



UPANISHAD COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Research

Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

Phone: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676 Email: upanishadcourse@chinfo.org Web: www.chinfo.org



cf

BENEDICTION



What are you looking for? Why are you here? How do you intend to achieve whatever you set out to gain? Although I mean the questions literally, they may as well be topics of long spiritual discussion.

But the study of the Upaniṣads is something else altogether. It is truly an undertaking of the rarest kind. No amount of theorising or rote chanting of these esoteric texts can yield meaningful profit – unless students apply themselves earnestly and immerse their entire personality into the silent waters of this sacred wisdom.

With this initiative, Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji has brilliantly – and selflessly – presented the complete adhyātma-śāstra in a manner and structure that is not only easy to comprehend at the intellectual level, but also delightful to practise at the contemplative and meditative levels. Recognising this is vital to one's being able to appreciate the incomparable value of this Upanishad Course. Few indeed are the places in the world that can offer the same depth of insight into – and experience of – pure Advaita.

Remembering that, embrace the course wholeheartedly, leaving aside all hint of conceit or prejudice. Focus on the ideas presented, and the ideas alone. Internalise them. Seek to make them actual discoveries, lucid and irresistible, within your own heart. *Never forget why you started.*

My congratulations to the Chinmaya International Foundation and its dedicated team on successfully organising this course. I invoke the blessings of the Lord, of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji and of all the Upaniṣadic Gurus and their śiṣyas, that you may all excel and shine as worthy recipients of this Highest Knowledge.

With Prem and Om,

Swami Swaroopananda
Head, Chinmaya Mission

19th October 2017
Diwali



UPANISHAD COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Research

Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

Phone: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676 Email: upanishadcourse@chinfo.org Web: www.chinfo.org



cif

GRATITUDE



Our first gratitude goes to all of you, the eager students. It is your interest that is the prime mover behind Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji envisioning and authoring this Upanishad Course.

We shall ever be indebted to the Ṛṣis who have benevolently shared their Wisdom that is enshrined in the sacred Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads are inspirational and timeless and have stood like a lighthouse from time immemorial guiding all seekers endeavouring to cross the ocean of saṃsāra.

Many individuals dedicated themselves to creating this fascinating Upanishad Course and to all of them Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) offers its heartfelt gratitude. Brni. Shripriya Chaitanya, Chinmaya Mission, London, and Acharya Shreevidya, Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai, assiduously transcribed all the 23 lectures that Pūjya Guruji delivered in the 'Upanishad Darshan' Camp held at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Mumbai, in January 2017. Simultaneously, Smt. (Dr.) Anita Raina Tapan, New Delhi, worked with great devotion and diligence and converted the transcripts into the lesson format that forms the very foundation and basic structure of the entire Upanishad Course. We are truly indebted to her for her labour of love.

The CIF team thereafter took the responsibility upon themselves and set to work. Br. Sundar Chaitanya not only undertook the production coordination, but also typeset, proofread and exhorted the team to pull together; it is his immense energy and skills that brought the project to a timely completion.

Smt. Radhika Manoj took care of the pagination; Br. Chirantan Chaitanya and Br. Sanath diligently checked all the cross references and proofed the pages

Gratitude

as and when their assistance was sought. Smt. Sarala Suresh, Research Fellow at the CIF Shodha Sansthan, even while she was recuperating from an unexpected hospitalisation, went through the content with great devotion and helped in making it error free. Br. Sagar Chaitanya too contributed his best to this end.

Br. Ved Chaitanya from Chinmaya Mission, Navi Mumbai, and Br. Narayana Chaitanya from Chinmaya Mission, Vikarabad, Telangana, created the questionnaires that accompany these lessons. Deeply thought through, the questions have been framed such as to consistently push the learner to a further contemplation of the lesson. They have also worked on the Glossary as well as the Subject Index. Br. Ved Chaitanya with his eagle eye has also proofread the final versions.

The contribution of Swami Shashvatananda, Acharya, Chinmaya Mission Salem; Acharya Rammohan and Acharya Shanthi Rammohan from CIF; Smt. Rajalekshmi, Librarian, CIF Shodha Sansthan; and Vidhi Modi, Yuvaveer at CIF, during the initial drafts cannot be overstated. Aishwarya Seetharam, Yuvaveer at CIF, also joined the team at the end of the work and lent her youthful enthusiasm to the completion of the Course.

We truly thank Smt. Sandhya Sundar, Chennai, for the English language edits. She has given this Course a finesse that is characteristic of her work, without which it would not be such a good read for all of us. Indeed her work is a labour of pure love.

We are very grateful to Sri Venkata Pula and Smt. Mahalakshmi Pula, the dedicated Chinmaya Family couple from Boston, USA, for voluntarily coming forward and sponsoring the Upanishad Course project. Smt. Mahalakshmi also serves as a Director on the Board of Chinmaya Mission West.

On all these devotees and seekers of the Reality I invoke the abundant grace of the Lord and the choicest blessings of Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayanandaji.

We are very grateful to Pūjya Swami Swaroopanandaji, Head of the Chinmaya Mission, for the Benediction and the abundant guidance, support and blessings that he has always showered CIF with.

Upanishad Course

Our deepest love and gratitude is for Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayanandaji, whose love of the Upaniṣads fills these pages; his erudition and simplicity, profundity and ease of expression are evident in full measure, and these pages carry to you his encouragement and blessings to help you along in your study and spiritual pursuit.

Beyond and above all, we bow our heads in reverence to all those great masters and students whose astounding philosophical and spiritual ruminations have weathered the scourge of time; this Upanishad Course brings to you in abundant measure that received Wisdom so that we may understand, live and pass this treasure on to future generations. We are ever indebted to them.

We are sure that the study of the Upanishad Course will inspire you to next take up for study the Upaniṣads in their original. We hope this Course will not only help you comprehend the eternal message of the Ṛṣis but also inspire you to walk with confidence the path envisaged by them and attain the summum bonnum of life.

In Śrī Guru Smṛti,

Swami Advayananda
Ācārya, CIF

19th October 2017
Diwali





UPANISHAD COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION



Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Research

Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

Phone: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676 Email: upanishadcourse@chinfo.org Web: www.chinfo.org



GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS



Welcome to this Upanishad Course. Chinmaya International Foundation (CIF) takes great pleasure in offering this new study in its bouquet of Home Study Courses, available in webinar, online and postal modes. Authored by Pūjya Guruji Swami Tejomayananda, mentor and guide of the Chinmaya Mission Worldwide, this course extracts the essence of the Upaniṣads and presents it to the student embellished by Pūjya Guruji's insights and wisdom.

Every person seeking answers to the wonders and pains of life and living must at some point in the spiritual journey stop and face the fundamental questions: Who am I? What is this world? These two essential questions lead us into a twofold enquiry: one, into the nature of the Self and, two, into the cause of this world. The answers to these form the theme of the Upaniṣads: Brahma-vidyā.

Keeping to the traditional framework and method of instruction in Advaita-vedānta, Pūjya Guruji has presented the core of the Upaniṣadic teachings within the framework of the anubandha-catuṣṭaya. Mantras that deal with each concept have been selected from multiple Upaniṣads and a comprehensive explanation given for each.

