

Mandukaya Upanishad, Class 15

The aim of the seeker is to grab hold of viśva (attention is on the object I witness), then to chaidhasa (attention to witness of the subtle), then to Pragya (witness of casual universe) and finally to Thuriyum. In Thuriyum I turn my attention to I the observer, who am continuously there.

In omkara, instead of viśva, chaidha and Pragya we are turning the attention to akara, ukara and makara. Ultimately I turn my attention to the consciousness which is the witness of the silence. From sound to silence to the witness of the silence. Both sound and silence are object but the awareness is not the object, but it is the witness of the silence. Sound is not in silence and the silence is not in sound, but the witness is in both. Omkara vichara is from the sound to silence to the witness of the sound and silence.

In the eighth mantra onward the Upanishads equates each mathra to each padha. The Upanishads prescribes a meditation to assimilate this equation. The sound Akara is taken as symbol of of virad or viwsa roopa. By practicing upasana, when we say the sound akara, the whole viśvarūpa should come into mind.

The idols are not piece of arts for us, but Vishnu or Shiva. Similarly we should train our mind to sound a as viśva. The two common features of the two are:

- Virat is the first gross creation; after Virat along all other devatas came. In the alphabet akara is the first letter.
- The sound akara alone transforms into all other letters. Akara is the transformative letter from all other letters are formed. Similarly Virat is also all pervading.

The benefit of this upasana are:

1. Worldly benefit; or Attains kamas and pervades in terms of his possessions. He expands in life also; in terms of children, grandchildren etc.
2. In life, he will become top most.
3. The spiritual benefit is his capacity to equate akara to viśva. This very skill is a spiritual benefit. When he practices vedantic meditation, as he chants omkara, his mind thinks Virat, to Hiranyagarbha and then to andaryamin then to chaithanya adhirshatanam. Facility or skill in omkara dhyānam through which he can smoothly land in consciousness.

Mantra 10

Taisaja, whose filed is the dream state, is the second letter "u" due to the similarity of superiority and mindlessness. One who mediates thus extends the range of knowledge and becomes equal to all. In his family there will be no one who is ignorant of Brahman.

The second pada chaidhasa or Hiranyagarbha representing the subtle universe. This is equated to the second mathra ukara. 0 is a mixture of akara and ukara based on the sandhi rule. This ukara symbolizes the meditation on the second pada. Common features of ukara and chidhasa:

The superiority: Hiranyagarbha is superior to Visva. Hiranyagarbha is superior because:

1. Subtle is always superior.
2. Gross is born out of subtle. Sukshma is kāraṇam (cause) and gross is kariyam (Effect).

Ukara sound is superior to the sound of Akara because ukara comes after akara. Therefore akara resolves into ukara.

Ukara being the resolution ground, it is superior. Therefore Hiranyagarbha and ukara are both superior.

Second common feature is that they both are intermediary status. If you take viśva, chaidhasa and Pragya. Chaidhsa is in the middle; ukara is the middle between akara and makara. Train your mind to see the whole subtle universe or the cosmic mind or cosmic knowledge.

The benefit of this upasana:

You can practice this as a sakama upasana, you will get the following two results:

1. Because the upasana is on total Jñāna sakthi, it is equal to Saraswathi upasana and the upasaka will become a great learner. The extent of his knowledge will increase.
2. He will become a common man to everyone. He will be accepted by all groups. His knowledge will influence other members of his family also and they will become more learned person.

Mantra 11

Pragya, whose field is the sleep-state, is the third letter "m" due to the similarity of being a measure and being the ground of dissolution. One who meditates thus knows the truth of all this and becomes the ground of dissolution.

The third mathra of omkara is makara and should be equated to Pragya otherwise called andharyami or Eeswara. Pragya should be mediated up on makara. The two common features:

1. Mithihi means a measuring vessel. Pragya and makara are comparable to a measure. Measure (ulakku) disappears in a sack of grains and appears again later. Pragya is also a measure. When I go to sleep, the visible world

of my knowledge, ignorance they all enter into me. But they all appear again when I wake up. This cycle happens every day. Therefore Pragma is like a measure. Similarly when you say makara also, we swallow all other sounds. The speaker when he closes the mouth with the sound ma, all other sound dissolves, but they all come back when I speak again. So the sound ma is also like a measure where all sounds disappear and appear.

