



## **English translation of Svetasvatara Upanishad**

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# Credits

## English translation of **Svetasvatara Upanishad**

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# Svetasvatara Upanishad

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## Chapter I

1

Rishis, discoursing on Brahman, ask: Is Brahman the cause? Whence are we born? By what do we live? Where do we dwell at the end? Please tell us, O ye who know Brahman, under whose guidance we abide, whether in pleasure or in pain.

2

Should time, or nature, or necessity, or chance, or the elements be regarded as the cause? Or he who is called the purusha, the living self?

3

The sages, absorbed in meditation through one-pointedness of mind, discovered the creative power, belonging to the Lord Himself and hidden in its own gunas. That non-dual Lord rules over all those causes—time, the self and the rest.

4

The sages saw the wheel of Brahman, which has one felly, a triple tire, sixteen end-parts, fifty spokes with twenty counter-spokes and six sets of eight; whose one rope is manifold; which moves on three different roads; and whose illusion arises from two causes.

5

We meditate on the River whose five currents are the five organs of perception, which is made impetuous and winding by the five elements, whose waves are the five organs of actions and whose fountain-head is the mind, the source of the five forms of perception. This River has five whirlpools and its rapids are the fivefold misery; and lastly, it has fifty branches and five pain-bearing obstructions.

6

In this great Brahma-Wheel, in which all things abide and finally rest, the swan wanders about so long as it thinks the self is different from the Controller. When blessed by Him the self attains Immortality.

7

It is the Supreme Brahman alone untouched by phenomena that is proclaimed in the Upanishads. In It is established the triad of the enjoyer, the object and the Lord who is the Controller. This Brahman is the immutable foundation; It is imperishable. The sages, having realized Brahman to be the essence of phenomena, become devoted to Him. Completely merged in Brahman, they attain freedom from rebirth.

8

The Lord, Isa, supports all this which has been joined together—the perishable and the imperishable, the manifest, the effect and the unmanifest, the cause. The same Lord, the Supreme Self, devoid of Lordship, becomes bound because of assuming the attitude of the enjoyer. The jiva again realizes the Supreme Self and is freed from all fetters.

9

The Supreme Lord appears as Isvara, omniscient and omnipotent and as the jiva, of limited knowledge and power, both unborn. But this does not deny the phenomenal universe; for there exists further the unborn prakriti, which creates the ideas of the enjoyer, enjoyment and the object. Atman is infinite and all-pervading and therefore devoid of agency. When the seeker knows all these three to be Brahman, he is freed from his fetters.

10

Prakriti is perishable. Hara, the Lord, is immortal and imperishable. The non-dual Supreme Self rules both prakriti and the individual soul. Through constant meditation on Him, by union with Him, by the knowledge of identity with Him, one attains, in the end, cessation of the illusion of phenomena.

11

When the Lord is known all fetters fall off; with the cessation of miseries, birth and death come to an end. From meditation on Him there arises, after the dissolution of the body, the third state, that of universal lordship. And lastly, the aspirant, transcending that state also, abides in the complete Bliss of Brahman.

12

The enjoyer (jiva), the objects of enjoyment and the Ruler (Isvara)—the triad described by the knowers of Brahman—all this is nothing but Brahman. This Brahman alone, which abides eternally within the self, should be known. Beyond It, truly, there is nothing else to be known.

13

The visible form of fire, while it lies latent in its source, the fire-wood, is not perceived; yet there is no destruction of its subtle form. That very fire can be brought out again by means of persistent rubbing of the wood, its source. In like manner, Atman, which exists in two states, like fire, can be grasped in this very body by means of Om.

14

By making the body the lower piece of wood and Om the upper piece and through the practice of the friction of meditation, one perceives the luminous Self, hidden like the fire in the wood.

15-16

As oil exists in sesame seeds, butter in milk, water in river-beds and fire in wood, so the Self is realized as existing within the self, when a man looks for It by means of truthfulness and austerity—when he looks for the Self, which pervades all things as butter pervades milk and whose roots are Self-Knowledge and austerity. That is the Brahman taught by the Upanishad; yea, that is the Brahman taught by the Upanishads.

## **Chapter II**

1

May the sun, at the commencement of yoga, join our minds and other organs to the Supreme Self so that we may attain the Knowledge of Reality. May He, also, support the

body, the highest material entity, through the powers of the deities who control the senses.

2

Having received the blessings of the divine Sun and with minds joined to the Supreme Self, we exert ourselves, to the best of our power, toward meditation, by which we shall attain Heaven (Brahman).

