

Māndukya Upaniṣhad माण्डुक्योपनिषत्

The term Upanishad ('upa' near; 'ni' down; 'sad' to sit) means sitting down near; this implies the students sitting down near their Guru to learn the big secret. In the splendid isolation of their forest abodes, the philosophers who composed the Upanishads contemplated upon the various mysteries of life and its creation – whether common, or metaphysical. The answers were however not open to all, but only for select students with a genuine desire to learn. The reason for this was simple: not everyone can handle knowledge.

The **Māndukya** is an exquisite treatise aligned to the **Atharva Veda** which expounds on the principle of Om and its metaphysical significance in various states of being - waking, dream, the dreamless sleep, and beyond these three. The subtlest and one of the most profound of the Upanishads, it is said that mastery of this Upanishad alone will lead one to the path of enlightenment. Thus, it is stated:

māndukyam ekam eva alam, mu-muk-shūnām vi-muk-taye

For the liberation of the mumukṣhū or seeker the Māndukya alone is enough; and if you are able to understand the true meaning of this single Upaniṣhad, there may not be a necessity to study any other Upaniṣhad.

INVOCATION AND VERSES

ओ३म् भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।

स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तनूभिर्व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ॥

स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।

स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्योऽरिष्टनेमिः स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ।

ओ३म् शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥

Om! Bhadram karnebhiḥ śrinuyāma devāḥ

bhadram paśye-māk-ṣhabhir-yajat-rāḥ

sthirair-angais-tush-tuvām-sas-tanūbhir

vyaśema devahitam yadāyuh

svasti na indro vrid-dhaś-ravāḥ

svasti naḥ pūṣhā viśva-vedāḥ

svasti nas-tārk-ṣhyo ariṣhta-nemiḥ

svasti no brihaspatir-dadhātu

Om śāntiḥ; śāntiḥ; śāntiḥ

(Also found in Yajur Veda 25:19 & 21 and Rig Veda)

“Om. O God! May we hear through our ears what is auspicious; You, fit to be worshipped! May we see with our eyes what is auspicious; May we, endowed with body strong with limbs, offering praise, complete the full span of life bestowed upon us, in accordance with our deeds, by the Divine Being; May **Indra**, of enhanced fame, be auspicious unto us; May **Pūshan**, who is all-knowing, be auspicious unto us; May **Tārکشya**, who is the destroyer of all evils, be auspicious unto us; May **Brihaspati** bestow upon us auspiciousness!
Om. O God, may peace prevail throughout the visible and invisible Universe!

ओ३म् इत्येतदक्षरमिदं सर्वं तस्योपव्याख्यानं भूतं भवद् भविष्यदिति
सर्वमोङ्कार एव यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं तदप्योङ्कार एव ॥१॥

Aum ityetad akṣaram idam sarvam,
Tasyo-‘pav-yākh-yānam bhūtam,
bhavad bhaviṣyad iti sarvam aumkāra eva ।
yac cānyat, trikālātītaṁ tad apy aumkāra eva ॥... 1

The word ‘OM’ is the best name of the Eternal Imperishable God, and this whole Universe is as if a commentary (exposition) on Him (the entire Universe being a manifestation of His glory, He being the efficient cause). OM encompasses the whole, whether past, present, or future - What had come, what has come, what is to come, all of this is OM. And what is beyond these three states of the world of time, - that too, verily, is OM.

Om: Om, the most perfect name of God **Om iti etat aksharam idam sarvam:** Om pervades all of this, the visible and invisible Universe
Tasya: of that, of this Om, God **Upavyaakhyaanam:** a clear exposition **Bhutam:** the past **Bhavad:** the present **Bhavishyat:** the future **Iti:** these; whatever is circumscribed by these three periods of time **Sarvam:** all this
Omkaarah eva: pervaded by Om **Ca yat trikaalaateetam:** and whatever else is beyond the three periods of time (past, present, future), **Tat api:** that too **Omkara eva:** verily is pervaded by Om

सर्वं ह्येतद् ब्रह्मायमात्मा ब्रह्म सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् ॥२॥

Sarvaṁ hy etad brahma,
Ayam ātmā brahma,
So’yam ātmā catuṣ-pāt ॥... 2

All this (the entire Universe, visible and invisible, and all beings), verily, is pervaded by Brahman (God), the Supreme Spirit. This Supreme Spirit has four phases of His existence.

