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## **THE CONCEPT OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN MANDUKYOPANISAD**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Indian philosophical tradition can be treated as highly ritual as well as spiritual in its nature. Vedas are the root cause for the cultural and spiritual heritage of the country. The Vedas consists of four parts; the mantras mean the hymns, brahmanas deal with the performance of sacrificial rites aranyakas include the duties which have to be done in aranyas and upanisads consist of pure Vedanta. The Upanisads contain the essence of Vedas and which are treated as the product of highest wisdom and divine knowledge. So upanisads can be said as the creame of Vedas. The upanisads explain the direct spiritual experience of great risis and each of them teach the way to liberation.

The word 'upanisad' has several meanings such as 'rahasya', 'upasana' etc. The most common explanation of the word is 'sitting beside a guru for getting the secret. i.e.; the real knowledge'. The upanisadic period can be treated as the golden period in which there exist a close relationship between the teacher and the student. The subject matter of almost all upanisads is mainly 'Brahman' the ultimate reality and 'atman' the individual self. There are more than hundred upanisads but among them the ten are very important and famous as dasopanisads. So they are treated as the principal upanisads. As the upanisadic teachings the goal of men is the realization of the supreme which only can dispel the ignorance and bestow the eternal bliss. The knowledge of oneness alone will remove all the pains and sorrows of beings. Mandukyopanisad teaches the different stages of consciousness and the meditation on the syllable 'om' which helps a man to attain his ultimate goal.

### Mandukyopanisad

Among the ten principal upanisads, 'Mandukyopanisad' is the smallest. This upanisad belongs to 'atharva veda' which holds only twelve mantras. Among the principal upanisads, mandukya deserves a peculiar place as it discusses the four states of consciousness which are the important ways of attaining the Ultimate Reality. The name 'mandukya' is from the name 'manduka', the sage who has given the teachings of this respective upanisad. Though it is the smallest, its teachings are very important and essential. The muktikopanisad says the importance of this upanisad in the following manner –

**“mandukyamekamevalam mumukshunamvimuktaye”<sup>i</sup>**

In muktikopanisad Srirama says to Hanuman thatmandukyopanisad itself is rich enough to lead a man to liberation instead of studying other upanisads. This upanisad also shows the importance of meditating on ‘om’ which leads a man to moksha.

After the santimantra this upanisad elucidate the importance of the syllable ‘om’; as the whole world is that ‘om’, the past, the present, the future etc are simply ‘om’ and also the things in this world beyond the three times is ‘om’. Here the syllable ‘om’ is treated as the verbal representation of the Supreme Reality, Brahman.

The second mantra is very important because which include one of the four mahavakyas

**“ayamatma Brahma”<sup>ii</sup>**

This says about the oneness of Atman and Brahman and this Brahman is the whole, consisting of the four quarters. Among the four, the first quarter is named as ‘vaisvanara’ or ‘visva’ which is said as the universal one, situated in the waking state-

**“jagaritasthano bahishprajna: saptanga: ekonavimsatimukha:  
sthulabhugvaisvanara: prathama: pada:”<sup>iii</sup>**

Vaisvanara is said as the perceiver of the outside world and possessed with seven limbs, nineteen mouths and enjoys the gross objects. The seven limbs of vaisvanara are :

1. Heaven is the head of vaisvanara,
2. Sun and moon are eyes,
3. Air is breath,
4. Fire is mouth (ahavaniya fire),
5. Sky is his middle or body,
6. Water is urinary organ,
7. Earth is his feet.<sup>iv</sup>

Nineteen mouths are:the five jnanendriyas or organs of knowledge (ear,eye,kin,toungue and nose), five karmendriyas or organs of action (mouth,hand, feet, generatory organ and excretory organ), five pranas or vital airs (prana.apana,samana,udana and vyana) and four fold adhikaranas consists of mind, intellect,subconsciousmind and ahankara.<sup>v</sup> These are called mouths because through this vaisvanara enjoys the external gross objects. This also said as reflected intelligence.

