

Taitreya Upanishads, Class14

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 8, Shloka # 1:

The sacred sound Om is Brahman. All this is the syllable OM.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 8, Shloka # 2:

It is widely known that Om is uttered to indicate consent. The priest officiating at the sacrifice encourages his assistants with the words "O Sravya". With the chanting of Om they start singing the Sama verses; and with "Om Som" they recite the shastras; Adhvaryu answers with the syllable "Om".

With Om the chief priest, Brahma expresses his assent. One permits the offering of oblation to the fire with "OM". May I obtain with Brahman; with this determination, the Brahmana says "Om" before he begins to recite the Veda; and he does obtain the Brahman.

Continuing his teaching of the Upanishad, Swami Paramarthananda said this shloka is a glorification of Omkara. It is a mantra used in Gyana Kandam, as analysis of Omkara, in Upasana Kandam where Omkara is used as a symbol for saguna Brahma Upasana and in Karma Kandam where it is used in rituals. Priests of Rg, Yajur, and Sama Vedas also use Omkara extensively. Even a beginning Brahmachari starts his chanting or Veda Adhyayana through Omkara chanting. In Veda Adhyayanam one only learns how to chant, as such it is Shabda Pradhana. Later the Brahmachari moves on to Veda-mimasa where he learns the meaning of the chant. Typically, he learns his branch of Veda that is Rg, Yajur or Sama. Some may also learn more than one Veda. In our tradition memorizing and chanting alone existed in the past and not reading and chanting.

In this Shloka Brahma means Yoga. Thus the Brahmachari starts his chanting with Om. Uttering Om is mangalam. As a result of this prayer he certainly completes Veda Adhyayanam.

Some clarifications were provided on Omkara.

How should one utter or pronounce the word Om?

In English Om is often written as AUM, however the pronunciation is not Aum. In Sanskrit A +U= O, due to a sandhi. Thus, in English, AUM should change to OM. OM is the correct pronunciation.

How long does one chant Om?

In the beginning of a Vedic chanting O must be three matras long or as O3M. At end of a Vedic chanting O should be four matras long or as O4M.

Omkara Japa is prescribed only for Sanyasis. People in other ashramas such as Brahmacharya and Grihasta are not allowed to chant Omkara alone as a kevala mantra. For a Sanyasi it is a compulsory mantra. Sanyasi chants Omkara instead of Gayathri. A Sanyasi can prolong the Om mantra chant as much as he wants such as OOOM.

Dayananda Saraswathi used to say that the mere Omkara chanting creates Tivra Vairagyaha (extreme sense of detachment) and because of it a Grihasta may wish to take up Sanyasa after such a chanting. This, of course, can create problems in society. Therefore Omkara is always mixed with other mantras for Grihasta's. Now, concluding the anuvakaha #8 with shloka # 1, it says, May the seeker practice Omkara.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 9, Shloka # 1:

The practice of what is right and proper, as fixed by the scriptural texts, is to be done along with reading the texts oneself and propagating the truths of the same. "Truth", meaning practicing in life what is to be understood to be right and proper, is to be pursued along with regular studies and preaching. Penance, study, and preaching; control of the senses, study and preaching; tranquility, study and preaching;

the “maintenance of fire”, study and preaching; offering oblations in fire sacrifice, study and preaching of the Vedas; serving the guests, study and preaching; the performance of duties towards man, study and preaching; duties towards children, study and preaching of the Vedas; procreation, study and preaching; propagation of the race, study and preaching; all these are things to be practiced sincerely. Satyavaca, son of Rathitara, holds that truth alone is to be strictly practiced. Taponitya, a son of Purusista declares that penance alone is to be practiced. Naka, son of Modgala, holds the view that the study and preaching of the Vedas alone is to be practiced; that verily, is penance; aye that is penance.

With previous shloka the five Upasanas of Samshito Upasana, Vyahriti Upasana, Hiranyagarbha Upasana, Pankta Upasana and Omkara Upasana have all been completed. These Upasanas are meant to purify, concentrate and expand one’s mind. These Upasanas will make the mind ready for Gyanam. We should keep in mind that these Upasanas will not give us Moksha. For that one has to go through Gyana yoga of sravanam, mananam and nidhidhyasanam of Vedanta scriptures under a qualified Guru.

There are many types of Upasanas. Chandogyo Upanishad has countless Upasanas. Puranas and Itihasas also have many Upasanas. Bhagawatham also has many Upasanas. It is not compulsory to practice a Vedic Upasana. Nowadays, Vedic Upasanas are not preached or practiced anymore. Rather, Ganesha, Rama, Krishna and other such Upasanas are more common and as good for purification of the mind. In todays context Vedic Upasanas are only of academic interest.

