishads*. Buddhism, on the other hand, even though based on false premises, developed a whole new way of approaching meditation and internal cultivation.

Omitting the basic distinctions between awakening and surrender, and between soul-realization and self-realization, the sages of the *Upanishads* left Indian spirituality with a gaping hole, which was soon filled with intellectual nonsense. Hinduism was not the only victim of the *Upanishads* incomplete revelation, as Buddhism fell prey to it too. Gautama Shakyamuni, later known as the Buddha or 'the awakened one', was a child of Hindu philosophy, with all of its concepts of reincarnation, karma, self-realization, and liberation from suffering. But he was also bright and bold enough to break away from his tradition and to look for his own answers. Yet, internally, he was never entirely free of this tradition, and in spite of his great efforts, he did not find the clarity that the *Upanishads* also failed to give him. He did find a peace of sorts, but not a complete understanding. Above all, he failed to realize his me, which means that despite his remarkable and impressive illumination on one level, he did not know who he was.

Where did the Buddhist interpretation of enlightenment as a negation come from? Not only did they negate the individual self, but they negated any self whatsoever – not only is there no Atman in Buddhism, but there is not even a Brahman. All they leave their followers with is non-abidance or abidance in a netherworld that they call 'peace' or 'nirvana'. The answer is really quite simple if we go to the roots of Buddhism, which are the *Upanishads*. As much as Buddhists may try to deny it, without the revelations of the *Upanishads*, there could never have been a Buddha. In other words, without the



incomplete revelation of the *Upanishads*, Buddha would not have been able to express his own profound but still incomplete understanding.

The *Upanishads* say that behind seeing, hearing, and thinking is the true and unchanging self. But this is not entirely true for someone who is not fully established in himself, because even if our me is recognized in its pure subjectivity, unless it is absorbed in the universal self, it is bound to fluctuate, and, hence, it will not yet be unchanging. Buddha had six years in his personal search to contemplate these things in his own way. Seeing that this self behind senses and mind is 'impermanent', Buddha rejected it. But then, when he arrived at deeper states of samadhi in the universal self, he could not embody them because he did not have enough me to achieve it. He neither embodied his me nor I am, so he was left in emptiness in the end, which is just another description for the (incomplete) realization of the transcendent I am without the realization of me. Had the *Upanishads* given him clearer instructions, his path would have been much easier and more fruitful; he would have steered a more complete course, and his teachings would have been much more positive and helpful. Despite this, Buddhism is, on some level, more honest than Advaita – if there is indeed no Atman, there is also no Brahman. This is because, firstly, the concept of Brahman can exist only in contrast to Atman, and secondly, without realizing me, one cannot realize absolute reality correctly. So Buddha's conceptual conclusion was inevitable: there is no me and no I am – wherever we look, there is no self to be found.

It is human nature not to seek the realization of me, because of the virtually universal lack of appreciation of essence-me and of self-love. Most seekers are accordingly drawn to an impersonal enlightenment. Disappearing into I am is their ultimate dream. But no matter how deep one's meditation is or even the level of one's opening to the beyond, one cannot get rid of one's me. That me is the most persistent 'thing' in existence; it just never goes away. You can numb it with drugs, mantras, kundalini energy, mortification, renunciation, and countless 'spiritual' means of spacing out – but it always comes back. This is what Buddha discovered under the Bodhi tree – no matter how deep his samadhi was, nothing had fundamentally changed when he came back. So he started to contemplate the cause of suffering and bondage caused by the illusion of 'self', in order to unchain himself from human existence. But was he successful in this? It is doubtful, since the discipline of disidentification from the human condition while dwelling in the impersonal state of being became his way of living. The requirement for such constant vigilance and discipline is not true freedom – it is still in living in the realm of suffering.

Buddha never questioned (at least openly) the Hindu idea of reincarnation, because he knew that Buddhism, as a sect in its own right, would not make sense, and could therefore never survive without this concept. Since most people do not have the potential to be liberated in their present lifetime, he created a path that was based on hope, a project of many lifetimes. And hope is the foundation of any religion. He was a man on a mission, an ambitious preacher and missionary who wanted to reach the whole of the population.



While some say that his teaching became a religion only after his death, this is not true – it was a religion from its very conception, and the inevitable religious trappings of symbols and iconography of worship were soon incorporated into it. Buddha's conceptual challenge was to reconcile the idea of reincarnation with a philosophy that is based on a negation of self.

Since he was ignorant of essence-me – the original spark and kernel of our individual existence – and yet needed reincarnation to justify his new religion, he had to go to great lengths to rationalize how the cosmos 'conspires' to maintain the continuity of all these disjointed psychic particles (that once were a 'person') even after death in order to reconstruct them again into a newly reincarnated body-mind to recreate the phantom of an enduring self. In his reality of no-self, not only there is no me and no I am, but life itself is against us, and the cosmos is seen as a cunning adversary that has to be defeated by liberation: "O house builder, you have been seen; you shall not build the house again. Your rafters have been broken up, your ridgepole is demolished too." (Dhammapada Verse 154)

