AMRITABINDU

UPANISHAD

A Drop of Immortality

"THE SANDEEPANY EXPERIENCE"

Reflections by

SWAMI GURUBHAKTANANDA
## Sandeepany’s Vedanta Course

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### A Note About Sandeepany

Sandeepany Sadhanalaya is an institution run by the Chinmaya Mission in Powai, Mumbai, teaching a 2-year Vedanta Course. It has a very balanced daily programme of basic Samskrit, Vedic chanting, Vedanta study, Bhagavatam, Ramcharitmanas, Bhajans, meditation, sports and fitness exercises, team-building outings, games and drama, celebration of all Hindu festivals, weekly Gayatri Havan and Guru Paduka Pooja, and Karma Yoga activities.

This series is an effort to promote the learning of Vedanta; it does not replace the Course, but hopes to inspire young people to spend two years of their life for an experience that is sure to make a far-reaching spiritual impact on their personal lives. Sandeepany is an all-round spiritual course that gives proper direction to the youth and to those approaching retirement. Hinduism is in dire need of a band of systematically trained teachers or Acharyas who can serve this Eternal Religion.

– The Author, 16\textsuperscript{th} July, 2019, Sacred Guru Purnima Day
Om Namah Shivaaya!

|| अमृतबिन्दु ||

AMRITABINDU UPANISHAD

“A Drop of Immortality”

Reflections

by Swami Gurubhaktananda

on the Series of 6 Lectures by Swami Ishwaranandaji

Visiting Acharyaji from U.S.A., to 15th Batch Vedanta Course at Sandeepany Sadhanalaya, Powai, Mumbai.

December 24th – December 26th, 2012

Adi Shankaracharya  Swami Sivananda  Swami Tapovanji  Swami Chinmayananda

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Personal Dedication

1. To my Late Parents, Smt Sharadaben & Sri Ratilalbhai Kapitan
   who inspired me to study in life, to stick to the path of Dharma and pursue the highest ideals; and swamped me with their abundant Love;

2. To Pujya Sri Swami Vimalanandaji Maharaj (1932-2019)
   the Late President of the Divine Life Society of Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, India, who constantly encouraged and supported this effort;

3. To Pujya Sri Swami Tejomayanandaji (Guruji)
   for his boundless vision and inspiration to create a vibrant organisation;

4. To Sri Swami Advayanandaji and Sri Swami Sharadanandaji
   my Acharyaji and Upa-Acharyaji at Sandeepany, who imparted their bountiful knowledge and wisdom with rare selfless Divine Love, just as the Rishis of yore would wish to see them do.

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AMRITABINDU
UPANISHAD

“A Drop of Immortality”
## AMRITABINDU UPANISHAD
### “A Drop of Immortality”

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AMRITABINDU UPANISHAD

4 Chapters (22 Verses)

A DROP OF IMMORTALITY

INVOCATION

ॐ bhadraṁ karṇēbhīḥ śrūṇuyāma dhēvā; bhadrāṃ paśyēmāksabhīryajatrāḥ |
sthirairāṅgaistuṣṭvāgrāṃsastanēbhīḥ vyaśēma dēvahītāṁ yadāyuh |
svastī na indrō vṛddhaśravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavēdāḥ |
svastī nastārkṣyō ariṣṭanēmiḥ svasti nō bhṛhaspatirdadhātu|

|| ॐ शंतिः शंतिः शंतिः ||

1 om bhadram karnebhih shrunuyaama devaah; Om. What is always auspicious, with our ears may we hear, O ye Gods.
2 bhadram pashyema akshawbhih yajatraah; What is always auspicious, may we see with our eyes, O Worshipful Ones.
3 sthiraih angaih tushtu vaagam sah; With our limbs hale and hearty, may we live offering our praises unto Thee.
4 tanoobhih vyasheha devahitam yad aayuh. With our body, may we have our full lifespan (to live) for the benefit of the Gods.
5 svasti nah indrah vriddha-shravaah; May Indra, the ancient and famous, bless us!
6 svasti nah pooshah vishwa-vedaah; May the Sun (Pooshan), the all-knowing, bless us!
7 svasti nah taarkshyah arishtanemih; May the Lord of Wind save us from all harm!
8 svasti nah brihaspatiḥ dadhaatu. May Brihaspati protect our spiritual wealth!
9 om shantih! shantih! shantih! Om Peace, Peace, Peace!

*****
INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE BOOK

DEEP WITHIN US ARE beautiful qualities, but they are shrouded by foreign negativities. The jewel within has a fake wrapper called Ego, and due to that a host of other impurities have gathered around it.

The Science of Brahma Vidya in the Upanishads is needed to make us aware of the real situation pertaining to our predicament in this world. When the whole knowledge is absorbed and reflected upon, and also when our minds have become free from thoughts, then we gradually converge towards the state of Self-Realisation or total abidance in our Self. This is the theme of this Upanishad.

Amritabindu Upanishad is one of the 5 Bindu Upanishads found in the Atharvana Veda. The others are: Nadabindu, Brahmabindu, Tejobindu and Dhyanabindu Upanishads. All five are considered as “Minor” Upanishads, like the Kaivalya Upanishad. Minor Upanishads elaborate on the themes of the Major Upanishads.

Verse 1: The Two Types of Mind

मनो हि द्विविधं प्रोक्तं शुद्धं चाशुद्धमेव च।
अशुद्धं कामसंकल्पं शुद्धं कामविवर्जितं ॥ १॥

1. manah hi dvividham proktam, Mind indeed is said to be of two types only
2. shuddham cha ashuddham eva cha; – the pure and the impure.
3. ashuddham kaamasankalpam, The impure type has thoughts of desires;
4. shuddham kaama-vivarjitaam, the pure type is desireless.

1. A mind free from this inherent “mind nature” must be a misnomer. The only mind that meets this requirement is one which is ‘devoid of desires’, and to be devoid of desires means to be where there is no mind. This brings us to an understanding that the ‘two’ types of mind are actually one only – we are either in our mind, or we are in ‘no mind’.

2. Acharyaji said, “It means we either live instinctively or we live intelligently. That makes all the difference between the two types of mind. To clean the dirt of the mind there is no detergent. Wrong thinking is the cause. To correct the thinking requires us to apply our intelligence to every thought process in our mind. By carefully studying our mind’s ways we can come to understand it and free ourselves from its clutches.”

No one debates on whether we get wet if we touch water, or whether we get burnt if we play with fire. It is like that with the mind, too. Its nature is to be restless, to rise up to
the crests and to sink into the troughs of life. Anything it touches it “wets” with its restless nature, either taking us to peaks of joy or to valleys of sorrow.

3 Desire starts the long chain that takes us through all the following in stages: Anger, Greed, Jealousy, Cravings, Obsessions and Addictions. This is why it is considered to be an impure burden that we carry in life.

Desires arise because of ignorance. Kama or desire is then fanned by Sankalpa or imagination, i.e. entertaining fanciful thoughts of how pleasant it would be to have those desires. Then we set about doing all the various activities to fulfil those desires.