The Upanishad Course has been divided into 24 lessons and we expect that you will cover it in a year at the rate of two lessons a month. At the end of each lesson, you will be required to answer a questionnaire based on the lesson. Take a fortnight to study each lesson and submit your answers to these questions. As and when you complete the lessons you will receive further lessons. The glossary of Sanskrit technical terms used in these lessons, as well as

Upanishad Course

the subject index, are also a part of this course material and will be a very useful reference throughout your study.

If you fail to submit your answers regularly and on time, you will be taken off the rolls, and you will have to re-register and start afresh from the first lesson should you choose to get back to the course. Of course, all genuine and valid reasons for failing to submit the answers on time will certainly be given due consideration. In such cases, do contact the Course Administrator.

The priceless wisdom of the Upaniṣads is being offered to you in capsule form, so as to make you familiar with its key concepts. This Course is indeed an 'Upanishad-darshan', empowering you with the vision of the Upaniṣads. For this to truly happen, it is essential therefore that you internalise the ideas and concepts through diligent study and practice. With this as the objective we recommend the following method of study:

- Devote at least half-an-hour daily to study these lessons. Regular study and reflection is the key to spiritual knowledge becoming transformative.
- You must devote at least four hours a week on study and reflection.
- Once you are confident that you have understood the contents of the lesson, answer the questionnaire that pertains to the lesson. We expect your answers to be to the point and in your own words. Refrain from referring to the lesson while answering the questions. As much as possible, answer all the questions at one stretch.
- Make it a point to revise the earlier lesson before you begin a new one. Once in six months revise all the lessons you have studied.
- Record all your doubts in a separate book. As the concepts unfold in the subsequent lessons, most of your doubts will clear. Hence we discourage learners from writing to us about their doubts as and when they first arise. If the questions persist, of course you are welcome to write/e-mail us.

Guidelines and Instructions

- In a separate book jot down the ideas and concepts that truly inspire you. Read this book often and make a conscious attempt to practise these ideals in day-to-day life. Simply browsing through this book that you have prepared will certainly give you the insight and inspiration to face problems and meet life as it unfolds.
- We recommend that you also discuss and share these ideas and insights with like-minded friends. Such discussion can only enhance your clarity on the subject matter.
- For spiritual knowledge to be truly kindled in us, two factors are imperative: purity of mind (heart) and clarity of knowledge (head). Reflect on these lessons and the knowledge gained therein; mull over the ideas as you go about your daily work and there will be moments of sudden insight which will take you another step forward in your spiritual journey.

That sincere study and reflection will transform your life – the way you feel, think and interact with others – and through you the lives of the people around you cannot be doubted. For further study we suggest that you look at the individual commentaries on each Upaniṣad by Pūjya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda.

All these books can be purchased from CIF or local Chinmaya Mission Centre or ordered online from <http://eshop.chinmayamission.com/>

All correspondence with respect to the Upanishad Course should carry your registration number and should be addressed to:

The Administrator, Upanishad Course
Chinmaya International Foundation
Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg
Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 319 Kerala, India.
Ph: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676
Email: upanishadcourse@chinfo.org

We wish you the very best in your study and spiritual unfoldment.





UPANISHAD COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION



Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Research

Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

Phone: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676 Email: upanishadcourse@chinfo.org Web: www.chinfo.org

cif

KEY TO TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION

The Sanskrit language, written in the Devanāgarī script, has nearly twice as many characters in its alphabet as has English. In these lessons, the Devanāgarī characters have been transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International congress of orientologists at Athens in 1912 and since then generally acknowledged to be the only rational and satisfactory scheme. The following is the key for the transliteration and pronunciation of the Sanskrit alphabet. One 'sound value' is given to each letter; f, g, w, x, and z are not used at all.

अ	a	like the <i>o</i> in son
आ	ā	like the <i>a</i> in far
इ	i	like the <i>i</i> in if
ई	ī	like the <i>ee</i> in feel
उ	u	like the <i>u</i> in full
ऊ	ū	like the <i>oo</i> in pool
ऋ	r̄	like the <i>ri</i> in rig
ॠ	r̄	no equivalent in English
ऌ	l̄	no equivalent in English
ए	e	like the <i>a</i> in gate
ऐ	ai	like the <i>y</i> in my
ओ	o	like the <i>o</i> in note
औ	au	like the <i>ou</i> in loud
क	k	like the <i>k</i> in look
ख	kh	like the <i>kh</i> in khan
ग	g	like the <i>g</i> in gap
घ	gh	like the <i>gh</i> in ghost
च	c	like the <i>ch</i> in chuckle
छ	ch	like the <i>ch</i> in treachery
ज	j	like the <i>j</i> in jam
झ	jh	like the <i>geh</i> in hedgehog

Key to Transliteration and Pronunciation

ट्	t	like the <i>t</i> in tank
ठ्	th	like the <i>th</i> in ant hill (approximate)
ड्	d	like the <i>d</i> in dog
ढ्	dh	like the <i>dd</i> in midday (approximate)
त्	t	like the <i>th</i> in thump
थ्	th	like the <i>th</i> in Othello
द्	d	like the <i>th</i> in then
ध्	dh	like the <i>dh</i> in dhobi
प्	p	like the <i>p</i> in put
फ्	ph	like the <i>ph</i> in uphill (approximate)
ब्	b	like the <i>b</i> in bad
भ्	bh	like the <i>bh</i> in bhangra
ङ्	ñ	like the <i>ng</i> in sing
ञ्	ñ	like the <i>ny</i> in canyon (approximate)
ण्	ṇ	like the <i>n</i> in under
न्	n	like the <i>n</i> in nose
य्	y	like the <i>y</i> in yap
र्	r	like the <i>R</i> in Raja
ल्	l	like the <i>l</i> in lap
व्	v	like the <i>v</i> in avert (approximate)
श्	ś	like the <i>sh</i> in shri
ष्	ṣ	like the <i>sh</i> in shall
स्	s	like the <i>s</i> in sand
ह्	h	like the <i>h</i> in hat (approximate)
:	ḥ	a distinct hard aspiration that echoes the vowel which immediately precedes it
.	m̐	the nasal belonging to the preceding vowel, the precise sound of which depends upon the consonants that follow it. Represented by a dot above the alphabet.





UPANISHAD COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION



Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Research

Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

Phone: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676 Email: upanishadcourse@chininfo.org Web: www.chininfo.org

cif

COURSE CONTENT

(24 Lessons)



1. Introduction

Upaniṣads as Śāstra
Methodology of Study
The Vedas
Dharma
Pravṛtti-dharma
Nivṛtti-dharma
The Term 'Upaniṣad'
Anubandha-catuṣṭaya
Vedānta
Yajurveda-śāntimantra

2. Adhikārin: Essentials and Gurūpasadana

Viveka
Parīkṣā: How to Analyse a Topic?
Vairāgya
The Viveka and Vairāgya of Maitreyī
Naciketas – An Exemplary Adhikārin
Seeking the Guru
Who is a Guru?
The Guru's Duty

3. Adhikārin: Sādhana-catuṣṭaya

Sādhana-catuṣṭaya

4. Viṣaya: Questions from the Upaniṣads

Question from the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*

The Necessity of Knowledge

Question from the *Kena-upaniṣad*

Significance of the Question

Why this Question?