2. Abithihi: Means ground of dissolution or merger or disintegration. This is the common feature between common feature between Pragma and makara. Pragma stands for one who is in sleep state; one associated with kārāṇa prabañca. As Pragma I dissolve everything into me. At samshti level, Eeswara dissolves everything into himself. The sound makara is also the resolution of all other sounds. When you shut your mouth, it becomes m. That will be the last sound you will product, when you close the mouth.

Keeping these two common features, one should practice.

The one who practices this upasana he will get two fold benefits:

1. Because of measure upasana, he will be able to measure everything and everyone properly.
 2. He becomes the ground of resolution; he becomes one with the Eeswara.
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Sadhana Panchakam – Class 5

Shankaracharya discussing final stages of Jñāna yoga – sravanam, mananam, nidhithyasanam. Sravanam is nothing but systematic analysis of upaniṣadic statement. It is called vedanta vichara, vedanta mimamsa etc. Through systematic analysis we discover consciousness is the essence of individuals, and existence is the essence of the world; consciousness and existence are one and the same. This we call sat chit atma. Consciousness called sat and existence is called chit. This alone we call jivatma paramatma aikyam. This is sravanam.

Mananam is logically refuting all other systems which are contrary to vedantic teaching. Any knowledge involves two paths; one is seeing the rightness of the right path; second is seeing the wrongness of the wrong path. It is not enough to see the right alone; we also need to see the wrongness of wrong idea; if we don't, one day the wrong idea may appear right. Knowledge is knowledge only when it can't be shaken by anybody. I should know truth as truth and non-truth as non-truth. For opinions we can have variety, but for knowledge we can't have variety. Rope is rope and it is not a snake.

Vedanta makes statement regarding three fundamental things: Jiva, jagat and Eeswara. First it says jiva is infinite and ananda swaroopam. This we are not able to accept. Then it makes the statement about the world that the world is unreal. I am solidly facing the world all the time. How can I dismiss this wonderful solid universe? The third statement says that you are not different than the lord. This I can't accept at all. When we are in such despair, other system will be easily acceptable. Other systems say jivatma is different than paramatma. Paramatma created the universe and jivatma. All other systems are very appealing to intellect. They all claim that they are rational systems based on logic and reasoning. Advaidam is based on sruthi, the vedas and use tarka or logic

as a subservient tool. That is why we say shraddha in sruthi is important. A rational person will not accept faith. Their order is reason and scripture. Our order is scripture and reason. Mananam is where every other system is clearly negated. That can be done only with logic. Acharyas of advaidam have logically pointed out the logical contradictions in other systems.

Shankaracharya establishes that logic can't be used in the discovery of reality because logic has inherent limitations. Logic and modern science etc. are deficient in discovering reality. Sruthi itself has said this limitation. This logical repudiation of other systems and seeing innate deficiency of logic alone increase our faith in vedanta.

If logic is deficient and can't reveal the truth, does it mean logic should be totally given up? Sankarachariyar says logic does not need to be given up totally but used as a tool to extract the meaning of sashtra. Don't use logic to invent a philosophy but use it to bring out the teaching of sashtra. This is called sruthi madha tarkakas. For all our questions and doubts, vedas does not give explicit answer. But at the same time, answers are hidden in vedas. We have to bring out the answer to remove my particular doubt. The method used for this is logic. Logic will be helpful in bringing out implicit answers. Many systems were not there at Sankarachariyar time, so he did not repudiate those systems. Later acharyas repudiate those systems based on vedas, using Shankaracharya's method. Answering all my doubts is mananam. The benefit of mananam is conviction of vedanta. I can say "Aham Brahma Asmi" without any doubt. That is a knowledge with conviction.