4 Only when we are free from the mind can we be desireless. This is the truth being indirectly pointed out in this verse.

A pure mind, free of desire, is the very opposite. It starts the chain of Devotion, Service, Charity, Yearning for God, Meditation, and complete Surrender to the Divine.

Guruji says, “In short, a desire-ridden mind is sorrowful and impure; and the desireless mind is happy and pure.”

From Acharyaji: “The Hindi Kaam (work or activity) is because of the Samskrit Kaama (desire), and therefore the English Calm (peacefulness) is not there!”

---

**Verse 2: The Cause Bondage or Liberation**

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारण बन्धमोक्षयोऽः ।
बन्ध्याय विशयासंक मुक्तवे निर्विषयं स्मृतम् । ॥ २॥

| 1 | manah eva manushyaanaam, | For human beings, mind alone is |
| 2 | kaaranam bandha-mokshayoh; | the cause of bondage and freedom. |
| 3 | bandhaaya vishayaa-saktam, | Mind attached to objects is the cause of bondage, |
| 4 | muktam nirvishayam smritam. | and detached from them is considered liberated. |

1 Human beings are singled out here for special consideration. There is a good reason for this. Animals live by instinct. For them there is no such thing as good or bad. The capacity to think in such terms is not present. It is only in a human birth that the idea of good and bad enters the mind. In humans alone is the play of light and darkness seen very distinctly. Only in the human birth can one earn merit through righteous deeds and demerit through unrighteous deeds.

2 Since these two extremes are the result of mental conditioning and development, it is said that the mind is responsible for the states of bondage and of liberation arising from the two types of deeds. Merit frees one from bondage; demerit adds to one’s bondage. Bondage and liberation are two end results of two diametrically opposite states of mind.

We know something by the results it brings. What is the result or fruit of the above two types of mind? It is Bondage or Liberation.

3 The state of bondage is the end result of a mind attached to sense objects. This means a mind which is filled with desires. From verse 1, this means an impure mind.

The impure, desire-ridden mind leads us further and further into the deep pit of sorrowful worldly existence from which there appears to be no chance of escaping. Hence it is called bondage, a kind of self-imposed imprisonment.
The state of liberation is the end result of a mind devoid of desire for objects. This means a mind which is desireless. And from verse 1, this means a pure mind.

The pure, desireless mind leads us further and further towards our real inner being, the Self. This is the opposite direction of the above route into bondage. It is the only “escape route” available to lead us out of bondage and into freedom.

**Lesson on Attachment**

Attachment is a mental ‘glue’ that makes the mind stick to sense objects. It makes the mind go on repeating to itself thoughts about the objects it desires, until eventually that thought becomes so strong that it forces us to satisfy it.

In this way, from the very outset, this beautiful Upanishad immediately throws light on the two major influences on our life:

| i) The Bondage Chain:                           |
| DESIRE → IMPURITY → UNRIGHTEOUSNESS → MERIT/DEMERIT → BONDAGE. |

| ii) The Liberation Chain:                      |
| DESIRELESSNESS → PURITY → RIGHTEOUSNESS → BEYOND MERIT → LIBERATION. |

As seekers we are, of course, really interested in the Pure Mind. That is what we focus on in the next verse . . .

---

**Verse 3: The Training of a Seeker’s Mind**

यतो निर्विषयस्याय स्मनसो मुक्तिरिष्यते।
अतो निर्विषयं नित्यं मनः कार्यं मुमुक्षुः।

1. *yatoh nirvishayasya asya,* Free from desire for sense objects,
2. *manasah muktiḥ ishyate;* the mind becomes liberated,
3. *atato nirvishayam nityam,* Therefore, to be ever free from sense objects
4. *manah kaaryam mumukshunaa.* the mind of a seeker should be well-trained

---

**Training the Seeker’s Mind**

1 Amritabindu Upanishad accepts that freeing the mind of desire is very hard work. Much effort is needed in overcoming existing tendencies that enslave us to the mind and its desires. Every such effort is bound to have a good impact on our life. It will duly free us from the grip of sense objects, and prepare us for the direct path to God.

2 What is that direct path? The great modern sage *Sri Ramana Maharshi* would at this stage simply tell his disciples that *mind is unreal*, that there is no such thing! That is for the super-disciples, not for the general case which most of us fall into. There was also the recent exceptional case of *Sri Nisargadatt Maharaj* of Mumbai who also freed himself from his mind the moment his Guru told him he was not the mind. These are exceptional phenomena in spiritual history. This Upanishad takes a little more moderate approach, and is aimed at the common case of a man struggling to come out of desire.
The task before us is clearly to do everything in our power to resist the proliferation of desire in our mind, to keep it as pure as we possibly can from the contamination of desire.

Acharyaji also mentioned to us the efforts being made by some scientists to free us from desires. They base their efforts on the theory that our mental states are due to some chemical reactions in the body which affect the mind. As a result their route to a solution is directed towards discovering a “pill” that will bring about a favourable chemistry in the body by which desires will be eliminated. That is fine in theory. In practice, this theory has only led to “pills” being discovered which boost one’s desires! For hardly anyone is interested in reducing their desires. The correct pill does not sell; it is bad for business. The incorrect pill is the one that has swamped the market! It is even called simply “the Pill”.

Vedanta, however, holds that the opposite is more true – that the thoughts we entertain in our mind actually cause the chemical changes in the body, not the other way around. For example, one who is nervous before presenting his first public speech may start to sweat under the armpits or he will have moist palms. An unexpected emotion may cause him to ‘freeze’ all action. Anger increases body heat, fear makes the face pale, and so on. The mind’s condition has a direct effect on the body.

Vedanta’s “magic pill” to cure this is DESIRELESSNESS. Not only does it promise to improve our health, but it also promises to liberate us from our spiritual bondage. Acharyaji quipped, “We get two for the price of one”!

Verse 4: The Reward of Training the Mind

| 1 | nirasta vishayaa-sangam, | Having renounced attachment to sense objects, |
| 2 | sanniruddham manah hridi; | with the mind well-controlled in the heart, |
| 3 | yadaa aayaati aatmanah bhaavam, | when he obtains the nature of the Self, |
| 4 | tadaa tat paramam padam. | then he attains that Supreme Abode. |

1-2 What was taught in the second half of the previous verse is here consolidated by repetition. Non-attachment has freed the mind and trained it to remain introverted, not extroverted. That is where we were left in the last verse.

The mind that is thus freed from the hold of external objects can now be used to focus more steadily on the Lord dwelling in the heart. This implies that it has become available for serious meditation, which needs an undistracted mind. The student now begins the introverted part of Sadhana, that which we have previously called Antarmukha Sadhana as opposed to Bahirmukha Sadhana (inward-facing, not outward-facing).

The logical conclusion or fruit of a trained mind is now given. What is the benefit of making the sacrifice of renouncing sense pleasures? The fruit comes in two stages:

3 i) One acquires the nature of the Self. By this is meant the tranquility, balance, peace, steadfastness and strength of one who is not battered by external circumstances, but
well-anchored in his true inner being. The person is no longer swayed by the ups and downs of the winds of the world.