Sarvam etat: all this (that was spoken of previously as pervaded by Om) **Brahma:** God
Ayam aatmaa brahma: this Supreme Self is Brahma (God)
Sah ayam aatmaa: that Supreme Self (Supreme Spirit, God) **Ca tush paat:** and has four phases of existence

जागरितस्थानो बहिष्प्रज्ञः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः

स्थूल भुग्वैश्वानरः प्रथमः पादः ॥३॥

jāgarita sthāno bahiṣ-prajñah
saptāṅga eko-na-vimśati-mukhaḥ
sthūla-bhug vaiśvā-narah, prathamah pādah ॥... 3

In His first wakeful phase He is manifest as diffused in external nature creating seven parts (2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, and the mouth), and nineteen faces (5 organs of veins – heart, lungs, kidneys, small intestines, and liver, 5 organs of motion – **vach** speaking, **pani** grasping, **pada** moving, **paya** eliminating, and **upastha** procreating -, 5 pranas of Vital Airs, mind, intellect, memory and organ of individuality) that enable each person to seek enjoyment in gross palpable matter, and regulating, with precision and order, the physical motions of the universe. He is the Universal Soul and is the giver of life to all things.

Jaagarita: Waking state **Sthaana:** sphere of activity **Prajynaa:** awareness **Bahih:** outside, other than himself

Saptaanga: seven parts (2 eyes, 2 ears, 2 nostrils, and mouth; **or** the sun as the eyes, air as the vital force, space as the middle part, water as the bladder, and the earth as the two feet)

Eko-navim-shati-mukhah: containing nineteen faces (mouths) (the 5 senses of perception, 5 organs of action, the 5 pranic vital forces, and the mind (thinking, intellect, ego, mind activity))

Sthulabhuk: an enjoyer of the gross **Vaishvaanara:** he leads in diverse ways all (vishva) beings (nara) **Prathamah paadah:** the first phase

स्वप्नस्थानोऽन्तः प्रज्ञाः सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः

प्रविविक्तभुक्तैजसो द्वितीयः पादः ॥४॥

svapna-sthāno'ntah-prajñah
saptāṅga ekonavimśati-mukhaḥ
pravivikta-bhuk taijaso dvītiyah pādah ॥... 4

In His second dreaming or contemplative phase, God is viewed as internally wise (taijasa, designator), fixing the relations of the said seven parts of the human body to each other and also of the said nineteen faces, and regulating, with precision

and order, the internal, (atomic) subtle motion of the Universe (and all therein). He is Self-Luminous and illumines the sun, the moon, and other heavenly bodies.

Svapna-sthaanah: the dream state of activity of **Taijasa** **Antah:** internal in relation to the senses **Prajynaa:** awareness in dream **Antah-prajynah:** aware of internal objects (rest of translation similar to other verse)

यत्र सुप्तो न कञ्चन कामं कामयते न कञ्चन स्वप्नं पश्यति तत् सुषुप्तम् ।
सुषुप्तस्थानः एकीभूतः प्रज्ञानघन एवानन्दमयो ह्यानन्दभुक् चेतो मुखः
प्राज्ञस्तृतीयः पादः ॥५॥

yatra supto na kaṁ cana kāmam
kāmayate na kaṁ cana svapnam
paśyati tat suṣuptam ।
suṣupta-sthāna ekī-bhūtaḥ
prajñānā-ghana evānanda-mayo
hy ānanda-bhuk ceto-mukhaḥ
prājñas tṛtīyaḥ pādah ॥... 5

When human souls repose in sound sleep, suspending voluntarily actions and desires, and also not dreaming (i.e., experiences no dream), he is said to be **sushupta** (in the perfect slumber). For the third slumbering phase, God is likewise viewed as one indivisible, embodiment of all knowledge (Omniscient), All-bliss, enjoying but pure delight, only manifest in His consciousness and endowed with the highest wisdom.