The final stage of sadhana is nidhithyasanam. Nidhithyasanam is a process by which the knowledge has to be converted into emotional, mental and psychological strength. Our original disease is ignorance, which is at the intellect, but the symptoms are expressed at mental level in the form of kama,

raga, lōbha etc. All the samsara is emotional but the root cause is at the intellect level. The solution is at the intellectual level. But it is not enough. I am convinced I am brahma asmi, but the symptoms of raga dwesha etc. must be totally rooted out. If not, the knowledge is as good as being ignorant. A vedanta does not help me in gaining calm, compassionate, considerate, generous, charitable mind – for that vedanta is utterly useless. This requires assimilation of the teaching. The knowledge coming at the emotional level as emotional strength, duty and refinement. This is called jivan mukthi. Knowledge is at the intellectual level, but the benefit is at emotional level. Assimilating vedanta requires effort and requires removing each weakness. It is a lifelong painful long process. It is a lifelong process of consciously addressing every emotional weakness. The weakness is different for each person. For one it may be a superiority complex and another it may be inferiority complex. Each of them should be removed. This is nidhithyasanam and it requires time and constant alertness to discover the weakness coming up. For this introspect is required to gain auto suggestions when the weakness appear on day to day life.

We should look at what I am (Brahman) and what I am not (śarīra thrayāṃ). I should be able to see my own body as one of the objects of the world. We should have the same objective attitude towards our body as well as the bodies of the ones we love. Then the knowledge will be steady and firm. Cultivate I am brahman notion and negate I am body notion. This is nidhithyasanam and it requires lifelong commitment.

Sankarachariyar gives instructions on how to live. These instructions assume a person is at the stage of sanyasi. We will modify it to fit everyone:

1. Make sure you don't become arrogant because of this knowledge. Constantly remove the arrogance. Always be

humble.

2. Never argue with wise people.

Sadhana Panchakam – Class 4

Sankarachariyar talked about the first three stages, karma yoga and upasana which are to be practiced in the first three ashramas. Once the person has successfully gone through the first three stages, then he is ready for Jñāna yoga which is generally pursued in sanyasa ashrama. Whether a person physically renounces or not is not the question. A mind with a renunciation is ready for final sadhana which is Jñāna yoga.

First Sankarachariyar wants to emphasize that Jñānam must be pursued under the guidance of a guru alone. Knowledge without a guru will give information but not transformation. To learn anything, we go to a teacher. We do accept exceptions to any rule and if there is anyone who becomes a Jñāni without a guru, that is an exception and not the rule. Even if one gets knowledge without a teacher, we can accomplish the same thing faster with a teacher. Two meanings of this verse:

1. May you approach a brahma Jñāni.
2. May you approach a competent Jñāni. We should approach a Jñāni who has been a disciple of a guru, who has not studied independently. This guru knows the traditional methods of teaching and communication.

If we are approaching a vidwan and gain knowledge, that person must be alive. Other mahatmas can be kept for inspiration and worship; for learning we require a live teacher.

Why should we worship a teacher, a human being? First, it helps weaken our ego. Secondly, the scriptures are not going to speak to us directly. Upanishads themselves do not speak to us and we get the upaniṣad teachings from the guru. For the students, the guru is saṣthram. We must develop as much faith in the guru as much faith he has with the saṣthram. Physical actions like puja, namaskara etc. create an inner attitude of divinity.

Once the rapport has been created and the channels have been opened, we may ask for brahma knowledge. In this context, Brahman should be understood as brahma jñānam. Jñāna yoga consists of a threefold process of sravanam, mananam and nidhithyasanam.

Systematic Study consist of:

1. Analysis of jivatma; anvaya vrithireka method, to find out the essential nature. Whatever feature is there all the time that is my essential nature and permanent nature. Whatever feature is incidental feature is temporary. Another example is hot water; heat is not the essential nature of water; but fire has heat as the essential nature. So, heat is the incidental nature of water and essential nature of fire. Based on this, chit or awareness is the only essential nature of jivatma.
2. Analysis of paramatma; macrocosm by the method of adhyaropa apavara; through this analysis we come to the essential nature of totality, which is sat or pure existence. The permanent and changeless nature of creation. Everything else is subject to change.
3. Then come to the mahā vakya tat tvam asi; pure existence and pure consciousness are one and same.

