

## 23

**AUM—The Name Of God**

*Born in water and momentarily floating on it, the water-bubble disappears into the water; Nara (man), likewise, emerges from Narayana (God) and merges back into Him.*

**Embodiments of Love!**

**T**he concept of the indestructibility of the Supreme Being or the *Akshara* aspect of Reality is acceptable to all religions and creeds. The basis for the acceptance of God as the Eternal Being and as the Cosmic Enrapturer is His indestructibility. *Aksharathwa* or indestructibility is the Form of God and for this indestructible God, *Aum* is the name. *Aum*, the primordial Word, contains the essence of all the *Vedas* and is the source of all the *Sastras*. It provides the basis for the core of all religious teaching and eclectic knowledge.

*Aum* is comprised of three syllables, “A”, “U” and “M”, each of which has profound connotations. *Aum* is the primordial Word, which gives life (*chaitanya*) to all other words. All the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Puranas* have extolled the *Pranava (Aum)* in many ways.

It is not possible for anyone to fully cognise or even describe the integral form of the sacred word *Aum*. It is an integral word that stands for the Divine. It is *Sabda Brahmanamayi* (the audible form of *Brahman*), *Charachara Mayi* (pervading the universe of the animate and inanimate beings), *Jyothir Mayi* (resplendent, divine Light), *Vaang Mayi* (Speech), *Nityananda Mayi* (Eternal Delight), *Paratpara Mayi* (Transcendental), *Maya Mayi* (the mother of *maya* itself—the creative consciousness of *Brahman*), and *Sri Mayi* (Auspiciousness). *Aum*, thus, has the foregoing eight *Aishwaryas* or divine treasures. It is divinely precious and should be recognised as the Name of God.

This world is *kshara*, subject to decadence and destruction. Nevertheless, in this world, which is destructible, the *Akshara Parabrahman* or the indestructible, transcendental *Brahman* manifests Itself. *Brahman* permeates the world (*kshara*), but *Brahman* is not subject to *kshara* (destruction).

In the pot you have mud. But in the mud, pots do not exist. Pots are the result of a process of *kalpana* (creation) and therefore perish. Yet, mud exists in the

pots. A bubble of water arises from water because of the process of *kalpana* and hence dissolves back. Nevertheless, in the water-bubble too, water is present as the film that envelopes the air within. In a similar manner, the *Akshara* manifests itself in the creation and is present in it along with *kshara*. *Aum* demonstrates this.

In the *Ramayana*, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna exhibit the qualities associated respectively with the three syllables “A”, “U” and “M” of *Aum*. *Aum* itself is personified in Rama. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna declares that He is the *Pranava* (*Aum*) in the *Vedas*—“*Pranavasya sarva Vedeshu*”. Patanjali has extolled the *Pranava* as being an apt name for God, “*Tasya vachakah Pranavah*”. In the Hindu religion, there is no *mantra* or *Sastra* that does not have *Aum* as its basis. We should, therefore, try to understand the profound significance of the sacred *Pranava*, the primordial word.

*Aum* is a Name of God which can find universal acceptance. The Christians say Amen in their prayers every day. It is only a different form of *Aum*. *Aum* has universal relevance and applicability. It cuts across all barriers of time, place, religion and culture, and can be uttered by all men.

Life is a mighty river and desires constitute its water. Thoughts are the innumerable little waves in this river. Aspirations are the crocodiles that abound in it

and illusions are its whirlpools. Only a *yogi* can cross such a terrible river, as he alone has gained control over the modifications of the mind, “*yogah chitta vritti nirodhah*”, as Patanjali says.

The flow of water in an ordinary river may increase or decrease, but the river of life, with ever-multiplying desires as its water, knows no decrease. It may become so wide as to be a boundless expanse of uncontrollable, turbulent waters. To cross such a river, therefore, a boat is absolutely necessary. *Aum*, the name of God, is the boat that takes you across this river. The ancient *rishis* had crossed the turbulent river of life with the help of the boat of *Pranava*, with ease. *Pranava* has the power to save the world from *pralaya* (great deluge).

In our worldly affairs, we follow several paths to fulfil our desires. In experiencing the fulfilment of our desires, we invariably pass through three stages. They are *priyam*, *modam*, and *pramodam*. Here is an illustration. You hear that some delicious mangoes are available in the market. This news itself gives you a sense of pleasant anticipation and makes your mouth water. This pleasure is really the experience of *priyam*. It is illusory and is brought about primarily by thought or imagination. Then, you go to the market and buy a mango. The act of purchasing the mango also gives you some pleasure or happiness called *modam*; this too, however, is not lasting and cannot satisfy you. You finally eat the mango and experience the joy of

satisfaction. This is the ultimate experience of happiness and is called *pramodam*.

But even this *pramodam* is not a lasting experience so long as the object desired is a worldly object. Man gets real and everlasting happiness only if he desires for God and treads the Godward-path. When the mind is steadfastly centred on the Lord, *priyam*, *modam* and *pramodam* acquire a divine character and confer the Bliss of Immortality on man.

In philosophical parlance, desiring, acquiring the object desired and enjoying the object acquired (*priyam*, *modam*, and *pramodam*) are also regarded as relating to the three stages of *sravana* (listening), *manana* (ruminating in the mind over what has been heard), and *nididhyasana* (imprinting in the heart what has been ruminated upon). Merely listening to sacred words will not help. It should be followed by recapitulation and deep contemplation.

*Sravana* may be compared to the act of cooking in the kitchen, *manana*, to that of bringing the food to the dining room, and *nididhyasana*, to that of eating the food and absorbing it in the human body. It is only when you eat the food that you get nourishment. So also, only *nididhyasana* can help you attain *jnana*.

It is only when you follow this threefold path of *sravana*, *manana*, and *nididhyasana* do you understand the nature of the three *gunas* (*sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas*),

visualise the forms of the Holy Trinity (Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara), and recognise the transience of the three worlds, that you can get the eternal Bliss of the Atma.

Remember that you should merge in God even as the bubble of water merges in the water whence it comes from, and chant the *Pranava* within you repeatedly!