Beyond the Assemblage

This the Student Seeks to Understand

Ātma-jijñāsā or Ātma-vicāra

Question from the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*

Question from the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*

Question from the *Praśna-upaniṣad*

Brahma-jijñāsā or Brahma-vicāra

5. Viṣaya: Ātma-vicāra (Part I)

Śreyas and Preyas

Jijñāsā-pūrṭi

Ātma-vicāra

Pāramārthika-svarūpa or Absolute Identity

Matter, Energy, Sentience and Consciousness

Turning the Mind's Attention to the Truth

Nature of Self-knowledge

Nature of Consciousness

6. Viṣaya: Ātma-vicāra (Part II)

Vyāvahārika-svarūpa

Māyā

Ātman and Jīva

Jīva-bhāva

Three States of Experience
Waking State or Jāgrat-avasthā
Dream State or Svapna-avasthā
Deep Sleep State or Suṣupti-avasthā
What Makes a Jīva Wake up from Sleep?
The Three States and the Three Bodies

7. Viṣaya: Brahma-vicāra

Brahma-jijñāsā
Svarūpa-lakṣaṇa
Brahman and Māyā
Taṭastha-lakṣaṇa
Purpose of Discussing Creation

8. Viṣaya: Creation

The Process of Creation
The Virāṭ-puruṣa
Creation of the Vedas
Dikṣā in the Vedas
Yajñas and Lokas
Duties and Other Beings
Values and Virtues
The Inner Sevenfold Ritual
Conclusion

9. Viṣaya: Brahmātmaikya (Part 1)

Dvaita and Advaita
The Significance of 'Subtle' and Ātman
Absolute Reality
Brahman and Ātman are One
Tat Tvam Asi
Theme of Oneness

Mahāvākya
Absolute Identity
Brahma-vidyā – Questions
Brahma-vidyā

10. Viṣaya: Brahmātmaikya (Part II)

Nature of Brahman
Limitation or Finitude
Significance of the Term 'Brahma'
Location of Brahman
Nature of the Knowledge of Brahman
Result of the Knowledge of Brahman

11. Viṣaya: Pañcakośa-viveka

Pañcakośas
The Ānanda-ātman
Ahaṅkāra or Ego
Brahma-vidyā is Upaniṣad
Means for Realising the Self
The Right Attitude for Śravaṇa and Manana

12. Viṣaya: Śravaṇa, Manana and Nididhyāsana (Part I)

Śravaṇa
Doubts after Śravaṇa
Manana or Reflection
Manana in the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*
The Infinite Alone is Brahman
Nididhyāsana

13. Viṣaya: Śravaṇa, Manana and Nididhyāsana (Part II)

The Practice of Meditation
External Preparation
Internal Preparation

Obstacles to Meditation

Key to Success

14. Viṣaya: Meditation Aided by Om

Om in the *Kāṭha-upaniṣad*

Om in the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*

Om in the *Māṇḍūkya-upaniṣad*

The Four Quarters of Om

Practical Aspect of Om Meditation

Benefits of Chanting Om

Recapitulation of Meditation on OM

15. Viṣaya: The Practice of Meditation

Merging into the Self

The Process of Merging

Implication of Meditation

The Supreme State

16. Viṣaya: The Mahāvākyas and the Chariot Metaphor

Mahāvākyas

Interconnecting the Four Mahāvākyas

Consciousness or Prajñāna

The Chariot Metaphor

Building the Metaphor

From the Gross to the most Subtle

The Supreme State

Subtle Intellect versus Sharp Intellect

17. Prayojana: The Result of Knowledge

Self-realisation and Its Results

The Knots of the Heart are Cut Asunder

Purpose Served by Upaniṣad

All Doubts are Dispelled
Freedom from the Bondage of Karmas

18. Prayojana: The Vision of Oneness

End of Delusion and Grief
Superficial Solution for Sorrow
The End of Ignorance
The End of Fear
End of Revulsion, Hatred and Dislike
Attaining the Supreme
The Experience of Bliss

19. Sambandha: Bodhya-bodhaka-bhāva

The Aprāpta Goal
The Prāpta Goal
Knowledge and Its Result
Bodhya-bodhaka-sambandha
What is Bondage?
What is Liberation?
Knowledge: The Means for Liberation
Is it Fanaticism?
Is Bhakti Not a Means for Mokṣa?
What Does Knowledge Reveal?

20. Prayojana: The Jīvanmukta and His Characteristics

Jīvanmukti and Jīvanmukta
Jīvanmukti – A Fact
Bondage and Liberation
Beyond Puṇya and Pāpa
Jīvanmukta is Desireless
Jīvanmukta is Satyasaṅkalpa

Behind the Jīvanmukta's Wish-fulfilling Abilities
The Jīvanmukta's Expression of Bliss

21. *Prayojana: From Jīvanmukti to Videhamukti*

Qualities of a Jīvanmukta
A Jīvanmukta Alone Attains Videhamukti
Merging with the Infinitude
The Sixteen Kalās
Prāṇa, Pañca-mahābhūtas, Indriya, Manas, Annam and Vīryam
Śraddhā
Annam and Vīryam
Tapas
Mantra
Karma
Loka
Nāma
What is Mahāsamādhi?

22. *Self-realisation: Success and Failure*

Single-pointed Aspiration
Self-effort, Grace of God and Guru
Moral Strength
Pramāda
Tapas without Liṅga
Who Does Not Realise the Ātman?
Factors that Accelerate the Realisation of Ātman

23. *Śānti-mantras*

Ṛgveda-śāntimantra
Sāmaveda-śāntimantra
Atharvaveda-śāntimantra

24. Conclusion

Yajurveda-śāntimantra

Gratitude of the Disciple

Blessings of the Guru

Summary

Upanishad Course as Adhyātma-śāstra





UPANISHAD COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION

Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Research

Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

Phone: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676 Email: upanishadcourse@chinfo.org Web: www.chinfo.org



cif

GLOSSARY



A

abhyudaya – material prosperity

acintya – that which cannot be thought of by the mind

adbhuta – a wonder

adharmā – unrighteousness

adhikārin – an aspirant qualified for the Self-knowledge

adhiṣṭhāna – substratum, ādhāra

adhyātma-śāstra – science of spirituality or science of the Self

adrśya – unseen

advaita – non-dual

advaita-vedānta – philosophy of non-dualism

aham – I

ahaṅkāra – ego, the concept of possessiveness or egoism

aikya – oneness

aja – unborn

ajñāna – ignorance

akhaṇḍākāra-vṛtti – the thought that has taken the form of the Homogenous.