Now, the Upanishad talks about karma as well. Karmas can be Kayika or Vachika karmas. Thus, in the beginning stages, Brahmacharya stage, one starts with Karma yoga. Later, Karma decreases and Upasana increases during Vanaprastha stage. So, one should not neglect Karma. Karma Yoga has been discussed extensively in the Gita. Karma Yoga involves actions that contribute to the spiritual growth. Thus we have:

Para Upakara Karmani: This involves work that helps more people as such leads to spiritual growth.

Para Udasana Karmani: Here my work helps me. I don't care about others. He does not do any good or harm to others. In this state one is in a stage of spiritual stagnation.

Para Apakara Karmani: These are actions harmful to others. It brings one down spiritually.

Swami Chinmayananda used to say:

Godman: Para Upakara

Man man: Para Udasana

Animal man: Para Apakara

So, one should strive to increase Para Upakara or Satvika Karmani. One should bring Tamasika Karmani to a minimum. The word Suna means "necessary evil". If one performs Suna, one should also perform prayaschita. Vedas have Prayaschita built into it so that any errors are corrected immediately. Sandhya Vandanam has Prayschita mantras built into it.

All prayers and Pancha Maha Yagna, all contribute to spiritual growth. Pancha Maha Yagna is a Prayaschita as well as a Shodhaka karmani.

Refreshing our memories on Pancha Maha Yagna, they are:

1. Deva Yagna: Puja or Sandhya vandana are examples
2. Pitr Yagna: Prayers and puja to ancestors. One should not forget one's living parents as well.
3. Rishi or Brahma Yagna: Study of scriptures and teaching others about our scriptures.
4. Manushya Yagna: Social Service
5. Bhuta Yagna: Service to lower beings such as animals and plants. Daily placing of Kolam (rangoli) using rice powder, Tulasi puja are all examples of this.

The Upanishad says, of the five-maha yagna's, while all are important, Brahma Yagna foremost. People are naturally more rituals oriented. However, Taittiriya Upanishad recommends a systematic study of scriptures. Many people consider such a study as of academic interest only. However, recognizing that knowledge is power and that spiritual knowledge is very powerful, study of scriptures should not be just for academic interest. Furthermore, spiritual knowledge helps with our Prarabhdha Karmas as well. It is a Kavacha against Prarabhdha karmas.

This Upanishad also emphasizes values or Daiviha Sampati. Daiviha Sampati means discovering God in my heart. To obtain this sampati one has to acquire Godly character. Therefore values are important.

Discussing the shloka, following words were explained:

Svadyaya: Study of scriptures. In Brahmacharya ashrama Dharma shastra is studied in addition to learning professional skills such as warfare, business etc. Dharma shastra, in poorva bhaga, was a common subject for all students. Thus, in Brahmacharya ashrama one studies Dharma while in Grihastha and Vanaprastha ashramas one lives the Dharma, hence the saying Dharmam Chara. The idea was to learn Dharma in Brahmacharya, then follow Dharma in practice and then learn about Brahman or go to Gyana Yoga.

Pravachanam: Means sharing knowledge. Only a competent Guru can teach you the Vedas. Self-study can be dangerous. This also gives me the responsibility of teaching future generations as well as a part of the Anadi Guru Shishya Parampara.

In the Vedic society everyone had to share by talking and living the teachings of the Vedas. Vedas also ask a segment of society to make the study and spread of scriptural knowledge their only profession. This segment of society is known as

Karma Brahmana. Their livelihood is teaching and sharing information and for this they accept as dakshina whatever is given voluntarily. Thus, they had to lead a simple life. Since they were not rich, they were also not burdened with problems and this allowed them more time to study scriptures. Their only job was to learn and share. This is known as Pravachanam. One segment of society was dedicated for this.

Ritum: It means knowledge about life in line with scriptures. Life beyond Pratyaksha Gyanam was also to be studied. Thus, one was required to learn about Apursheya Gyanam as well. Generally, materialistic (Artha kama pradhana) societies' goals are entertainment and enjoyment. Here, however, a Dharma Moksha Pradhana life (a spiritual life) is important and it is known as Ritum.

Satyam: It means to live life according to scriptures. One should not be a hypocrite. What I know and what I do must have minimum gap. Leading a Vaidica life or a life of Anushtana's (religious life) is Satyam.

With Best Wishes,

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