

THE MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

by

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Yesterday we observed that the human individual is a microcosmic specimen of the entire creative process of the cosmos. The layers or degrees of reality which constitute the composition of the universe of creation are also to be found in the human individual in the form of the Kosas or the sheaths, as they are called—physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal—known in the Sanskrit language as Annamaya Kosa, Pranomaya Kosa, Manomaya Kosa, Vijñanamaya Kosa and Anandamaya Kosa. These are the five layers of objectivity which, in a gradational form, externalise consciousness. The grosser the sheath, the greater is the force of externality, so that when consciousness enters the physical body we are totally material in our outlook, physical in our understanding and assessment of values, intensely body-conscious, and know nothing about ourselves except this body. It is only when we go interior that we have access to the subtler layers of our personality—not otherwise. The Taittiriya Upanishad dealt with subject of the five layers, known as the Kosas; and the Mandukya Upanishad, which is another important Upanishad, sometimes considered as the most important, deals with the very same Kosas in a different way, namely, by the elucidation of the involvement of consciousness in these Kosas.

The five have been classified into three groups—the physical, the subtle and the causal. In the waking state in which we are now, for instance, the physical body is intensely operative and we always think in terms of physical body, physical objects and physical sensations. This physical sensation is absent in the state of dream, but three of the Kosas operate in dream. In the waking condition, all the five are operating, concentrating their action on the physical body mostly. In the dream state the physical body is not operating, but the vital, the mental and the intellectual sheaths are active. The Prana is there, the mind is there, the intellect also is there also in a diminished intensity. We breathe, we think and we understand in the state of dream. That means Prana, Manas and Buddhi all are active in the state of dream, minus the physical element, namely the body consciousness. In the state of deep sleep, none of these are active; neither the body is operating there, nor the mind, nor the intellect, nor is there any consciousness that we are even breathing. The consciousness is withdrawn entirely from all the sheaths—physical, vital, mental and intellectual. There is only one sheath that is operating in the state of sleep—that is the causal sheath, called Anandamaya Kosa in Sanskrit.

In the waking condition the senses are very active, physically and materially. The Mandukya Upanishad tells us that we enjoy, experience and contact things in nineteen ways in the waking state. Consciousness has nineteen mouths through which it eats the food of objective experience. What are these nineteen mouths? They are the five senses of knowledge—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. With these five sensations we come in contact with things in the world outside, and enjoy them with actions and reactions produced thereby, by means of such sensory contact. These five mentioned are called senses of knowledge—Jnanya Indriyas. They are so called because they give us some sort of knowledge—either of sight, or sound, or taste, or smell, or touch. Apart from these five senses of knowledge, there are five organs of action; they do not give us any independent knowledge, but they act. The

hand that grasps is one organ of action. The speech that articulates words is another organ of action. The feet that cause locomotion or movement are also organs of action. The generative organ and the excretory organ also are two of the active elements or organs of action. They act, but they do not give any new knowledge. Whatever idea, knowledge, experience, etc. we may have through any one of these organs of action comes through the sensations already mentioned, namely, the Jnana Indriyas. Even when the organs of action act and we are conscious that they are acting, this consciousness is available only through the Jnana Indriyas and not separately through the organs of action, which do not give additional knowledge. It looks as if we have some sensation even through the organs of action, but actually it is not so. The sensation, the experience of the action of the Karma Indriyas as they are called, arises on account of the simultaneous action of the Jnana Indriyas or senses of knowledge. These five senses of knowledge and five organs of action make ten mouths of consciousness.

Then there are the five Pranas—the Prana, or the vital energy in us, operates in five ways. When we breathe out, expel breath, the Prana is acting. When we breathe in, when we inhale the breath, the Apana is acting. The Vyana is a third form of the operation of this energy, which causes circulation of blood and makes us feel a sensation of liveliness in every part of the body because of the operative action of the bloodstream, which is pushed onward in a circular fashion throughout the body by the action of a particular function of Prana, called Vyana. There is another action of the Prana, which is Udana; it causes the swallowing of food. When we put food in the mouth, it goes inside through the esophagus and it is pushed down by the action of a Prana called Udana. Udana has also certain other functions to perform. It takes us to deep sleep. Our ego consciousness, our individualised consciousness is pushed into a state of somnambulism, sleep; that also is the work of Udana. Udana has also a third function to perform, namely the separation of the vital body from the physical body at the time of death. Three actions,

three performances are attributed to Udana. There is another, fifth one, Samana, which operates through the navel region and causes digestion of food. It creates heat in the stomach and in the naval region so that the gastric juices operate and we feel appetite. Hunger is caused and food is digested by the action of this Samana. So, there are five Pranas—Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana, Samana.