4 ii) When the above nature takes over in our personality, the second benefit arrives. He attains prolonged abidance in the Self dwelling in the core of the heart. He begins to enjoy living within himself, in the company of his true nature. He no longer lives on the surface of life, but is firmly established in the indwelling Presence of the Lord.

The next verse continues from this point, with more details of this state . . .

**Verse 5:** *When Sadhana Fructifies into Siddhi*

तावदेव निरोध्यायेयः यावधुङ्दि गतं क्षयम् ।
एतत् ज्ञानम् च ध्यानम् च शोषो न्यावश्च विस्तरः ॥ ५॥

1. *tavat eva nirodhavyam,*  
   The mind need be restrained only for as long

2. *yaavat hriti gatam kshayam;*  
   as it takes to get dissolved in the heart.

3. *ettat jnanaam cha dhyanaam cha,*  
   This is knowledge; and this is meditation;

4. *sheshah nyaayah cha vistarah.*  
   anything else is mere logic and a play of words.

Briefly recapping the thrust of the previous verse, we can say that the mind has been given the Sadhana of turning inward and keeping its attention on the Self as best as it can.

1 In this practice, it will not be successful immediately. The practice takes time to get perfected. While it is still not perfected, the stage is defined as a Sadhana. In the stage of Sadhana it is necessary to maintain the self-discipline of restraining one’s mind from running outwards.

2 Gradually the duration of concentration on the Self increases as thoughts get less and less troublesome. Eventually there comes a time when the mind, as it were, gets “dissolved” in the heart centre. This is the point we have been striving to attain. It is the point when all thoughts vanish and one is able to abide undisturbed in the Self within. At this point the Sadhana (the effort) has fructified into Siddhi (perfection).

At this point, restraint, which implies an application of great effort, is no longer needed. The abidance in the Self is undisturbed. Hence the “effort” to restrain the mind is not needed. The whole process becomes effortless. This is the indication that the goal is approaching near. The mind has found a better way to “enjoy” itself – within its own heart, in the Presence of the Divine!

3 This, of course, is the theory, which sounds so simple. In practice it is like climbing up to the peak of Mount Everest! When one actually practices this advice he begins to realize how much is demanded of him. He has to sweat and toil for every inch gained on the path. The sweat and toil is to overcome the resistance of the mind to the change.

4 The Rishi, who has already been through the journey, is now able to advise the student to beware of too much verbalizing of this theory. One can easily get stuck on the path by resorting to too much of discussion on the theory. It is rightly said, “An ounce of practice is worth tons of theory.”

*****

7
WHAT TAKES PLACE IN meditational practice is being covered in this chapter. The subtlety of the meditation process is described. We get some idea of the “resistance” offered by the mind against the whole process of transformation. The mind resists because it senses that its end is in sight. How can it allow itself to be destroyed?

**Verse 6: The Subtle Process of Meditation**

\[
\text{नैव चिन्त्यम न चाचिन्त्यम न चिन्त्यमेव च।} \\
\text{पक्षापत्विनिमुक्तं ब्रह्म समपद्यते तदा} \\
\text{॥ ६॥}
\]

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>na eva chintyam, na cha achintyam,</em></td>
<td><em>Neither to be thought of (with favour), nor to be avoided (with disfavour)</em>;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>na chintyam, chintyam eva tat;</em></td>
<td><em>nor to be thought of (as object), but to be just contemplated on as the Reality.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>pakshapaata-vinirmuktam,</em></td>
<td><em>(Such contemplation) devoid of any Partiality,</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>brahma sampadyate tadaa.</em></td>
<td><em>leads one in due course to attainment of Brahman.</em></td>
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**Freedom From Thought:**

1-2 This first half of the verse contains the word *Chintyam, “thinking”* four times. Interestingly, each time it is used with a different connotation!

i) **Chintyam 1:** “thinking of favourable things”.

ii) **Chintyam 2:** “thinking of unfavourable things”.

iii) **Chintyam 3:** “objectified thinking”.

iv) **Chintyam 4:** “unobjectified thinking”, i.e. pure contemplation on Self.

1 The mind, when examined carefully, is seen to be a bundle of thoughts at any given moment. We are being advised not to dwell on the habitual thinking patterns which the mind is prone to. In habitual thinking, the mind cannot help being influenced by likes and dislikes, things that are favourable or unfavourable to it. It either thinks of what it likes, or thinks of what it wants to avoid. Both these thought patterns have to be avoided.

2 Another point of caution is to draw our attention away from thinking altogether. Thinking is always associated with an object; this is “objectified thinking”. Contemplation is not a thought process at all; it is freedom from all thought! So, meditation is not about thinking but about *abandoning thinking*, and simply being the witness of thoughts.

We saw this very clearly in *Upadesh Sara* (Text 7). The same explanation that we have come across in that text is repeated here with a slight addition. We are here seeing not just one moment or ‘photograph’ of the mind, but a ‘video’ of the mind that is functioning continuously on a scale of Time.
An Illustrative Story by Acharyaji

Acharyaji gave us this story to illustrate how difficult it is to give up objects in the mind:

There was a King who was faced with the problem of premature falling of his hair. He was rapidly balding. He was desperately in search of a remedy. So he announced a huge reward to anyone who could guarantee a cure for his falling hair. To prevent fakes coming in with suggestions, he added that if the remedy did not work within a month, the person would be killed.

One of the king’s subjects, who was known for his wisdom, came up boldly to the king’s court and announced himself. The king repeated the conditions; the subject accepted them, and made his own condition that the king should follow the instructions very strictly. The king was given an oil which he had to apply daily at a fixed time. At the same time he was told that he should not think of a red-faced monkey when he applies the oil. If he does, he would have to postpone the oil treatment for the next day.

The king happily agreed. But when he was ready to apply the oil the thought of a red-faced monkey came up without fail. This happened day after day. The oil was never applied! The time limit came and the subject had to be given his due reward!

Mind Devoid of Partiality

Acharyaji gave us a “mathematical” analogy to help us understand the deeper workings of the whole thought process:

When we add time to the events of the mind, we see them as a flow of thoughts, i.e. thought A + thought B + thought C, and so on.

If there were no further input of information, thought A will continue as thought B and then as thought C. But there is an input into the mind – memory is stirred up by thought A. The memory could be any feeling or fact stored in the mind-stuff about thought A. When that enters the mind, thought A becomes thought B. Then another item from the memory enters the mind-scene and changes thought B into thought C. In this way, a complex chain of thoughts is set up.

The above verse describes this process as the influence of “likes and dislikes”, or simply as Partiality. Partiality is stored in our memory and when it enters the equation, it begins to set up unpredictable changes. The result is a dynamic thought environment within which our thoughts keep fluctuating. Partiality is deeply ego-based. It has an unpredictable nature. No one can say for certain which way the thoughts in the mind are going to swing. The whole picture becomes very complex. Therefore, the Rishi says to the seeker that he has to free himself from all partiality.

The dynamic thought environment has to be replaced by a more stable thought environment. Stability of mind is the first stage from which proper contemplation on the Self can be done, which leads eventually to the attainment of Brahman.

