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Hinduism

Mundaka Upanishad

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Anonymous (English translation by F. Max Müller)

F. Max Müller (1884)

Credits

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About:

The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, attached to the Atharvaveda, has three parts (muṇḍaka) of two chapters each. It distinguishes the lower knowledge (the Vedas, rites, grammar) from the higher knowledge "by which the Imperishable is known".

It has the image of the two birds on the same tree, one eating the fruit and the other only watching, and the words India put on its emblem: "Truth alone triumphs" (satyam eva jayate).

English translation by F. Max Müller (Sacred Books of the East, vol. 15, 1884). The Isha, Kena and Katha Upanishads are also in Une Sacra.

Source: https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/index.htm

Müller's introduction and footnotes are omitted. The verse numbers are his; each chapter is one section (khanda, adhyaya or question) of the original.

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CHAPTER I

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1 BRAHMA was the first of the Devas, the maker of the universe, the preserver of the world. He told the knowledge of Brahman, the foundation of all knowledge, to his eldest son Atharva .

2 Whatever Brahmâ told Atharvan, that knowledge of Brahman Atharvan formerly told to Aṅgir; he told it to Satyavâha Bhâradvâga, and Bhâradvâga told it in succession to Aṅgiras.

3 Saunaka, the great householder, approached Aṅgiras respectfully and asked: 'Sir, what is that through which, if it is known, everything else becomes known?'

4 He said to him: 'Two kinds of knowledge must be known, this is what all who know Brahman tell us, the higher and the lower knowledge.'

5 9 The lower knowledge is the Rig-veda, Yagur-veda, Sâma-veda, Atharva-veda, Sikshâ (phonetics), Kalpa (ceremonial), Vyâkarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Khandas (metre), Gyotisha (astronomy) ; but the higher knowledge is that by which the Indestructible (Brahman) is apprehended.'

6 'That which cannot be seen, nor seized, which has no family and no caste , no eyes nor ears, no hands nor feet, the eternal, the omnipresent (all-pervading), infinitesimal, that which is imperishable, that it is which the wise regard as the source of all beings.'

7 'As the spider sends forth and draws in its thread, as plants grow on the earth, as from every man hairs spring forth on the head and the body, thus does everything arise here from the Indestructible.'

8 'The Brahman swells by means of brooding (penance) ; hence is produced matter (food); from matter breath , mind, the true , the worlds (seven), and from the works (performed by men in the worlds), the immortal (the eternal effects, rewards, and punishments of works).'

9 'From him who perceives all and who knows all, whose brooding (penance) consists of knowledge, from him (the highest Brahman) is born that Brahman , name, form , and matter (food).'

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CHAPTER 2

✦

1 This is the truth : the sacrificial works which they (the poets) saw in the hymns (of the Veda) have been performed in many ways in the Tretâ age . Practise them diligently, ye lovers of truth, this is your path that leads to the world of good works !

2 When the fire is lighted and the flame flickers, let a man offer his oblations between the two portions of melted butter, as an offering with faith.

3 If a man's Agnihotra sacrifice is not followed by the new-moon and full-moon sacrifices, by the four-months' sacrifices, and by the harvest sacrifice, if it is unattended by guests, not offered at all, or without the Vaisvadeva ceremony, or not offered according to rule, then it destroys his seven worlds .

4 Kâlî (black), Karâlî (terrific), Manogavâ (swift as thought), Sulohitâ (very red), Sudhûmravarnâ (purple), Sphulińginî (sparkling), and the brilliant Visvarûpî (having all forms), all these playing about are called the seven tongues (of fire).

5 If a man performs his sacred works when these flames are shining, and the oblations follow at the right time, then they lead him as sun-rays to where the one Lord of the Devas dwells.

6 Come hither, come hither! the brilliant oblations say to him, and carry the sacrificer on the rays of the sun, while they utter pleasant speech and praise him, saying: 'This is thy holy Brahma-world (Svarga), gained by thy

good works.'

7 But frail, in truth, are those boats, the sacrifices, the eighteen, in which this lower ceremonial has been told . Fools who praise this as the highest good, are subject again and again to old age and death.

8 Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind .

9 Children, when they have long lived in ignorance, consider themselves happy. Because those who depend on their good works are, owing to their passions, improvident, they fall and become miserable when their life (in the world which they had gained by their good works) is finished.

