

# Saarth Paramamrut (Essence of Sublime Nectar)

A Concise but inspiring book by Sage Mukandaraj, one of the greatest sages of Maharashtra who lived in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Mukandaraj addressed the disciple:

*I shall now tell you how to be able to acquire that basic secret knowledge, without the apprehension of which there cannot be anything gained, in which one must keep one's mind concentrated, that knowledge in which the yogi keeps himself constantly immersed...*

*I shall convey to you clearly the very essence of this knowledge like the nectar churned out of the ocean or butter from the milk so that you may give up the various practices that are based on mere untested concepts and which are, therefore, only an exercise in futility so long as there has not been a clear apprehension of the significance of the sublime pronouncements of the Mahavakyas.... (Great Sayings)*

*Who can understand the extent of the seeker's misery so long as he has not clearly apprehended and experienced the true nature of the Absolute? Those poor souls who have accepted the shackles of physical penances and mental disciplines have in reality entangled themselves in doubt and indecision. How can they ever hope to cross the ocean of samsara? Worship, pilgrimages, charities, sacrifices, mantric and tantric practices can only provide time-bound results. Prayers and penances cannot bring about liberation unless there is Self-knowledge...*

*Pure knowledge – Reality – cannot shine forth until the basic unity of the individual phenomenon and the Absolute Noumenon is clearly apperceived, and there is an unblemished understanding of the nature of Maya, which is the cause of the apparent difference between the two. How can there be any question of liberation so long as the identification with the body as a separate entity-doer is not lost through a proper understanding of the terms 'Thou' and 'That' in the Mahavakya 'That Thou Art'?*...

*How can there be liberation unless there has been a) instruction on Vedanta from the lips of the Guru; b) meditation on the Guru's words; and c) total absorption in the Guru's teaching?...*

*Rules of conduct laid down by the Shastras are only meant for the smoother working of the social structure. The seeker should seek instruction from the Guru regarding the essence of Vedanta, whereby one would realize that state of liberation, which is prior to thought and word. And when, in that state of liberation there is the union of Jiva and Shiva, the state of duality disappears.*

Mukandaraj, thereafter, proceeds to explain to the disciple the significance of the Mahavakya, 'That Thou Art':

*When the Absolute Subject with the help of its Primordial Energy objectivizes Itself as the multi-faceted manifestation, the aspects of the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the manifested universe happen in Consciousness. Whatever has form and shape and is, therefore, perceptible to the senses is to be rejected, and that which is unseen and remains as the witness is to be recognized as the Reality. Know That to be the Reality, which is prior to the arising of Consciousness, which is termed the all-knowing, all-controlling principle.*

*That Reality is the witness of everything. It cannot be measured by any criterion, it has no specific place of abidance: it is all-pervading, limitless, unknowable. That Reality is what remains when everything that is illusory is rejected, and is Itself pure knowledge, pure joy, self-evident. That Reality is all by itself, the original fullness of Potential, the Plenum, prior to witnessing of all that is created, maintained and dissolved. The Absolute Reality is totally apart from all aspects of manifestation: Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (The One who maintains the Universe), and Rudra (the destroyer) and the Primeval Power (Consciousness). It is pure Brahman. It is only in this perspective that Reality is to be apprehended- it will not be comprehensible by any other means and practices based on ignorance and duality...*

*The superficial meaning of the term 'Tvam' (Thou) is conveyed by that which is governed by maya, the physical form. The true meaning of the term 'Tat' (That) is pure Brahman, which cannot be apprehended except after due discrimination. A clear apperception of the true meaning of the term 'Tat' is indeed liberation itself. The same sight in both eyes, the same sound in both ears and the same word on both lips – similarly, when one sees the same meaning in both 'Tat'(That) and 'Tvam'(Thou), the state of Brahman is attained, which is beyond duality. Just as the difference between the space in a pot and the space in a house disappears when both are broken up, so also the duality disappears when both terms are superimposed. The apparent difference between the two is only because of the illusion of maya. As soon as the false is seen as false, only Reality remains...*

*The knowledge of the Self is Advaita, that is non-duality, but it is obviously to be acquired in apparent duality so that the duality disappears in due course when one remains firmly in that knowledge. Instead of looking ahead as one usually does, one must look back and seek the Source in order to realize one's true Beingness.*

“Looking back” is to be interpreted in the sense that the eye can see the objects in front but it cannot see itself; if one wants to see one's own eyes, it can be done only by the mind, the mind can be seen only through intellect, and it is Consciousness that can witness the intellect.