Verse 7: Taking the Help of “OM” Symbol

स्वरेण संधयेद्योगमस्वरं भावेत्परम् ।
अस्वरेणानुभावेन नाभावो भाव इश्यते ॥ ७॥
svareṇa sandhayet yogam, By the sound of Om, union can be established;
asvaram bhaavayet param; then follows meditation upon that beyond sound.
asvarena anubhaavena, By thus meditating on that which is beyond sound,
bhaavah vaa abhaavah ishyate. what is Real and what is Unreal becomes known.

If we succeed with removing the thought of objects from the mind, i.e. the objective aspect of thought, we are still left with the problem of removing the subjective aspect of thought. In the former case, the “enemy” object stood outside oneself, so it was not too difficult to remove. In the latter case, the “enemy” lies within, as the Ego.

Removing the Ego is the most difficult operation anyone could perform on himself. To remove the Ego sounds easy in theory, but is extremely difficult in practice. Perhaps this explains why there are so few saints in this world.

Help of “Om’’ Upasana

1 As our quest for God becomes more intense, we come to the stage where we are face to face with our Ego, where we have to deal with the problem of transforming the ‘Aham Vritti’ or the ‘I-sense’. The direct route is to replace ‘Aham Vritti’ with the “Brahmakara Vritti”, i.e. the thought of Brahman. However, there is an intermediate step necessary before we can attempt that. It is called Omkara Upasana.

Omkara Upasana is the repetition of Om, starting by doing it aloud and focusing on the sound. This is the most effective technique prescribed in the Upanishads to still the mind. It removes not only the objective thought but also the subjective thought of “I” – at least, in theory.

Om is the sound symbol for Brahman. When it is repeated with this understanding, it works most effectively. Om repetition takes us from sound to the support of sound, which is SILENCE. Silence is not the opposite of sound but its very support. All sounds arise in silence. When sounds are eliminated, we are left with Silence. This relationship signifies our own relationship with the Self or Brahman; Brahman is our sole Support.

The relation between sound and silence begins to be understood. This is in respect only to the sense of sound. Sounds arise in space. If sounds are eliminated, we are left with Space alone. The other senses can be viewed in the same way. For example, the sense of sight can be examined. All sight requires light. When light is taken away we are left with darkness. When we look at taste we see a similar situation. All tastes require the medium of water, but water itself is tasteless; it only carries the taste to the tongue. In this way, we understand how to move away from the objects of the senses, and go to their very support.

Now, let us apply the above rule to the removal of the internal ‘object’ of Ego:

When we are seated for meditation, the chanting of Om is the easiest way to achieve this. Omkara Upasana acts as a bridge between the world of the Ego and that of the ultimate Reality. Progress in Om Upasana is measured by the steadiness gained by the mind when all objects, external and internal, are removed.

Turning Within to the Supreme

2 When steadiness is achieved, we are ready to go to the next step. We move on to the “Supreme that is beyond sound”. A single thought alone is left in the mind.

3 This is the “Brahmakara Vritti”, which is the thought “I am Brahman”. This is what is meant by ‘beyond sound’ when it is applied to meditation.
The purpose of the Brahmakara Vritti is to take Self-enquiry to its limit. The enquiry is to constantly try to discriminate between what is Real and what is Unreal. This should be the meditator’s main concern. The Brahmakara Vritti is a practical tool which is most useful for this enquiry.

The aspirant who successfully reaches this stage of enquiry is considered by ordinary standards to be very highly advanced on the spiritual path. We are speaking of an advanced seeker. The Upanishad at this point provides some key pointers which mean a lot to such a seeker, but which may be very difficult to grasp for one who is not practising this Sadhana. These details are given in the next two verses.

Verse 8: **Characteristics to Identify Brahman**

तदेव निष्कल्पे ब्रह्म निर्विकल्पं निरञ्जनम्।
तद्वहारामि क्रिता ब्रह्म सम्मान्ये ध्रुवम् ्॥ ८॥

1. **tad eva nishkalam brahma,** That alone is Brahman which is without parts,
2. **nirvikalpam niranjanaam;** free of differences, and taintless.
3. **tat brahma aham iti jnaataa,** On knowing That as ‘I am Brahman’.
4. **brahma sampadyate dhruvam.** one attains Brahman, the Eternal.

When we proceed with the enquiry process using the Brahmakara Vritti, the Real is identified by three characteristics. These are interlinked, one following the other. The seeker’s task is to shift his identity from the Unreal to the Real, using these three as his guidelines to differentiate the thoughts that arise in his mind. The mind always needs to have an object. It is extremely difficult to hold thoughts in the mind which are completely free of the ‘object’ element as described above.

**The Three Tendencies in Thoughts**

1. **i) Nishkalam:** “without parts”. The mind has the natural tendency to break up the whole and view it in its component parts. By nature the intellect is analytical, not synthetical. It proceeds forward by analysis, not synthesis. By classifying objects the mind obtains knowledge of them. Brahman, however, is without parts.

2a. **ii) Nirvikalpam:** “free of differences”. Our mind also has the built-in tendency to see differences between various things. It wants to know how one thing is different from another. It then proceeds to name things so that their differences may be defined. It thus gives reality to these differences. However, Brahman is free from differences, for differences arise only in the Unreal realm of creation.

One of the big problems encountered by an aspirant during meditation is the tendency to ‘objectify’ the Self. When the mind is asked to focus on the Self, the first tendency is to imagine the Self to be an object of perception. This verse guides the aspirant to avoid this tendency. “The Self is free from all differences and is without parts.”

The Upanishads contain numerous Mantras which are specially designed to make us aware of this tendency of our mind. In these Mantras or verses, the Self is described in terms that appear contradictory to our normal sense of perception. For example, the Self is described as “bigger than the biggest” and “smaller than the smallest”.

11
2b iii) **Niranjanam**: “taintless”. Another tendency is to think of the Self as being ‘tainted’ by having certain qualities which really belong to the Ego but are understood as appearing to belong to the Self. All these misconceptions may be overcome by meditation on appropriate Mantras and similes given in the *Upanishads*.

For instance, the Self is compared to Akasha or space, which does not partake of any qualities which the other elements may impart to it. Space remains taintless and unaffected by the presence or absence of the other four elements, namely, air, fire, water and earth.

3-4 These two Padas re-affirm the goal that the seeker is striving towards in his meditational practice. All this striving is done by the use of the single thought, “I am Brahman” the Brahmakara Vritti. This is, indeed, like a “magic wand” in the mind of a spiritual aspirant.

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**Verse 9: More Characteristics of Brahman**

\[ \text{nirvikalpam anantam cha,} \quad \text{Devoid of division, and endless,} \\
\text{hetu-drishtaanta varjitam;} \quad \text{beyond logic and comparison,} \\
\text{aprameyam anaadim cha,} \quad \text{immeasurable, and without beginning,} \\
\text{yat jnaatvaa muchyate budhah.} \quad \text{knowing that Brahman a wise one is liberated.} \]

We are given six characteristics of Brahman in this verse, the first of which (Nirvikalpam) is a repeat from the previous verse, perhaps just to maintain a link to it. The five new characteristics are all attempts which our mind makes to “measure” the Self:

The qualities listed in this and in the previous verse are such that they cannot be measured using the yardsticks of material knowledge. We do not have a ruler long enough to measure the depths of the ocean of Brahman! That is the main point that comes through in this section.

