

SACRED TEXTS

The Upanishads for Yogis

*Īśa, Kaṭha, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Śvetāśvatara, Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the
Yoga Upanishads, in Sanskrit with our own translations*



उपनिषद्

upaniṣad

YOGIDE

Free sample

For the personal use of the buyer; sharing or reselling is not allowed. This book informs and does not replace a qualified

Contents

Before you begin	4
How to use this book	4
Chapter 1. From the Vedas to the Upanishads	6
What the Upanishads are	6
The word "upaniṣad"	6
How old are they?	6
How many are there?	6
Five words to carry	7
The Upanishads and the yoga you practise	7
Chapter 1 recap	7

teacher or medical advice. Questions; administration@lacangel.fr

Before you begin

At Rishikesh, in the early morning, you can hear the Upanishads before you read them. A voice in an ashram courtyard chants om saha nāvavatu, "may it protect us both"; at the end of a class a teacher closes with pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam, "that is whole, this is whole". Many practitioners know these lines by sound long before they know where they come from. They come from the Upanishads, the oldest philosophical texts of India, and the place where the word yoga first appears with the meaning that the whole later tradition would give it.

This book reads the Upanishads as a yogi reads them: not as a museum of ideas, but as a set of instructions, images and questions for practice. It introduces seven of the principal Upanishads (Īśa, Kaṭha, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Śvetāśvatara, Chāndogya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka), then the later group known as the Yoga Upanishads. For each, you will find the context, the key passages in Sanskrit, our own translation, and a commentary that asks one question: what does this change in the way I sit, breathe, chant and live?

It rests on three promises.

First, our own translations, from the Sanskrit. Every passage is printed in devanāgarī and IAST transliteration and translated by us for this book. We do not reproduce any modern copyrighted translation. Where we suggest you compare with an older translation, we name a public-domain edition (F. Max Müller, 1879 and 1884; Robert Ernest Hume, 1921, and others listed in the Sources).

Second, honesty about history. The Upanishads were composed over many centuries by many hands, and the yoga practised today is not described in them in full. We say what the texts say, what scholars think about their dates, and where later tradition has read things into them. When the traditional view and the historical view differ, you will find both.

Third, practice. Each chapter ends with a short practice drawn from the text: a contemplation, a way of chanting Om, a breath, a question for the day.

How to read the Sanskrit.

Long vowels carry a macron (ā, ī, ū) and are held twice as long. ṁ is a nasal closing the syllable; ḥ is a light echo of breath. ś and ṣ are both close to English "sh"; c is always "ch"; ṛ is a vowel, said like a quick "ri". th and ph are aspirated t and p, never English "th" or "f". Verse numbers follow the usual printed editions; where the numbering differs between editions, we say so.

How to use this book

Chapter 1 gives the background you need: what the Upanishads are, when and how they were composed, and a few key words. You can then read the chapters in any order. If you are new to these texts, begin with the Kaṭha (Chapter 3): it is a story, it is vivid, and it contains the first definition of yoga. If you chant Om in your practice, read the Māṇḍūkya next (Chapter 4). If you know the five kośas from yoga classes, Chapter 5

shows you the original passage. Chapter 9 offers advice on reading alone and with a teacher.

Chapter 1. From the Vedas to the Upanishads

What the Upanishads are

The Veda is the most ancient body of sacred literature in India, transmitted orally for many centuries with an extraordinary care for exact sound. Each of the four Vedas (Ṛg, Sāma, Yajur and Atharva) grew in layers: hymns (saṃhitā), ritual prose (brāhmaṇa), texts for those who withdrew to the forest (āraṇyaka), and finally the upaniṣads. Because they come at the end of each Vedic branch, and because they are considered its culmination, the Upanishads are also called Vedānta, "the end of the Veda".

Where the earlier layers are mostly concerned with the correct performance of sacrifice, the Upanishads turn the question inward. What is the real sacrifice? What is breath? What happens in sleep? What remains when a person dies? What is the self, ātman, and how is it related to brahman, the vast reality from which everything comes? They answer through dialogues between teachers and students, kings and priests, husbands and wives, fathers and sons; through riddles, images and lists; and sometimes through instructions for meditation.

The word "upaniṣad"

Traditional explanations break the word into upa (near), ni (down) and sad (to sit): sitting down near a teacher to receive a secret teaching. This is the explanation you will hear in most Indian classrooms and it captures how the texts were transmitted. Philologists have pointed out that in the texts themselves upaniṣad often means a hidden connection or equivalence (between the breath and the wind, the eye and the sun, the self and brahman), and by extension a secret teaching about such connections. The two explanations are not contradictory: the secret is a connection, and it is passed on sitting close.

How old are they?

The dates are uncertain, and you will see very different figures in popular books. Most scholars today place the oldest prose Upanishads, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya, in the first millennium BCE, before or around the time of the Buddha; then the Taittirīya, Aitareya and Kauṣītaki; then the verse Upanishads such as the Kena, Kaṭha, Īśa, Śvetāśvatara and Muṇḍaka in the last centuries BCE; the Praśna and Māṇḍūkya somewhat later. The traditional view holds that the Veda, Upanishads included, is apauruṣeya, not of human authorship, and timeless. This book gives you the historical picture without asking you to abandon the traditional reverence: many Indian practitioners hold both.

How many are there?

There is no single closed list. The Muktikā Upaniṣad, a late text, names 108 Upanishads in a dialogue between Rāma and Hanumān, and this list of 108 became standard in printed collections. The great philosopher Śaṅkara (traditionally placed in the eighth century CE) wrote commentaries on about ten of

them, which are therefore called the "principal" Upanishads: Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka. A commentary on the Śvetāśvatara is also attributed to him, though its authorship is debated. Many of the remaining Upanishads in the list of 108 are much later, some of them medieval or early modern, including the group called Yoga Upanishads (Chapter 8).

Five words to carry

Word	Devanāgarī	Meaning in this book
ātman	आत्मन्	the self; what one truly is beneath body and mind
brahman	ब्रह्मन्	the vast, the absolute reality, ground of all
prāṇa	प्राण	breath, life-force; in the Upanishads often the chief of the bodily powers
om	ॐ	the sacred syllable, praṇava
yoga	योग	from yuj, to yoke: harnessing the senses and the mind

The Upanishads and the yoga you practise

The Upanishads do not describe Sun Salutations or standing postures. What they give the yogi is something else: the first descriptions of turning the senses inward, of the chariot of the self, of Om as the bow and the self as the arrow, of the sitting posture with the trunk, neck and head held erect, of breath restraint, and of the signs of progress in meditation. Later yoga, from Patañjali to the haṭha texts, built on this foundation. When a modern teacher speaks of the "koshas", of "turīya", of the "witness", or of "the self that is not the body", they are speaking the language of the Upanishads, whether they know it or not.

Chapter 1 recap

- The Upanishads close each branch of the Veda: they are Vedānta, "the end of the Veda".
- They turn the question of sacrifice inward: breath, sleep, death, the self.
- The oldest are generally placed in the first millennium BCE; dates are uncertain.
- Ten or eleven are called principal because Śaṅkara commented on them; the standard list counts 108.
- They give yoga its foundation: inner turning, Om, posture and breath for meditation.

End of the sample

Thank you for reading this far. We hope these first pages already help your practice, and that they show how the rest of the book is built: clear steps, texts quoted with their source, nothing invented.

The full book has 43 pages.

Get it here: <https://yogide.com/>

One-time payment, instant PDF.