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Hinduism

Svetasvatara Upanishad

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Anonymous (English translation by F. Max Müller)

F. Max Müller (1884)

Credits

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About:

The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, of the Black Yajurveda, takes its name from the sage who taught it. In six chapters it joins the philosophy of the Upanishads to devotion to a personal God, Rudra-Śiva, Lord who rules nature (prakṛti) and illusion (māyā).

It speaks of yoga and of the wheel of Brahman in which the soul turns until it knows the Lord, and is one of the central texts of Shaivism.

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 The Brahma-students say: Is Brahman the cause ? Whence are we born? Whereby do we live, and whither do we go? O ye who know Brahman, (tell us) at whose command we abide, whether in pain or in pleasure?

2 Should time, or nature , or necessity, or chance, or the elements be considered as the cause, or he who is called the person (purusha, vigñânâtmâ)? It cannot be their union either, because that is not self-dependent , and the self also is powerless, because there is (independent of him) a cause of good and evil .

3 The sages, devoted to meditation and concentration, have seen the power belonging to God himself , hidden in its own qualities (guna). He, being one, superintends all those causes, time, self, and the rest . 4 .

3.2 We meditate on him who (like a wheel) has one felly with three tires, sixteen ends, fifty spokes, with twenty counter-spokes, and six sets of eight; whose one rope is manifold, who proceeds on three different roads, and whose illusion arises from two causes. 5 .

3.3 We meditate on the river whose water consists of the five streams, which is wild and winding with its five springs, whose waves are the five vital breaths, whose fountain head is the mind, the course of the five kinds of perceptions. It has five whirlpools, its rapids are the five pains; it has fifty kinds of suffering, and five branches.

6 In that vast Brahma-wheel, in which all things live and rest, the bird flutters about, so long as he thinks that the self (in him) is different from the mover (the god, the lord). When he has been blessed by him, then he gains immortality .

7 But what is praised (in the Upanishads) is the Highest Brahman, and in it there is the triad . The Highest Brahman is the safe support, it is imperishable. The Brahma-students , when they have known what is within this (world), are devoted and merged in the Brahman, free from birth .

8 The Lord (îsa) supports all this together, the perishable and the imperishable, the developed and the undeveloped. The (living) self, not being a lord, is bound , because he has to enjoy (the fruits of works); but when he has known the god (deva), he is freed from all fetters.

9 There are two, one knowing (îsvara), the other not-knowing (gîva), both unborn, one strong, the other weak ; there is she, the unborn, through whom each man receives the recompense of his works ; and there is the infinite Self (appearing) under all forms, but himself inactive. When a man finds out these three, that is Brahma .

10 That which is perishable is the Pradhâna (the first), the immortal and imperishable is Hara . The one god rules the perishable (the pradhâna) and the (living) self . From meditating on him, from joining him, from becoming one with him there is further cessation of all illusion in the end.

11 When that god is known, all fetters fall off, sufferings are destroyed, and birth and death cease. From meditating on him there arises, on the dissolution of the body, the third state, that of universal lordship ; but he only who is alone, is satisfied .

12 This, which rests eternally within the self, should be known; and beyond this not anything has to be known. By knowing the enjoyer , the enjoyed, and the ruler, everything has been declared to be threefold, and this is Brahman.

13 As the form of fire, while it exists in the under-wood , is not seen, nor is its seed destroyed, but it has to be seized again and again by means of the stick and the under-wood, so it is in both cases, and the Self has to be seized in the body by means of the pranava (the syllable Om).

14 By making his body the under-wood, and the syllable Om the upper-wood, man, after repeating the drill of meditation, will perceive the bright god, like the spark hidden in the wood .

15 As oil in seeds, as butter in cream, as water in (dry) river-beds , as fire in wood, so is the Self seized within the self, if man looks for him by truthfulness and penance ;

16 (If he looks) for the Self that pervades everything, as butter is contained in milk, and the roots whereof are self-knowledge and penance. That is the Brahman taught by the Upanishad.