This thought is also called as 'brahmākāra-vṛtti'. Both these terms stand for the firm 'I am Brahman' thought which puts an end to ignorance.

akṣara – the imperishable principle

amanas – without mind

amṛta – immortal

amūrta – formless

ananta – infinite

Glossary

- ananya-bhakti* – single-pointed devotion
anātman – not-Self
aṅga-aṅgī-bhāva – relation of the part to the whole
anirvacanīya – inexplicable
anitya – impermanent
aniyatākṣara – indefinite words
annamaya-kośa – food sheath
anna-vikāra – modification of food
antaḥ-karaṇa – inner instrument made up of manas, buddhi, citta and ahaṅkāra
antaraṅga-sādhana – advanced or spiritual practice within
anubandha-catuṣṭaya – the four preliminary considerations related to the study of a text
anumāna-pramāṇa – inference as a means of knowledge
apāna – physiological function of evacuation
aparokṣa-jñāna – direct Knowledge of the Self
aprāṇa – without prāṇas
aprāpta – that which is not gained
artha – wealth or meaning
arūpam – formless
asura – demon
atyāśrama – the last stage of life called renunciation
avara – lower
avasādana – decay, weakening, wearing out
avidyā – ignorance
avidyā-granthi – the knot of ignorance
avyakta – unmanifest
avyakta-rūpa – unmanifest form
ābhyantara – inside
ācārya – teacher
ādhibhautika – pertaining to things, beings and situations of the world around us

ādhidaiivika – pertaining to the devatās or cosmic forces

ādhyātmika – pertaining to our body, mind and intellect

āgāmi-karma – results born from the actions of the present embodiment that
will accrue to the individual in the future

āhuti – oblation to be offered in the fire

ākāśa – space

ālambana – support

ālocanāyām – with respect to thinking

ānandamaya-kośa – bliss sheath, corresponding to the causal body

ānanda-sāgara – ocean of Bliss

ānanda-svarūpa – of the nature of Bliss

āpa – water

āsana – posture

āstika-darśana – philosophies that believe in the authority of the Vedas

āśrama – hermitage or stage of life

Ātman – the true Self, the unconditioned pure Consciousness

ātma-jijñāsā – enquiry into the Self

ātmajñānī – the knower of the Self

ātma-kṛpā – grace of the Self

ātma-svarūpa – of the nature of the Self

ātma-vicāra – enquiry into the Self

āvaraṇa-śakti – concealing or veiling power of māyā

āvīrbhāva – to become manifest

B

bahiraṅga-sādhana – external spiritual practice

bala – strength

bandha – bondage

bāhya – outer, external

bhadra – auspicious

Glossary

bhajan – devotional song

bhakta – devotee of the Lord

bhakti – devotion

bhakti-mārga – the path of devotion

bhautika-śāstra – physics

bhaya – fear

bhāvanā – feeling or attitude

bhoga – experience or enjoyment

bhogārthin – seeker of pleasure

bhoktā – enjoyer

bhoktr̥tva – enjoyership

bhūtayoni – cause of this world

bodhaka – revealer

bodhya – revealed

bodhya-bodhaka-sambandha – relationship between the revealer and the revealed

brahmacārin – seeker walking the path of Brahman

brahmacarya-āśrama – student life

brahma-jijñāsā – enquiry into the Brahman

brahmajñānī – knower of Brahman

Brahman – supreme Truth, infinite Reality

brahmāṇḍa – cosmos, a total of fourteen worlds (lokas)

brahmaniṣṭha – person established in the Brahman

brahmasūtras – aphorisms composed by Veda Vyāsa

brahma-svarūpa – of the nature of Brahman

brahma-vicāra – enquiry into Brahman

brahma-vidyā – Knowledge of Brahman

brahmātmaikya – oneness between the Self and the Brahman

buddhi – intellect, the decision-making power of the individual

C

caitanya – Consciousness

caturtha – fourth

chandasa – Vedic prosody or metres, such as gāyatrī, triṣṭup, anuṣṭup and so on

cit – Consciousness

citta – memory, thoughts of the nature of memory

D

dakṣiṇā – reward given at the end of the rituals to the priest who performs them
or to the teacher who instructs a student

dakṣiṇa-mārga – the southern path

dama – control of the senses

darśana – a school of philosophy

deha – body

deśa – space

deśataḥ – with respect to space

deva or devatā – god or deity

dhanārthī – seeker of wealth

dharma – essential nature of an object or righteousness or nobility

dhīra – an intelligent person

dhṛti – fortitude, the ability to hold on to a goal

dhyāna-yoga – path of contemplation

divya – divine or self-shining

dīkṣā – initiation

dīkṣānta-samāroha – graduation ceremony

ḍṛk – seer

ḍṛg-ḍṛśya-viveka – differentiation between the seer and the seen

ḍṛṣṭa – seer

ḍṛśya – seen

dvaita – duality

dveṣa – dislike

E

ekākṣaram – monosyllable

G

gadya – prose

gandha – smell

gati – destination

ghṛṇa – hatred

gītī – song

golaka – physical aperture of the senses

gotra – lineage

granthi – knot

gṛhastha – householder

gṛhastha-āśrama – household life

guhā – cave

guṇātīta – the man of Self-realisation who has transcended the three guṇas

Guru – teacher

guru-kṛpā – grace of the Guru

gurukula – traditional residential schools

gurūpasadana – traditional way of approaching a teacher

gūḍha – hidden

H

hiranyagarbha – the supreme Consciousness associated with the total mind-intellect

hṛdaya – heart

hṛdaya-granthi – knot of the heart

I

idam – this, the entire world

indriya – the senses

iṣṭa-devatā – personal or favourite God

iṣṭa-mantra – japamantra of iṣṭa-devatā

itihāsa – epic

Īśa or Īśvara – the Lord

īśvara-kṛpā – grace of the Lord

J

jada – inert

jagat – world

japa – repetition of the Lord's name

jāgrat-avasthā – waking state

jijñāsā – quest for knowledge

jīva or jīvātman – the limited individual or the bound self

jīva-bhāva – the notion or sense of being a limited individual

jīvabrahmaikya – oneness between jīva and Brahman

jīvanmukta – the person liberated even while living

jīvanmukti – the final Liberation

jīveśvaraikya – oneness between jīva and Īśvara

jñāna – knowledge

jñāna-mārga – path of knowledge

jñānendriya – organs of knowledge such as ear, skin and so on

Jñānī – the one endowed with Self-knowledge

jyoti – fire

K

kalā – part or facet or phase or aspect of the personality

karma – action

karmādhyakṣa – Īśvara who presides over all karmas

karma-kāṇḍa – the ritual portion of the Vedas

karmaphala – fruits of action

Glossary

- karmaphaladātā* – bestower of the fruits of action
karma-yoga – path of action
karmendriya – organs of action such as speech, hands and so on
kartā – doer
karṭṛtva – doership
karuṇā – compassion
kāla – time
kālataḥ – with respect to time
kālātīta – one who has transcended time
kāma – desire
kāraṇa – cause
kāraṇa-śarīra – causal body
kārya – effect
kāryakāraṇa-viveka – discrimination between cause and effect
kāṣṭha – the final limit
kośa – sheath, such as annamaya-kośa and so on
kriyā-śakti – the power to act
kṛtakṛtyatā – complete fulfilment

L

- lakṣaṇa* – definition
lakṣyārtha – implied meaning
laya – dissolution
laya-sthāna – abode of dissolution
liṅga – marker or sign
loka – world or field of experience