Who is it that searches for liberation anyway, if there is no one there in the first place? Buddhists were profuse in rationalizing their arguments, because the mind can justify anything, even if its conclusions defy the most basic common sense. It was this loss of common sense that was responsible for the original flaw in Buddha's teaching. He had become caught in artificial logic, the sphere of abstract thought, like a fish in a net. While in principle Buddha himself did not engage in metaphysical speculations, Buddhism was bound to become over-philosophized in its never-ending effort to reconcile its inherent contradictions. It would all be very different had Buddha been able to honor his very self and embrace the light of me as the divine within. But the anti-me philosophy had already become deeply rooted in Hindu spirituality, and none who followed in its footsteps had the required spiritual depth and courage to challenge it. It is human nature to follow and imitate authority. This instinctive tendency can also be observed among chimpanzees. The ideas of Buddhism can be compelling and persuasive, but for the wrong reasons. Because an average human does not have any substantial sense of self, the concept of no-self seems 'logical', but to create the vision of a spiritual path based on humanity's low level of consciousness and use this as a foundation for a religion with liberation as its stated goal is an appalling misrepresentation of truth.

Those who pursue the spiritual path as a battle against me will always lose this battle. No one can get rid of their me for the very simple reason that without their me they would cease to exist. They see their me as an enemy, an obstacle to peace, a tempter, a seducer, and even as a devil inside themselves. So they start to hate it. Hatred of me is at the root of all of the major traditions of 'enlightenment'. Seekers after such 'enlightenment' are bound to live lives of spiritual schizophrenia, because to be at war with one's me is madness. And what is most ironic is that they do not even know what that me is that they are at war with, because they have never given themselves the chance to get to know who



they are. Are the *Upanishads* responsible for this? No, it is people themselves who are responsible, not the *Upanishads*. But since seekers are invariably confused, unintelligent, and less than uncompromising, the conceptual vacuum that the *Upanishads* left certainly did not help make the path clearer for them.

We must be profoundly grateful to all of the sages who wrote the *Upanishads*, for without them, the light of spirit would be absent from this world. Most seekers do not even know what the *Upanishads* are, even though the very idea of seeking one's true self originated from them. But this is how things are. Despite today's increased access to information through the internet, most seekers who surf it remain as spiritually ignorant as they were previously – while surpassing themselves in superficiality.

However, it is also important to be clear about the incompleteness of the revelations of the *Upanishads*, not for reasons of diminishing their contribution and value, but for the higher good of oneself (that self to which the *Upanishads* pointed) and the good of all of humankind. Those long ago sages said 'A', and we each have to stand on their shoulders and step further forward on our own to be able to say 'B'. The clarity is there, hidden in the mystery of our own selves, but it reveals itself with the greatest reluctance, as if waiting with infinite patience for the right person, so that it can finally – and without regret – reveal itself to his innermost intelligence. Do we, as humans, deserve a new revelation, one that completes the revelation the *Upanishads* began? Before you answer this question, look really carefully and deeply into your heart. How much are you truly longing for truth, clarity, and wholeness, and how much are you willing to sacrifice to receive such a priceless treasure?

The tragedy of humanity is that we have stopped developing spirituality. We stopped walking towards higher truth soon after the revelations of the *Upanishads*, and this initial momentum has become entirely frozen. It is like a paused picture in which a person has made one step forward, while his other leg is simply suspended in midair. Humanity has to wake up from this place of being entirely stuck in those past traditions which have monopolized and corrupted the original revelation. The prerequisite for this awakening is to begin honoring our very me, our soul, our divine identity, the individualized light of god that we are. The *Upanishads* revealed the knowledge of self to human kind, but this original revelation was only the first step, impersonal enlightenment, and it has to be followed by the next step – personal enlightenment.

From our study of the past teachings of enlightenment, it is clear that no one has been able to make this next step (though Gurdjieff can in some ways be seen as an exception). These past traditions have only managed to comment on and slightly re-interpret ancient conclusions, and have as such been unable to take us towards our future. While on the surface it appears that there are many different traditions



of self-realization, they are fundamentally all the same. They may differ in the details, but they have not imparted anything original and new on top of what the Upanishads had already said. And what is the result? All seekers are lost. How can it be otherwise, if they are constantly deceived by the teachings of non-duality? They do not stand a chance of realizing who they are. Seeing this, you may become more clear about why we have on many occasions been deeply critical of these various teaching. Unless their fundamental assumptions are challenged, they will block the evolution of each individual soul, and the evolution of humanity as a whole.

Around 2800 years ago, humanity was graced with the revelation of self. Now, after 2800 years, we have been graced with receiving a further revelation that finally opens the doorway for a multidimensional evolution into our complete self, the vehicle of which is our teaching. Why is it happening now? Because humanity will not awaken to the light of me. It is almost over. Look around, spirituality is dead here; it is no more than a farce, a pitiful and distasteful repetition of the past, which has itself been distorted and misunderstood. We must finally realize that we live in critical times. Our understanding of the spiritual dimension must change in its very core or our fate as spiritual beings is doomed. The spiritual momentum that the Upanishads gave has been all but exhausted, and its light is right on the verge of becoming extinguished. If that should happen, all that would remain is darkness.

But we have been blessed. The sun is rising again, after over two and a half millennia, in the middle of the spiritual night of humanity. But only those whose eyes are open, who are not spiritually blind, can see its life-giving radiance.

Blessings,
Anadi

For a precise glossary of terminology, please visit our website:
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