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CHAPTER 2

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6 1 . Savitri (the sun), having first collected his mind and expanded his thoughts, brought Agni (fire), when he had discovered his light, above the earth.

2 . With collected minds we are at the command of the divine Savitri, that we may obtain blessedness.

3 . May Savitri, after he has reached with his mind the gods as they rise up to the sky, and with his thoughts (has reached) heaven, grant these gods to make a great light to shine.

4 . The wise sages of the great sage collect their mind and collect their thoughts. He who alone knows the law (Savitri) has ordered the invocations; great is the praise of the divine Savitri.

5 . Your old prayer has to be joined with praises. Let my song go forth like the path of the sun! May all the sons of the Immortal listen, they who have reached their heavenly homes.

Where the fire is rubbed , where the wind is checked, where the Soma flows over, there the mind is born.

7 Let us love the old Brahman by the grace of Savitri; if thou make thy dwelling there, the path will not hurt thee .

8 If a wise man hold his body with its three erect parts (chest, neck, and head) even , and turn his senses with the mind towards the heart, he will then in the boat of Brahman cross all the torrents which cause fear.

9 Compressing his breathings let him, who has subdued all motions, breathe forth through the nose with gentle breath . Let the wise man without fail restrain his mind, that chariot yoked with vicious horses .

10 Let him perform his exercises in a place level, pure, free from pebbles, fire, and dust, delightful by its sounds, its water, and bowers, not painful to the eye, and full of shelters and caves.

11 When Yoga is being performed, the forms which come first, producing apparitions in Brahman, are those of misty smoke, sun, fire, wind, fire-flies, lightnings, and a crystal moon .

12 When, as earth, water, light, heat, and ether arise, the fivefold quality of Yoga takes place , then there is no longer illness, old age, or pain for him who has obtained a body, produced by the fire of Yoga.

13 The first results of Yoga they call lightness, healthiness, steadiness, a good complexion, an easy pronunciation, a sweet odour, and slight excretions.

14 As a metal disk (mirror), tarnished by dust, shines bright again after it has been cleaned, so is the one incarnate person satisfied and free from grief, after he has seen the real nature of the Self .

15 And when by means of the real nature of his self he sees, as by a lamp, the real nature of Brahman, then having known the unborn, eternal god, who is beyond all natures , he is freed from all fetters.

16 He indeed is the god who pervades all regions: he is the first-born (as Hiranyagarbha), and he is in the womb. He has been born, and he will be born . He stands behind all persons, looking everywhere.

17 The god who is in the fire, the god who is in the water, the god who has entered into the whole world, the god who is in plants, the god who is in trees, adoration be to that god, adoration!

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CHAPTER 3

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1 The snarer who rules alone by his powers, who rules all the worlds by his powers, who is one and the same, while things arise and exist ,—they who know this are immortal.

2 For there is one Rudra only, they do not allow a second, who rules all the worlds by his powers. He stands behind all persons , and after having created all worlds he, the protector, rolls it up at the end of time. 3 . That one god, having his eyes, his face, his arms, and his feet in every place, when producing heaven and earth, forges them together with his arms and his wings .

4 He , the creator and supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, he who formerly gave birth to Hiranyagarbha, may he endow us with good thoughts. 5 . O Rudra, thou dweller in the mountains, look upon us with that most blessed form of thine which is auspicious, not terrible, and reveals no evil! 6 . O lord of the mountains, make lucky that arrow which thou, a dweller in the mountains, holdest in thy hand to shoot. Do not hurt man or beast!

7 Those who know beyond this the High Brahman, the vast, hidden in the bodies of all creatures, and alone enveloping everything, as the Lord, they become immortal . 8 . I know that great person (purusha) of sunlike lustre beyond the darkness . A man who knows him truly, passes over death; there is no other path to go .

