

THE MEASURES OF THE ETERNAL MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

TRANSLATED FROM THE SANSKRIT WITH AN INTERPRETATION

Om: this syllable, this imperishable, is the All. Its expansion is what has been, what is, what shall be. All, verily, is Om. And whatsoever else surpasses the three times, this also is Om. For all this is the Eternal, this is the Divine Self; and this Divine Self has four measures.

Standing in waking, outwardly perceiving, of sevenfold form, with nineteen energies, experiencing the gross, Common-to-all-men, this is the first measure.

Standing in dream, inwardly perceiving, of sevenfold form, with nineteen energies, experiencing the subtle, the Radiant, this is the second measure.

Where entering into rest, he desires no desire, nor beholds any dream, this is dreamlessness. Standing in dreamlessness, unified, a sphere of spiritual perception, formed of joy, experiencing joy, whose energy is spiritual consciousness, the Wise Seer is the third measure. He is Lord of all, he is all-knowing, he is the inner ruler, he is the source of all, the forth-going and the indrawing of lives.

Nor outwardly perceiving, nor inwardly perceiving, nor perceiving in both ways, nor a sphere of spiritual perception, nor perception, nor non-perception; invisible, inapprehensible, ungraspable, indistinguishable, unimaginable, unindicable, whose essence is realization of oneness with the Eternal, where forth-going is ended, still, benign, beyond duality, is held to be the fourth; this is the Divine Self, this is the goal of wisdom.

THE Mandukya, briefest and yet most inclusive of all the great Upanishads, undertakes to describe the universe in terms of consciousness and of vehicles of consciousness in four progressive degrees. There is only a passing indication of the objective world presented to consciousness through these degrees.

The philosophical justification of this treatment is the truth that consciousness is the one thing we know at first hand; objects we know only as they are reflected in consciousness. That we should ever know objects as they are in themselves, that is, unrelated to consciousness, appears to be impossible, a contradiction in terms; though we may and without doubt shall come to know them as they present themselves to a deeper and more real consciousness, thus knowing them more truly.

Science undertakes to describe objects as they are in themselves; but in reality science does not so describe them, since all observation rests on the impressions which objects make on consciousness, whether immediately,

through the senses, or mediately, through various instruments like the microscope or telescope, which are simply extensions of the lenses of the eyes. All scientific observation, therefore, consists of the impressions which objects make on what we may call the outer layer of consciousness; while all scientific interpretation is derived from certain deeper powers of consciousness, powers of which science, even while continually and consistently using them, gives no real account, but simply takes them for granted.

Science uses reason to reach its conclusions, and often uses it with admirable power; yet science does not appear to have begun by establishing the necessarily precedent thesis, that reason is reasonable, that it may be depended on to reach truth. That is taken for granted, to a large degree quite unconsciously, with no very clear realization that the problem exists. The truth would seem to be that this conviction that reason is a trustworthy guide is itself derived from consciousness, from a deeper layer than the layer which reasons, a layer which we may call intuitional.

Science thus depends on sensuous consciousness for its observations, on rational consciousness for its interpretations and, if we are right, on intuitional consciousness for the validation both of sense perception and of the process of reasoning.

We may, perhaps, postulate a form of consciousness even deeper than intuition, a consciousness from which we draw the conviction that there is a universe to experience and interpret, the consciousness of Being itself.

The philosophical justification for describing the universe in terms of consciousness is, then, the simple fact that there is no other way in which we can describe it. It is all a question of our consciousness, and of what our consciousness contains. This is the beginning. There is no indication of a possible end.

The Mandukya Upanishad describes consciousness as one, made manifest in four degrees, with appropriate vehicles. But form or shape, as we experience it in our ordinary life, is present only in the first two of the four degrees. The third and fourth are above form in that sense. There is, therefore, a medial line; below it is the realm of form, while above it principles or potencies take the place of form.

The idea of conscious experience devoid of form by no means takes us beyond what we already know. Take music, for example, a very rich and abounding field of experience. As music reaches our consciousness, it has no form or shape, in the sense that a picture, or a statue, or a building has form or shape. Yet we are clearly conscious in music of a quality which corresponds to architectural form, like that, let us say, of the Parthenon, or of a quality which corresponds to beauty of colour. And all music rests on the truth that it can and does render a great realm of our experience. And this it does without shape or form in the ordinary sense. So that we are familiar with one very rich realm of consciousness which is independent of form. We may, therefore, form a concept, however inadequate, of a realm accessible to consciousness, in which reality is manifested without form as we experience it; in which powers and principles take the place of form: the realm above the medial line.

To come back to the text of the Mandukya. The first paragraph outlines the unity of the universe, the unmanifest All and its manifestation; the universe in eternity, and its manifestation in the three times, past, present, future. The Eternal, the Divine Self, is made manifest in four realms, four ranges of consciousness; if we wish to find more definite terms, we may, perhaps, speak of these four degrees as that of the man, the disciple, the adept and the Mahatma. The first two are described in terms of form; the third and fourth, in terms of principles or powers. The third and fourth are above the medial line, above Maya.

The second paragraph describes the vehicle of the consciousness of the man, the physical body. It is sevenfold: head, upper and lower trunk, the four limbs. It has nineteen energies; namely, five senses or powers of perception, five powers of action, five vital breaths, to which are added mind (Manas), imagination (Chitta), the personal sense (Ahankara), and intelligence (Buddhi).