**Five More Attempts to Measure the Self:**

1 i) **Anantam**: “Endless”, and 3b ii) **Anaadim**: “Beginningless”. These two characteristics place Brahman beyond *Time*. If something is beginningless and endless, there cannot be a time scale put against it to measure it.

2 iii) & iv) **Heti-Drishtaanta Varjitam**: “Beyond Logic and Comparison”. This characteristic places Brahman beyond *Causation*. If something has no Cause and is not an effect, then how can it be understood through logic? The cause of a thing is obtained by the use of Logic.

Similarly, if something is Non-Dual, i.e. One without a second, then what is it going to be compared with? We may try to use a simile, but it will always be only a simile, not the real thing. There can never be a perfect simile for Brahman.

3a v) **Aprameyam**: “Immeasurable”. This characteristic places Brahman beyond *Space*. A thing can only be measured if we are standing outside it. But if that thing is all-pervading, how is it possible to stand ‘outside’ it in order to measure it? The measuring instrument is itself part of Brahman!
4 In this way we have learnt eight characteristics so far to help us to identify Brahman by telling us what it is NOT. We have learnt that Brahman is beyond Time, Space and Causation. The Self is immeasurable according to material standards. Continuing our enquiry along these lines will bring us to the Truth, and by knowing the Truth we are liberated.

The conclusion that comes to the enquiring seeker is that Brahman is Non-Dual. This subtle Brahman can only be grasped by the wise person, i.e. the sage with an extremely subtle and purified intellect. It cannot be understood by a dull, clouded intellect. Our limited mind is certainly not the measuring tool for It.

This brings us to the following description about the Absolute Truth in the next seven verses, 10-16.
3. THE NON-DUAL BRAHMAN

(Verses 10-16, 7 no.)

NON-DUALITY IS THE single key description of Brahman which makes Vedanta unique as a philosophy. When this is practically realized by the Grace of God and one’s Guru, the seeker reaches the pinnacle of perfection.

Verse 10:  The Absolute Standpoint

न निरोधं न चोत्पत्तिः बद्धों न च साधकः।
न मुमुक्षुं वै मुक्तं इत्येषा परमार्थता ॥ १०॥

1. na nirodah na cha utpattih, Where there is no dissolution nor creation,
2. na baddhah na cha saadhakah; Where none is bound, none a practitioner,
3. na mumukshuh na vai muktah, none a seeker, none indeed a liberated one –
4. iti eshaa paramaarthataa. such is this state of Supreme Truth.

As we see from this verse, it becomes necessary for a student of Vedanta to understand the Truth intellectually from two distinct standpoints. These are:

i) The Absolute Standpoint: called the Paramarthic Reality or the standpoint from the Self or from the person who has realized the Self; and

ii) The Relative Standpoint: called the Vyavaharic reality or the standpoint from the ordinary man, or the worldly standpoint, or the standpoint of secular Science.

The two standpoints are diametrically opposite to each other. This is the source of most confusions or misunderstanding about spirituality. It is always important to know from which standpoint a certain statement is being made. The view from the top of a mountain is very different from the view from the bottom. People of different levels of growth will obviously see things differently.

One example of the conflicting views represented by these standpoints is the one concerning bondage and liberation. From the Relative view we see that these are real problems to man. But from the Absolute view, they do not even exist, because they concern only the body and mind, and these are unreal from the Absolute view.

Understanding this difference in viewpoint is the only way we can make sense of verses like this.

1 The entire creation, and consequently dissolution, is considered to be a mere superimposition on the Truth, and is therefore “Unreal”.

2 From the higher standpoint, there is no such thing as bondage – the Absolute cannot be bound. How can there be the practice of Yoga in a realm where one is already united to the Ultimate?
3 Where there is no bondage, there can be none who will be seekers, and none who need to be liberated.

4 For most of us who are in the Relative plane of existence, these are, at best, pointers to the Truth. From our side of Unreality, we need to strive to enter that state of Supreme Truth. We can ill-afford to ignore bondage as a fact of our existence, requiring practice of Yoga, seeking the Truth, and finding the way to liberation.

Verse 11: Analyzing the Three States

† ekā eva aatmaa mantavyah, The Self should be known as One alone
† jaagrat-swapna-sushuptishu; in waking, dream and deep sleep.
† sthanā-traya-vyateetasya, For one who is beyond the three states
† punarjanma na vidyate. there is no rebirth.

Another portal to Truth is to study the three states through which we pass every day of our lives, namely, the waking, the dream and the deep sleep. Details of these states are not given, since the purpose of this text is to present an overview of the spiritual path and establish the basis of the spiritual quest. We are expected to go to other Upanishads to obtain the knowledge mentioned here.

1 The study of the three states is vital for an aspirant on the path. By studying them we know that the Self alone can be the real “me”, and is present in all the three states.

The Self in the Three States

The method used in their study is called Anvaya-Vyatireka, meaning “presence and absence method”; the presence of one thing is proven by the presence or absence of another thing. The study of the three states is a very good case to apply this method.

THE THREE STATES & THE “ENLIGHTENED” STATE

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<tr>
<th>FACULTY</th>
<th>WAKING</th>
<th>DREAM</th>
<th>DEEP SLEEP</th>
<th>ENLIGHTENED</th>
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<td>THE WITNESS-Self</td>
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Firstly, let us look at what is present and what is absent or not available within these three states. From that we can get clues as to the Self’s Presence in all three states. Then we can apply the logic of Anvaya-Vyatireka.

From deep sleep we can see that nothing of the personality is present. We do not know anything about it, so Ignorance has to be present. Yet we know we existed during sleep, so the Witness-Self must also be present.

Then we know that it is the same person who is experiencing all the three states. Therefore, we can deduce that the Self must be present in all three states as their Witness, for when we are in one state, the other two are not present.

Since at no time are we aware directly of the presence of this Self, the presence of Ignorance is deduced in all three states.

In dream, there are no senses available, but we see the dream and hence deduce that the mind must be present. The material for dream can come only from memory, so memory must be present. The intellect is helpless in dream, which means it is not present. It is the same with the ego-sense.

In the waking state, all these faculties are present. Since Ego is present only in the waking state, this is the only state in which we know ourselves as individuals. It is also the only state when we can accumulate merit or demerit. Hence it is the only state in which we can get into bondage or get liberated.

3-4 From the above analysis, we see that Enlightenment must be another state, known commonly as the “Fourth” state, wherein there is no ignorance and we are consciously aware of the Witness-Self.

We cannot be that which comes and goes – this is the clue. This fact rules out the Self as being any of the faculties from 2 to 8. All of them come and go. Only the Witness-Self remains in all the states. Hence, that is our true Self.

When we know ourselves to be the Self and not body-mind-intellect etc, then we are liberated from the cycle of births and deaths forever.