Yatra: in which place or at which time **Suptah:** the sleeping person **Na pashyati:** does not see **Kancana svapnam:** any dream **Na kaamayate:** does not desire **Kancana kaamam:** any enjoyable thing – for in deep sleep there does not exist, as in the earlier states, either dream, or any desire – that is **Tat sushuptam**, that state of deep sleep **Sushupta-sthaanah:** person who has got state of deep sleep as his/her sphere **Ekeebhootah:** (that person is) undifferentiated **Prajnaanaghanah:** (this state is called) a mass of consciousness, since it is characterized by the absence of discrimination **Eva:** merely **Aananda-maya:** full of joy (This abundance of joy is being caused by the absence of misery involved in the effort of the mind vibrating as the objects and their expericncer, but he/she is not Bliss itself, since the joy is not absolute.) **Aanandabhuk:** an experiencer of joy (In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad IV iii 32 it states ‘...this is its supreme bliss. On a particle of this very bliss other beings live.) He is called **Cetomukhah**, because consciousness, appearing as empirical experience, is the doorway or entrance leading to the states of dream and waking. He is called **Praajnah**. Praajna, consciousness par excellence, since in Him alone is there theknowledge of the past and the future and of all things.

एष सर्वेश्वरः एष सर्वज्ञ एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष योनिः सर्वस्य प्रभवाप्ययौ हि भूतानाम्
॥६॥

eṣa sarveśvaraḥ eṣa sarvajñaḥ,
eṣo'ntaryāmyeṣa yoniḥ sarvasya
prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām ॥... 6

This/He is the Lord of All; the Omniscient; Controller of all (entire Universe) within Himself; the Source of All, the womb (i.e. holder) of all beings and things. Verily, this One is the cause of the beginning (birth) and end (death) of all beings.

Eshah: this God **Sarveshvara:** Lord of all **Esha sarvajnah:** this one is Omniscient
Esha: this God **Antaryaanee:** controller **Eshah yonih:** this One is the source
Sarvasya: of all **Prabhava-apyayau:** cause of beginning and end **Hi:** certainly, verily
Bhutaanaam: of all beings

नान्तः प्रज्ञं न बहिष्प्रज्ञं नोभयतः प्रज्ञं न प्रज्ञानघनं न प्रज्ञं नाप्रज्ञम् ।
अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यम ग्राह्यमलक्षणं अचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यमेकात्म
प्रत्ययसारं प्रपञ्चोपशमं शान्तं शिवमद्वैतं चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते स आत्मा स विज्ञेयः
॥७॥

nāntaḥ-prajñam, na bahiṣ prajñam, nobhayataḥ-prajñam,
na prajñāna-ghanam, na prajñam, nāprajñam;
adṛṣṭam, avyavahārayam, agrāhyam, alakṣaṇam, acintyam,
avyapadeśyam, ekātma-pratyaya-sāram, prapañcopaśamam, śāntam,
śivam, advaitam, caturtham manyante, sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ ॥... 7

In His fourth phase, God may be viewed as neither designing internally nor as diffused throughout external nature, nor in the transitional mood between the two, nor fraught with volitional consciousness, nor devoid of consciousness; but may be viewed as invisible, incommunicable (by physical tongue, etc.), ineffable, un-seizable, intangible, devoid of characteristics – without form (formless), unthinkable, and indefinable - unknowable, Being, only conscious of Self, (in Self) resort of the Universe on its destruction, perfectly calm. All bliss and One unequal, without a second. He, the Universal Soul, should be known by every human being.

By the phrase **na antah-prajñam:** not conscious of the internal world, is eliminated **taijasa;** by **na bahish-prajñam:** not conscious of the outside world, is eliminated

vishva; by **na ubhayatah-prajñam:** not conscious of either, is ruled out the intermediate state between dream and waking; by **na prajñāna-ghanam:** not a mass of consciousness, is denied the state of deep sleep, for this consists of a state of latency where everything becomes indistinguishable; by **na prajñam:** nor conscious, is denied being aware of all objects simultaneously (by a single act of consciousness); by **na aprajñam:** nor unconscious, is negated insentience