M

- mahat-tattva* – total mind
mahādbhutā – mysterious
mahāvākya – identity revealing statement

mahāvākya-vicāra – enquiry into the implied meaning of the mahāvākyas

manana – deep reflection

manas – mind, thoughts in the condition of doubt or indecision

manomaya-kośa – mental sheath

mantra – a verse from the Vedas

māyā – illusion or magic or the Lord's power

medhā – the ability to understand and memorise the śāstras

mithyā – illusion or that which is not truly existent

moda – the thrill prompted by attaining the object of our liking

moha – delusion

mokṣa – Liberation

mukti – Liberation

mumukṣu – one desirous of Liberation

mumukṣutva – the burning desire for Liberation

muni – a reflective person

mūrti – idol

mūrti-pūjā – worship of the ideal through an idol

N

nāma – name

nididhyāsana – contemplation, continuous flow of a single thought directed to
Brahman

niḥśreyasa – Liberation

nirguṇa – without attributes

nirguṇa-brahman – attributeless Reality

niṣedha – prohibition or what must not be done

niṣkāma – desireless

niṣkāma-karma – actions performed without selfish desires

nitya – eternal or permanent

nitya-mukta – ever-liberated

Glossary

nitya-upalabdha – ever-present or ever-available

nivṛtti – actionlessness or renunciation

O

oṣadhi – plant kingdom

P

padya – poetry

pañcāgni-vidyā – a combination of karma and upāsanā on the five fires as explained in the Vedas

pañca-kośa – five sheaths

pañca-mahābhūta – the five great elements

pāpa – demerit

para – higher

parama-guru – grand-guru

paramānanda – supreme Bliss

paramātman – the supreme Self of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss

paramēśvara – the Lord

paramparā – succession

parīkṣā – examination

parivāra – family

parokṣa-jñāna – indirect knowledge gained through a medium

pāramārthika – absolute

pāribhāṣika-śabda – technical word

pitā – father

pluta – elongation of a vowel

prakaraṇa-grantha – topical text

prakārāntara – different mode or manner

pralaya – cosmic dissolution

pramāda – inadvertence

pramāṇa – instrument or means of knowledge

pramoda – the happiness ensuing from actually enjoying the object of our liking

prameya – the object of knowledge

praṇava – Om, the primordial sound

prapañca – world

praśna – question

prathama – first

pratyagātman – the inner Self

pratyakṣa-jñāna – direct knowledge gained through the senses

pravacana – discourse or satsang

pravṛtti – activity

prājñā – Consciousness

prāṇa – faculty of respiration that controls the inhalation and exhalation of
breath

prāṇamaya-kośa – the vital-air sheath

prāṇa-vīkṣaṇa – observation of the breath

prāpta – that which has already been gained

prāpya – that which is to be gained

prārabdha-karma – results of those actions that have caused the present
embodiment and the experiences thereof

preyas – path of pleasure

priya – joy caused by the perception of the object of our liking

pr̥thivī – earth

puṇya – merit

purāṇa – texts which are old yet their teaching is new

pūrṇam – full or complete or infinite or limitless

puruṣa – the supreme Self

puruṣārthas – human goals of life – dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa

pūjā – ritual worship of a deity

pūrti – completion or fulfilment

R

rasa – taste

rasāyana-śāstra – chemistry

rāga – likes

ṛṣi – those to whom Vedas were revealed

ṛtam – intellectual determination and understanding of the truths enshrined in the scriptures

rūpa – form

S

saguṇa – with attributes

saguṇa-brahman – Reality with attributes

sakāma-karma – desire-prompted actions

sama – equal

samādhāna – the ability to keep the mind absorbed in the pursuit of knowledge

samādhi – absorption of mind in the thought ‘I am Brahman’

samādhi-avasthā – state of absorption

samāna – physiological faculty of digestion

samasta-sākṣin – the illuminator or witness of all

samaṣṭi – totality or macrocosm

sambandha – relationship

samit – sacrificial fuel

samsāra – realm of transmigration

saṁśaya or sandeha – doubt

samskāra – inherent tendencies

saṁvāda – dialogue

samyag-jñāna – right knowledge or right thinking.

sañcita-karma – collection of results of all the actions performed by an individual in all the previous births

saṅghāta – assemblage

saṅkalpa – wish or desire

sannyāsa – renunciation

sannyāsa-dīkṣā – initiation into the life of renunciation

sat – Existence

satsaṅga – company of the good or a spiritual discourse

sattā - Existence

satya – virtue of truth or Existence

satyasaṅkalpa – one whose every saṅkalpa or wish is readily fulfilled.

sarvātmabhāva – mental attitude of seeing one Self in all

sarva-vyāpī – all pervading

sādhana – means or spiritual practice

sādhana-catustaya – four-fold qualification comprising viveka, vairāgya, śamādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti and mumukṣutva

sākṣāt-sādhana – direct means

sākṣi-bhāva – attitude of being a witness

smṛti – memory

sparsā – touch

spaṣṭa – clear

sṛṣṭi or sarga – creation

sthira – firm

sthitaprajñā – Man of Wisdom established firmly in the knowledge of the Self

sthiti – sustenance

sthiti-kāraṇa – cause of sustenance

sthūla-buddhi – gross intellect

sthūla-pañcamahābhūta – gross form of the five great elements

sthūla-śarīra – physical or gross body

stotra – hymn in praise of the Lord

sukha – joy

sukhāsana – comfortable posture

suṣupti-avasthā – deep sleep state

Glossary

sūkṣma-buddhi – subtle intellect capable of understanding subtle topics
sūkṣma-śarīra – subtle body
sūktam – Vedic hymn
sūrya – sun
svamāyayā – by his own illusory power
svapna-avasthā – dream state
svarga – heaven
svarūpa – nature
svarūpa-lakṣaṇa – definition based on the object's intrinsic characteristics
svataḥ-siddha – self-existent
svayaṁ-siddha – self-existent

Ś

śabda – sound
śabda-pramāṇa – scriptures as a means of knowledge
śakti – power
śakti-pradātā – giver of power
śama – control of the mind
samādi-ṣaṭka-sampatti – six-fold inner wealth starting with śama
śaucam – purification
śānti – peace
śānti-mantra – invocation of peace
śāstra – scripture
śāstrārtha – discussion upon the scriptures
śiṣya – disciple or student
śivam – most auspicious
śoka – grief
śraddhā – faith
śravaṇa – listening attentively to the teacher so that the purport of Vedānta is
ascertained