10 Considering sacrifice and good works as the best, these fools know no higher good, and having enjoyed (their reward) on the height of heaven, gained by good works, they enter again this world or a lower one.

11 But those who practise penance and faith in the forest, tranquil, wise, and living on alms, depart free from passion through the sun to where that immortal Person dwells whose nature is imperishable .

12 Let a Brâhmana, after he has examined all these worlds which are gained by works, acquire freedom from all desires. Nothing that is eternal (not made) can be gained by what is not eternal (made). Let him, in order to understand this, take fuel in his hand and approach a Guru who is learned and dwells entirely in Brahman.

13 To that pupil who has approached him respectfully, whose thoughts are not troubled by any desires, and who has obtained perfect peace, the wise teacher truly told that knowledge of Brahman through which he knows the eternal and true Person.

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CHAPTER 3

✦

1 This is the truth. As from a blazing fire sparks, being like unto fire , fly forth a thousandfold, thus are various beings brought forth from the Imperishable, my friend, and return thither also.

2 That heavenly Person is without body, he is both without and within, not produced, without breath and without mind, pure, higher than the high Imperishable .

3 From him (when entering on creation) is born breath, mind, and all organs of sense, ether, air, light, water, and the earth, the support of all.

4 Fire (the sky) is his head, his eyes the sun and the moon, the quarters his ears, his speech the Vedas disclosed, the wind his breath, his heart the universe; from his feet came the earth; he is indeed the inner Self of all things .

5 From him comes Agni (fire) , the sun being the fuel; from the moon (Soma) comes rain (Parganya); from the earth herbs; and man gives seed unto the woman. Thus many beings are begotten from the Person (purusha).

6 From him come the Rik, the Sâman, the Yagush, the Dîkshâ (initiatory rites), all sacrifices and offerings of animals, and the fees bestowed on priests, the year too, the sacrificer, and the worlds, in which the moon shines brightly and the sun.

7 From him the many Devas too are begotten, the Sâdhyas (genii), men, cattle, birds, the up and down breathings, rice and corn (for sacrifices), penance, faith, truth, abstinence, and law.

8 The seven senses (prâna) also spring from him, the seven lights (acts of sensation), the seven kinds of fuel (objects by which the senses are lighted), the seven sacrifices (results of sensation), these seven worlds (the places of the senses, the worlds determined by the senses) in which the senses move, which rest in the cave (of the heart), and are placed there seven and seven.

9 Hence come the seas and all the mountains, from him flow the rivers of every kind; hence come all herbs and the juice through which the inner Self subsists with the elements.

10 The Person is all this, sacrifice, penance, Brahman, the highest immortal; he who knows this hidden in the cave (of the heart), he, O friend, scatters the knot of ignorance here on earth.

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CHAPTER 4

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1 Manifest, near, moving in the cave (of the heart) is the great Being. In it everything is centred which ye know as moving, breathing, and blinking, as being and not-being, as adorable, as the best, that is beyond the understanding of creatures.

2 That which is brilliant, smaller than small, that on which the worlds are founded and their inhabitants, that is the indestructible Brahman, that is the breath, speech, mind; that is the true, that is the immortal. That is to be hit. Hit it, O friend!

3 Having taken the Upanishad as the bow, as the great weapon, let him place on it the arrow, sharpened by devotion! Then having drawn it with a thought directed to that which is, hit the mark, O friend, viz. that which is the Indestructible!

4 Om is the bow, the Self is the arrow, Brahman is called its aim. It is to be hit by a man who is not thoughtless; and then, as the arrow (becomes one with the target), he will become one with Brahman.

5 In him the heaven, the earth, and the sky are woven, the mind also with all the senses. Know him alone as the Self, and leave off other words! He is the bridge of the Immortal.

6 He moves about becoming manifold within the heart where the arteries meet, like spokes fastened to the nave. Meditate on the Self as Om! Hail to you, that you may cross beyond (the sea of) darkness!

7 He who understands all and who knows all, he to whom all this glory in the world belongs, the Self, is placed in the ether, in the heavenly city of Brahman (the heart). He assumes the nature of mind, and becomes the guide of the body of the senses. He subsists in food, in close proximity to the heart. The wise who understand this, behold the Immortal which shines forth full of bliss.

8 The fetter of the heart is broken, all doubts are solved, all his works (and their effects) perish when He has been beheld who is high and low (cause and effect) .

