

## **AMRITABINDU UPANISHAD (Nectar-Drop-Upanishad)**

“Desire is the root cause of Sorrow”, says Buddha. The desire ridden mind is impure. Other impurities like anger or jealousy are its side products. When obstructed desire becomes anger, when someone else enjoys what one desires, it turns into jealousy. When one gets what one wanted, greed or pride arises.

“Mind is considered as two-fold: pure and impure. It is impure with the resolve of personal desire. It is pure when devoid of all selfish desires”, says Mantra 1.

Mind binds, mind liberates! Thoughts are the medium through which the ego, the limited Self, appears and paves the way for all our likes and dislikes, pleasure and pain. Innocence of a child is free from attachment or hatred. As we reach deep within ourselves--we see this childlike nature of pure--undivided awareness due to attachment to sense objects. We pursue pleasure out of mere habit and not as a true need. Paying attention to the subtle ways our mind is indeed desire-less state. This thought is reflected in the 2<sup>nd</sup> mantra: “Mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation for human beings. The mind attached to sense objects leads to bondage and that which is free of sense objects sets one free. So it is said”.

The mind is like a white cloth. Dip it in red dye, it turns red; dip it in green, it turns green. Put it in sunlight for long, it loses its colors. The mind truly is the Self itself, with no color. Attachment to sense objects are the colors that our mind has taken. Meditation brings the original freshness of the mind. A spiritual seeker starts with keeping away from temptations. Mantra 3, advises that one should free his mind of sense objects: “A seeker of liberation should constantly make his mind free of sense objects since liberation is predicted of a mind that does not cling to sense objects”.

Are the mind and Consciousness (Self) different? The mind is just the Consciousness with superimpositions of name and form. An enlightened Meditate sees himself as the Self even amidst the different modifications that his mind may assume. The mind is compared to the moon which draws its light from the Self, the Sun. The Self is called here the Consciousness, the spiritual heart, distinct from the blood-pumping organ. Mantra 4 says: “That is then the Supreme state when the mind is held firmly in the inner psyche, having given up all its attachments to sense objects and it (the mind) attains its own true state (the Self).

The ego is the nature of, “I am so and so”. Any self-description taken as real leads to trouble. “I am low” is immediate trouble. “I am high” is postponed trouble. When we shed all ideas of high or low, the egoless awareness shines supreme. That is Consciousness. Any particular description of the Self is in the mind. The mind must dissolve in the Consciousness, and descriptions must disappear into the indescribable. Therefore Mantra 5 says: “Restrain the mind until it dissolves in the Consciousness. This is wisdom, this is meditation. The rest is all logic and verbal extensions”.

Space is unrelated to any form of structure. It cannot be equated with either the magnificent Taj Mahal or a humble cottage of a village. In the same way, Awareness is unrelated to any mental concept. The most wonderful philosophical thought as well as images of worldly attractions do not grasp the Self. All concepts fall in the mind-blowing insight of Self-Knowledge. This is explained in mantra 6. “The highest State is neither something to be thought of (as pleasing); nor something to be not thought of (as displeasing); it is not something to be thought of (as object) at all; it should be thought of (i.e. contemplated upon). Then one attains Brahman (the Absolute Reality) which is free from any partiality.

Upaasana is a time honored spiritual practice. It leads one to the highest level of meditation. Ramana Maharishi often said “your mind is stuck with names and forms of the world. Please apply it to the names and forms of the Lord. You will reach ‘That’ which is beyond names and forms: “Words, mantras, symbols etc are all thus helpful supports for a seeker of the path. The very advanced one lets these supports go. Choosing the good leads to God, who is beyond both good and bad”. This Upanishad in Mantra 7 says: “One should unite one’s mind with the higher, first taking the sound (of Om). Then one should meditate on the Supreme as (the Reality) beyond Om”. Realizing (the truth) beyond sounds, the illusory (world) is realized as the Real (Brahman)”.

“Wholeness is Holiness” said the great philosopher J.Krishnamurti. Conflicts over materialistic moral or spiritual matters divide us. Conflicts cease by looking inwardly, in true self-observation. See and they cease. The field of mind is full of divisions and conflicts. Time brings in past, present and future. Space means front, back and the middle. Reason introduces cause and effect. One should realize Awareness without the formations of a separating tendency “me”. Here the Upanishad in mantra 8 says: “That alone is the part-less Brahman, free of choice and devoid of stain. One attains the eternal Brahman, knowing ‘I am the Brahman’ ”.

