

# The Essential Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad / Kārikā

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॥ श्रीः ॥

Mantras 1-7 & Kārikās 10-18

## Introduction

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (not to be confused with the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad) is the shortest of all the surviving upaniṣads, with a total of 12 verses. It is a prose upaniṣad and is found in the Atharva Veda. The Māṇḍūkya is traditionally the last upaniṣad taught during a traditional three-and-a-half-year Vedānta course due to its 'advanced' nature. The name 'Māṇḍūkya' is believed to refer to the Ṛṣi (seer) who revealed this particular knowledge; Māṇḍūka Ṛṣi. The knowledge revealed by Māṇḍūka Ṛṣi in the form of the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad is that of 'Self'-knowledge; the topic of all the upaniṣads as well as that of Vedānta.

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad was the inspiration to a great Vedāntic ācārya named Gauḍapāda (Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya's teacher's teacher), to write an extensive commentary/analysis called the Māṇḍūkya Kārikā. The Māṇḍūkya Kārikā is in a poetical form containing four chapters with a total of 215 verses. Though the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad predates the Māṇḍūkya Kārikā by millennia, it has become an integral part of the Kārikā, and is unfolded in its entirety in chapter one (Āgama Prakaraṇa).

This booklet purposely focuses on select mantras from the upaniṣad and verses from the kārikā (from the Āgama Prakaraṇa) which are considered essential to the study of this particular text. This is meant to be an easily accessible handbook, designed to be used in conjunction with and referenced during the study of the full text of the Māṇḍūkya Kārikā, unfolded during live classes taught by a qualified, traditional teacher.

## Upādhi

One of the numerous methods the upaniṣads use to explain the nature of 'reality' is to construct models based on certain observable or 'self-evident' phenomena. One such model is the microcosm-macrocosm model (known in Vedānta as vyaṣṭiḥ-samaṣṭiḥ); a model that has found its way into numerous mystical and new age belief systems. In almost all these cases of spiritual appropriation, the

original meaning and usage of this Vedic model has been obscured and twisted beyond its original intention. The Vedic microcosm-macrocosm model of 'reality' is simply meant to be an illustration; a methodology for explaining the unexplainable and, once 'understood', to be discarded.

The Sanskrit word upādhiḥ means (among other things) 'body' (indicating the body-sense-mind complex). In context, the 'body' being explained by the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad is that of the individual (vyaṣṭiḥ), which is composed of four constituent parts/pādaḥ (the microcosm). These parts will be expanded upon later in this introduction.

Students of Vedānta, who have long been active in their respective saṅghas will be familiar with the text 'Tattvabodhaḥ'. In this short, introductory Vedāntic text, many technical terms found in the study of Vedānta are unfolded. It would be useful for the student of the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad/Kārikā to review Tattvabodhaḥ in preparation for the study of this Upaniṣad.

The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad/Kārikā deals specifically with tvampada; the nature of 'I'; tvam literally meaning 'you'. It is a deliberate, step by step analysis of the nature of you as the microcosm/vyaṣṭiḥ, and shows the student in a clear, concise manner how every objectifiable, observable, material quality is not one's true nature; that you as the three upādhiḥ, manifesting in the three states of experience (waking – dream – deep sleep) are of a lower order of reality.

## Viśva

'The wake-er'; indicating one's gross, physical body (sthūla-śarīram); the first and 'grossest' of the four aspects/pādaḥ of the microcosm/vyaṣṭiḥ, and encompassing all functions of said body, manifesting in the waking state of experience. It is vitally important for the student of Vedānta to understand that both the gross and subtle bodies, as well as the field of experience that they 'inhabit' are jaḍam (inert); the subtle body especially requiring 'consciousness' to enliven it. Each of the 14 different fields of

experiences talked about in the Vedas require different gross bodies with which to be experienced. The purpose of these lokas is for the jīva (the subtle body, bound by ignorance and enslaved to saṁsāra) to burn off accumulated karmas (prārabdha-karma).