9 In the highest golden sheath there is the Brahman without passions and without parts. That is pure, that is the light of lights, that is it which they know who know the Self.

10 The sun does not thine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings, and much less this fire. When he shines, everything shines after him; by his light all this is lighted .

11 That immortal Brahman is before, that Brahman is behind, that Brahman is right and left. It has gone forth below and above; Brahman alone is all this, it is the best.

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CHAPTER 5

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1 Two birds, inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit, the other looks on without eating .

2 On the same tree man sits grieving, immersed, bewildered by his own impotence (an-îsâ). But when he sees the other lord (îsâ) contented and knows his glory, then his grief passes away .

3 When the seer sees the brilliant maker and lord (of the world) as the Person who has his source in Brahman, then he is wise, and shaking off good and evil, he reaches the highest oneness, free from passions;

4 For he is the Breath shining forth in all beings, and he who understands this becomes truly wise, not a talker only. He revels in the Self, he delights in the Self, and having performed his works (truthfulness, penance, meditation, &c.) he rests, firmly established in Brahman, the best of those who know Brahman .

5 By truthfulness, indeed, by penance, right knowledge, and abstinence must that Self be gained; the Self whom spotless anchorites gain is pure, and like a light within the body.

6 The true prevails, not the untrue; by the true the path is laid out, the way of the gods (devayânah), on which the old sages, satisfied in their desires, proceed to where there is that highest place of the True One.

7 That (true Brahman) shines forth grand, divine., inconceivable, smaller than small; it is far beyond what is far and yet near here, it is hidden in the cave (of the heart) among those who see it even here.

8 He is not apprehended by the eye, nor by speech, nor by the other senses, not by penance or good works . When a man's nature has become purified by the serene light of knowledge, then he sees him, meditating on him as without parts.

9 That subtle Self is to be known by thought (ketas) there where breath has entered fivefold, for every thought of men is interwoven with the senses, and when thought is purified, then the Self arises.

10 Whatever state a man, whose nature is purified imagines, and whatever desires he desires (for himself or for others) , that state he conquers and those desires he obtains. Therefore let every man who desires happiness worship the man who knows the Self .

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CHAPTER 6

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1 He (the knower of the Self) knows that highest home of Brahman , in which all is contained and shines brightly. The wise who, without desiring happiness, worship that Person , transcend this seed, (they are not born again.)

2 He who forms desires in his mind, is born again through his desires here and there. But to him whose desires are fulfilled and who is conscious of the true Self (within himself) all desires vanish, even here on earth.

3 That Self cannot be gained by the Veda, nor by understanding, nor by much learning. He whom the Self chooses, by him the Self can be gained. The Self chooses him (his body) as his own.

4 Nor is that Self to be gained by one who is destitute of strength, or without earnestness, or without right meditation. But if a wise man strives after it by those means (by strength, earnestness, and right meditation), then his Self enters the home of Brahman.

5 When they have reached him (the Self), the sages become satisfied through knowledge, they are conscious of their Self, their passions have passed away, and they are tranquil. The wise, having reached Him who is omnipresent everywhere, devoted to the Self, enter into him wholly.

6 Having well ascertained the object of the knowledge of the Vedânta , and having purified their nature by the Yoga of renunciation, all anchorites, enjoying the highest immortality, become free at the time of the great end

(death) in the worlds of Brahmâ.

7 Their fifteen parts enter into their elements, their Devas (the senses) into their (corresponding) Devas . Their deeds and their Self with all his knowledge become all one in the highest Imperishable.

8 As the flowing rivers disappear in the sea , losing their name and their form, thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine Person, who is greater than the great .

9 He who knows that highest Brahman, becomes even Brahman. In his race no one is born ignorant of Brahman. He overcomes grief, he overcomes evil; free from the fetters of the heart, he becomes immortal.

10 And this is declared by the following Rik-verse: 'Let a man tell this science of Brahman to those only who have performed all (necessary) acts, who are versed in the Vedas, and firmly established in (the lower) Brahman, who themselves offer as an oblation the one Rishi (Agni), full of faith, and by whom the rite of (carrying fire on) the head has been performed, according to the rule (of the Âtharvanas).'

11 The Rishi Aṅgiras formerly told this true (science); a man who has not performed the (proper) rites, does not read it. Adoration to the highest Rishis! Adoration to the highest Rishis!

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