Five senses of knowledge, five organs of action and five Pranas make fifteen. There are four functions of the psychic organ. The internal psyche, which we generally call Manas or mind in ordinary language, has four functions. In Sanskrit these four functions are designated as Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara and Chitta. Manas is ordinary, indeterminate thinking—just being aware that something is there. Manas is the work of the mind. Buddhi determines, decides and logically comes to a conclusion that something is such-and-such a thing. That is another aspect of the operation of the psyche—Buddhi or intellect. The third form of it is Ahamkara—ego, affirmation, assertion, 'I know'. "I know that there is some object in front of me, and I also know that I know. I know that I am existing as this so-and-so." This kind of affirmation attributed to one's own individuality is the work of Ahamkara, known as egoism. The subconscious action, memory, etc., is caused by Chitta. It is the fourth function. So Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara, Chitta—these are the four basic functions of the internal organ, the psychological organ.

So, we have five senses of knowledge, five organs of action, five Pranas and four operations of the psyche, totaling nineteen. These are the mouths through which consciousness grasps objects from outside, and we feel secure and happy because all these nineteen things are acting at the same time in some form or other, with more emphasis or less emphasis. Any one can act at any time, under special given conditions; and inasmuch as any one can act at any time, it is virtually saying that all are acting at the same time. Therefore we are objectively conscious through the nineteen operative media of the individual consciousness acting in the waking

condition. We are aware of this vast world of sensory perception, and we go on contacting these objects of the world through these media.

It is also mentioned, in this connection, that we can conceive this form of perception in a cosmic way. Cosmic consciousness can be conceived to be operating in this manner in a cosmic waking condition. In the same way as we are individually conscious of objects in our waking condition, in a similar manner we can conceive that the universal consciousness is awake to the world of daylight. The whole universe is the object of the consciousness of a consciousness in its manner, similar to an individualised, circumscribed world becoming the object of our individual consciousness in the waking state. The waking state is called Jagrat-avastha—Jagratsthan. Technical words are used, which may be remembered or not remembered. For instance, Visva is the word used to designate consciousness in the waking, individualised state. Our consciousness, the Jiva-tattva, this individuality of ours at this moment of waking, is called Visva. This very waking world of universal expanse in space and time, animated by a universal consciousness, is called Vaishvanara, or sometimes the word used is Virat. There is a consciousness pervading all things, as we know already. If this consciousness, which is universal and hidden behind all things, is to be aware of the whole cosmos as we perceive in our waking condition, that cosmic awaking or awareness of the whole universe may be regarded as Virat-tattva—cosmic consciousness of the whole physical world, the entire cosmos of physicality.

We have heard that Sri Krishna manifested the Viratsvarupa before Arjuna. In the Purusha-Sukta we also have some sort of description of the Cosmic Being conceived as animating the whole physical cosmos. By 'physical cosmos' we have to understand here not merely this physical earth, but all the layers of externality which are computerised, as it were, into fourteen categories known in Sanskrit as Bhuh-lok, Bhuvah-lok, Svah-lok, Mahah-lok, Jana-lok, Tapah-lok and Satya-lok. The whole cosmos, in all the levels of its

manifestation, is at once an object of the awareness of this Cosmic Being. Such an awakened, waking state, as it were, of the cosmic consciousness is Virat, also known as Vaishvanara in the language of the Upanishads. Individually, the microcosmic aspect of this Virat is Visva—your own or my own waking experience as it is available just now, for instance.

Through nineteen mouths we experience objects of the world in this waking condition. We can conceive for our own intellectual satisfaction that the universe operates also in this manner, and God-consciousness, imagined to be operating through this waking condition everywhere, is an expanded form of our individualised consciousness. While we in our waking state know only certain things, God as the universal consciousness knows all things at the same time. This is briefly a description of consciousness involved in the waking state; a total physical perception in which the consciousness is involved is the objective world of waking state of consciousness.