3

May the Sun bestow favour upon the senses and the mind by joining them with the Self, so that the senses may be directed toward the Blissful Brahman and may reveal, by means of Knowledge, the mighty and radiant Brahman.

4

It is the duty of those brahmins who fix their minds and senses on the Supreme Self to utter such lofty invocations to the divine Sun, omnipresent, mighty and omniscient. For He, all-witnessing and non-dual, is the dispenser of sacrifices.

5

O senses and O deities who favour them! Through salutations I unite myself with the eternal Brahman, who is your source. Let this prayer sung by me, who follow the right path of the Sun, go forth in all directions. May the sons of the Immortal, who occupy celestial positions, hear it!

6

If sacrifices are performed without first propitiating the Sun, then the mind becomes attached to sacrifices in which fire is kindled by the rubbing of the pieces of fire-wood, the oblations are offered to the deity Vayu and the soma juice is drunk excessively.

7

Serve the eternal Brahman with the blessings of the Sun, the cause of the universe. Be absorbed, through samadhi, in the eternal Brahman. Thus your work will not bind you.

8

The wise man should hold his body steady, with the three upper parts erect, turn his senses, with the help of the mind, toward the heart and by means of the raft of Brahman cross the fearful torrents of the world.

9

The yogi of well regulated endeavours should control the pranas; when they are quieted he should breathe out through the nostrils. Then let him undistractedly restrain his mind, as a charioteer restrains his vicious horses.

10

Let yoga be practised within a cave protected from the high wind, or in a place which is level, pure and free from pebbles, gravel and fire, undisturbed by the noise of water or of market-booths and which is delightful to the mind and not offensive to the eye.

11

When yoga is practised, the forms which appear first and which gradually manifest Brahman are those of snow–flakes, smoke, sun, wind, fire, fire–flies, lightning, crystal and the moon.

12

When earth, water, fire, air and akasa arise, that is to say, when the five attributes of the elements, mentioned in the books on yoga, become manifest then the yogi's body becomes purified by the fire of yoga and he is free from illness, old age and death.

13

The precursors of perfection in yoga, they say, are lightness and healthiness of the body, absence of desire, clear complexion, pleasantness of voice, sweet odour and slight excretions.

14

As gold covered by earth shines bright after it has been purified, so also the yogi, realising the truth of Atman, becomes one with the non–dual Atman, attains the goal and is free from grief.

15

And when the yogi beholds the real nature of Brahman, through the Knowledge of the Self, radiant as a lamp, then, having known the unborn and immutable Lord, who is untouched by ignorance and its effects, he is freed from all fetters.

16

He indeed, the Lord, who pervades all regions, was the first to be born and it is He who dwells in the womb of the universe. It is He, again, who is born as a child and He will be born in the future, He stands behind all persons and His face is everywhere.

17

The Self–luminous Lord, who is fire, who is in water, who has entered into the whole world, who is in plants, who is in trees—to that Lord let there be adoration! Yea, let there be adoration!

### **Chapter III**

1

The non–dual Ensnarer rules by His powers. Remaining one and the same, He rules by His powers all the worlds during their manifestation and continued existence. They who know this become immortal.

2

Rudra is truly one; for the knowers of Brahman do not admit the existence of a second, He alone rules all the worlds by His powers. He dwells as the inner Self of every living being. After having created all the worlds, He, their Protector, takes them back into Himself at the end of time.

3

His eyes are everywhere, His faces everywhere, His arms everywhere, everywhere His feet. He it is who endows men with arms, birds with feet and wings and men likewise with feet. Having produced heaven and earth, He remains as their non-dual manifester.

4

He, the omniscient Rudra, the creator of the gods and the bestower of their powers, the support of the universe, He who, in the beginning, gave birth to Hiranyagarbha—may He endow us with clear intellect!

5

O Rudra, Thou who dwellest in the body and bestowest happiness! Look upon us with that most blessed form of Thine, which is auspicious, unterrifying and all good.

6

O Dweller in the body and Bestower of happiness, make benign that arrow which Thou holdest in Thy hand ready to shoot, O Protector of the body! Do not injure man or the world!

7

The Supreme Lord is higher than Virat, beyond Hiranyagarbha. He is vast and is hidden in the bodies of all living beings. By knowing Him who alone pervades the universe, men become immortal.

8

I know the great Purusha, who is luminous, like the sun and beyond darkness. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death; there is no other way to the Supreme Goal.

