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!

The 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 Enraptured 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 Brahnamayi (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), Parmatpara 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 Satrughna 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!