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Verse 12: The “Pratibimba Vada” Analogy

एक एव हि भूतात्मा भूते भूते व्यवस्थितः।
एकधा बहुधा चैव दृष्यते जलचन्द्रवत्।

1. The confusion that there are many Selves, one in each individual, is due mainly to the presence of the ego-consciousness in man. This confusion is cleared by using the “Pratibimba Vada” analogy.

2. This is a common model used in the scriptures to explain the difference between Jeeva (the individual self) and the Supreme, Universal Self, which is common in all living beings. The model is based on the reflection of light through a medium.
The Pratibimba Model:

3-4 The light beam coming directly from the source (moon, in this case) stands for the Self. The medium of reflection stands for each individual’s Upadhis (body, mind and intellect). The reflected light stands for the Jeeva or individual soul.

There is one moon, reflecting through many waters (Upadhis or living beings). The reflected light varies in quality depending on the clarity and stillness of the Upadhi it is reflected from. A very Rajasic or Tamasic Upadhi reflects a poor image of the moon. A Sattwic Upadhi reflects it to near perfection. In a saint, who has no identification with his Upadhis at all, the reflected light is as though coming off a mirror surface. This can be interpreted to mean that the saint is no different from Brahman Himself, as there is no contamination of the reflection passing through him.

This is only a model, and as such, not every characteristic of the Self is symbolized by the Light rays. However, it is very useful to help our understanding.

Verse 13 & 14: The “Avacchheda Vada” Analogy

1 ghata samvritam aakaasham,
SPACE IS COVERED BY A POT.
2 neeyamaane ghate yathaa;
JUST AS WHEN THERE IS MOVEMENT OF THE POT,
3 ghatah neeyeta na aakaashah,
THE POT ALONE MOVES AND NOT THE SPACE,
4 tathaa jeevo nabhopamah.
IN THE SAME WAY, JEEVA IS COMPARED WITH POT-SPACE.

5 ghatavat vividhaakaaram,
VARIOUS FORMS LIKE THE POT
6 bhidyamaanam punah punah;
ARE BROKEN AGAIN AND AGAIN.
7 tat bhagnam na cha jaanaati,
WHEN POTS BREAK, SPACE IS NOT AWARE (IT IS INERT);
8 sa jaanaati cha nityashah.
BUT THE SELF ALWAYS KNOWS (IT IS SENTIENT).

1 In these two verses, another analogy is used that is common in the scriptures. It is called the “Avacchheda Model”. Instead of reflected light, this model uses ‘space’ as a symbol for the Self. Space has the advantage of not being affected by the pot; light does not have this point of comparison with Brahman.

The model may be explained as follows:

2-3 One very significant aspect about the analogy as presented in this text is that there is a slight twist in it. In other Upanishads the pot space is considered to be the Jeeva. When the pot is broken, the pot space is no different from the rest of space.

In this Upanishad, however, the element of motion is introduced into the analogy. It is not the space inside the pot but the space occupied by the solid pot which is compared to the Jeeva. When the pot is moved, the space remains where it was. (In the other case, the space would be considered to move with the pot.) The purpose served by this twist in the
analogy is the further lesson that the Self remains unmoved no matter what happens to the pot. This is an important enhancement to the analogy.

4 The comparison is that the Self does not move with the Upadhis. The Self is homogeneous and all-pervading; it is one Big Mass of Consciousness. Regardless of what happens to the body and mind, the Self is unaffected. This fact comes out clearer in this version of the analogy.

A Second Twist: Introduction of Knowing

In the second verse, there is another twist to the original analogy.

5-6 In the traditional simile when the pot is broken, the meaning is that the pot space merges with the rest of space. In this text, dynamism is added by making the breaking a repetitive event that compares with the rebirth of the human being.

7 Now the element of sentiency is introduced into the analogy. When the pot is broken, the space does not even know it; it is unconcerned as it is inert.

8 However, in the application, the opposite is the case with the Self. It always knows everything that happens to the Jeeva. Nothing escapes its knowing. In this sense, we see that the simile does not hold in the matter of knowing; it becomes a point of contrast. The Self is sentient; space is inert. The former is all-knowing; the latter is incapable of knowing. The imperfection of the simile is being highlighted.

This new element of sentiency enhances the meaning of the Self greatly. It tells us that although the Self is totally unaffected by the pot and what happens to it, including its existence or non-existence, yet it is fully aware of everything that happens to it. As far as the Self is concerned the pot always is and will always remain a non-entity. but it is always known and recognized to be such.

In this way two effective original ideas are introduced into the Avacchheda Model in this Upanishad – by introducing motion and sentiency into the model.

An interesting fact that emerges out of this model is that the physical body exists only as a thought in our mind – “I am this body” – which endlessly repeats itself until the delusion is destroyed by knowledge of the Self.

Verse 15: The Self’s “Hide and Seek” Mystery

1-2 The question that rings in the mind of many people is “Is there a Self or not?”. This will ever remain a puzzle when viewed from the relative standpoint of ignorance. There is no answer to this question until ignorance is removed. We may seek shelter under cover of many ‘words’, meaning many philosophical concepts, but until ignorance is removed we will remain under thick delusion.
**Shabda Maayaa**: “the delusion of words”. Is it not a ‘wild-goose chase’ trying to get more and more knowledge about Ignorance! How is it going to help us?

3-4 As darkness is eradicated by introducing light, so also the darkness of ignorance is destroyed by the introduction of the Light of knowledge of the Self. The solution is to get knowledge of the Truth.

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**INSIGHTS INTO KNOWLEDGE**

Acharyaji gave us some interesting insights on knowledge. The example of heat and cold was given. Heat is a measurable quantity, but cold is not. Cold is just absence of heat. There is a temperature known as absolute zero in science. Temperature cannot go below that. That is the point where there is no heat at all. It is a sort of vacuum in which there are no ‘heat particles’. Similarly, light is measurable, but not darkness. Sound is measurable, not silence. Continuing this trend, this verse says, “Ignorance is not measurable, Knowledge is.”

We can extend the trend into morality, one can say that Evil also is not measurable, as it is only the absence of Good. This means there is no such thing as “evil”. Hatred is only the absence of the positive quantity called Love. When seen in this light, one begins to view morality in a new way. Violence is also seen in this way. Nothing can be done to destroy violence; only Harmony and understanding need be introduced and violence will vanish by itself. This leads to a totally new approach to remove strife in society.

The bottom line of this insight is: “**Immorality cannot be eliminated except by being established in Morality.**”

This topic made for a good discussion in class, ending with Acharyaji’s play with letters. “Life lived backwards makes one a devil”, that is:

L-I-V-E  
D-E-V-I-L  
The letters are written in reverse!

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**Verse 16:**  
**Beyond Sound is the Imperishable Brahman**

The sound Om symbolises the Supreme Brahman. Everything else changes or gets destroyed, including Om, the best symbol yet known for Brahman.

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1. shabda aksharam param brahma,  
2. tasmin ksheene yad aksharam;  
3. tad vidvaan aksharam dhyaat,  
4. yadi icchet shaantim aatmanah.