The word vaisvanara simply means the normal consciousness. The waking state can be treated as the combination of conscious and subconscious layers of mind. This state is said as the normal consciousness of a man. ‘Virat’ is the universal or the macro cosmic aspect of Isvara and visva is the individual or micro cosmic aspect. The sum total of visva is treated as virat.

**“visvesham naranam anekadha nayanadvaisvanara:”<sup>vi</sup>**

The word ‘nara’ denotes a collective name for all beings. The wakeful state is the last state in order of evolution of the universe but is the first in involution.

The second state is svapna or dream state which constitutes a different level of human consciousness. This is the second quarter of the liberated soul. The consciousness in this state is described as ‘taijasa’ in mandukyopanisad. The word ‘taijasa’ means shining or bright, the brilliant. Here it is described as –

**“Svapnasthanonthahprajna:saptanga ekonavimsatimukha:  
praviviktabhugtaijaso dvitiya: pada:”<sup>vii</sup>**

Taijasa perceives what is inside and possesses seven limbs nineteen mouths etc and who is the enjoyer of the refined things. Here the dream state can be treated as the inner moving consciousness. There will be a continuity maintained both in waking state as well as in dream state. In the waking state the continuity is given by the factors of personal memory where as in the dream state the racial memory provides the ground of continuity. In the dreaming state the mind reproduces the things what are experienced in the waking state through the force of ‘avidya’, ‘karma’ and ‘kama’. In this state, the consciousness can be said as the inner-moving consciousness. Because of being the subject of pure consciousness it is named as ‘taijasa’.

The third quarter is ‘prajna’, situated in the state of deepsleep i.e.; ‘sushupti’. When a sleeping man entertains no desires and dreams that state is named as sushupti. In this state everything become one being single mass of perception, consisting of bliss, enjoying the bliss and only a simple concentration on mind, it is named as prajna.

**“yatra supto na kancana kamam kamayate na kancana svapnam pasyati  
tatsushuptam| sushuptasthana ekibhuta: prajnanaghana evanandamayo  
hyanandabhuk chetomukha: prajna: tritiya: pada: <sup>viii</sup> |**

The state of deepsleep is the state where the man approaches a final end of mind. There will be no duality of the sleeper and the sleep. There will be only sleep and not the sleeper. Prajna or wise is the state of wisdom. Deep sleep arrives when the past and the future are not. This state can also be named as silent consciousness.

The fourth and final quarter is ‘Turiya’ the lord of all, the knower the inner controller, the womb of all things in the world and he is the origin and dissolution of beings.

**“esha sarvesvara esha sarvajna esha antaryamesha yoni : sarvasya  
prabhavapyayau hi bhutanam”<sup>ix</sup>**

Considering the fourth quarter, the ‘atman’ can be seen as perceiving neither what is inside nor what is outside, nor even both together, not even the mass of perception, perceiving or not perceiving . Moreover beyond the reach of ordinary transaction or ungraspable, unseen, unthinkable, indescribable, as one whose essence is the perception of itself alone, the cessation of the world, auspicious and the one without a second that is the self i.e.; ‘Atman’ which have to be perceived. Mandukyopanishad describes this state in the following manner-

**“nantaprajnam na bahishprajnam nobhayataprajnam na prajnanaghanam  
na prajnam naprajnam |  
adrishyamavyavaharyamagrahyamalaknaamacintyamavyapadesyamekatma  
pratyasaram prapanchopasamam santam sivamadvaitam caturtham  
manyante”<sup>x</sup>**

In mandukyopanisad, the fourth state i.e. ‘turiya’ is considered as the state of arrival of truth. When the self knows its true and original nature, the mystery of time and space will be solved and when the mind becomes free from all the thoughts of past and future. This is the state of advaita and is indeed the experience of the pure love. This state cannot be described in words as it is the transcendental state that has to be realized through meditation.

