

Gaudapada's Mandukya Karika commentary on the distinction between the 3rd quarter (Ishvara/Prajna) and the 4th quarter (Turiya/Atma).

In the *Mandukya Karika*, Acharya Gaudapada systematically maps out the transition from the causal realm (*Prajna / Ishvara*) to the ultimate, unconditioned reality (*Turiya*).

His exposition in the **Agama Prakarana** (Chapter 1) provides one of the most rigorous dialectical separations in all of Advaita Vedanta between the **3rd Quarter** (*Prajna / Ishvara*) and the **4th Quarter** (*Turiya*).

1. The Diagnostic Framework: Two Types of Ignorance

To distinguish the quarters, Gaudapada introduces two diagnostic metrics for how Consciousness interacts with truth:

1. **Tattva-Agrahana (Non-apprehension of Truth):** The total absence of knowledge of the Self (spiritual sleep / causal ignorance).
2. **Anyatha-Grahana (Misapprehension of Truth):** Seeing the Self as something else—taking the non-dual reality and projecting a world of multiplicity, bodies, minds, and objects (spiritual dream / error).

Gaudapada uses these two criteria to evaluate the four quarters:

State / Quarter	Non-Apprehension (Tattva-Agrahana)	Misapprehension (Anyatha-Grahana)	Status
1st Quarter (Visva / Waking)	Yes (Does not know Atman)	Yes (Perceives gross world)	Bound by Cause & Effect
2nd Quarter (Taijasa / Dream)	Yes (Does not know Atman)	Yes (Perceives subtle world)	Bound by Cause & Effect
3rd Quarter (Prajna / Ishvara)	Yes (Causal darkness/seed)	No (No manifold world seen)	Bound by Cause alone
4th Quarter (Turiya / Pure Self)	No (Pure Awareness)	No (No duality exists)	Free from Cause & Effect

2. Key Karika Verses Decoding the 3rd vs. 4th Quarter

Karika 1.11 — Cause (*Karana*) vs. Effect (*Karya*)

kāryakāraṇabaddhau tāviṣyete viśvataijasau |

prājñāḥ kāraṇabaddhastu dau tau turīye na sidhyataḥ ||

"Visva (1st) and Taijasa (2nd) are conditioned by both Effect and Cause. Prajna (3rd / Ishvara) is conditioned by Cause alone. But both Cause and Effect do not exist in Turiya (4th)."

- **The 3rd Quarter (*Prajna* / *Ishvara*):** Operates as the **Causal Seed (*Bija*)**. In deep sleep or the cosmic causal state, the multiplicity of the universe collapses into an undifferentiated mass of potentiality. There are no effects (*Karya*), but the seed of ignorance/causation (*Karana*) is intact.
- **The 4th Quarter (*Turiya*):** Is **Akarya-Akarana**—neither an effect nor a cause. It is not a "producer" of the universe, nor is it produced.

Karika 1.13 & 1.14 — Sleep (*Nidra*) vs. Awakening (*Jnana*) [Thematic paraphrase combining the core concepts of verses 1.13 through 1.15.]

agrahāṇaṃ sataḥ tattvaṃ prājñe tasyāstathobhayoh |

dviṣaṭke jñānaṃ turīye hi tadā nānyaṃ na paśyati ||

"In Prajna, there is only non-apprehension of Reality. In Visva and Taijasa, both non-apprehension and misapprehension are present. In Turiya, Reality is ever-apprehended; hence neither exists."

Gaudapada uses two analogies to define the operational difference:

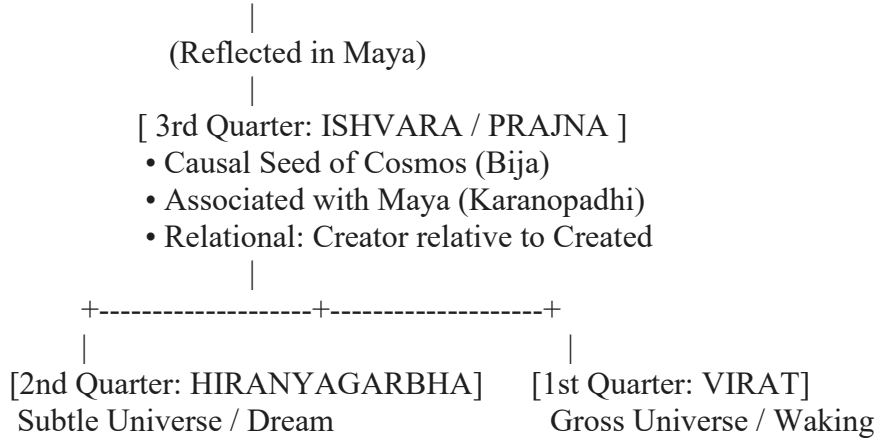
- **Sleep (*Nidra*):** Represented by *Prajna* / *Ishvara*. It is the state of unmanifest potential where nothing is seen, yet darkness/unawareness of the absolute remains as a latent seed.
- **Dream (*Svapna*):** Represented by *Visva* and *Taijasa*, where the seed shoots up into false projections (objects, ego, world).
- **Sun / Light (*Turiya*):** In Turiya, the "sleep" of causal ignorance is destroyed by the light of Self-Knowledge. Just as the sun cannot perceive darkness, Turiya cannot contain ignorance or causation.

3. Why Ishvara belongs to the 3rd Quarter in Gaudapada's Analysis

Mantra 6 of the *Mandukya Upanishad* describes *Prajna* as *Sarveshvara* (the Lord of all), *Sarvajna* (Omniscient), *Antaryami* (Inner Controller), and *Yoni* (the source/womb of all creation).

Gaudapada and Adi Shankara clarify why this description applies to **Ishvara as Causal Reality**, yet falls short of **Turiya**:

[TURIYA] (Pure Unconditioned Consciousness)



- 1) **Relational Definition:** Ishvara is defined as "Lord", "Controller", and "Creator". These terms are relational—they only have meaning in reference to a creation (Karya). If creation is an illusion (Mithya), then the status of being a "Creator" is also relative (Vyavaharika).
- 2) **Causal Maya:** Ishvara's conditioning adjunct (*Upadhi*) is macrocosmic *Maya* in its unmanifest state. Turiya is completely *Nirupadhika*—devoid of any conditioning or relative association with *Maya*.
- 3) **The Seed vs. The Scorched Seed:**
 - a) As long as one rests in the 3rd Quarter (*Prajna/Ishvara*), the seed of birth and rebirth remains intact in its causal state.
 - b) When Turiya is realized (Mantra 7), the causal seed itself is scorched in the fire of non-dual awareness (*Jnana-agni*).

Summary: The Shift from Mantra 6 to Mantra 7

Feature	3rd Quarter (Prajna / Ishvara) — Mantra 6	4th Quarter (Turiya / Pure Atman) — Mantra 7
Metaphysical Role	Causal State (<i>Karana-Avastha</i>)	Transcendent Absolute (<i>Avasthatita</i>)

Feature	3rd Quarter (Prajna / Ishvara) — Mantra 6	4th Quarter (Turiya / Pure Atman) — Mantra 7
Duality Status	Unmanifest potential duality (<i>Bija-bhava</i>)	Absolute Non-Duality (<i>Advaita</i>)
Ignorance Profile	Has <i>Tattva-Agrahana</i> (Non-apprehension)	Free from both <i>Agrahana</i> and <i>Anyatha-grahana</i>
Relationship to Cosmos	Creator, Sustainer, Dissolver (<i>Yoni</i>)	Neither cause nor effect (<i>Akarana</i>)
Vedantic Classification	<i>Sopadhika Brahman</i> (Relative / Saguna)	<i>Nirupadhika Brahman</i> (Absolute / Nirguna)

Gaudapada's Final Conclusion

Gaudapada asserts that one must not stop at the 3rd Quarter (*Ishvara/Prajna*). Worship or realization of Ishvara as a causal entity leads to cosmic absorption or gradual liberation (*Krama Mukti*), but **final liberation (*Kaivalya*)** occurs only when one transcends the causal seed entirely to claim identity with **Turiya**—the 4th Quarter that is your true, unconditioned Self.