9

The whole universe is filled by the Purusha, to whom there is nothing superior, from whom there is nothing different, than whom there is nothing either smaller or greater; who stands alone, motionless as a tree, established in His own glory.

10

That which is farthest from this world is without form and without affliction They who know It become immortal; but others, indeed, suffer pain.

11

All faces are His faces; all heads, His heads; all necks, His necks. He dwells in the hearts of all beings. He is the all-pervading Bhagavan. Therefore He is the omnipresent and benign Lord.

12

He, indeed, is the great Purusha, the Lord of creation, preservation and destruction, who inspires the mind to attain the state of stainlessness. He is the Ruler and the Light that is imperishable.

13

The Purusha, no bigger than a thumb, is the inner Self, ever seated in the heart of man. He

is known by the mind, which controls knowledge and is perceived in the heart. They who know Him become immortal.

14

The Purusha with a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet, compasses the earth on all sides and extends beyond it by ten fingers' breadth.

15

The Purusha alone is all this—what has been and what will be. He is also the Lord of Immortality and of whatever grows by food.

16

His hands and feet are everywhere; His eyes, heads and faces are everywhere; His ears are everywhere; He exists compassing all.

17

Himself devoid of senses, He shines through the functions of the senses. He is the capable ruler of all; He is the refuge of all. He is great.

18

The Swan, the ruler of the whole world, of all that is moving and all that is motionless, becomes the embodied self and dwelling in the city of nine gates, flies outward.

19

Grasping without hands, hasting without feet, It sees without eyes, It hears without ears. It knows what is to be known, but no one knows It. They call It the First, the Great, the Full.

20

The Self, smaller than the small, greater than the great, is hidden in the hearts of creatures. The wise, by the grace of the Creator, behold the Lord, majestic and desireless and become free from grief.

21

I know this undecaying, primeval One, the Self of all things, which exists everywhere, being all-pervading and which the wise declare to be free from birth. The teachers of Brahman, indeed, speak of It as eternal.

## **Chapter IV**

1

He, the One and Undifferentiated, who by the manifold application of His powers produces, in the beginning, different objects for a hidden purpose and, in the end, withdraws the universe into Himself, is indeed the self-luminous—May He endow us with clear intellect!

2

That Supreme Self is Agni (Fire); It is Aditya (Sun); It is Vayu (Wind); It is Chandrama (Moon). That Self is the luminous stars; It is Hiranyagarbha; It is water; It is Virat.

3

Thou art woman, Thou art man; Thou art youth and maiden too. Thou as an old man totterest along on a staff; it is Thou alone who, when born, assumest diverse forms.

4

Thou art the dark–blue bee; Thou art the green parrot with red eyes; Thou art the thunder–cloud, the seasons and the seas. Thou art beginningless and all–pervading. From Thee all the worlds are born.

5

There is one unborn prakriti–red, white and black–which gives birth to many creatures like itself. An unborn individual soul becomes attached to it and enjoys it, while another unborn individual soul leaves it after his enjoyment is completed.

6

Two birds, united always and known by the same name, closely cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit; the other looks on without eating.

7

Seated on the same tree, the jiva moans, bewildered by its impotence. But when it beholds the other, the Lord worshipped by all and His glory, it becomes free from grief.

8

Of what use are the Vedas to him who does not know that indestructible Substance, that akasa–like Brahman, which is greater than the unmanifest and wherein the Vedas and all the gods are sheltered? Only those who know It attain bliss.

9

The sacred verses, the offerings (yajna), the sacrifices (kratu), the penances (vrata), the past, the future and all that the Vedas declare, have been produced from the imperishable Brahman. Brahman projects the universe through the power of Its maya. Again, in that universe Brahman as the jiva is entangled through maya.

10

Know, then, that prakriti is maya and that Great God is the Lord of maya. The whole universe is filled with objects which are parts of His being.

11

By truly realising Him who, though non–dual, dwells in prakriti, both in its primary and in its secondary aspect and in Whom this whole world comes together and dissolves–by truly realising Him Who is the Lord, the bestower of blessings, the Adorable God, one attains the supreme peace.

12

He, the creator of the gods and the bestower of their powers, the Support of the universe, Rudra the omniscient, who at the beginning gave birth to Hiranyagarbha–may He endow us with clear intellect!

13

He who is the sovereign of the gods, in whom the worlds find their support, who rules over all two-footed and four-footed beings—let us serve that God, radiant and blissful, with an oblation.