śreyas – path of good

śrotriya – one who is well learned in the Vedic lore

śruti – that which is heard, a term which connotes the Vedas

śubhra or śuddha – pure

śuci – cleanliness or purity

śuddha-ātman – the pure Self

śuddha-vaidika-śāstrīya-paramparā – the pure Vedic and traditional method

śūnya – nothingness

Ṣ

ṣoḍaśa-kalā-puruṣa – supreme Reality associated with sixteen facets

T

taijasa – dream state ego

tamas – darkness

tanmātra – subtle form of the five great elements

tapas – austerity or penance or the single-pointedness of the mind and sense organs

taṭastha-lakṣaṇa – definition of an object based on its relationship with another temporary, external object

tattva – factor

tātparyā-nirṇaya – assertion of the essential teachings of the scriptures

titikṣā – forbearance

trayī – the Vedas

tr̥pti – contentment

turīya – fourth

U

udāna – physiological faculty governing the reverse processes like vomiting, burping and so on

upadeśa – teaching

Glossary

upādhi – conditioning

upalakṣaṇa – implication

Upaniṣad – the philosophical portion of the Vedas that contains the Knowledge of the Self as its subject matter

uparama – withdrawal of the mind from all indulgence

upāsaka – worshipper

upāsanā – worship

uttama-adhikārin – seeker of high calibre

uttara-mārga – the northern path

ūrjā-śakti – vital power

V

vācyārtha – literal meaning

vairāgya – dispassion

varaṇa – choosing

vāsanā – inherent and habitual tendencies born of impressions gained through the experiences in this life or the earlier ones

vastu – object

vastutaḥ – with respect to the object

vāda – argument

vāyu – air

Veda – the revealed knowledge that forms the foundation of Hinduism

vedānta – end portion of the Vedas, also termed Upaniṣad

vibhu – all-pervading

vicāra – thinking or enquiry

videhamukti – liberation associated with the death of the body

vidhi – injunction about what must be done

vidhivat – in accordance with the injunctions

vidyārthī – seeker of knowledge

vijñāna – experiential knowledge

vijñānamaya-kośa – intellectual sheath

vikṣepa-śakti – projecting power of māyā

vilakṣaṇa – different

viparīta-bhāvanā – contrary notions that are at variance with the knowledge ‘I am Brahman’

virāṭ-puruṣa – the cosmic form of the Lord

viśadam – clear

viśaraṇa – destruction

viśaya – subject matter

viśayānanda – pleasures obtained from objects

viśeṣaṇa – adjective

Viṣṇu – the all-pervading Reality

viśokam – devoid of sorrow

viśuddham – extremely pure

viśva – waking state ego

vivāha – marriage

viveka – discrimination

vivekī – one who discriminates well

vivikta-deśa – solitary place

vīryam – vitality or energy that one gets from food

vrata – vow or observance

vṛtti – thought

vṛttijñāna – knowledge in the form of a thought

vyāṣṭi – individuality or microcosm

vyāna – physiological faculty of circulation

vyāpaka – all-pervasive

vyāvahārika-svarūpa – empirical or relative nature

Y

yajamāna – one who performs the yajña

yajña – ritualistic fire worship

Glossary

yajñopavīta – sacred thread

yajñopavīta-dīkṣā – the sacred thread ceremony

yāga – ritualistic fire worship

yātanā-śarīra – the body that one gets in hell

yoga – that which unites one with the Supreme

yogin – one who practices yoga

yogya-vidyārthī – a qualified or fit student

yoni – womb or type of birth

yuktātmānaḥ – Man of Realisation whose mind is totally absorbed in the Truth





UPANISHAD COURSE

CHINMAYA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION



Centre for Sanskrit and Indic Research

Adi Sankara Nilayam, Adi Sankara Marg, Veliyanad, Ernakulam - 682 313, Kerala, India.

Phone: +91-92077-11140, +91-484-2749676 Email: upanishadcourse@chininfo.org Web: www.chininfo.org

cif

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION



Upaniṣads as Śāstra

This Upaniṣad Course aims to equip us with a vision of the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads are verily 'śāstra', which term signifies an entire system of knowledge. Thus the term 'śāstra' can also be used to indicate the various material sciences such as bhautika-śāstra (physics) and rasāyana-śāstra (chemistry); in the spiritual context, however, the term 'śāstra' signifies a 'scripture'. What is common in both cases – science or scripture – is that the subject matter is dealt with in its totality.

Śāstra (or science) is described as a systematic study of a particular subject. In the case of the Upaniṣads, this science is referred to as 'adhyātma-śāstra' because the study is centred on the Ātman. Ātman refers to the Self (I) and that is why this knowledge is also referred to as 'Self-knowledge' or 'spiritual knowledge.'

Methodology of Study

There are numerous Upaniṣads. Some say there are 108, of which ten or eleven are considered the major ones. Although all of them deal with the same knowledge, certain aspects of this knowledge are dealt with more elaborately in one or the other of them. In this course, we highlight such relevant portions from different Upaniṣads that will enable us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the overall vision of the Upaniṣads.

The study and presentation of this subject in this course is in accordance with the tradition of Advaita-vedānta, as handed over to us by our Guru-paramparā and as expounded by its foremost Ācārya, Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Being thus the śuddha-vaidika-śāstrīya-paramparā (the pure Vedic and traditional method), the method of study here will be quite distinct from the modern scholarly and academic approach used for the study of philosophy in Universities and other academic institutions.

The Vedas

Intrinsic to the study of the Upaniṣads, or Vedānta as it is also known (since it is the culminating section of the Vedas), is the axiom that the Vedas are the authentic, authoritative and valid means of knowledge: *vedāḥ pramāṇam*. The Vedas are described both as (1) the means and (2) the treasure house of knowledge. Because the scope of this Vedic knowledge is so vast, in time it was not possible for any one individual to know all of it. Therefore, Sage Veda-vyāsa in his infinite wisdom and compassion divided the Veda into four different volumes: *Ṛg-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, *Sāma-veda* and *Atharva-veda*.

The Vedas give us knowledge of dharma: “*vedo’khilo dharmamūlam* – The Vedas are the very source of the knowledge of dharma.” However, knowledge of dharma cannot be attained through the usual means of gaining knowledge such as sense perception (pratyakṣa) or logic (anumāna). Thus, for those who want to understand what dharma is, the Vedas are the only supreme and valid means.¹



Reflect Upon

There are many aspects of knowledge that are beyond perception and inference. For example, in a particular country what is legal or illegal cannot be known by mere perception or just inference. Such matters have to be known from the nation’s constitution. So too, whether a particular act is according to dharma

¹ Dharmah jijñāsasamānānān paramaṁ pramāṇam śrutiḥ.

or not (i.e. righteous or unrighteous) cannot also be known by perception, or inference, or through other available means of knowledge such as postulation. This knowledge of dharma is brought to us by the Vedas alone.



Dharma

Dharma implies much more than its present restricted translation as 'religion' or 'duty'. Dharma is that in which lies the welfare of all beings. Hence the definition of dharma: "*yataḥ abhyudaya-niḥśreyasa-prāptiḥ, saḥ dharmah* – That which enables both material prosperity (abhyudaya) and spiritual unfoldment (niḥśreyasa) is 'dharma'."

In his introduction to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya elaborates on the full significance of the term 'dharma'. He explains that dharma is of two kinds: (1) pravṛtti and (2) nivṛtti.

'Pravṛtti' signifies the pursuit of some material goal and engagement in such activities as are appropriate to its attainment. Such material goals include prosperity, power, status, pleasure, comforts and even the attainment of heaven and the higher worlds after the fall of the body. 'Nivṛtti', on the other hand, means withdrawal from all material goals and their attendant activities in order to pursue spiritual knowledge. In short, 'pravṛtti' and 'nivṛtti' imply respectively action for worldly attainments and withdrawal from such actions for the Realisation of the Self.