Systematic, consistent study for a length of time is sravanam.

Verse 3

Here Sankarachariyar briefly mentions sravanam, mananam and nidhithyasanam. The upaniṣad vakyam does not convey the teaching explicitly or directly. Mimamsa sasthanam is the key to fully unlocking the meaning of vedanta. Without mimamsa, vedas will be abstract and contradictory.

In Kaivalya Upanishad, in one verse the Upanishad says from Brahman the panca buddha is born. (Around 12th or 13th verse). Since all these are born from Brahman, Brahman is nirgunam and therefore, they are not there. These two statements are contradictory.

In Taittiriya Upanishad, mantra is Sathyam, jñānam and anandam. In the beginning it said Brahman is all pervading but now it says it entered everything. These two are contradictory. In mimamsa method, when a sentence is not clear, you do not go deep into the statement. You arrive at the proper meaning by considering all other statements made by the Upanishads. Then we will find the beautiful meaning conveyed by the statement. Six factors of mimamsa are used to tie together all the Upanishad statement and arrive at the true meaning. This is sravanam and by this you arrive at the conclusion that essence of jivatma is chit, essence of paramatma is sat. And paramatma and jivatma are one and the same. Aham Brahma Asmi.

Note regarding mimamsa:

Swamiji referred to six factors or Shadanga. They are:

1. Shabda (Word): Shabda refers to the words of the Vedic text, which are considered to be the ultimate authority. Mimamsa emphasizes the importance of analyzing and understanding the precise meaning of each word in the text.
2. Artha (Meaning): Artha refers to the meaning of the

words in the Vedic text. Mimamsa believes that the true meaning of the text can only be understood by analyzing the words and their meanings in great detail.

3. Prayojana (Purpose): Prayojana refers to the purpose or goal of the Vedic text. Mimamsa emphasizes the importance of understanding the context and purpose of each text in order to properly interpret it.
4. Dosha (Fault): Dosha refers to any faults or contradictions in the Vedic text. Mimamsa believes that these faults must be identified and resolved in order to properly understand the text.
5. Samkhya (Inference): Samkhya refers to the process of inference or logical deduction. Mimamsa uses inference to draw conclusions and establish the meaning of the text.
6. Upapatti (Example): Upapatti refers to the use of examples to clarify the meaning of the text. Mimamsa believes that examples can help to illustrate complex ideas and make them easier to understand.

Sādhana Pañchakam – Class 3

Shankaracharya is dealing with the second stage of life; the first stage of life is learning about the way of life I should be leading. Having learnt that in the first stage, one has to go to the next stage of gragasthasrama, one should implement the dharma learnt. In the case of brahma Jñānam, Jñānam itself gives moksha. In this case knowledge itself is an end itself. In the case of dharma gyanam, knowledge itself is not an end itself, but it must be followed by implemented. The key in gragasthasrama is svadharma asthanam. Svadharma in modern times is panca mahā yagya. Vedas do not clearly tell

what the benefit of svadharma is. Svadharma is presented for material benefits by the Vedas; however, Veda's intended benefit is we should develop spirituality and our crave for materialism should subside. Vedanta is not against using material benefits, but does not want us to lean on material benefits. Turning away from anithyam and turning towards nithyam is the aim of vedas. Turning away from anatma and turning towards atma is the aim of the vedas. A person is not mature enough to know the value of moksha and therefore vedas presented svadharma as a way to prosper. Even though the explicit benefit is material prosperity, the intended benefit is spiritual inclination. The svadharma will make the mind see the limitation of material accomplishment; we do not hate material benefits, but we refuse to lean up on them. There is only one secure thing in the world; all others are insecure and not worth leaning on.

Viveka, vairāgyam and mumukṣutvaṁ are all implied in the first verse. Once these three qualifications are acquired, one has successfully gone through the second stage of gragasthasrama. After this, one should get out gragasthasrama and get to vanaprastha ashram. This means, karma should be reduced and replaced by more time devoted to upasana or meditation. In gragasthasrama because of too many duties, mind has become highly extroverted. In gragasthasrama, karma is more and upasana is less. In vanaprastha ashrama, upasana is more and karma is less. For current times, one can stay in home but increase the time spent on upasana and reduce time spent on worldly activities.