9 This whole universe is filled by this person (purusha), to whom there is nothing superior, from whom there is nothing different, than whom there is nothing smaller or larger, who stands alone, fixed like a tree in the sky .

10 That which is beyond this world is without form and without suffering. They who know it, become immortal, but others suffer pain indeed .

11 That Bhagavat exists in the faces, the heads, the necks of all, he dwells in the cave (of the heart) of all beings, he is all-pervading, therefore he is the omnipresent Siva.

12 That person (purusha) is the great lord; he is the mover of existence , he possesses that purest power of reaching everything , he is light, he is undecaying. 13 . The person (purusha), not larger than a thumb, dwelling within, always dwelling in the heart of man, is perceived by the heart, the thought , the mind; they who know it become immortal. 14 . The person (purusha) with a thousand heads. a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, having compassed the earth on every side, extends beyond it by ten fingers' breadth.

15 That person alone (purusha) is all this, what has been and what will be; he is also the lord of immortality; he is whatever grows by food .

16 Its hands and feet are everywhere, its eyes and head are everywhere, its ears are everywhere, it stands encompassing all in the world .

17 Separate from all the senses, yet reflecting the qualities of all the senses, it is the lord and ruler of all, it is the great refuge of all.

18 The embodied spirit within the town with nine gates , the bird, flutters outwards, the ruler of the whole world, of all that rests and of all that moves.

19 Grasping without hands, hasting without feet, he sees without eyes, he hears without ears. He knows what can be known, but no one knows him; they call him the first, the great person (purusha). 20 . The Self, smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of the creature.

19.2 A man who has left all grief behind, sees the majesty, the Lord, the passionless, by the grace of the creator (the Lord). 21 . I know this undecaying, ancient one, the self of all things, being infinite and omnipresent. They declare that in him all birth is stopped, for the Brahma-students proclaim him to be eternal .

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CHAPTER 4

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1 He, the sun, without any colour, who with set purpose by means of his power (sakti) produces endless colours , in whom all this comes together in the beginning, and comes asunder in the end—may he, the god, endow us with good thoughts .

2 That (Self) indeed is Agni (fire), it is Âditya (sun), it is Vâyu (wind), it is Kandramas (moon); the same also is the starry firmament , it is Brahman (Hiranyagarbha), it is water, it is Pragâpati (Virâg).

3 Thou art woman, thou art man; thou art youth, thou art maiden; thou, as an old man, totterest along on thy staff; thou art born with thy face turned everywhere.

4 Thou art the dark-blue bee, thou art the green parrot with red eyes, thou art the thunder-cloud, the seasons, the seas. Thou art without beginning , because thou art infinite, thou from whom all worlds are born. 5 . There is one unborn being (female), red, white, and black, uniform, but producing manifold offspring.

4.2 There is one unborn being (male) who loves her and lies by her; there is another who leaves her, while she is eating what has to be eaten. 6 . Two birds, inseparable friends, cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit, the other looks on without eating.

7 On the same tree man sits grieving, immersed, bewildered, by his own impotence (an-îsâ). But when he sees the other lord (îsa) contented, and knows his glory, then his grief passes away. 8 . He who does not know that

indestructible being of the Rig-Veda, that highest ether-like (Self) wherein all the gods reside, of what use is the Rig-Veda to him? Those only who know it, rest contented.

9 That from which the maker (mâyin) sends forth all this—the sacred verses, the offerings, the sacrifices, the panaceas, the past, the future, and all that the Vedas declare—in that the other is bound up through that mâyâ.

10 Know then Prakriti (nature) is Mâyâ (art), and the great Lord the Mâyin (maker); the whole world is filled with what are his members.

11 If a man has discerned him, who being one only, rules over every germ (cause), in whom all this comes together and comes asunder again, who is the lord, the bestower of blessing, the adorable god, then he passes for ever into that peace. 12 . He, the creator and supporter of the gods, Rudra, the great seer, the lord of all, who saw , Hiranyagarbha being born, may he endow us with good thoughts.