14

By realising Him who is subtler than the subtlest who dwells in the midst of the chaos, who is the Creator of all things and is endowed with many forms, who is the non-dual Pervader of the universe and all good—by realising Him one attains the supreme peace.

15

It is He who, in proper time, becomes the custodian of the universe and the sovereign of all; who conceals Himself in all beings as their inner Witness; and in whom the sages and the deities are united. Verily, by knowing Him one cuts asunder the fetters of death.

16

He who knows Brahman, who is all Bliss, extremely subtle, like the film that rises to the surface of clarified butter and is hidden in all beings—he who knows the radiant Deity, the sole Pervader of the universe, is released from all his fetters.

17

The Maker of all things, self-luminous and all-pervading, He dwells always in the hearts of men. He is revealed by the negative teachings of the Vedanta, discriminative wisdom and the Knowledge of Unity based upon reflection. They who know Him become immortal.

18

When there is no darkness of ignorance, there is no day or night, neither being nor non-being; the pure Brahman alone exists. That immutable Reality is the meaning of "That"; It is adored by the Sun. From It has proceeded the ancient wisdom.

19

No one can grasp Him above, across, or in the middle. There is no likeness of Him. His name is Great Glory (Mahad Yasah).

20

His form is not an object of vision; no one beholds Him with the eyes. They who, through pure intellect and the Knowledge of Unity based upon reflection, realise Him as abiding in the heart become immortal.

21

It is because Thou, O Lord, art birthless, that some rare souls, frightened by birth and death, take refuge in Thee. O Rudra, may Thy benign face protect me for ever!

22

O Rudra, do not, in Thy wrath, destroy our children and grand-children. Do not destroy our lives; do not destroy our cows or horses; do not destroy our strong servants. For we invoke Thee always, with oblations, for our protection.

## Chapter V

1

In the Immutable, infinite Supreme Brahman remain hidden the two: knowledge and ignorance. Ignorance leads to worldliness and knowledge, to Immortality. Brahman, who controls both knowledge and ignorance, is different from both.

2

He, the non-dual Brahman, who rules over every position; who controls all forms and all sources; who, in the beginning, filled with knowledge the omniscient Hiranyagarbha, His own creation, whom He beheld when He (Hiranyagarbha) was produced—He is other than both knowledge and ignorance.

3

At the time of the creation the Lord spreads out individual nets in various ways and then at the time of the cosmic dissolution withdraws them into the great prakriti. Again the all-pervading Deity creates the aggregates of body and senses, both individual and collective and their controllers also and thus exercises His overlordship.

4

As the sun shines, illumining all the quarters—above, below and across—so also God, self-resplendent, adorable and non-dual, controls all objects, which themselves possess the nature of a cause.

5–6

He who is the cause of all and who enables all things to function according to their nature; who brings to maturity all that can be ripened; who, being non-dual, rules over the whole universe and engages the gunas in their respective functions—He is concealed in the Upanishads, the secret part of the Vedas. Brahma knew Him who can be known only from the evidence of the Vedas. The gods and seers of olden times who knew Him became Brahman and attained Immortality.

7

Endowed with gunas, the jiva performs action, seeking its fruit; and again, it reaps the fruit of what it has done. Assuming all forms and led by the three gunas, the jiva, ruler of the pranas, roams about following the three paths, according to its deeds.

8

Of the size of a thumb, but brilliant, like the sun, the jiva possesses both volition and egoism. It is endowed with the qualities of both buddhi and Atman. Therefore it is seen as another entity, inferior and small as the point of a goad.

9

Know the embodied soul to be a part of the hundredth part of the point of a hair divided a hundred times; and yet it is infinite.

10

It is not female, it is not male, nor is it neuter. whatever body it takes, with that it becomes

united.

11

By means of desires, contact, attachment and delusion, the embodied soul assumes, successively, diverse forms in various places, according to its deeds, just as the body grows when food and drink are poured into it.

12

The embodied soul, by means of good and evil deeds committed by itself, assumes many forms, coarse and fine. By virtue of its actions and also of such characteristics of the mind as knowledge and desire, it assumes another body for the enjoyment of suitable objects.

13

He who knows the Lord, who is without beginning or end, who stands in the midst of the chaos of the world, who is the Creator of all things and is endowed with many forms—he who knows the radiant Deity, the sole Pervader of the universe, is released from all his fetters.

14

Those who know Him who can be realised by the pure heart, who is called incorporeal, who is the cause of creation and destruction, who is all good and the creator of the sixteen parts—those who know the luminous Lord are freed from embodiment.