Verse 2

In vanaprastha ashrama, one must be obsessed with spiritual pursuit; one must have sat sangha or association with spiritual seekers or wisemen as much as possible. Materialistic arguments are so powerful, one can easily fall prey to them. Until you are firmly established, be selective with your friends, books etc. The primary function in

vanaprastha is bhakti or upasana or meditation of the lord or the Virat swaroopam. Upasana and yoga shastra go together. Patanjali's ashtanga yoga is good for integrating personality in life:

- Yama and niyama; these two will help in integration our way life.
- Asana will integrate my annamya kosa and discipline my physical body.
- Pranayama will integrate with pranayama kosa or breathing discipline.
- Prathyagra integration of sense organs.
- Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi: these three will help integration of mind.

In the vedanta sasthanam, instead of focusing on various chakras of body, we focus on brahman. By the practice of upasana and yoga one should develop one more faculty that is samadhi shadka sampatti or six-fold inner wealth:

1. Samaha or thought discipline; reducing thoughts occurring without my knowledge; not stopping the thought but the capacity to channelize the thought in the direction we want. All the alues will come under this concept. Daivi sampat and asuri sampat will come under this.
2. Dhamaha or sense discipline; Sense organs functioning as I want and not as it wants. Real mastery is not over other people, but mastery over sense organs.
3. Uparamah or withdrawn mind; mind withdrawn from unwanted field should not run again towards to the unwanted field. Withdrawing mind is samaha and restraining the mind is uparamah.
4. Titikṣā or inner strength to face difficult times; forbearance; there are certain inevitable opposite like heat and cold, arrival and departure; jenma and marana;

sukam and duḥkam; capacity to withstand these is titikṣā.

5. Shradha or faith in the scriptures and the teacher. It is not blind faith; if there is doubt, then I inquire until I am satisfied.
6. Samādhānam or concentration; non wavering mind; in yoga sashtra it is called samadhi.

May all karma and upasana be totally given up because they have served their purpose. Karma and upasanas are like womb; they are relevant only until Sadhana Catuṣṭaya Saṃpatti ripening. Once Sadhana Catuṣṭaya Saṃpatti is completely assimilated karmas and upasanas should be renounced. This is also the formal process of entering into sanyasa ashrama. If the person does not have inner attachment, even the house can be sanyasa ashrama. The sign of detachment is that I am prepared to lose anything around me. If karma and upasanas can't be performed then take to Jñāna yoga, corresponding to Jñāna kanda. Take up Sravanam, Mananam and nidhithyasanam.

Sādhana Pañchakam – Class 2

Sankarachariyar is discussing the grand scheme of ashrama avastha – the four stages of life. The first stage is called Brahmacharyam where a student learns chanting of vedas, learns auxiliary sciences veda anga vichara and veda artha or mimamsa. If he is shathriya he learns dhanu sasthram, if he is Vaishnava he learns vedic studies.

Having understood the scheme in Brahmacharyam, one has to go to the next stage gragasthasrama where he implements the scheme.

The first stage is karma anushtanam, following the karmas prescribed in the vedas. The ten samanya dharmas should be implemented by all – the five do's and don'ts – yama and niyama. In addition to these universal values, one has to follow vishesha dharma or specific duties which is called svadharma which will vary from brahmana to shathriya, shathriya to vaishya etc. This karma or the vedic duties can be classified into three:

1. Nişkāma karma: Those compulsory actions which do not depend on your like and dislikes. These are based on vedic commandments and are meant for spiritual growth and refinement of mind.
2. Sakama Karma: These are based on our desires; they are not compulsory and are optional. These are meant for material well-being.
3. Nişiddha karma: These are prohibited karmas and must be renounced; like harming, telling lies etc. These are obstacles for spiritual growth.