In the dream state something else happens. The actual physical world which is seen and contacted through the sense organs in the waking state is absent, but by an action of the mind it looks as if it is present even in the dream state. Without the assistance of the gross senses and the organs of action which are active in the waking condition, the mind alone concocts, imagines, projects a world of its own in the dream state, and we see a world in dream. We exist there in the same way that we exist in the waking state. We can see ourselves now, seated here, in the waking state; in a similar way we can see ourselves observing certain things in the dream state also. There is a dream 'me' in the same way as there is a waking 'me', and there is a dream world. We see all sorts of things in the waking state—mountains, rivers, sun, moon, stars, and people of all kinds. We can see all that in the dream world also. There is space, time and externality in dream, as we have also in the waking state. The difference between the waking and the dream is that the mind has created this entire world of external cognition and

perception of its own accord, without the existence of physically external objects or the physical sensations. There, also, nineteen mouths are operating. We have dream eyes, dream ears, a dream nose, a dream tongue that tastes, dream touch; and dream legs, dream hands, dream organs of every kind. We run in dream with the legs, we eat a good meal in dream, we can even live and die—even that experience is possible in dream. One can feel that one is born, or one can feel that one is dead. One can observe one's own cremation in dream. All kinds of fantastic things can be experienced in dream. A new world is projected by the mind—space, time, causation, objects, people, all blessed things. They are in the dream world because the psyche is operating through the vital energy, the mind, the intellect in a diminished form, not in an active way. The only difference is that the physical body is not there as an object of awareness. Sometimes people sleep with open mouths. If a few particles of sugar are put on the tongue of a sleeping man, he will not feel the taste of it, because his mind is withdrawn. The mind is the main operative organ which causes sensations of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc. Even the ego will react in dream. If somebody calls us, either in dream or in sleep, by a name that is not ours, we will not listen to it. We will not wake up. If John is sleeping and he is called as Jacob, he will not wake up. John must be summoned as John only. That is, the ego is so intensely identified with this particular name-form complex that it is acting even there in a submerged condition of dream and sleep.

So, the nineteen mouths of the waking condition are psychologically projected by the mind in the dreaming state also, and there also we have all these experiences, every blessed thing, as we have in the waking state. The Mandukya Upanishad is a study of these states. It is said that if one properly understands the Mandukya Upanishad and its implications, one need not read any other Upanishad afterwards. *Mandukyam ekam eva alam mumukshunam vimuktaye*—For the sake of the liberation of the soul, one Upanishad is sufficient, the Mandukya Upanishad, provided it

is understood properly in its deep connotations. We should not just read it only to understand of the lower meaning of it. The suggestion given by the Mandukya Upanishad is to take one's consciousness deeper and deeper into the very root of one's personality—from external sensations, from body etc. to what one really is in one's deepest essence.

There is a third state, called sleep, where not only are we not aware of the body, but even the psychological functions are not there. The mind does not think, the intellect does not decide, and we do not even know that we exist. Our existence itself is abolished, as it were; a nothing. It is a nothing of which we are not even aware that it is a nothing. To be aware that it is a nothing is something, but even to be not aware that it is a nothing—that is pure nothing, unadulterated. But, what is happening there? Are we dead? No; very much alive. Who told us that we are alive in sleep when we call it nothing and our awareness is totally obliterated by something? We are totally oblivious of all things happening there. When we did not even know that we are existing, how do we come to the conclusion that we were alive at that time? Nobody told us. We ourselves conclude, "I am the same person now that I was before I slept yesterday. Therefore I conclude that I must have been existing in sleep. Today I am not another person—I am the same person that I was yesterday. Therefore I must have existed in sleep." But how do we know that we are the same person? We may be another person; every day we can change and become somebody else. This does not happen. A continuity of consciousness is maintained between yesterday's experience and today's experience. Is this not interesting and surprising? We are very certain, cocksure that we are the same person today that we were yesterday, and our consciousness is continuing even through the sleep condition, making us feel we are existing today in the same way as we existed yesterday. That is to say, we did exist in the state of deep sleep. The proof of it is only our conviction that we are the same person today as we were yesterday. We have a memory of having slept.