After the elucidation of the four states each of them are merged with the syllable ‘om’. The constituent phonemes are the quarters, which are ‘a’, ‘u’ and ‘m’. The first constituent ‘a’ is merged with vaisvanara situated in the waking state. Here the upasaka obtains all the desires by understanding this ‘akara’ as the very first part of the syllable ‘om’. The second constituent ‘u’ is considered as taijasa situated in dream state. Taijasa is so called either because of being an intermediate or because of lightening. The knower of this will lighten the knowledge and becomes common. The man without the knowledge of the truth i.e. Brahman, will not be born in his lineage. The third constituent ‘m’ is prajna situated in the state of deepsleep because of construction or of destruction. The fourth which has no parts, is transcendental, all bliss and non-dual. This verily is said as ‘omkara’. The knower of this will enter in to the Supreme self by the individual self.

**“amatrascaturtho avyavaharya: prapancopasma: sivo advaita evamonkara atmaiva  
samvisatyatmanatmanam ya evam veda ya evam veda”<sup>xi</sup>**

In the fourth state the knower of self attains immortality by entered in to the Supreme self by the means of self. Here the Vaisva merges in to Taijasa, Taijasa in to Prajna, Prajna dissolves in Turiya i.e. Brahman.

The meditation on ‘om’ leads an aspirant to the attainment of self realization by destructing all the illusions created by avidya. In other words, the rope is realized when the illusion of snake vanishes. Here Brahman or om is realized when the duality disappears. The three states waking state, dreaming state, deep sleep state etc can be considered as the gateway to the fourth .

final state turiya, which is the perfect awareness or the pure consciousness. In the fourth state the self is merged with the Absolute and there is no duality. The upanishad corroborate it as “brahmaivid brahmaiva bhavati” which means the knower of Brahman becomes the Brahman Itself.

### Conclusion

Mandukyopanisad is one of the most important upanisad among the principal upanisads as it consists of a wide range of knowledge. Acharya Gaudapada has composed a precious commentary on this upanisad in four different prakaranas which is named as ‘Mandukyakarika’. This includes 275 karikas and through which acharya Gaudapada established the Advata concept by describing each states. The peculiarity of this great Upanishad is its style of presentation. Here the subject matter of this Upanishad is described directly in a very short number of mantras besides explaining several examples as like in the other Upanishads. Gaudapad’s karika plays an important role in understatnding the rel meaning of each mantra. Acharya Sankara also composed bhashya on this Upanishad and he starts his bhasha by saying that this Upanishad is the treasure house of all vedantic doctrines –

“vedantarthasarasangrahabhutamidam ” xii

From the above it is very clear that the study of mandukya upanishad is very essential as it is highly rich in every aspect. The study of this Upanishad is highly relevant because this can be considered as a seed of philosophical as well as psychological ideas which have to be explored and experienced later. The modern medical sciences have not been defined about the process of dreaming and how it occurs in brain etc. Thus as Vedas and upanisads are treated the treasure house of knowledge there are many possibilities for new researches in this area.

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<sup>i</sup> muktikopanisad, mantra-26

<sup>ii</sup> Mandukyopanisad, mantra- 2

<sup>iii</sup> Mandukyopanisad, mantra-3

<sup>iv</sup> Mandukyopanisad sankarabhashya, mantra- 3

<sup>v</sup> ibid

<sup>vi</sup> Mandukyopanisad, sankarabhashya

<sup>vii</sup> Mandukyopanisad, mantra-4

<sup>viii</sup> Mandukyopanisad, mantra-5

<sup>ix</sup> Mandukyopanisad, mantra-6

<sup>x</sup> Mandukyopanisad, mantra-7

<sup>xi</sup> Mandukyopanisad, mantra- 12

<sup>xii</sup> Mandukyopanisad sankarabhashya