

Mandukya Upanishad, Class 18:

Chapter 1 Summary

Swamiji gave his summary of chapter 1 also known as Agama Prakaranam, today. In introduction to this Upanishad he had previously indicated that it has four chapters in it.

The first chapter is called agamaprakaranam. This chapter contains the entire Upanishad and 29 karikas. The second chapter is called Vaitathyaprakaranam containing 38 karikas on the mithya nature of the universe. The third chapter is titled Advaitaprakaranam containing 48 karikas dealing with the non-dual nature of atma. The fourth chapter is called Alatahantiprakaranam containing 100 karikas, which clear all the possible objections to the teaching contained in the Upanishad.

Of the four chapters the first one, agama prakaranam, consists of 12 mantras of the Upanishad and the 29 Karikas written by Gaudapada. The 12 mantras belong to Atharvana Veda and are supposed be revelations by God himself. Shankaracharya's guru's guru, Gaudapada, however, wrote Karikas. Karika means a commentary in verse. Among the 12 mantras and 29 karikas, prominence is given to the 12 mantras since they are from Upanishad and it is the focus of chapter 1 and is of importance from a Vedic perspective. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are all about Karikas.

Gist of the Upanishad portion or Mantras of Chapter 1:

Mandukya Upanishad was revealed through Manduka Rishi in the Atharvana Veda.

The first two mantras introduce two types of Vicharas:

1) Chatushpada Atma Vichara or the four facets of Self.

2) Second enquiry is Chatur matra Omkara Vichara. It has four sounds of Omkara.

Both the Atma Vichara and Omkara Vichara are performed to arrive at the absolute reality.

Mantras # 3 through # 7 deal with Chatushpada Atma Vichara. The essence of these mantras is that they are talking about the four aspects of "I" the Atma.

Mantras # 8 through # 12 deal with Chatur matra Omkara Vichara.

Discussing Mantras # 3- # 7, the following points were made:

1. The first I, is obtained in Waking state and is the "Waker I". I in waking state is endowed with various attributes such as weight, size, individuality etc. This is the "attributed I" in jagrit avastha. Here, I comes in contact with external world. It is a finite and limited I. This I is described in mantra # 3. This I also goes by the names of Vishwa and Virat.
2. The second I is obtained in dream state or the dreamer I. I functions through the projected dream body; the sukhma shariram with attributes determined by dream body. The second and Saguna I, is in the dream state. This I is also finite and limited. This I is also called Taijasa and Hiranyagarbha.
3. The third I is obtained in sleep state. Here, I am not in waking or dream body; here body is in resolved condition. Sleeper I is also an "attributed I". In sleep all attributes are in dormant state or in their potential state. Thus, the "Father I" during the waking and dream states is in a dormant state here. All attributes are dormant as well. It is also a state that is limited and finite. Here limitations are also in dormant condition. The sleeper I is called Pragya and Ishwara. These are technical names given by Upanishad.

This is addressed in mantras # 5 and # 6.

4. My fourth aspect is my real nature, the core nature, also known as Turiyam or Sakshi I. Thus, witness I is free from all attributes. It is the "attribute-less I" or nirguna I. It is described in the most important mantra # 7. This I is attribute-less and limitless. Thus, for every one of our assertions there are many negations. When I say, I am man; I am also saying I am not woman; not an animal; not a pencil etc; all negations. For one assertion there are many negations. Thus, attributes limit an object, while Turiyam is the limitless I. This is the essential I; it is Shantam; Shivam (ananda) and immortality; all three are possible only in Turiyam. So, if you want Shantam, Shivam and Immortality you have to know Turiyam for liberation.

How can I know Turiyam?

I can know Saguna I in waking state. I can know Saguna I in dream state; I can know saguna I in Sleep state, if so, in which state can I know nirguna I or Turiyam I?

If the three associations result in Vishva, Taijasa and Prajna, what is the Turiyam? What association does

Turiyam have? Turiyam is the name of the atma when it is dissociated from all the three states. I myself,

as consciousness principle, am Turiyam. How do I become Turiyam?

Now mantra # 7 does not talk of a fourth state at all; so where is nirguna I available? The Upanishad says, the nirguna I has to be discovered through the "attributed I" or Saguna I.

Turiyam is available in Vishva, Taijasa and Pragya states. So there is no need for a fourth state. So, remain in jagrat avastha, analyze and gain Turiyam.

If so, how do I arrive at nirguna I from Saguna I?

Swamiji says it is quite simple, Saguna I minus gunas gives you nirguna I.

Thus, "Father I" minus fatherhood equals nirguna I. In this manner negate all attributes about yourself and it takes you to Turiyam I.

How do I remove the attributes?

Upanishad says you need not remove attributes at all. I, the consciousness, can never be associated with attributes; just as the light on the hand, does not take on the impurities of the body because light is asangaha. Similarly, I, the consciousness, am also free of attributes. Attributed I does not exist in reality. My thought that I have attributes was born out of my misconceptions. I have to know that I am attribute-less at all times. Citing an example, to illustrate the point, you see a movie on the screen and there you see the very dirty Cuvam River. You want to purify the screen. Swamiji says the screen is pure even when the dirty Cuvam is shown on screen. Screen is not touched by the movie. Therefore, I am the screen-like consciousness; I just have to know that I am free of attributes and knowledge removes these attributes. When I add attributes to waking state, I am Vishwa; when I, add attributes to dream state, I am Taijasa; and when I add attributes to sleep state, I am Pragya. However, when I remove these attributes from any or all of the three states, it is Turiyam.