13 He who is the sovereign of the gods, he in whom all the worlds rest, he who rules over all two-footed and four-footed beings, to that god let us sacrifice an oblation.

14 He who has known him who is more subtile than subtile, in the midst of chaos, creating all things, having many forms, alone enveloping everything , the happy one (Siva), passes into peace for ever.

15 He also was in time the guardian of this world, the lord of all, hidden in all beings. In him the Brahmarshis and the deities are united , and he who knows him cuts the fetters of death asunder.

16 He who knows Siva (the blessed) hidden in all beings, like the subtile film that rises from out the clarified butter , alone enveloping everything, —he who knows the god, is freed from all fetters.

17 That god, the maker of all things, the great Self , always dwelling in the heart of man, is perceived by the heart, the soul, the mind ;—they who know it become immortal.

18 When the light has risen , there is no day, no night, neither existence nor non-existence ; Siva (the blessed) alone is there. That is the eternal, the adorable light of Savitri ,—and the ancient wisdom proceeded thence.

19 No one has grasped him above, or across, or in the middle . There is no image of him whose name is Great Glory.

20 His form cannot be seen, no one perceives him with the eye. Those who through heart and mind know him thus abiding in the heart, become immortal.

21 'Thou art unborn,' with these words some one comes near to thee, trembling. O Rudra, let thy gracious face protect me for ever! 22 . O Rudra! hurt us not in our offspring and descendants, hurt us not in our own lives, nor in our cows, nor in our horses! Do not slay our men in thy wrath, for, holding oblations, we call on thee always.

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CHAPTER 5

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1 In the imperishable and infinite Highest Brahman , wherein the two, knowledge and ignorance, are hidden , the one, ignorance, perishes , the other, knowledge, is immortal; but he who controls both, knowledge and ignorance, is another .

2 It is he who, being one only, rules over every germ (cause), over all forms, and over all germs; it is he who, in the beginning, bears in his thoughts the wise son, the fiery, whom he wishes to look on while he is born . 3 . In that field in which the god, after spreading out one net after another in various ways, draws it together again, the Lord, the great Self , having further created the lords , thus carries on his lordship over all.

4 As the car (of the sun) shines, lighting up all quarters, above, below, and across, thus does that god, the holy, the adorable, being one, rule over all that has the nature of a germ .

5 He, being one, rules over all and everything, so that the universal germ ripens its nature, diversifies all natures that can be ripened , and determines all qualities . 6 . Brahma (Hiranyagarbha) knows this, which is hidden in the Upanishads, which are hidden in the Vedas, as the Brahma-germ. The ancient gods and poets who knew it, they became it and were immortal. 7 .

5.2 But he who is endowed with qualities, and performs works that are to bear fruit, and enjoys the reward of whatever he has done, migrates through his own works, the lord of life, assuming all forms, led by the

three Gunas, and following the three paths . 8 .

5.3 That lower one also, not larger than a thumb, but brilliant like the sun, who is endowed with personality and thoughts, with the quality of mind and the quality of body, is seen small even like the point of a goad.

9 That living soul is to be known as part of the hundredth part of the point of a hair , divided a hundred times, and yet it is to be infinite.

10 It is not woman, it is not man, nor is it neuter; whatever body it takes, with that it is joined (only). 11 . By means of thoughts, touching, seeing, and passions the incarnate Self assumes successively in various places various forms , in accordance with his deeds, just as the body grows when food and drink are poured into it.

12 That incarnate Self, according to his own qualities, chooses (assumes) many shapes, coarse or subtile, and having himself caused his union with them, he is seen as another and another , through the qualities of his acts, and through the qualities of his body. 13 . He who knows him who has no beginning and no end, in the midst of chaos, creating all things, having many forms, alone enveloping everything, is freed from all fetters.