Hence, it is **adṛṣtam:** unseen; therefore, it is **avyavahārayam:** beyond empirical dealings; **Agrāhyam:** beyond the grasp, of the organs of action; **alakṣaṇam:** without any logical ground of inference. Therefore, it is **acintyam:** unthinkable; hence, it is **avyapadeśyam:** indescribable, by words; it is **ekātma-pratyaya-sāram:** to be spotted by the unchanging knowledge that **It** is the same Self that subsists in the states of walking, and so on (this is in accord with the Vedic text ‘The Self/God alone should be meditated upon’ Br I iv. 7) **Prapañcopaśamam:** the one in whom all phenomena have ceased; hence it is **śāntam:** unchanging; **śivam:** auspicious; **advaitam:** non-dual; **caturtham:** the fourth; **manyante:** consider It to be; **sa ātmā:** the Supreme Self; **sa vijñeyah:** that is to be known

The above thoughts are also expressed in the following texts:

That Thou art – Ch VI iii-xvi

He is never seen but is the witness – Br III vii 23

For the visions of the witness can never be lost – Br IV ii 23

सोऽयमात्माध्यक्षरमोङ्करोऽधिमात्रं पादा मात्रा मात्राश्च पादा अकार उकारो
मकार इति ॥८॥

so'yam ātmādyakṣaram
auṁkaro'dhimātram
pādā mātṛā mātṛāś ca pādā
akāra ukāra makāra iti ॥... 8

Om is the best name of God. His attributes being truly represented by the three letters constituting ‘Om’. The components of the syllable, and the components of the syllable being identical with the four quarters of the Self. The components of the Syllable are A, U, M.

so'yam ātmā: that very Supreme Self, God; **adyakṣaram:** from the standpoint of the syllable; **auṁkaarah:** it is the syllable Om; **adhimātram:** exists as its components, as its basis; **pādā mātṛā mātṛāś ca pādā:** non different from the component parts; **akāra ukāra makāra iti:** the component parts are verily ‘A’, ‘U’, ‘M’.

जागरितस्थानो वैश्वानरोऽकारः प्रथमा मात्राऽप्तेरादिमत्त्वाद् वाऽप्नोति ह वै
सर्वान् कामानादिश्च भवति य एवं वेद ॥९॥

jāgarita-sthāno vaiśvānaro'kārah
prathamā mātṛā'pterādimatvād vā'pnoti
ha vai sarvān kāmān ādiś ca bhavati, ya evaṁ veda ||... 9

Vaiśvānara, whose field is the waking state, is the first sound (maatṛa) of Om, A, because all other sounds are dependent on this sound, it is all-encompassing. He who realizes this (similar) attribute of God (represented by the 'A' maatṛa) and worships Him accordingly, will have all desires fulfilled, and that person has taken the first step towards His realization.

jāgarita-sthānaḥ: with sphere of activity as the wakeful state; **vaiśvānarah:** vishvaanara (Viraat); **akārah:** 'a' (first letter)
prathamā mātṛā: the first letter of Om; **Aaptaḥ:** because of pervasiveness (**Aapti** means pervasiveness); **ādi:** precedence; **ādimat:** first; **vād:** it is said;
ā'pnoti ha vai sarvān kāmān: he surely achieves all desirable things;
ca bhavati ādiḥ: and he becomes the foremost, among the great;
ya evaṁ veda: who knows this

Just as the letter 'a' is present in all consonants and is the first letter of the alphabet, so this letter, when used in relation to God, represents His All-pervading attributes. Also, He ranking first in our praise and prayer.

स्वप्नस्थानस्तैजस उकारो द्वितीया मात्रोत्कर्षात् उभयत्वाद्वोत्कर्षति ह वै
ज्ञानसन्ततिं समानश्च भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति य एवं वेद ॥१०॥

svapna-sthānas taijasa
ukāro dvitīyā mātrotkarṣāt
ubhayatvādvotkarṣati ha vai jñāna-saṁtatiṁ |
samānaś ca bhavati
nāsyābrahma-vit-kule bhavati
ya evaṁ veda ||... 10

Taijasa, whose field is the dream state, is the second sound, U, because this is excellence, and contains the qualities of the other two. He who knows thus, exalts the flow of knowledge and becomes equalized; in his family there will be born no one ignorant of Brahman.