Ponder Over

Pravṛtti and nivṛtti play out everyday in our lives. During the day, an individual remains active (pravṛtti) but in the evening withdraws from activity as sleep takes over (nivṛtti). Also, pravṛtti or an active life depends on a good night's rest, nivṛtti. Thus, nivṛtti sustains pravṛtti and pravṛtti leads to nivṛtti. Clearly, our health and well-being depend on both these aspects of life.

Another example of pravṛtti and nivṛtti could be that of any company manufacturing, say cars. While vigorous activity goes on in the factory and office – production and assembly, marketing, publicity, sales and so on – all of this pravṛtti is, in fact, sustained by the work undertaken in the Research and Development Department. And research work is always done with a quiet mind in a calm atmosphere away from feverish activity. This is nivṛtti.

These examples highlight nivṛtti at a rudimentary level. In the spiritual context, pravṛtti and nivṛtti have a deeper significance which will become clear in the course of this lesson.



Pravṛtti-dharma

Pravṛtti-dharma is to be considered at two levels:

(1) For individuals who have no idea what spiritual life is, their entire life is pravṛtti alone. That is why it is said: “*yad yad hi kurute jantuḥ tat tat kāmasya ceṣṭitam* – whatever an individual does is only an expression of desire.” The desire may be moral or immoral, ethical or unethical, good or bad. At the basic level, the desire may be just for food, clothing and shelter. And later it could be for more comforts and pleasure, to raise the standard of living, to gain power and position. Or, not being satisfied with this world, individuals may also desire a higher world if they believe in it. The śāstras prescribe certain rituals termed ‘yāgas’ for the attainment of such goals as heaven. By performing such rituals, the gods are propitiated and they in turn shower grace and blessings which enable one to attain those higher worlds.

Such a life of desire-prompted activity for one’s personal gratification is called sakāma-pravṛtti. The only driving question for all sakāma-pravṛtti is “What will I get?” There is little or no concern for others and the desire is merely for physical and tangible results.

(2) A new phase begins when an element of nivṛtti comes into an otherwise purely pravṛtti life. An individual begins to ask: What can I give? How can the

other person benefit from my time, money, skill? and so on. In other words, some actions become niṣkāma-karma, that is the individual's actions become prompted by selflessness too. Slowly the attitude of niṣkāma-karma increases and while one continues with activities prompted by selfish desires, there opens an aspect in one's life dedicated to the benefit of others without a feeling of obliging the other. In other words, an element of renunciation (nivṛtti) has entered one's life. Niṣkāma-karma is thus constituted of selfless action that rises above the need to fulfil selfish desires, leading to purification of the mind.

Various types of worship or upāsana are also indicated by the Vedas in the context of pravṛtti. Upāsana too can be practised either for material results (sakāma) or for purity of mind (niṣkāma). Hence pravṛtti-dharma is constituted of both karma (action) and upāsana (worship). If these are performed with desire for material gain one achieves that. But the advice is to slowly rise above self-centredness and ask oneself what one can do for others. And when such selfless actions are dedicated to God or offered as worship, one's whole attitude begins to transform. The result of such karma is purity of mind, and such karma is termed 'karma-yoga'.

We thus see that pravṛtti-dharma leads to abhyudaya (material prosperity). Also, when performed selflessly, it grants purity of mind and prepares the individual for nivṛtti-dharma, the topic of the Upaniṣads.



Ponder Over

A father has three children. Of them one is a professional, another an industrialist. Very proudly he says that his first son is a very successful doctor, a heart specialist, famous and so on. And about the other son the father says, he runs a successful company with an excellent turnover and so on and thus he is proud of him too. What about the third? He is a social worker, doesn't produce anything. The father starts saying on a complaining note: "And if you ask what is this social work, what do you get?" My son says, "Inner satisfaction!"

The reason why money is so attractive is because it is the currency of survival and also an immediate tangible result of work: If I work for 5 hours I get this much money, if I work for 10 hours I get this much money. Thus, it is very tangible unlike inner satisfaction. And when people do not choose work that gives tangible results they feel that they are not doing something worthwhile.



Nivṛtti-dharma

Nivṛtti-dharma is the path of renunciation. It deals with listening, enquiry, contemplation and meditation into the nature of Truth. Nivṛtti-dharma represents the quest for Reality and constitutes the subject matter of the Upaniṣads. Although there are references to karma and upāsanā, that is pravṛtti-dharma in the Upaniṣads, yet these are not their main theme.

Nivṛtti-dharma, too, is of two kinds: (1) The first is the preparatory stage of renunciation and is known as 'sādhana-rūpa-nivṛtti', consisting in the cultivation of the sādhana-catuṣṭaya or the four-fold qualification that the seeker of Truth must imbibe. These qualifications make the mind ready for that higher realm of knowledge that is attained through listening to the scriptures from the teacher (śravaṇa), then reflecting upon it (manana) and thereafter meditating on the teaching (nididhyāsana). (2) The second stage is the absolute state of renunciation and is known as 'sādhya-rūpa-nivṛtti', that is attainment of the goal, which is the highest stage of Realisation. It is here that Self-knowledge is gained and one abides in the Self.



The Term 'Upaniṣad'

Since we are studying the vision and the message of the Upaniṣads it is important to know what the term 'Upaniṣad' means. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya explains this in detail in his introduction to the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*. The term 'Upaniṣad' is derived from the verbal root '*sad*' and to it are added two prefixes, '*upa*' and

‘ni’ (upa + ni + sad). There are three meanings to ‘sad’: to lead, to loosen and to end/destroy. The prefix ‘upa’ means ‘near’ (*samīpe*) and ‘ni’ signifies the ‘determined practice’ (*niścayena śīlayati*) of the knowledge that one gains from one's teacher.

When individuals live a life of selfless dedicated activity – niškāma-pravṛtti-dharma – their mind is purified and a longing for spiritual knowledge develops. Such an evolved individual approaches a teacher (‘upa’ – *samīpe*), sits at the teacher's feet and gains that knowledge, and thereafter firmly practices or abides in it (‘ni’ – *niścayena śīlayati*). When the seeker does so, this knowledge accomplishes three things: it destroys ignorance, loosens all bondages and leads seekers to their own nature (*brahma-gamayitṛtvena*).

The term ‘Upaniṣad’ thus refers to this Self-knowledge that is gained from the teacher: “*upaniṣad-śabdena brahmavidyā ucyate.*” The term ‘Upaniṣad’ referring to a book is only the secondary meaning of the word (*granthe tu bhaktyā*). The real meaning of the term ‘Upaniṣad’ is knowledge of the Self.



Anubandha-catuṣṭaya

The śāstras refer to the various aspects of Upaniṣadic knowledge collectively as ‘anubandha-catuṣṭaya’ or the ‘introductory four factors’. These are important as it is the awareness of these factors that connects a seeker of this knowledge to its pursuit. These four factors are evident in the following mantra from the *Kaivalya-upaniṣad* (1.1):

अधीहि भगवन् ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठां सदा सद्भिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम् ।

ययाऽचिरात् सर्वपापं व्यपोह्य परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति विद्वान् ॥

*adhihi bhagavan brahmavidyām varīṣṭhām sadā sadbhiḥ sevya-mānām nigūḍhām,
yayā'cīrāt sarvopāpam vyapohya parātparam puruṣamupaiti vidvān.*

O revered sire, teach me the highest science of Reality, cultivated always by the good people, which is ever a hidden secret for man, a Knowledge by which a wise man, discarding all sins, can reach the highest ‘Reality’.