Viśva is ruled by both ignorance and error. Ignorance to the fact that one's 'real' nature has nothing to do with any experience or experienced object; error, in this context, referring to the jīva (the individual identified with the body-sense-mind complex) having identified with gross and subtle material, believing them to have intrinsic reality; that from the moment of birth, one is ignorant to the fact that 'I am the limitless 'I'. We all suffer from the fundamental problem of Self-ignorance. Ignorance will inevitably lead to error. Since I am unaware of the truth that I am the limitless 'I', I have mistaken myself to be the limited I. When I look upon myself as the 'wak-er', I see myself as the limited 'I'; I am born, I will die, I am here, I am there, I am thin, I am fat, etc.

It is this ignorance (cause) that leads to error (effect); 'dreaming' as an effect of sleep; misperceiving as a direct result of non-perception; a sprout 'growing' from a seed:

<b>Ignorance</b>	⇒	<b>Error</b>
Sleep (nidrā)		Dreaming (svapnaḥ)
Non-perception (agrahaṇam)		Misperceiving (anyathāgrahaṇam)
Cause (kāraṇam)		Effect (kāryam)
Seed (bījam)		Sprout (aṅkhuraḥ)

## Taijasa

'The dream-er'; indicating the subtle body (sūkṣma-śarīram); the second of the four aspects/pādaḥ of the microcosm/vyaṣṭiḥ indicating the dream state of experience. The dream-er is also afflicted by both ignorance and error. In one's dream state, the subject, the object and the means of expressing both subject and object are the same; you. Though this is also true in regards to

viśva/the waking state, it is easier to see the logic of higher and lower orders of reality using taijasa as an illustration.

In this dream state of experience, the dream-er is convinced of the substantiality of what is being experienced while dreaming. It is only upon waking that, from the wake-er's point of view, the dream-er's experience is understood to be of a lower order of reality; ephemeral and limited. This is an important topic in Vedānta which is used to illustrate the 'experience' of the jīvanmuktiḥ; the one who 'understands' that from the 'point of view' of ātmā, the wake-er's experience is of a lower order of reality. At best, this is a 'crude' metaphor, as ātmā is neither a field of experience nor is it experience-able in any way, shape or form. The belief that one actually 'wakes' into ātmā is incorrect (and yet a very popular conclusion in 'new-age' beliefs regarding the 'nature' of reality). There is no waking into anything, as one's true nature *is* ātmā.

## Prājña

'The sleep-er'; indicating the causal body (karaṇa-śarīram); the third of the four aspects/pādaḥ of the microcosm/vyaṣṭiḥ, 'expressed' in the deep, dream-less state of experience; a 'state' where all the subtle aspects have reverted to an un-manifest form; a mini-pralayam. Because the subtle body is un-manifest and is therefore incapable of 'expressing' error, this state is ruled only by ignorance.

The macrocosm/samaṣṭiḥ is also composed of four constituent aspects/pādaḥ; virāt (all gross bodies in the universe), hiraṇyagarbhaḥ (all subtle bodies in the universe) and antaryāmī or Īśvara (all causal bodies in the universe) plus turīyam.

## Turīyam

Literally, turīyam means 'the fourth' or 'the fourth one'. The implied meaning of turīyam is paramātmā. The term turīyam, not found in the Upaniṣad proper, is introduced in chapter one of the Māṇḍūkya Kārikā as a unique way of illustrating the 'qualities' of ātmā; free

from ignorance of a limited 'I' and free from error as an effect of that ignorance; free in fact of all limitations, causes and effects; unbound by time or space; limitless, time-less and space-less. This is one's true nature.

Since this is an advanced text, we will not go into an exhaustive unfolding of the word ātmā, as it is understood that the student studying this particular booklet is well-versed in most of the technical terms found in the study of Vedānta.

In truth, this booklet is meant to introduce a few terms that one will encounter when studying the entire Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad/Kārikā under the guidance of a traditional teacher. During the course of this study, these terms will be greatly expanded upon.