Vishwa minus waking state attributes equals Turiyam.

Taijasa minus dream state attributes equals Turiyam.

Pragya minus sleep state attributes equals Turiyam.

So, Turiyam is obtained through knowledge. This knowledge of Turiyam is described in mantra # 7.

With this chatushpada Atma Vichara is over.

Mantras # 8 through # 12:

Chaturmatra Omkara Vichara is described. Omakra consists of A U M and the Silence that follows known as Amatra.

A is described in mantra # 9.

U is described in mantra # 10.

M is described in mantra # 11 and

Amatra is described in mantra # 12.

Having introduced each mantra, they can be equated to each Pada.

Thus:

A equates to Virat

U equates to Hirayagarbha

M equates to Ishwara

Amatra equates to Turiya atma.

Having equated one has to begin with upasana. First upasana is meditating on Virat in Akara; then meditating on Taijasa on U kara; and then meditating on Ishwara on M kara. To support meditation, common features were mentioned. They are:

Akara equation with Virat is based on pervasiveness and primacy both also called Apte and adimatvat, respectively.

Ukara equation with Hiranyagarbha is based on superiority and middleness; both also called Utkarsha and Ubhayata respectively.

Mkara and Ishvara equation is based on being similar to a measure and the ground of dissolution, both also called Mithi

and Apithi respectively.

Remembering the common features one has to perform each upasana. It will help cleanse the mind. The upasana also provides material benefits. How to perform the upasana has not been described.

Rather, we have to meditate on Omkara and dissolve A into U; U into M; and M into silence and reach the silence or consciousness.

How to perform this? Example of this resolution was discussed as resolving Bangle, Chain and Ring in gold.

How to arrive at gold?

Look at bangle and look there for an object called bangle. You will observe that there is no substance called bangle; there is only gold. You must be convinced that there is no Bangle. Once bangle, the substance has been negated, the word bangle has no more relevance. Without an object where is the need for a word to describe it. This is known as Padartha nisheda and pada nisheda. Thus Virat nisheda is Akara nisheda.

Then come to Chain. Going through same process as with bangle, we realize that there is no object called chain as such the word chain is also negated. Chain padartha is negated; Hiranyagarbha is negated; U kara is also negated.

Then coming to Ring and going through same process as for bangle we realize there is no substance called ring as such and there is no need for word called ring Thus, ring padartha is negated; Ishwara is negated; Makara is negated.

A (Virat), U (Hiranyagarbha), M (Pragya) all three are saguna Atma.

Pada-padartha division exists only in empirical field where time, space and attributes are there. It exists in saguna field alone. Once you negate everything you will feel

blankness. Buddhists call it Shunyam or void. Mandukya says, for “ nothing remains”, you still need a witness of nothingness, known as Shunya Shakshi or Chaitanyam or as per Vedanta, Consciousness. This consciousness illumines the presence or absence of everything. This was pointed out in mantra # 12. Now the Upanishad is over. Benefit of this knowledge is that: whoever knows this, can claim, I am Turiyam.

Karikas:

Gaudapada talks of common and uncommon features of padas.

1. Pragya, the I in sleep state, is associated with Ignorance (I).
2. Vishwa and Taijasa, both in jagrat and swapna avastha are associated with Ignorance (I) and Error (E).
3. Turiyam is associated with none of them.

Ignorance means, not knowing “ I am limitless”.

Error means the notion that “I am limited.”

Gaudapada uses different terms for Ignorance and Error.

Thus, agyanam, agrahanam, nidra, and karanam are the four names for ignorance. Ankuraha, anyathagrahanam, swapna and karyam are the four names for misconception or error.

Another topic is position of each pada. Gaudapada describes the Sthana Trayam as:

Vishwa is in right eye.

Taijasa is in mind

Pragya is in Hiranyagarbha.

Then he describes Bhoga Trayam as follows:

Vishwa has experience of gross world.

Taijasa has experience of inner world.

Pragya has experience of ananda or Sushupti.

The last topic is Omkara dhyanam. Gaudapada uses word Pranava to describe Omkara. In word Pranava, Pra means perfect; while navaha means, so named.

So pranva means ideal name, that is Om, which stands for Brahman. Why is Om ideal name for Brahman? Other names reveal saguna or nirguna aspects only once. Om is ideal as it reveals both Saguna and Nirguna Brahman.

Sound part of Om reveals Saguna Brahman. Silence between two Omkara's reveals nirguna Brahman. Saguna Brahman has three parts, Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishwara. Om also has three divisions, A U M. So every aspect of Brahman is revealed in OM, hence it is the Uttama Nama.

One has to practice Omkara dhyanam. In beginning focus on sound part, that also includes Virat, Hiranyagarbha and Ishwara. This is called Aparam Brahman.

Once you have advanced in meditation, move to silence and expand on it. Chant Om and dwell on silence. In silence reflect on teaching. Silence is Amatra; it is not blankness; it is absence of everything except the I, who am aware of the silence. The silence is Nirguna, Ananta etc. I have to see this as my swarupam. So it becomes swarupa dhyanam, which leads us to liberation. This concludes the 29 Karikas as well.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy