

Mandukya Upanishad

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What are Upanishads?

- Literal meaning – “sitting near” – implying sitting near a teacher to get knowledge; upanishad=knowledge
- Represent an earnest quest for Truth
- End part of the Vedas – Vedanta
- Each Veda has four sections – Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka, Upanishad
- Two major sections of Vedas – ritualistic part and knowledge part
 - Ritualistic part for personal and material gains - lower knowledge
 - Upanishadic knowledge: higher knowledge - of self and transcendent states of awareness.
 - Some Upanishads attack the ritualistic practices of the Vedas (explicitly and implicitly)

What are Upanishads (cont.)

- Vedas are without beginning – they contain eternal spiritual laws discovered by sages
- No human author attributed to the Vedas – called Shruti (“heard” during meditation)
- Subsequent texts like Puranas, Mahabharat, Ramayana etc called Smritis (created by human)
- Religion and philosophy of vedas called Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Religion)

What are Upanishads (cont.)

- 108 Upanishads are well known
- 10 considered most significant: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, MandUkya, Taittirlya, Aitareya, Chandogya, and Brihadaranyaka
- Not well organized - not a product of human intellect
- Contain knowledge revealed to rishis in deep meditation states – called Shruti (heard)
- No coherent or definitive philosophy; thus open to interpretation and difference of opinion
- Brahmasutra and Bhagavad Gita – organized and coherent formulation of Vedanta philosophy

Upanishads – basic information

- Shankaracharya wrote commentary on ten principal upanishads from Advaita viewpoint
- Main theme: discuss Brahman, cosmic soul – impersonal, mysterious, and supreme being
 - fit for contemplation, concentration, speculation and philosophical enquiry - not devotional or ritual worship.
 - non-communicable and unapproachable in ordinary state of consciousness

Upanishads – basic info (cont.)

- Atman – individual soul – suffers from impact of Maya
- Two 'mahavakyas' (great sayings) define the link between Brahman and Atman
 - "tat tvam asi" (you are that)
 - "aham brahmasmi" (I am Brahman)
 - These represent the oneness of God and soul

Upanishads – basic info (cont.)

- Result of tireless and bold adventure into human depth
- Not done under coercion or force, but as free pursuit of truth
- Living philosophy, open for verification in any time and place

MU Introduction

- MU provides an exposition of the symbol and sound of AUM, its significance and its identification with supreme Self
- Besides the Mandukya, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Taittiriya, Chandogya and Maitri Upanishads refer to Omkara Pranava, describe its identification with Brahman, glorify the various uses for meditation and fruit of OM chanting.
- For example, in Mundaka (2.2.4): OM is the bow, the soul is the arrow and Brahman is the target. The target is to be hit by an unerring (detached and desireless) person. One should become one with the target just like the arrow.
- The word Mandukya is from Manduka, a frog. So, they say, it takes four leaps of a frog to get to the Self (Atman).

MU Sutra 1

“AUM, the word, is all this, the whole universe. All that is the past, present and future is, indeed, AUM. And whatever else there is, beyond the threefold division of time—that also is truly AUM.”

- AUM is the cosmic vibration
- AUM is the substratum for all that is limited by time and also for what is not conditioned by it
- AUM is imperishable (akshara)
- AUM represents name and form combination. Being universal, they merge into one.
- Another interpretation: "A" is manifestation(past/Brahma), "U" is the sustenance (present/Vishnu), and "M" is the final dissolution back to the source (future/Shiva)

MU Sutra 1 (cont.)

AUM in Yoga sutras of Patanjali

- "The Sacred Word Designating Him Is Pranava Or The Mystic Syllable OM [1.27]"
- "Repeat It And Contemplate Upon Its Meaning [1.28]." This implies that while reciting OM, we remember the meaning of OM that it is nothing but Ishwara.
- "From That Comes Realization Of The Individual Self And the Obstacles Are Resolved [1.29]."

MU Sutra 2

“All this is, indeed, Brahman. This Atman is Brahman. This same Atman has four quarters”

- “Atman is Brahman” – strong and revolutionary statement!
The main theme of most of the Upanishads
- Omnipresent Atman – analogous to space - total space cannot be divided into the bedroom space or the living room space
- Four quarters, more in the sense of four quarters in a dollar bill, not like the four legs of an animal. They are like four functions of the Atman, the four stages of self-transcendence.
- Four stages are identified as waking, dream, dreamless sleep and the “fourth” state

Various descriptions of Atma

- (1) Prana, (2) Elements, (3) Gunas, (4) Tattvas, (5) Pada, (6) Objects of sense, (7) Worlds, (8) Gods, (9) Vedas, (10) Sacrifices, (11) Enjoyer, (12) Object of enjoyment, (12) Subtle, (13) Gross, (14) Possessed of form, (15) Form-less, (16) Time, (17) Quarters, (1 8) Topics for discussion, (19) Universe divisions, (20) Mind, (21) Intellect, (22) Chitta, (23) Merit and demerit, (24) Twenty-five principles, (25) Twenty-six principles, (26) Thirty-one principles, (27) Infinite, (28) People, (29) Man and Woman, (30) Creation, (31) Dissolution, (32) Stability, (33) All-existing and so forth.

MU Sutra 3

“The first quarter is called Vaisvanara, whose sphere of activity is the waking state, who is conscious of external objects, who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths and who is the experienter of gross objects”

- Vaisvanara is the cosmic person, consciousness animating the physical universe
- All inanimate and animate objects are a combination of the three gunas – sattva, rajas, and tamas
- We can also look at the creation in terms of the five sheaths – physical, vital, mind, intellect and bliss
- Awareness of the world of sense perception and cognition
- The seven limbs refer to the limbs of the cosmic man
- The nineteen mouth refer to the individual living being

MU Sutra 3 (cont.)