14 Those who know him who is to be grasped by the mind, who is not to be called the nest (the body), who makes existence and non-existence, the happy one (Siva), who also creates the elements , they have left the body.

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CHAPTER 6

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2 1 . Some wise men, deluded, speak of Nature, and others of Time (as the cause of everything); but it is the greatness of God by which this Brahma-wheel is made to turn.
It is at the command of him who always covers this world, the knower, the time of time , who assumes qualities and all knowledge , it is at his command that this work (creation) unfolds itself, which is called earth, water, fire, air, and ether; 3 . He who, after he has done that work and rested again, and after he has brought together one essence (the self) with the other (matter), with one, two, three, or eight, with time also and with the subtile qualities of the mind,

4 Who, after starting the works endowed with (the three) qualities, can order all things, yet when, in the absence of all these, he has caused the destruction of the work, goes on, being in truth different (from all he has produced);

5 He is the beginning, producing the causes which unite (the soul with the body), and, being above the three kinds of time (past, present, future), he is seen as without parts , after we have first worshipped that adorable god, who has many forms, and who is the true source (of all things), as dwelling in our own mind.

6 He is beyond all the forms of the tree (of the world) and of time, he is the other, from whom this world moves round, when one has known him who brings good and removes evil, the lord of bliss, as dwelling within the

self, the immortal, the support of all.

7 Let us know that highest great lord of lords , the highest deity of deities, the master of masters, the highest above, as god, the lord of the world, the adorable.

8 There is no effect and no cause known of him, no one is seen like unto him or better; his high power is revealed as manifold, as inherent, acting as force and knowledge.

9 There is no master of his in the world, no ruler of his, not even a sign of him . He is the cause, the lord of the lords of the organs , and there is of him neither parent nor lord.

10 That only god who spontaneously covered himself, like a spider, with threads drawn from the first cause (pradhâna), grant us entrance into Brahman .

11 He is the one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the self within all beings, watching over all works, dwelling in all beings, the witness, the perceiver , the only one, free from qualities. 12 . He is the one ruler of many who (seem to act, but really do) not act ; he makes the one seed manifold.

11.2 The wise who perceive him within their self, to them belongs eternal happiness, not to others. 13 . He is the eternal among eternals, the thinker among thinkers, who, though one, fulfils the desires of many. He who has known that cause which is to be apprehended by Sâṅkhya (philosophy) and Yoga (religious discipline), he is freed from all fetters.

14 The sun does not shine 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 lightened.

15 He is the one bird in the midst of the world; he is also (like) the fire (of the sun) that has set in the ocean. A man who knows him truly, passes over death ; there is no other path to go.

16 He makes all, he knows all, the self-caused, the knower , the time of time (destroyer of time), who assumes qualities and knows everything, the master of nature and of man , the lord of the three qualities (guna), the cause of the bondage, the existence, and the liberation of the world .

17 He who has become that , he is the immortal, remaining the lord, the knower, the ever-present guardian of this world, who rules this world for ever, for no one else is able to rule it.

18 Seeking for freedom I go for refuge to that God who is the light of his own thoughts , he who first creates Brahman (m.) and delivers the Vedas to him;

19 Who is without parts, without actions, tranquil, without fault, without taint , the highest bridge to immortality—like a fire that has consumed its fuel.

20 Only when men shall roll up the sky like a hide, will there be an end of misery, unless God has first been known .

21 Through the power of his penance and through the grace of God has the wise Svetâsvatara truly proclaimed Brahman, the highest and holiest, to the best of ascetics , as approved by the company of Rishis.

22 This highest mystery in the Vedânta, delivered in a former age, should not be given to one whose passions have not been subdued, nor to one who is not a son, or who is not a pupil .

23 If these truths have been told to a high-minded man, who feels the highest devotion for God, and for his Guru as for God, then they will shine forth,—then they will shine forth indeed.

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