## **Chapter VI**

1

Some learned men speak of the inherent nature of things and some speak of time, as the cause of the universe. They all, indeed, are deluded. It is the greatness of the self-luminous Lord that causes the Wheel of Brahman to revolve.

2

He by whom the whole universe is constantly pervaded is the Knower, the Author of time. He is sinless and omniscient, It is at His command that the work which is called earth, water, fire, air and akasa appears as the universe. All this should be reflected upon by the wise.

3

The yogi who first performs actions and then turns away from them and who practises one, two, three, or eight disciplines, unites one principle with another principle and with the help of virtues cultivated by the self and of subtle tendencies attains Liberation in course of time.

4

He who attains purity of heart by performing actions as an offering to the Lord and merges prakriti and all its effects in Brahman, realises his true Self and thereby transcends phenomena. In the absence of maya, both collective and individual, all his past actions are destroyed. After the destruction of the prarabdha karma he attains final Liberation.

5

The Great Lord is the beginning, the cause which unites the soul with the body; He is above the three kinds of time and is seen to be without parts. After having worshipped that adorable God dwelling in the heart, who is of many forms and is the true source of all things, man attains final Liberation.

6

He from whom this universe proceeds is higher and other than all forms of the Tree of the World and of time. When one knows Him who is the indweller, the bringer of good, the destroyer of evil, the Lord of powers, the immortal support of all, one attains final Liberation.

7

We know Him who is the Supreme Lord of lords, the Supreme Deity of deities, the Ruler of rulers; who is higher than the imperishable prakriti and is the self-luminous, adorable Lord of the world.

8

He is without a body or organs; none like unto Him is seen, or better than He. The Vedas speak of His exalted power, which is innate and capable of producing diverse effects and also of His omniscience and might.

9

He has no master in the world, no ruler, nor is there even a sign of Him by which He can be inferred. He is the cause, the Lord of the lord of the organs; and He is without progenitor or controller.

10

May the non-dual Lord, who, by the power of His maya, covered Himself, like a spider, with threads drawn from primal matter, merge us in Brahman!

11

The non-dual and resplendent Lord is hidden in all beings. All-pervading, the inmost Self of all creatures, the impeller to actions, abiding in all things, He is the Witness, the Animator and the Absolute, free from gunas.

12

There is a non-dual Ruler of the actionless many; He makes the one seed manifold. Eternal happiness belongs to the wise, who perceive Him within themselves—and not to others.

13

He is the Eternal among the eternal, the Conscious among the conscious and though non-dual, fulfils the desires of many. He who has known Him, the luminous Lord, the Great Cause, to be realised by Knowledge (Samkhya) and yoga, is freed from all fetters.

14

The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings—much less this fire. He shining, everything shines after Him. By his light all this is lighted.

15

In this universe the Swan, the Supreme Self alone exists. It is He who, as fire, abides in the water. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death, There is no other way to reach the Supreme Goal.

16

He who is the support of both the unmanifested prakriti and the jiva, who is the Lord of the three gunas and who is the cause of bondage, existence and Liberation from samsara, is verily the Creator of the universe, the Knower, the inmost Self of all things and their Source—the omniscient Lord, the Author of time, the Possessor of virtues, the Knower of everything.

17

He who constantly rules the world is verily the cause of bondage and Liberation. Established in His own glory, He is the Immortal, the Embodiment of Consciousness, the omnipresent Protector of the universe. There is no one else able to rule it.

18

Seeking Liberation, I take refuge in the Lord, the revealer of Self–Knowledge, who in the beginning created Brahma and delivered the Vedas to Him.

19–20

When men shall roll up space as if it were a piece of hide, then there will be an end of misery without one’s cultivating the Knowledge of the Lord, who is without parts, without actions, tranquil, blameless, unattached, the supreme bridge to Immortality, an like a fire that has consumed all its fuel.

21

Through the power of austerity and through the grace of the Lord, the sage Svetasvatara realised Brahman and proclaimed the highly sacred Knowledge, supremely cherished by the company of seers, to sannyasins of the most advanced stage.

22

The profound mystery in the Vedanta was taught in the previous cycle. It should not be given to one whose passions have not been subdued, nor to one who is not a son or a disciple.

23

If these truths have been told to a high–minded person who feels the highest devotion for God and for his guru as for God, then they will surely shine forth as inner experiences—then, indeed, they will shine forth.

-- Svetasvatara Upanishad --