The sound Om symbolises the Supreme Brahman. As it fades away, the Imperishable is revealed. Wise is the man who meditates on that Sound. If he desires the supreme peace of the Self.

In this last verse of the section, the Rishi stresses the most important characteristic of Brahman – its Imperishability. Parallel with Brahman’s imperishability, the Rishi also stresses the most important characteristic of spiritual life: The supply of supreme peace is a matter of demand for it. If the yearning is strong enough, the supply will surely come.

1 The sound Om is a perfect symbol for Brahman, the Imperishable. Everything else changes or gets destroyed, including Om, the best symbol yet known for Brahman.
The sound of Om, too, has to dissolve eventually as one reaches the highest peak of Brahman. The chanting begins aloud, then it is done in a whisper, and finally it is done mentally. Thereafter, the sound symbol dissolves completely and Brahman alone remains.

An extract from Guruji’s commentary explains this point beautifully:

“The Self is unchanging. The alphabet in Samskrit is called Akshara-Mala or a garland of letters. Each letter is called an Akshara. Akshara also means Imperishable. Letters form words, words form sentences, and sentences form language. All knowledge is in the form of language, be it literature, history or science. Different fields of knowledge may have their own specific languages, like the binary language of a computer or the mathematical language of formulae. They are all made up of letters. We need to learn to read and write the letters to get initiated into the world of knowledge through language. Words, their meanings, sentences and languages change but the letters of the alphabet remain the same. They are therefore called Imperishable, like Brahman.”

Thus we are reminded again of the Om Upasana which we studied in verse 7, this time from the perspective of the letters themselves.

Sound and letters are used only as symbols for the Supreme Brahman. Brahman is the ultimate quest. The symbols have to be given up at some point along the journey. This is what is meant by Ksheene, “the dissolution” of the symbol of Om.

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Perhapan it is not a mere coincidence that concurrent with the study of this text, we are also studying the Mundaka Upanishad (Text 29). In the latter, the very same topic is taken up at the outset. The Para and Apara Vidya are discussed at greater length than in this text. In particular, Sri Shankaracharyaji’s Bhashya on the Mundaka Upanishad expands greatly on the entire topic. Thus we will only present the gist of the class discussion.

Verse 17: The Two Knowledges – Lower and Higher

1. dwe vidye veditavye tu,  
   Indeed, two knowledges should be known –

2. shabda-brama param cha yat;  
   the word-knowledge and the Supreme Brahman.

3. shabda-brahmani nishnaatah,  
   One who is an adept in the word-knowledge

4. param brahma-adhigacchhati.  
   eventually aims for the Supreme Brahman.

1 The two knowledges are the Para (higher) and the Apara (serving the higher).

2 Shabda Brahma is the Apara Vidya or lower knowledge, i.e. it is based on ‘words’. It is the whole conglomerate of secular sciences which serves the Supreme Knowledge. Everything written or spoken about Brahman falls under Apara Vidya.

   The Para Vidya is the higher knowledge which is indicated by the words or the sound of Om. It is the subtle essence of what is being described through the words.

3 As in Mundaka Upanishad, the lower knowledge is considered as a basis from which one can launch one’s search for the higher knowledge. The lower is not seen with contempt or disdain. It is appreciated for the experience it gives one in fully grasping the unreal nature of this world. ‘An adept’ here means one who has mastered the material sciences, discovered their limitations, and now thirsts for the higher, more permanent form of knowledge.

   Apara Vidya has another specific meaning. It could refer to the earlier preparatory forms of Sadhana such as the Karmas and Upasanas prescribed in the Vedas. These serve the purpose of purifying the seeker and preparing him for the higher.

4 When one is convinced of the ultimate shortcoming of the lower knowledge, he gets the required motivation to aspire for the higher knowledge of the Self directly. In the Mundaka Upanishad the same approach is taken where the higher is seen as “that knowledge by which all else is known.”

   The Apara Vidya is taken up first in the next verse.
Verse 18:  From the Lower to the Higher Knowledge

**grantham-abhyasya medhaavee,** *Having studied the scriptures, an intelligent student,*

**jnaana-vijnaana-tatparah;** *intent on acquiring knowledge and wisdom,*

**palaalam-iva dhaanyaarthi,** *like one having reached the rice discards the husk,*

**tyajet grantham asheshatah.** *should discard the scriptures altogether.*

For this verse, it makes practical sense to start by explaining the last Pada first:

4 The higher knowledge is not an academic study. It is the actual experience one obtains through the practice of meditation. That is the only way to obtain direct experience or Aparoksha Jnana of the Self. In order to do this it is said her that the lower knowledge has to be given up.

When the call comes to go deeper within, this vast body of knowledge has to be dropped from the mind. This happens daily during the practice of meditation, when all external crutches are abandoned. It does not mean throwing away the books of scriptures, but simply putting them aside and focussing on the practical aspect of the quest.

**Example 1: The Pole Vaulter**

1-2 Perhaps the best example of this step, and one of Pujya Gurudev’s favourite illustrations, is that of a pole-vaulter. The vaulter runs with the long pole. At a certain point he pierces it into the ground and, clinging to the other end, jumps up with the pole as his support. When he has reached the highest point he has to let go of the pole and hurl himself over the horizontal bar. He cannot take the pole across with him. The pole that has served its purpose to take the vaulter to the high point, is discarded thereafter.

It is the same with all the study of the scriptural as well as secular knowledge one has gained. This Apara Vidya is like the pole used by the vaulter. It is needed to take us higher and higher, up to a certain point.

**Example 2: The Husk & the Rice**

3 This is the traditional equivalent of the ‘Pole Vault’ example. The husk is needed for most of the time after harvesting is done. It protects the rice grain. Only at the final stage, the rice has to be separated from the husk so that it can be consumed. Once the rice is reached by breaking the husk, the husk is discarded as it has no further use.

**A True Incident:** This incident in Pujya Gurudev’s life illustrates this idea. Gurudev was taking a group of visitors to Gaya, the Buddha’s place of illumination. The visitors went to the tree under which the Buddha got enlightenment, while Gurudev stayed behind at the residence. When they returned Gurudev asked them, “Anything happened?”

In this practical way Gurudev taught that it is not the tree that gave Buddha enlightenment, but he happened to be under that tree when he got enlightened. So as an inspiration it is fine to be under that same tree, but the Sadhana for enlightenment has nothing to do with the tree. The tree has to be ‘given up’.
Verse 19: Preparation for the Higher Knowledge

Using another simile, the variety in Apara Vidya is contrasted with the singularity of Para Vidya. This contrast is important to note for a student so that he may avoid all needless criticism of the innumerable sources of knowledge for Apara Vidya, all of which have something good to teach. One has to choose carefully the minimum number from these numberless sources to fulfill the purpose of his study.

Example 3: Many-Coloured Cows, One Colour Milk

1-2 There could many cows – the scriptures, different organizations, different sects, different cultures and religions, etc. All of them provide essentially the same service to those that have faith in them. They provide the basic inspiration and knowledge to proceed along the spiritual path.