## Oṃkāra

'The liṅgam or indicator'. Broken into its four constituent parts (mātra), Oṃ represents the three bodies/states of experience ('a' + 'u' + 'm') plus turīyam (in this case, manifested as 'silence'). Put another way, each part of oṃkāra mirrors the four parts/pādaḥ of the microcosm/vyaṣṭiḥ and macrocosm/samaṣṭiḥ. One may have come across Vedāntic texts that unfold Oṃ as having only three constituent parts/mātra, and from the point of view of these texts, this is correct. However, the point of view of the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad/Kārikā is radically different in that it shows us that Oṃ is much more than what we have so far understood it to be. In truth, Oṃ is everything, and indicates everything, including that which cannot be indicated, explained or objectified by perception and inference. That this is so, and that this self-evident fact may be 'understood' by the student through the study of Vedānta is truly remarkable, and will be examined in detail by this astonishing upaniṣad.

This introduction was inspired in part by a series of talks given by Śrī Svāmī Paramārthānanda Sarasvatī in Madras, Tamil Nadu, India titled "Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad". Our deepest thanks to Svāmī jī for helping to inspire the creation of this booklet.

# माण्डूक्य उपनिषद्

(Mantras)

ॐ इत्येतदक्षरं इदं सर्वं

तस्योपव्याख्यानं

भूतं भवद् भविष्यदिति

सर्वमोकार एव ।

यच्चान्यत् त्रिकालातीतं

तदप्योकार एव ॥ १ ॥

सर्वं ह्येतद् ब्रह्म

अयमात्मा ब्रह्म

सोऽयमात्मा चतुष्पात् ॥ २ ॥

जागरितस्थानो वहिष्प्रज्ञः

सप्ताङ्गः एकोनविंशतिमुखः

# Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad

1-7)

Om ityetaḍakṣaraṁ idagṁ sarvaṁ

tasyopavyākhyānaṁ

bhūtaṁ bhavad bhaviṣyaditi

sarvamomkāra eva

yaccānyat trikālātītaṁ

tadapyomkāra eva (1)

sarvagṁ hyetad brahma

ayamātmā brahma

so'yamātmā catuspāt (2)

jāgaritasthāno vahiṣṭrajñaḥ

saptāṅgaḥ ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ

स्थूल भुग्वैश्वानरः sthūla bhugvaiśvānaraḥ

प्रथमः पादः ॥ ३ ॥ prathamah pādaḥ (3)

स्वप्नस्थानोऽन्तःप्रज्ञः svapnasthāno'ntaḥprajñah

सप्ताङ्ग एकोनविंशतिमुखः saptāṅga ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ

प्रविविक्तभुक्तैजसो praviviktabhuktaijaso

द्वितीयः पादः ॥ ४ ॥ dvitīyah pādaḥ (4)

यत्र सुप्तो न कञ्चन कामं कामयते yatra supto na kañcana kāmam kāmayate

न कञ्चन स्वप्नं पश्यति na kañcana svapnam paśyati

तत् सुषुप्तम् । tat suṣuptam

सुषुप्तस्थान एकीभूतः suṣuptasthāna ekībhūtaḥ

प्रज्ञानघन एवानन्दमयो prajñānaghana evānandamayo

ह्यानन्दभुक् चेतोमुखः hyānandabhuk cetomukhaḥ

प्राज्ञस्तृतीयः पादः ॥ ५ ॥ prājñastrīyah pādaḥ (5)