This vehicle with its range of consciousness is called Common-to-all-men (Vaishvanara); it is described as standing in waking consciousness, perceiving outwardly, and experiencing the gross; that is, having the experience of ordinary physical life.

The second vesture or vehicle of consciousness is called the Radiant (Taijasa). *The Theosophical Glossary* says that this term is used "to designate the Manasarupa, the 'thought-body.'" The vesture called the Radiant would appear to be what *Light on the Path* calls the astral body. Both words mean "starry." The Mandukya describes it as a subtile counterpart of the natural body; like it, possessing form and members, and with a range of corresponding powers. It is said to stand in dream; that is, a consciousness of forms, perhaps a four-dimensional consciousness.

The third vesture appears to be what Shankaracharya calls the causal body, of which *The Theosophical Glossary* says: "This 'body,' which is no body either objective or subjective, but Buddhi, the Spiritual Soul, is so called because it is the direct cause of the Sushupti condition, leading to the Turiya state." We have translated Sushupti by "dreamlessness," a consciousness above form. Therefore the causal body (Karana sharira) is the vesture of a consciousness and a range of powers, which we have suggested may be the consciousness and powers of the adept. Of this consciousness, the Mandukya says that it is "unified, a sphere of spiritual perception, formed of joy, experiencing joy, whose energy is spiritual consciousness (Chetas)." And to this vesture with its consciousness is given the name "the Wise Seer" (Prajna). He is the Lord of all, all-knowing, the inner ruler. The concluding phrases of this paragraph: "the source of all, the forth-going and indrawing of lives," refer to the causal body, which, according to Shankaracharya, is "the cause and substance of the two other bodies," sending them forth in the series of lives, and, when each life is completed, drawing back the spiritual substance and force into itself; in this sense, the inner ruler of the whole series of lives.

The word Turiya, already cited, which is applied to the higher of the two ranges of spiritual consciousness above the realm of form, is simply the ordinal

number, "fourth." That consciousness is called by the Mandukya "Atma," which we have rendered "Divine Self." It appears to be a consciousness beyond individuality, which is in one sense the most fundamental thing in our present experience. And because this consciousness beyond individuality so completely transcends our experience, the Mandukya defines it almost wholly by negatives: "invisible, inapprehensible, ungraspable, indistinguishable, unimaginable, unindicable," adding the one positive indication: "whose essence is realization of oneness with the Eternal."

The second part of the Mandukya covers the same ground. Its purpose is, to correlate what has been said with the syllable Om; to show how the sacred syllable Om carries in itself the concentrated meaning of the whole teaching. The Sanskrit word translated "syllable" means "that which cannot be diminished, that which is imperishable."

This is the Divine Self referred to the sacred syllable, the Om according to its measures; the stages are the measures, and the measures are the stages: a-u-m.

Standing in waking consciousness, Common-to-all-men, is the sound a: the first measure, from obtaining (apti) and from being first (adi-mattva). He indeed obtains all his desires, he is first, who thus knows.

Standing in dream, Radiant, is the sound u: the second measure, from exalting (utkarsha) and from being intermediate (ubhayatva). He indeed exalts the continuity of wisdom, he becomes unified, nor in his family is any born not knowing the Eternal, who thus knows.

Standing in dreamlessness, the Wise Seer, is the sound m: the third measure, from overcoming (miti) or from entering (apiti). He indeed overcomes this world and becomes the entrance, who thus knows.

Without measure is the fourth, inapprehensible, where going forth is ended, benign, beyond duality. Thus Om is the Divine Self. Through the Self he enters into the Divine Self, who thus knows.

Perhaps the only comment needed is that the Sanskrit words in brackets (apti, utkarsha, miti), which have as their initials the three letters: a-u-m, are in part mnemonics. It would be difficult to find exact English equivalents beginning with these letters, therefore no attempt has been made to do this.

The Mandukya Upanishad is the theme of many commentaries and explanatory treatises. It is evident that its full meaning can be understood only through growth, development, spiritual experience, in which the higher realms of consciousness are unveiled. The whole substance of the great Upanishads may be used to illumine this little treatise; and it is the virtue of the Upanishads, that they have much to say concerning the higher realms of consciousness.

The Mandukya Upanishad thus gives us an outline map of four realms or ranges of consciousness. Without doubt each of the realms has within it endless diversity; perhaps we may think of each as having seven degrees, and of these again as subdivided.

Taking this outline map of consciousness, it would be profoundly interesting

to inquire into the knowledge of each realm which has been recorded by the saints and mystics of the world, as something actually experienced.

For the great Christian saints, for example, we have the materials ready to hand in such a book as *The Graces of Interior Prayer, A Treatise on Mystical Theology*, by Auguste Poulain; mystical theology being the accepted term for the study of these higher states of consciousness.

For another field of spiritual experience, such a book as *The Mystics of Islam*, by Reynold A. Nicholson, will give us abundant material.

Or we may take the New Testament, finding in what Paul says of the spiritual body a commentary on what is here said of the vesture called the Radiant. So the phrase, "whose essence is realization of oneness with the Eternal" suggests the saying of the Master Christ, "I and the Father are one." And when in the words, "Before Abraham was, I am," Christ speaks of the past as the present, or of the future as the present, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," we have the record of a consciousness which, in the words of the Mandukya, "surpasses the three times."

Thus we may use this outline map in preparation for our journey.

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