When the thought of ‘I am the body’ seizes me I have serious doubts about who I am and where I belong. Observing the ways of the self and enquiring ‘who am I’ are two sides of the same coin. Both these are not activities of verbalizing, judging or reasoning. Upanishad therefore says in Mantra 9: “(The Reality is) without doubt, infinite, beyond reason and analogies. It is unknowable and without beginning--knowing which a wise one gets liberation.

One is liberated when one realizes that all forms of “I am so and so” merge into pure being and Awareness.

In the next mantra 10, the Upanishad says: “This is the ultimate Truth--There is no control of mind; it does not rise at all; there is none bound; no spiritual practitioner; no seeker of liberation and there is no realized soul”. The egoistic living is like a long voyage in a dream. When one crosses the ocean with great difficulty, he is set to celebrate his success. One lives in a state of abandonment free from worry or inhibitions. The transcendental wisdom leaves no room for the old divisions of the mind which were more mental creations. The dream world is invalid.

The 'Awareness' is the same in the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. The Self is like space and the minds are like water in a bucket. Rebirth is when one's mind (the ego) leaves one body and begins to function in a second body. The water is transferred from one bucket to another. Space has no movement. The Self never has a rebirth. One who knows the Self is untouched by reincarnation. The Upanishad says in Mantra 11: "one should know there is only one Self, in waking, dream and deep sleep. There is no rebirth to the one which is beyond the three states".

The oneness of all life is the essence of Vedanta. The Self is same in Asia, Africa or Europe. It is the same in 1000 BC, 1000 AD and 1000 years further up. It is the same in realized soul and ignorant souls. Reflections of the same Moon are seen, in all waters, all over the world. Upanishad says in Mantra 12: "One alone is the Self in all beings. Like the moon which is reflected in water, the one (Self) is the same in all and yet, appears as many too".

The moon seems to move amidst clouds. Really the movement belongs to the clouds and not to the moon. Change is death and changelessness is immortality. The opposite of love is fear. Fear is of change, of death. Pleasures, positions, powers, and privileges all come and go. The "true I" is like space; there is no difference in it. The Self is immovable screen; all else is passing show! This is explained by an analogy of a moving pot in the following mantra 13: "Space is covered by a pot. When we move the pot, space does not move; only the pot moves. In the same way, the (true) soul is like space (and has no movement or changes)".

In Vedanta two of the most powerful analogies, the Self is likened to the Sun and space. However, both these, a star and an element, are inert. The Self is Awareness and sentient. Vedanta begins with the instructions: "The knower is the Self. The known is the non-Self. The Self is the principle of knowledge (cit) which illumines both the knower and the known. Self as the knower is stressed in the Mantra 14: "When pots of various shapes are broken, space knows it not! But the self knows it perfectly".

Words inspire. Words bind too. Words are like a boat which we must use to cross a river. We must leave the boat and walk to the other shore. Attachment to verbosity has held back many a spiritual seeker from higher possibilities. The Upanishad says in Mantra 15: "When covered by the power of words (sound) one does not know the Self (called the sky or space here) being enveloped in darkness. When the darkness (ignorance) is destroyed, one sees the oneness, being the One".

Leaving the boat before embarking on the journey is a blunder. Holding on to the boat after the journey is over, is again a blunder! A seeker should be true to himself and assess his own mental purity honestly and take up the appropriate spiritual practice. Repeating a mantra makes the mind single focused and gives a degree of freedom from sense objects which otherwise occupies the mind. One who meditates can afford to go deeper when a high degree of concentration and dispassion is gained. So says the Mantra 16: "The OM as a word is first considered as the Supreme Brahman. After that (word

idea) has vanished, the imperishable Brahman (remains). The wise one should meditate on that imperishable Brahman, if he desires peace of his soul.

Put your mind to PUT process, P for purity, U for Unity and T for transcend. The first two are on the plane of words, the third is non-verbal. One should purify one's mind by contemplating on inspiring thoughts and ideas from any source that uplifts him. Meditation on selected passages from books of wisdom can purify one's mind. One should unify his mind by repeating his chosen mantras. Then there is a progress from many thoughts to one thought. The simple thought of the mantra becomes a wonderful support against all distractions. The mind then subsides. Awareness alone shines. That is transcendence. This is stressed in the Upanishadic mantra 17: "One ought to know two kinds of vidya (knowledge)--these are; the word-Brahman and the Supreme Brahman. Having mastered the word Brahman, one attains the Supreme Brahman".

"The intelligent student, after studying the vedic texts, is solely intent on acquiring wisdom and realization. He should discard the texts altogether, as the man who seeks the rice discards the husk", says mantra 18. Spiritual texts are certainly a stepping stone to the highest vision. We may lift our mind to great heights through study of scriptures. Then we stay with the essence. Self enquiry "who am I" is really a non-verbal activity. Non-verbal, non-judgemental and non-interfering observation, which is not at all (a dull or passive state) of the mind's movement, brings about transformation. Transcendence of the mind takes place. The mind then no more binds you. Thoughts sit lightly in your Consciousness.