एष सर्वेश्वरः एष सर्वज्ञ eṣa sarveśvaraḥ eṣa sarvajña

एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष	eṣo'ntaryāmyeṣa
योनिः सर्वस्य	yonih sarvasya
प्रभवाप्ययौ हि भूतानाम् ॥ ६ ॥	prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām (6)
नान्तःप्रज्ञं न बहिष्प्रज्ञं	nāntaḥprajñam na bahiṣprajñam
नोभयतःप्रज्ञं न प्रज्ञानघनं	nobhayataḥprajñam na prajñānaghanam
न प्रज्ञं नाप्रज्ञम् ।	na prajñam nāprajñam
अदृष्टमव्यवहार्यम्	adrṣṭamavyavahāryam
अग्राह्यमलक्षणं	agrāhyamalakṣaṇam
अचिन्त्यमव्यपदेश्यम्	acintyamavyapadeśyam
एकात्मप्रत्ययसारं	ekātmapratyayasāram
प्रपञ्चोपशमं	prapañcopaśamam
शान्तं शिवमद्वैतं	śāntam śivamadvaitam
चतुर्थं मन्यन्ते	caturtham manyante
स आत्मा स विज्ञेयः ॥ ७ ॥	sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ (7)

# माण्डूक्य कारिका

(Kārikās

निवृत्तेः सर्वदुःखानां

ईशानः प्रभुरव्ययः ।

अद्वैतः सर्वभावानां

देवस्तुर्यो विभुः स्मृतः ॥ १० ॥

कार्यकारणबद्धौ

ताविष्येते विश्वतैजसौ ।

प्राज्ञः कारणबद्धस्तु

द्वौ तौ तुर्ये न सिध्यतः ॥ ११ ॥

नाऽत्मानं न परांश्चैव

न सत्यं नापि चानृतं ।

# Māṇḍūkya Kārikā

10-18)

nivṛtteḥ sarvaduḥkhānām

īśānaḥ prabhuravyayaḥ

advaitaḥ sarvabhāvānām

devasturyo vibhuḥ smṛtaḥ (10)

kāryakāraṇabaddhau

tāviṣyete viśvataijasau

prājñaḥ kāraṇabaddhastu

dvau tau turye na sidhyataḥ (11)

nā'tmānaṁ na parāṁścaiva

na satyaṁ nāpi cānṛtaṁ

प्राज्ञः किञ्चन संवेत्ति	prājñāḥ kiñcana samvetti
तुर्यं तत्सर्वदृक्सदा ॥ १२ ॥	turyam tatsarvadrksadā (12)
द्वैतस्याग्रहणं तुल्यम्	dvaitasyāgrahaṇam tulyam
उभयोः प्राज्ञतुर्ययोः ।	ubhayoḥ prājñaturyayoḥ
बीजनिद्रायुतः प्राज्ञः	bījanidrāyutaḥ prājñāḥ
सा च तुर्ये न विद्यते ॥ १३ ॥	sā ca turye na vidyate (13)
स्वप्ननिद्रायुतावाद्यौ	svapnanidrāyutāvādyau
प्राज्ञस्त्वस्वप्ननिद्रया ।	prājñastvasvapnanidrayā
न निद्रां नैव च स्वप्नं	na nidrām naiva ca svapnam
तुर्ये पश्यन्ति निश्चिताः ॥ १४ ॥	turye paśyanti niścitāḥ (14)
अन्यथा गृह्णतः स्वप्नो	anyathā grhṇataḥ svapno
निद्रा तत्त्वमजानतः ।	nidrā tattvamajānataḥ
विपर्यासे तयोः क्षीणे	vipāryase tayoh kṣīṇe



तुरीयं पदमश्नुते ॥ १५ ॥	turīyaṁ padamaśnute (15)
अनादिमायया सुप्तो	anādimāyayā supto
यदा जीवः प्रबुध्यते ।	yadā jīvaḥ prabudhyate
अजमनिद्रमस्वप्नं	ajamanidramasvapnaṁ
अद्वैतं बुध्यते तदा ॥ १६ ॥	advaitaṁ budhyate tadā (16)
प्रपञ्चो यदि विद्येत	prapañco yadi vidyeta
निवर्तेत न संशयः ।	nivarteta na saṁśayaḥ
मायामात्रमिदं द्वैतं	māyāmātramidaṁ dvaitaṁ
अद्वैतं परमर्थतः ॥ १७ ॥	advaitaṁ paramarthataḥ (17)
विकल्पो विनिवर्तेत	vikalpo vinivarteta
कल्पितो यदि केनचित् ।	kalpito yadi kenacit
उपदेशादयं वादः	upadeśādayaṁ vādaḥ
ज्ञाते द्वैतं न विद्यते ॥ १८ ॥	jñāte dvaitaṁ na vidyate (18)