- Seven limbs (cosmic body): The heavens are his head, the sun his eyes, the air his breath, the fire his heart, the water his stomach, the earth his feet, and space his body
- Nineteen mouths (individual Atman):
 - Five organs of perception (*jnana-indriya*): ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose.
 - Five organs of action (*karma-indriya*): vocal cords, hands, feet, reproductive and excretory.
 - Five living breaths: prana, upana, udana, samana, vyana – forward, downward, upward, balancing, and outward airs.
 - Mind (*manas*), Intellect (*buddhi*), Ego (*ahankara*), Consciousness (*citta*) – collectively “antahkarana” (Inner Instrument)

MU Sutra 4

“The second quarter is Taijasa, whose sphere of activity is the dream state, who is conscious of internal objects, who is endowed with seven limbs and nineteen mouths and who is the experienter of subtle objects”

- Dream experience is a reflection of impressions from the waking state, present and past
- Impressions are result of suppressed desires as well as past karmas
- Seven limbs and nineteen objects are the same as those for the waking state; however they provide the dream experience
- At the cosmic level the subtle state is called Hiranyagarbha (the golden egg or womb) or Taijasa, the brilliant one
- In the dream state, the perception is there due to the soul's own light, without the intervention of the sense-organs.

MU Sutra 5

“In the state of deep sleep one neither desires any object nor sees any dream. The third quarter is Prajna, whose sphere is deep sleep, in whom all experiences become unified, who is, verily, a mass of consciousness, who is full of bliss and experiences bliss and who is the door leading to the knowledge of dreaming and waking”

- We are “aware” of deep sleep since on waking up we know we slept really well; that’s why “mass of consciousness”
- This is the causal state and cause for waking and dream states
- In deep sleep we get totally rejuvenated, re-energized and relaxed because we are not connected with the ego or the mind and are close to the source of all bliss- supreme Self!
- Deep sleep is like a computer in sleep mode.

MU Sutra 6

“He is the Lord of all. He is the knower of all. He is the inner controller. He is the source of all; for from him all beings originate and in him they finally disappear”

- This is the equivalent of Ishwara or Lord (God) at the cosmic level.
- Equivalent to the state of “unmanifest prakriti” in Samkhya
- The happiness of deep sleep is greater than all other forms of happiness or pleasure born of sense-contact. It is filled with ānanda, bliss, delight, satisfaction.

MU Sutra 7

“In Turiya (the Fourth) one is not conscious of the inner (subjective) world, nor of the outer (objective) world, nor of both, nor it is a mass of consciousness. It is not simple consciousness nor is it unconsciousness. It is unperceived, unrelated, incomprehensible, uninferable, unthinkable and indescribable. The essence of the Consciousness manifesting as the self in the three states, It is the cessation of all phenomena; It is all peace, all bliss and non—dual. This is Atman and this has to be realized”

- This is the state of Kaivalya as per Patanjali attained when one realizes the true Self (Purusha)
- Not available through pratyaksha (perception), anumana (inference) or agama (scriptural testimony)
- Our goal in life is to know and realize Atman

MU Sutra 8

“The same Atman explained before as being endowed with four quarters is now described from the standpoint of the syllable AUM. AUM, too, divided into parts, is viewed from the standpoint of letters. The quarters of Atman are the same as the letters of AUM and the letters are the same as the quarters. The letters are A, U and M”

- AUM is the designator, Atman is the designated
- The three letters A, U and M correspond to the three states – waking, dream, deep sleep
- The transcendent state of Atman (Turiya/fourth) corresponds to a similar state of AUM.
- The letters also correspond to the four manifestations of Atman – gross, subtle, causal, unmanifest

MU Sutra 9

“Vaishvanara Atman, whose sphere of activity is the waking state, is A, the first letter of AUM, on account of his all—pervasiveness or on account of his being the first. He who knows this obtains all desires and becomes first among the great”

- Waking state can be considered the start of the other two states; similarly, letter A being the start of the alphabet is comparable to the waking state
- Similarly letters U and M are comparable with the dream and deep sleep states
- Chandogya U. describes how greatness is achieved by meditating on Vaishvanara

MU Sutra 10

“Taijasa Atman, whose sphere of activity is the dream state, is U, the second letter of AUM, on account of his superiority or intermediateness. He, who knows this attains a superior knowledge, receives equal treatment from all and finds in his family no one ignorant of Brahman”

- Letter U is in the middle of the vowels, just as dream state is in the middle of waking and deep sleep
- The one who meditates on the similarity of U and Taijasa becomes a peace maker as all conflicts are resolved

MU Sutra 11

“Prajna Atman, whose sphere is deep sleep, is M, the third letter of AUM, because both are the measure and also because in them all become one. He who knows this is able to measure all and also comprehends all within himself”

- When we chant Om, A and U merge in M, as all the impressions of waking and dream merge in prājña, deep sleep, the causal state.
- Deep sleep is a measure of experiences in the waking and dream states.
- The letter M represents the end of the chant of AUM and is a measure of the A and U chants.
- One who chants AUM thus is capable of measuring or knowing all.

MU Sutra 12

“The Fourth (Turiya) is without parts and without relationship; It is the cessation of phenomena; It is all good and non-dual. This AUM is verily Atman. He who knows this merges his self in Atman”

- The part-less AUM is the silence at the end of the chant of OM, the same as the fourth (Turiya) state.
- There are no more names and forms (nama-rupa)
- AUM thus chanted with the knowledge of the three letters is the same as the three quarters of the Self.
- When the fourth state of AUM is realized to be the same as the Turiya of Atman, then ultimate Self is realized.