Now, if consciousness must have existed in the state of deep sleep, we must have existed as consciousness only. We did not exist as a body, mind, intellect, or anything else. We did not know even that we were breathing at that time. We did exist as consciousness only. So, do we believe that our essential nature is consciousness? Because minus all these appurtenances of body, mind, intellect, etc., if we can exist nevertheless, why should we imagine that we are the body, mind, intellect, etc.? If I can exist minus something, then that thing from which I am withdrawn is not me, really speaking. If I can be safe without something, that something is redundant. So body is a redundant thing; mind, intellect also are not us. We are pure—Shuddha Chaitanya, as they call it—Pure Consciousness. In that state we existed. There is no other thing which can be regarded as an attribute of our being in that condition. Consciousness was our essential nature. What were we conscious of? Conscious of nothing; conscious of consciousness only. It was a consciousness of existence, about which we heard something sometime back. It was not a consciousness of something, it was a consciousness of consciousness existing. We were aware that we were aware—that's all, nothing more than that; nothing more, nothing less. It was being-consciousness; and we were very happy, therefore it was bliss also. We know how happy we are after having gone into a good sleep—happy—and we would like to continue the sleep, would we not?

So free we were in sleep that we would like to go to sleep again. All the botheration and turmoil of this world is no more there. "Let me go to bed and forget this devil of this world," we feel sometimes. So in this state of deep sleep we existed as Pure Consciousness; Sat-Chit-Ananda was our real nature in the state of deep sleep. This consciousness which was Sat-Chit-Ananda was not merely inside the body, as we may wrongly imagine once again after having deduced this wonderful conclusion that we were Pure Consciousness. It is a wonderful conclusion indeed that we are essentially Pure Consciousness. But again we may commit the mistake of thinking that we are inside the body. Pure Consciousness is

not inside anything—it is all things. We have already concluded in our earlier sessions that consciousness is all-pervading; it cannot be confined to one individuality only. To be conscious that it is only in one place and not in another place is to accept virtually that consciousness is in another place also. Otherwise how would consciousness know that it is not in some other place unless it has already been there. So the negation of consciousness in some other place is actually an affirmation of it in that place. Negation is determination. Therefore, what is the second conclusion that we draw by this analysis? That in the state of deep sleep we existed as Pure Consciousness; not the little consciousness inside the body, but the pervading consciousness which is everywhere. Cosmic consciousness was there. Universal consciousness was our essential nature in deep sleep. But why is it that we are not aware of such a condition? We come up like fools, as we went also like fools in the state of deep sleep. When we wake up, we do not come like a wise person. Same idiot went, same idiot comes back. What is the matter, in spite of these wondrous conclusions? There is a peculiar operation which is catching hold of us. The impression and the impact caused by this operation is the reason why we come up like fools though it appears that we were not really fools.

We have passed through various lives; we have taken many births. This is one link in the long chain in the births that we have undergone, maybe thousands in number. In every birth we think something, feel something and do something; and every thought, every feeling and every action creates an impression in the psyche. The psyche is nothing but the individualised center of consciousness. This impression is nothing but a remnant of a desire remaining after a particular experience. If we see something, we would like to see it again. If we like something, we want to continue that liking again and again, as much as possible. The like and dislike, so-called, which is the basic operation of the mind of the individual, creates an impression in the mind, a groove, as it were, and creates a compulsion in the psyche to repeat that experience already had earlier. This goes on day after

day, every day, and we pile up impressions, one over the other, so that these impressions heaped in that manner, one over the other, become something like a thick cloud covering of consciousness. This happens in one life; but if many lives are taken in this manner, what would happen? Complete darkness like an eclipse of the sun or an utter midnight-like experience when there is monsoon season, even in the waking condition, even in daytime. This thing is weighing so heavily upon us that it does not permit us to be aware that we were aware in the state of deep sleep.

So the transcendental being that we really are in the state of deep sleep is almost a negation of our existence, because of the heavy weight that is sitting upon us. Suppose I give you a very good lunch, very tasty, and five quintals of heavy weight I keep on your head at the same time—will you enjoy the food? Very tasty thing, but the five quintals on the head—unless that is removed, this eating has no meaning. So our own experience of transcendental awareness in deep sleep does not have any signification for us on account of the heavy weight of Karma potentials which compel us to think only in one way, in a stereotyped fashion—like blinkers, as it were—and we cannot think in any other way. Any number of lives we may take, births and births we may pass through, but we are the same person. We do not become different because we are whipped by the desires which were produced by earlier impressions; and as a horse being whipped and compelled to move in one direction only, we are forced to think in only one way—this space, this time, this causation, this object, this person, this me, this somebody else.