svapna-sthānaḥ: with the state of dream as his sphere; **taijash:** belonging to the taijaisa
ukārah: the letter u of Om; **dvitīyā mātṛā:** second letter; **utkarṣāt:** because of excellence; **ubhayatvāt vā:** because of intermediate position;
utkarṣati ha vai jñāna-saṁtatiṁ: he heightens (increases the flow of knowledge);
samānaś ca bhavati: and he becomes enlightened; **asya kule:** in the line of this one;
na bhavati abrahma-vit: none is born who is not a knower of Brahman/God;

ya evam veda: who knows thus

just as ‘u’ occurs in the middle of Om (A, u, m), so God contains within Himself all created objects and is therefore All-pervading.

सुषुप्तस्थानः प्राज्ञो मकारस्तृतीया मात्रा मितेरपीतेर्वा मिनोति ह वा इदं
सर्वमपीतिश्च भवति य एवं वेद ॥११॥

suṣupta-sthānaḥ prājño makāras
ṭṛtīya mātṛā miter apīter vā
minoti ha vā idaṁ sarvam
apītiś ca bhavati ya evaṁ veda ॥... 11

‘M’ the third maatra of Om (A, u, m) represents All-wise God in the slumbering (deep sleep) phase. ‘M’ means that which measures all, both in existence and knowledge, measures all and is the resort of all beings and things (all matter). He who realizes this mode of God’s divine existence acquires the knowledge of all the sciences, physical as well as spiritual, and retires unto Him.

suṣupta-sthānaḥ: with the state of deep sleep as his sphere; **prājñaḥ:** prājña; **makāraḥ:** the letter ‘m’; which is **ṭṛtīya mātṛā:** the third letter, of the word Om; **mīteḥ:** because of measuring, (miti means to measure); **apīteḥ vā:** because of absorption (Apīti means getting merged or united in, at the time of pronunciation of Om, ‘a’ and ‘u’ seem to get absorbed or merged in the last letter, ‘m’. Similarly, **viśva** and **aijasa** merge into **prājñaḥ** at the time of sleep); **minoti ha vā idaṁ sarvam:** he measures all this, he knows the reality of the Universe; **ca bhavati apītiḥ:** and he becomes the place of absorption;
ya evaṁ veda: who knows thus

अमात्रश्चतुर्थोऽव्यवहार्यः प्रपञ्चोपशमः शिवोऽद्वैत एवमोङ्कार आत्मैव
संविशत्यात्मनाऽत्मानं य एवं वेद य एवं वेद ॥१२॥

amātraś caturtho’vyavahāryaḥ
prapañcopaśamaḥ sivo’dvaita
evam auṁkāra ātmaiva,
saṁviśaty ātmanā’tmānaṁ
ya evaṁ veda ya evaṁ veda ॥... 12

In the fourth phase of God, there is no visible maatra of Om, for it represents the un-knowable; ie Who cannot be known by an ordinary person or seen by the physical eye. Omkara (Om) is the Supreme Spirit, Who is in-incommunicable (by physical tongue or the like), the final resort of all matter and beings, All-bliss

and One unequalled. He who realizes God thus, his soul enters Him (gets anchored in the Universal Spirit/Self) and he attains moksha (salvation), for an extended period.

amātraḥ: that which has no maatraa; **caturthaḥ**: fourth, (**turiya**, the absolute Self, God); **avyavahāryaḥ**: beyond empirical relations (without names as can be described by speech and mind); **prapañcopaśamaḥ**: the culmination of phenomenal existence; **śivaḥ**: the auspicious; **advaitaḥ**: non-dual; **evam**: thus **auṁkāra**: as possessed of the three letters and as applied by a person with (this) knowledge; **ātmā eva**: verily identical with the Self, possessed of the three quarters; **saṁviśati**: enters; **ātmānam**: into (His own Supreme) Self; **ātmanā**: through (his own) self; **ya evaṁ veda**: that person who knows this; **ya evaṁ veda**: that person who knows this (repeated here for emphasis)

ओ३म् शान्तिः । शान्तिः । शान्तिः ॥

Om śāntiḥ; śāntiḥ; śāntiḥ

Om Peace! Peace! Peace! O God, may all Your creation, within the visible and invisible universe(s), experience and exist in complete peace!!!