In the above mantra we see Āśvalāyana, the student, approaching the Guru, Brahmā, with a question in which the anubandha-catuṣṭaya, that is the introductory four factors are indicated:

(1) The viṣaya or subject matter is brahma-vidyā (*adhīhi bhagavan brahmavidyām*). This knowledge is deeply hidden (*nigūḍhām*), that is its meaning and import cannot be understood at the literal level, making the teacher's presence an absolute necessity.

(2) The adhikārin or qualified student is one who is noble and virtuous (*sadā sadbhiḥ sevyamānām*). Only such a student will benefit from this teaching.

(3) The prayojana or result/purpose served by this knowledge is freedom from sins and the attainment of the absolute Reality (*acirāt sarvapāpam vyapohya parātparam puruṣamupaiti vidvān*). In other words, the result is freedom from all sorrow (since sins are the cause of sorrow) and abidance in permanent supreme Bliss. This is termed in the Upaniṣadic literature as 'Mokṣa' (Liberation).

(4) The sambandha is the relationship between this knowledge and its result. Knowledge of the Self reveals the Self, which is already there. Self-knowledge is the experience of the Existence of that which was always there. There is nothing further to do for attaining the Self other than the knowledge of it. This relationship between Self-knowledge and its result is referred to in scriptural literature as 'bodhya-bodhaka-sambandha', that is the relationship of the revealer and the revealed and is indicated by the term "yayā – by which." Other knowledges are distinct in that they usually give us information of something which is not the same as experiencing it. Unlike Self-knowledge, which grants the result, the Self, other knowledges merely motivate us to reach out and strive for the attainment of something.

These four factors thus give us a complete idea of the essential facets of Upaniṣadic knowledge or 'Vedānta'.



Reflect Upon

There are certain kinds of knowledge after gaining which some effort is required to actually come to gain it. Suppose someone describes to us his exquisite and divine vision of the Himalayan Mount Kailash and how much his mind was elevated, we can only try to feel it. Still it is not the actual experience of seeing Mount Kailash. So too when someone describes heaven, it may create a desire to reach there. But then we need to make further effort to attain it by undertaking the right scriptural activity like a yāga (Vedic sacrificial act). In all these cases, knowledge merely functions as the motivator that is required to be followed up by action for the result to fructify. But then, if someone points out that the spectacles that I am searching for are right on my nose, then this knowledge itself is the gain and no further effort is required. In the same way, Self-knowledge reveals the Self and therefore Self-knowledge itself is the gain.



Vedānta

The term 'Vedānta' literally means the end portion of the Vedas. When a seeker of knowledge follows the spiritual path, purity of mind and single-pointedness of attention are the fundamental requirements. The culmination of such a spiritual pursuit is Upaniṣadic wisdom and hence the Upaniṣads are also known as 'Vedānta'.

Also, even if somebody has specialised in another field of knowledge, say astrophysics, fulfilment of life comes only with the study of brahma-vidyā, the subject matter of the Upaniṣads. Thus Upaniṣadic wisdom is the very fulfilment (anta) of knowledge (veda).



Yajurveda-śāntimantra

In many of the Upaniṣads the name of the teacher and the student are not mentioned and the teaching of brahma-vidyā begins directly. We shall later gain more knowledge about what brahma-vidyā is from the study of the various questions that the disciples ask in the Upaniṣads.

What is common to all the Upaniṣads, however, is the śānti-mantra or peace invocation that is chanted together at the outset by the teacher and the student(s). And there are different śānti-mantras for the various Upaniṣads depending upon which Veda the Upaniṣads belong to.

The following is a beautiful śānti-mantra found at the beginning of the Upaniṣads found in the *Śukla-yajurveda*:

ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Om saha nāvavatu, saha nau bhunaktu, saha vīryam karavāvahai,
tejasvi nāvadhītamastu, mā vidviṣāvahai.*

Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ.

Om. May He protect us both (the teacher and pupil). May He cause us both to enjoy. May we both exert together. May our studies be effulgent. May we never hate each other.

“Om” – This is remembrance of the Lord, the supreme Reality. It signifies also the invoking of auspiciousness and blessings for the pursuit of knowledge.

“Saha nāvavatu – May the supreme Lord protect us both (the teacher and the student).” Such protection is required also for the physical well-being of both the teacher and the student, for otherwise the teaching and the studying will become difficult. More importantly, wellness at the mental level is essential too, so that the noble attitude (bhāvanā/mano-bhāva) with which the teacher and the student come together to impart knowledge and to learn, respectively, is firmly maintained.

“*Saha nau bhunaktu* – May He make us both enjoy together.” The fruit of knowledge has to be enjoyment. That is, “May we enjoy the very process of learning and the result of knowledge too.”

“*Saha vīryam karavāvahai* – May we both put forth effort.” Only with the right effort will the enjoyment that has been spoken of earlier happen. With effort alone can there arise the true communication of knowledge and the joy of learning.

“*Tejasvi nāvadhītamastu* – May the knowledge we have learnt become bright and brilliant.” Right effort unfailingly brings the effulgence of knowledge. The brightness of knowledge implies here its availability when required. Knowledge if it remains only in books and other media like laptops and other gadgets and is not available in the mind for access when it is immediately needed, it is as good as not being there.

An alternate meaning is may our life be transformed by that knowledge. A person who has learnt that he or she is ānanda-svarūpa-ātman (the very nature of bliss) and yet is all the time feeling miserable has obviously missed the transformation that knowledge brings about in life.

“*Mā vidviṣāvahai* – Let there not be any misunderstanding between the teacher and the student.” At all times a cordial, loving relationship should prevail between the teacher and student. Misunderstandings will only create a barrier in communication.

“*Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ* – Let there be peace, peace, peace.” Disturbances come from seen or unseen forces from within or without. The seen could be disturbances from the surrounding world, such as riots, civil war and so on. Examples of unseen forces are earthquakes, floods and other natural calamities. The worst kind of obstacle that could arise is from within us and that is loss of faith: in oneself, in the teacher, or in the knowledge. Without faith, everything is lost.



Ponder Over

This śānti-mantra, which pertains specifically to the right relation between the Guru and śiṣya, is also applicable to all realms of daily life. Wherever two entities come together there is indeed the need for the śānti-mantra!

In the case of husband and wife, it is a prayer to the Lord to protect their relationship (saha nāvavatu), and that they may enjoy gṛhastha (householder) life together (saha nau bhunaktu). They both must work together (saha vīryam karavāvahai) and avoid misunderstandings (mā vidviṣāvahai). The same mantra could also apply to the management of any organisation and its employees, to the shopkeeper and his customer and so on.

It is up to us to ponder over and recognise this beautiful śānti-mantra's application in various fields of action in our daily life.¹



¹ A detailed study of the śānti-mantras pertaining to the other Vedas is taken up in Lessons 23 and 24.