Do the nişkāma karma properly without fail. Lord Krishna uses the word svadharma throughout Bagawad Gita. In the scriptures, the svadharma is determined by varna and ashrama. However, the varna and ashramas are not alive today. So, we need to interpret svadharma with present day need. This should be practicable by all. This is panca mahā yagya, which is svadharma of all people.

1. Deva Yagya: Worship of the lord. Just offering flowers, chanting slokas, going to pujas etc. It does not matter what way you worship, but it must be done. If this is done for material benefit, then it will not be nişkāma karma, but it will be sakama karma.
2. Pithur Yagya: Worship of forefathers; Vedas have prescribed certain rites; it doesn't matter how we express our gratitude towards forefather, but it must be

expressed.

3. Brahma Yagya: Worship of vedas and rishis, in the form of ritual. We do our best to preserve and propagate the scriptures.
4. Manuṣya yagya: We are indebted to every other human being. All we use and consume is because somebody has worked and is working; therefore, I am indebted to entire humanity. One of the best manuṣya yagya is anna dhānam. All social services will come under manuṣya yagya.
5. Bhudha yagya: Worship of so-called inferior living beings; animals and plants. Feeding the animals, insects and birds is bhudha yagya.

What are sakama karma? Sakama karma are actions for material wealth. May you gradually give up actions meant for material wealth – artha kama. In those days, everyone did their duty (svadharma), whatever the other person voluntarily gives, I live on that. When everybody does their svadharma, it works. However, now svadharma based society is gone and payment-based society is evolving. Everybody's svadharma became automatic payment of other's svadharma. Lord Krishna says gradually reduce kama karma. How do you reduce the kama karma?

Kama karma increases because of the increase of raga dwesha. As the kama increases, kama karma increases. As we reduce raga dwesha, kama karma will also be reduced. Svadharma anushtanam will reduce kama raga dwesha. Raga dwesha is called pavam because whatever obstructs spirituality is pavam. Raga dwesha obstructs spirituality, therefore raga dwesha is pavam. Raga dwesha makes mind extroverted. This bundles of raga dwesha should be neutralized. May you repeatedly see the following three defects of worldly accomplishments, worldly pleasures:

1. It is mixed with pain, pain in acquisition, maintenance

and departure.

2. It will never give satisfaction, the more I have, more I want more.
3. They make a person a slave of them, we will get addicted to them.

Through the refined mind, one can discern the defects and become viveka or mature. Eventually kama karma will become less and less. It is not enough that we just understand this, we should also remember this all the time.

If all material benefits are defective, is there a defect free ananda? The answer is atma; atmananda, is free from all the three defects. Turn the direction from material pleasures to spiritual fulfilment.

Sādhana Pañchakam – Class 1

Sādhana Pañchakam was written by Adhi Shankaracharya. Sometimes this is also called Sopana Panchakam or Upadesa Panchakam or Advaita Pañchakam. The word Pañchakam means a text consisting of five verses. It is called Advaita Pañchakam because these verses deal with advaitic teaching contained in Vedas. The word upadesa means teachings or instructions; five verses dealing with the instructions. The teaching in these verses are given in a graded manner. Sopanam means a flight of steps. Like a flight of steps, instructions are given to reach the goal. These five verses deal with a series of sādhanas or disciplines to be followed by every human being and that is why it is also called sādhana pañchakam. Sadhanam is means and sadhyam is end. The person who accomplishes the sadhanas is called sadhaka.

A series of sādhanas is given for two goals:

1. Discovering what is the goal of human life.
2. Accomplishment of the goal

Keeping these goals in mind, a scheme for life is presented. This scheme of life is given by vedas and scriptures. This is presented by Shankaracharya in five verses.

What is the scheme given by the Vedas? This scheme is known as varna ashrama vyavesthas; scheme of varnas and scheme of ashramas; Varna vyavesthas means dividing the whole society into four groups: brahmana, shathriya, vaishya, sudhras. This classification is based on the contribution towards the society. This classification was given by scriptures for social harmony and social growth.