The Mandukya Upanishad gives this analysis of our basic nature. But it is said that we will attain Moksha by knowing this knowledge—*Mandukyam ekam eva alam mumukshunam vimuktaye*. How would we get Moksha by knowing this? It is also added that we are the same foolish persons; we have never become different. This foolishness of ours can be removed by the gradual practise of Yoga. The suggestion of a particular kind of Yoga that is made by the Mandukya Upanishad is the recitation of Pranava or Omkara. It has a

simple way, a very easy means of meditation to tell us, not complicated—the recitation of Pranava. OM is the Pranava or the Omkar which is a blend of three syllables, letters—A, U, M. A-U-M becomes OM. When we chant OM, when we articulate the vocal organ in the recitation of OM, all the parts of the vocal organ act simultaneously in such a way that they may be supposed to be uttering every letter at that time. All language is supposed to be included in OM because of this reason. All the articulatory process takes place in the recitation of OM, if we can properly observe it.

The Visva, as I mentioned, is the name given to the waking consciousness. Dreaming consciousness is called Taijasa, sleeping consciousness is called Prajna. The transcendental consciousness is the Atman. So, Visva, Taijasa, Prajna and Atman are the designations of the very same consciousness involved in the physical body and physical sensations, involved in dream perception, involved in sleep, and not involved in anything. In a way, the letters of the Mantra OM—A, U, M—are identified by the Mandukya Upanishad with these three states; A is waking, U is dreaming, Ma is sleeping and OM is Atman. “OM is the name of the Ultimate Reality,” says Patanjali in his Sutra. The name of God is OM—He has no other name. As God is all-pervading, His name also should be all-inclusive. We do not call him ka ka, ga ga, abcd. It is an inarticulate universalised vibration. It is not actually a letter or a word, but a vibration. OM is to be chanted for the sake of the removal of this dross accumulated in our psyche in the form of impressions of past Karmas. Merge waking in dream, merge dream in sleep and merge sleep in the Atman. Draw the consciousness gradually from waking to dream—that is to say, draw it from the waking body consciousness to the psychological consciousness, and from that to the sleep consciousness. How do we do this? In the beginning we have to be seated in a suitable posture and slowly articulate this beautiful name of God, which is OM or Pranav.

The scripture says that, in the beginning, the Vedas did not exist. In the Krita Yuga, the golden age as we call it, the

Vedas did not exist; only Pranava existed. That religion was not Hinduism, Christianity, etc. Hamsa was the name of the religion of Krita Yuga. Hamsa means just love of God. It is not love through some 'ism'— this community or that community—no communities existed in Krita Yuga. It was total man loving total God, and OM was considered as inclusive of all the three Vedas. From Akara, Ukara and Makara, Prajapati is supposed to have extracted the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Sama Veda. The three Padas of the Gayatri Mantra are supposed to be extractions of the three Vedas, and are also supposed to be embedded in A-U-M, so that all the Veda is inside OM—all three Vedas.

To practice this meditation according to the Mandukya Upanishad, be seated properly, without distractions, and chant Aaaaaummmmm. Take a deep breath and then chant Aaaaaummmmmmm, Aaaaaummmmmmm, Aaaaaummmmmmm, Aaaaaummmmmmm, Aaaaaummmmmmm. When you recite OM like this, don't you feel a sense of satisfaction inside? In a few seconds you will feel the difference. You feel as if you are a different person altogether. You are not the same body; you were not even aware of that body for two seconds. It was melting, as it were, gradually melting. Every day practice this chant for fifteen minutes, in the morning and in the evening. You will feel as if the body is melting. Actually, physically, it may not melt; the sensation of melting may arise on account of the withdrawal of consciousness from the body. It will withdraw itself from even the mind, and it will withdraw itself from even your personality consciousness. By the chant of OM only you can enter into the bliss of the Atman, is the teaching of the Mandukya Upanishad. All Yogas are combined in this. So do this practice yourself when you are alone somewhere, under the tree, or at the Ganga, or at the temple, or in your room—wherever you are. Sit for a few minutes and chant in the same way as I told you, with a sonorous sound, beautifully, calmly, creating an equilibrated vibration in your personality. You will forget all your worries; you will feel happy inside. You will feel a tingling sensation in the body, as

if the consciousness is slowly getting withdrawn from body.
This is the practice of the Yoga of the Mandukya Upanishad.
God bless you.