3-4 The basic service provided by the various sources is the knowledge. That is the same. Many people may have written commentaries to cater for various tastes among students. Not all need to be read. We can pick the one that suits us best, and leave the rest. The milk of knowledge is of prime importance, not the type of ‘cow’ it comes from.

All religions or organization are respected for the knowledge they preserve and impart to the people. This is like having a respect for all cows, but drinking milk from one. We have many Gurus, but it is necessary to go to only one.

Baby Powder! This verse reminded Acharyaji of a nice joke. A lady visitor to the U.S.A. was shopping in a large supermarket. She came to a shelf marked ‘Rice Powder’ and was quite impressed when the attendant explained it was rice that had been powdered. Then she came to a shelf marked ‘Milk Powder’. The attendant explained it was milk that was dried and crushed into powder. Then she came to the shelf marked ‘Baby Powder’ – that sent a chilling feeling all over her, and she hastened away from that shelf!

Verse 20: Churning the Milk for the Butter

Just as butter is hidden in the milk, Self-awareness resides hidden in every being. To discover it, one should constantly churn oneself with the mind as the churning rod.
Here we touch upon another aspect of knowledge, using yet another simile to assist us. There is no dearth of knowledge, nor of similes to illustrate different aspects of it.

If we are interested there are any number of books that can help us. In the modern world the internet has a multitude of subjects that can satisfy the curiosity of any seeker. One person searching on the subject of Yoga, surfed the net and discovered that there are over 10,000 different Yoga ‘companies’ selling Yoga to the world!

**Example 4: As Butter in Milk**

We have an excellent simile to describe the inter-relationship of Self-awareness and the mind. The relationship is compared with butter and milk. Butter is the rare commodity that compares with Self-awareness.

Interestingly, there are always more dairies supplying milk than there are factories supplying butter. Even fewer are the suppliers of ghee. The more precious a commodity, the scarcer it becomes. This seems to be the theme of this verse.

1-2 The Self is hidden from our mental perception. It is there in the mind, but cannot be ‘seen’ because of impurities in the mind. It is like butter in milk; it cannot be seen but we know it is there. In the case of the Self, we have to have faith in the scriptures to believe that it is there. Then only will we consider churning the mind.

3-4 Enlightenment is hard work. It is something that is already there. Yet much churning of the mind is needed in order to ‘see’ it. The churning refers to the intense Mananam or Japa of the Lord’s Name that needs to be done in order to bring out the butter of enlightenment. We have to go on working on the mind over a protracted period until the result comes. When it comes, it is rather sudden, as sudden as the appearance of butter.

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**Verse 21: The Simile of the Arani Fire**

ज्ञानेन्त्रं समाधाय चोड़रेव्हिहितपर्म ||
निष्कलं निष्कलम ज्ञानं तद्ब्रह्माह्मिति स्मृतम || २१॥

| 1 | jnaana netram samaadhaaya, | By taking the rope of knowledge (for churning), |
| 2 | cha uddharet vanhivat-param; | one should bring out like fire the Supreme. |
| 3 | nishkalam nischalam shaantam, | Without parts, immutable, and peaceful – |
| 4 | tad brahma aham iti smritam. | as That “I am Brahman” is to be thought of. |

The inspirational verses continue. All these verses highlight the importance of Self-knowledge in bringing the seeker to the verge of Realisation. Another simile is added to the growing list as the Upanishad reaches its climax. This is the ‘hottest’ simile of them all, producing the fire of enlightenment.

**Example 5: Producing Fire by Friction**

1-4 There is a contraption called the Arani which we came across in *Atma Bodha* and *Kaivalya Upanishad*. The principle it uses is friction between two pieces of wood. The lower piece of wood is shaped like a semi-circular bowl and is fixed in position. The upper piece of wood is shaped into a semi-circular ball which fits into the lower bowl. The upper piece serves as a churning rod. Great friction is produced between the two pieces of wood.
In order to turn the upper rod, a rope is wound around the cylindrical spindle of the upper wood that has the ball shape at its lower end. The rope is pulled to turn the rod and produce friction with the lower wood. After a while, a spark is produced. The spark lights a piece of cotton placed in the lower bowl. The fire is carefully tended and transferred to a fire kund where it is nurtured and fanned into a strong fire.

**Symbolism:** The lower wood of the Arani is the Ego; the upper wood of the Arani is the Om chanting or constant practice of Sadhana. The churning rod is the intellect and the churning process using the rope is the knowledge of the Self. The fire that arises is the Brahmakara Vritti which burns down the ego and gives rise to the experience of Samadhi.

**Example 6: A Modern Simile – “Two Boxers”**

A modern simile for the same idea would be a Boxing Match. Imagine that one boxer has just been given a knockout punch and is on the floor (the lower Arani), while the other is standing over him (the upper Arani). The referee is busy with the countdown, which is the Om Japa. When the countdown ends, the boxer on the floor is declared vanquished and the one standing above him is cheered as the victor!

The final outcome is: The thought “I am part of the whole” is burnt away, and the knowledge “I am the Partless Whole” is experienced.

**Verse 22: From Vyasihi to Samashti Realisation**

| 1 | sarvabhoota-adhivaasam yat, | That one which is the abode of all beings, |
| 2 | bhoosthu cha vasaty-api; | and who also lives in all beings, |
| 3 | sarva-anugraahaka-twena, | as the One gracious Presence in all – |
| 4 | tad asmi aham vaasudevah; tad asmi aham vaasudeva iti. | That Vasudeva am I, That Vasudeva am I! |

The final test of realization is the experience of seeing Brahman in all beings. From the Vyasihi or microcosmic, individual level, the aspirant begins to identify himself with the Samashti or macrocosmic, total level. This is a huge expansion in Consciousness and is proof of one’s realization of the Self. The sage cannot help but see all beings as his own Self.

This is called Sarvatma Bhav, and is also the grand goal that the Upanishads set up before mankind. It is Vedanta’s gift to mankind, the climax of its great, undying philosophy of Oneness and Non-Duality. It is what has made seekers turn to Vedanta for the ultimate fruition of their spiritual aspirations.

Acharyaji put in a few very divine sentiments as he drew to the end of this text. He said, “When one gets this divine Sarvatma Bhava of feeling his unity with all beings, there is no more hatred in his life, he rises above all differences of caste, religion, nationality, etc. More differences mean more fanaticism; fewer differences mean more love, more compassion, more tolerance and more respect.”
One brings an end to one’s ego either by reducing it to a zero, or by expanding it to include all beings in his embrace. Indeed, when looked at closely there is no difference between the two! Acharyaji closed the text with the remark:

“The purpose of Universality is to see UNITY IN DIVERSITY”.

ॐ शान्ति: शान्ति: शान्ति: ॐ
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih!

हरि: ॐ ॥
Hari Om Tat Sat

॥ इति कृष्ण यजुर्वेदे-मृतबिन्दूपनिषत् समाप्ता ॥
Iti krishna yajurvede ‘mritabindopanishat samaaptaa |
Thus ends the Amritabindu Upanishad of the Krishna Yajurveda.

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Lord Krishna & Radharani

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