

# Isha Upanishad

*Eighteen verses on the Lord enveloping all and the immortal beyond knowing*

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## TRANSLATION

Friedrich Max Müller · 1879

## SOURCE

Sacred Texts Archive

## LICENCE

From The Upanishads, Part I, Sacred Books of the East volume 1, Oxford University Press 1879. Strict PD. Lightly modernised by Soul Spirit Self (archaic verb forms and pronouns updated; substantive translation choices preserved).

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The Isha is among the shortest of the principal upanishads, eighteen verses, and among the most quoted. The opening line in particular, *isha vasyam idam sarvam*, has shaped the contemplative imagination across centuries: all this, whatever moves on the earth, is enveloped by the Lord.

The text moves through several distinct movements. It opens with the renunciation of grasping. It contemplates the paradox of the moving and the unmoving, the near and the far. It addresses the limits of both knowledge and ignorance, both the manifest and the unmanifest. It closes with a prayer to the sun for revelation, and a final commendation of the breath, the body, and the deeds of the soul to what comes after.

What follows is the complete eighteen verses in Max Müller's 1879 translation from Sacred Books of the East volume 1, with archaic verb forms and pronouns lightly modernised. Substantive translation choices are unchanged.

## THE OPENING: ENVELOPED BY THE LORD

1

By the Lord is enveloped all this, whatever moves in this moving world. Through such renunciation support yourself. Covet no one's wealth.

2

Performing works in this world, one should desire to live a hundred years. There is no other way for you than this. In this way, action does not cling to a person.

3

There are those worlds called the worlds of the demons, covered with blind darkness. To them go after death those who slay the Self.

## THE MOVING AND THE UNMOVING

4

That one, though never stirring, is swifter than thought. The senses do not reach it; it has gone before. Standing still, it outstrips others that run. In it the all-pervading air supports the activities of beings.

5

It moves and it moves not. It is far and it is near. It is within all this, and it is also outside all this.

6

He who beholds all beings in the Self, and the Self in all beings, no longer hates anything.

7

For one who knows, in whom all beings have become the Self, what delusion, what sorrow can there be when he sees this oneness?

8

He has spread out into all things — the radiant, bodiless, free from injury, free from sinews, pure, untouched by evil. He, the seer, the thinker, all-pervading, self-existent, has rightly assigned the things eternally for all the years to come.

## ON KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE

9

Into blinding darkness enter those who worship ignorance; into greater darkness, as it were, those who delight in knowledge alone.

10

One thing, they say, is reached by knowledge; another, they say, by ignorance. So we have heard from the wise who taught us this.

11

He who knows together both knowledge and ignorance — by ignorance crosses over death, by knowledge attains the immortal.

## ON THE MANIFEST AND THE UNMANIFEST

12

Into blinding darkness enter those who worship the unmanifest; into greater darkness, as it were, those who delight in the manifest.

13

One thing, they say, is reached by the manifest; another, they say, by the unmanifest. So we have heard from the wise who taught us this.

14

He who knows together both the manifest and the unmanifest — by the unmanifest crosses over death, by the manifest attains the immortal.

## CLOSING PRAYER

15

The face of the True is hidden by a golden disc. Unveil it, O Pushan, that I, whose dharma is truth, may behold.

16

O Pushan, sole seer, controller of all, sun, son of Prajapati, dispose your rays, gather up your radiance. The light which is your fairest form, that I see. He, that being, am I.

17

May the breath go to the immortal breath; the body then ends in ashes. *Aum*. Mind, remember; what was done, remember. Mind, remember; what was done, remember.

18

Agni, lead us by a good path to wealth, O God who knows all our deeds. Remove from us the crooked sin. We would offer you the fullest praise.