Intelligence is different from the intellect. The intellect works within the field of the known. Intelligence breaks off. Attachment to books, symbols, dogmas and practices has made people blind to the essence. There would not be so much bloodshed in the name of religion if people had more intelligence than mere intellect. This message is brought about in the following mantra 19, by an analogy to cow and milk: 'Milk is of the same color, while cows are of different colors. The intelligent student regards wisdom as milk and the many branches of Vedas as cows".

"Do not get bitter, please get better" says Swami Tejomayananda. Every drop of milk has butter in it. Yet the milk has to curdle and then we churn it to get butter. Everybody is loving and lovable in their heart. Wrong psychological conditions veil that divinity. Contact with the wise, Satsanga, brings about an increased manifestation of their original goodness. This theme is conveyed in the following Mantra 20 by an analogy: "Pure awareness resides in every being as butter hides in milk. It ought to be churned out constantly with the churning rod of mind".

In olden days, they had a way of lighting up the sacrificial fire every morning. They made two pieces of wood (Aranis) rub against each other and by friction sparks of fire emerged out of them. A rope was used to bring about the rotation of the pieces. Employing this as an analogy, knowledge, in the form of new ideas, causes friction within us and leads to sparks of new understanding. The figurative use of fire is especially appropriate for the ego. Egoistic confusions are totally undone, as thoughts

burnt upon gaining the vision of the Self. Quiet attention in meditation has intelligence (light) and power (heat). This thought is conveyed in the following Mantra 21. “Take the rope of knowledge and bring it out like fire, the Supreme Brahman. I am that Brahman, indivisible, immutable and calm. Thus it is thought of”.

This beautiful Upanishad concludes with an assertion once more of the oneness of all life. It ends with the sentence “Tadasmayaham Vasudeva iti”. As pure Awareness, we are ever one with the entire Universe. “Vaasu” implies “dwelling in every heart”. “Deva” means of the nature of light i.e. “Awareness”. The concluding Mantra 22 of this Upanishad reads as follows: “I am the soul of the Universe, the Supreme Being--in whom reside all beings, and who resides in all beings by virtue of Me being the giver of grace to all. I am Vaasudeva, that soul of the Universe, the Supreme Being”.

Amritabindu Upanishad, the nectar drop of spiritual teachings is from the Atharva Veda containing 22 mantras. We do not know the Rishi of this Upanishad. Perhaps, truth alone matters, and not any personalities. It is considered as a mini Upanishad while Upanishads on which the Great Acharyas like Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva wrote commentaries are termed major. This Upanishad is not minor in its significance and has the same depth and force that major Upanishads have.

Mind and its management, the nature of the Self, the place of scriptural study, the limitations of conceptual thinking and the oneness of myriad books of wisdom are the shining facets of this gem of a revealed text. The keynote message is in mantra 18, which says “As one takes rice, discarding the husk, the intelligent seeker grasps the Truth and leaves the book behind”.

Beginning with two fold classification of mind as 1) attachment to sense pleasures and 2) free from seeking pleasure, the sacred book declares that liberation is gained by the latter kind of mind. It calls for restraining the mind’s movements, making the mind merge in the Self. Pure, infinite and changeless is the Truth. It is a mistake to think that there are many souls with various limitations. Just as many reflected images of the moon have the one and only moon in the sky as the truth of them all, the apparently many souls have the one Self (Atman) as their Truth. The nature of Brahman, the absolute reality, is pointed out in this Upanishad. Spiritual study and practices are meant to recognize this one Self in the illusory plurality. The Upanishad discusses the place of scriptural study and the relevance of meditation with inspiring illustrations and forceful expressions, the mantras here motivates a student to get down to serious Sadhana (exercise), leaving behind all non-essential.

This Upanishad begins and ends as well with the Shanti Path:  
“OM, May we hear the auspiciousness with ear, O God,  
May we see the auspicious with eyes O worshipful One  
May we live fully the whole span of Life Granted to us by gods  
praising them, while enjoying firm limbs and strong bodies!

May Indra of ancient fame bless us!  
May Sun God, who knows all, bless us!  
May Garuda, who eliminates obstacles, bless us!  
May Brahaspati (the preceptor of Gods) bless us!  
Om, May there be triune peace, peace, peace!”

This lecture has been prepared by abridging and editing original text of Swami Chidananda of Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai 400072, for Vedanta Class at Sri Ganesha Temple, Nashville, TN.