The second scheme is ashrama vyavesthas or scheme of four stages of life. This scheme is presented for individual harmony and growth. In this work, Shankaracharya is primarily concerned about the ashrama vyavesthas. The four ashramas are:

1. Brahmacharya: Student stage of life
2. Grihastha: Householder stage of life
3. Vanaprastha: Hermit stage of life
4. Sanyasa ashrama.

This scheme is almost gone and has only a skeletal existence. But internally and mentally everyone has to through this scheme.

For all the human beings, irrespective of varna or ashrama, the scriptures describe some common disciplines; universal disciplines; These disciplines are called samanya dharma; general disciplines and duties. These can be broadly classified into two: Avoidances (don't) and the second consisting of pursuits (dos). Each one consists of five; five don't disciplines are called yamas or nivrutti and five do

disciplines are called niyamas or pravriti bodha.

Yamas: Five avoidances

1. Ahimsa: Nonviolence; avoidance of harm to others by thought, word and deed.
2. Sathyam: Do not speak untruth; do not lie; It does not mean you always truth; do not speak untruth; so, this is avoidance of lie. Either speak truth or observe silence, but do not speak untruth.
3. Asteyam: Don't possess illegitimate wealth.
4. Brahmacharyam: Avoidance of illegitimate sexual relationships.
5. Aparigraha: Avoidance of possession of too much wealth, even though it is legal.

Five Niyamas: Disciplines to be pursued.

1. Śaucam: Purity; positively working for physical purity and mental purity.
2. Santosha: Positively developing a sense of contentment.
3. Tapas: Willful self-denial; to avoid slavery to our organs.
4. Svādhyāya: The study of scriptures; with or without knowing meaning.
5. Eeswara Praṇidhāna: Worship of the lord.

Vishesha Dharmas (specific disciplines) are not universal but should be followed by segments of society. These vishesha dharmas are based on varna and ashrama designation of a person. They are known as varnashrama dharma or vishesha dharma or swadharma. Shankaracharya does not discuss samanya dharmas and prescribes vishesha dharmas at four stages of life.

The first stage is Brahmacharya ashrama – a student's life where a person is supposed to study vedic scheme of life. There was 12 years of study. First, he learns what should and

should not do in each ashrama. Only after this study, a student can be called brahmachary. Brahma means veda and chary means the one who studies. This is the first stage: being aware of the vedic grand design.

The second stage is gragasthasrama in which one takes the life of activity as prescribed for his particular varna. This is predominantly discussed in the first portion of vedas or karma kanda; When a person follows this discipline, a person gets mental purity. Freedom from raga dwesha; likes and dislikes, because of which a person is generally disturbed. This indicates equanimity of mind or samatvam or chithasudhhi.

Third stage is vanaprastha ashrama; here extrovert physical activities are reduced, and mental disciplines are increased in the form of upasanas. This is discussed in the second portion of vedas or called upasana kanda. This gives a focusing faculty or converging faculty.

The fourth and final stage is sanyasa ashrama in which a person is free from all psychological dependence and attachments. If this is done physically then, he is an external sanyasi. If it is done mentally, then he is internal sanyasi. This is the final discipline or Jñāna yoga or pursuit of spiritual knowledge, which corresponds to Jñāna kanda portion of vedas. By following this, a person becomes gyani. He becomes jivan muktha, the one who has discovered inner freedom or liberation.

In the first sloka, we get first two stages. In the second and third slokas we get third and fourth stages. In the fourth and fifth Shankaracharya gives general instructions to be followed.

Sloka 1

The scriptures should be regularly studied by you. This is done in the first stage of Brahmacharyam and continued in the other ashramas. First, Vedas are chanted then the meaning is

studied and understood. Adhyayanam is chanting and mimamsa means understanding the meaning. To understand the meaning of the Vedas, one must know certain auxiliary sciences known as Veda angaṇi. If you want to understand physics, you must know mathematics. In brahmacharya ashrama the student learns Veda anga also. It is not mere technical expertise; he should know what to do when he comes out of this ashrama. He must have clear cut understanding of his goal and also how to conduct in the society. When life presents challenges, how to deal with them? In Brahmacharya Ashram, he studies the art of living and conducting in the society, in addition to learning their profession.