Unfolding the Essential  
**Māṇḍūkya**  
**Upaniṣad**  
**(Mantras 1-7)**

Om̐ is all that is. (What follows is) a clear and complete unfolding of that (Om̐). All that belongs in the past, in the present, and in the future is only om̐kāra. All that which is beyond the three periods of time is also only om̐kāra. (1)

All this is indeed Brahman. Ātmā is Brahman. This same Ātmā may be divided into quarters (pādas). (2)

The first quarter (pāda) is called vaiśvānara (viśva); whose sphere of activity is the waking state; who is aware of external objects; who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths; who is the experiencer of gross (objects). (3)

The second quarter (pāda) is called taijasa; whose sphere of activity is the dreaming state; who is aware of internal objects; who has seven limbs and nineteen mouths; who is the experiencer of subtle (objects). (4)

The (deep) sleep-state is that state of experience where one is self-ignorant; where one is desire-less of any external object; where dreams do not manifest. This third quarter (pāda) is called prājña, whose field is the (deep) sleep-state; who is undifferentiated; who is all potential expression; who is full-and-complete (ānanda); who is the 'experiencer' of absolute-fullness (ānanda); which is the doorway to the experiences (of the waking and dream states). (5)

She (Īśvarī) is the Lord of all. She is omniscient. She is the inner observer. She is the source of all, the 'source' of origination and dissolution of all beings (and objects). (6)

The Turīya (the fourth 'quarter') is neither the outward nor the inward consciousness; neither the consciousness turned to both sides nor all-consciousness; neither the all-knowing consciousness nor the un-conscious; beyond perception; beyond transaction; beyond grasp; beyond inference; beyond thoughts; beyond description; traceable through the unbroken (knowledge of) Self-awareness; free from the world; tranquil; auspicious; non-dual. It (Turīya) is 'I/Ātmā, which is to be 'known'. (7)

Unfolding the Essential  
**Māṇḍūkya**  
**Kārikā**  
**(Kārikās 10-18)**

Being free of all suffering, Turīya is considered to be the Lord who is capable (of freeing one from suffering). It (Turīya) is the immutable, effulgent, all-pervading, non-dual (Truth) of all beings. (10)

Viśva and taijasa are both conditioned by cause and effect; prājña conditioned only by cause. None of them exist in Turīya. (11)

Prājña knows nothing – neither itself (nor) others; neither the truth nor the untruth. Turīya is ever the all-knowing (consciousness). (12)

Non-perception (non-recognition) of duality is common to both prājña and Turīya. Yet prājña is associated with causal ignorance while Turīya is free (of causal ignorance). (13)

The first two (viśva and taijasa) are associated with (the states of) waking and dreaming; prājña (is associated with the state of) deep, dreamless sleep. The wise do not identify with waking, dreaming or deep-sleep in Turīya. (14)

Dreaming belongs to the one who takes (the Ātmā) to be different

(from one's Self). Deep-sleep belongs to the one who does not know the nature of Ātmā. When the defect (in seeing the as-though difference) between these two is removed, one 'attains' the goal of (knowledge in) Turīya. (15)

Acknowledging one's ignorance (of Turīya) due to beginning-less māyā, the jīva then becomes awakened; she 'knows' the non-dual (Turīya) which is unborn; dreamless; sleepless. (16)

The (material) world can vanish (has no substantiality), if it (even actually) exists (for the wise person). There is no doubt that this duality is simply a function of māyā. In reality there is only non-duality. (17)

Duality may be negated if (in actuality) it has been created. All this talk (of division) is only for the sake of teaching (Vedānta pramāṇam). There is no duality after 'knowledge' (is attained). (18)

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