Mukandaraj continues:

*What one sees from this transformed perspective is nothing tangible but an all-pervading Oneness, where there is an absence of maya and non-knowledge – something immeasurable which one can know only by experiencing it. That knowledge of Brahman is self-effulgent, like a solid mass of profound happiness, the realization of which comports the end of conceptualizing...*

*I shall tell you how to acquire that knowledge by which you shall have perpetual peace and contentment. But one must first find out precisely who or what it is that is doing the seeking. The only thing you know as a matter of certainty is the fact I AM, I exist. But you do not know who this 'I' is. My friend, why have you forgotten your Self? Who are you, and where have you come from? Indeed, have you really gone anywhere or come from anywhere? You have never even thought of considering this matter on these lines...*

*Are you the body, or is it you who have the body? You are the subject and the body is your object. It is you who have the knowledge of the body and indeed that you wear this body like a garment. Although you have acquired this body as a covering made of five elements, you have identified yourself with it and you strut about as an individual. Be clearly aware that this body is an object and that you are quite apart from it, and thus give up this mistaken identity with the body...*

*You are aware of the constitution of your body, that a) the hair, skin, veins, flesh and bones – the solid part of the body – represent the earth; b) saliva, urine, blood, marrow and semen – the five fluid materials – represent water; c) hunger, thirst, indolence, sleep and sex represent fire; d) movement, running, resisting, relaxing and contracting – the five kinds of activity – represent air, and e) desire, anger, grief, greed and fear – the five qualities – represent ether. The physical body, with these twenty-five parts, qualities and activities has six natural changes: it is conceived, delivered, grows, matures, becomes old and finally dies. You know the color and form of this body, and the name it has been given. How then can you identify your Beingness with the body that is something other than you? You, as the Beingness – or Consciousness – are formless, whereas you can see the form of the body. In the waking state it is Consciousness that acts through the body and has various experiences through the senses. The feeling that you have a particular name and form belongs to the mind, and you as the knower of the body and the mind, are apart from both...*

*Although you are apparently seen as the manifestation of the psyche (antahkarana), mind, intellect, concentration and ego, nevertheless you exist prior to the manifestation of these five constituents of the subtle body. It is Consciousness that is there first – spontaneous, Self-effulgent. The one who is aware of the rising passions and emotions is the mind, and it is the intellect which discriminates and decides; that which purposefully concentrates on the decisions of the intellect is the chitta or the operational center; and the one who accepts the doership of actions is the ego. It is you who are aware of this five-fold analysis of the psyche because you are the Self-awareness or witness or Atman. The thread is made out of cotton though it is different in appearance. Similarly, mind, intellect, discrimination and ego may appear to be different but all arise from the same Source – Beingness or Conscious Reality...*

*The breeze is the cause of the ripple on the water, and the twist in the cotton is the cause of the thread; similarly maya is the cause of the appearance of the subtle body. When the cause is removed, both the ripple and the thread disappear; similarly, with the arising of Self-knowledge and the removal of ignorance, maya becomes exposed and disappears. When the ripple and the water, or the thread and the cotton, unite – the duality disappears. Similarly, when mind merges into Consciousness, the sense of duality disappears...*

*The psyche is the subtle body and the relevant condition is the dream state that is based on desire. Mind works through the senses, and such desires that remain dormant in the mind manifest themselves in the dream state as objects and desires that have been experienced earlier. The manifestation of the dream world occurs because of that very speck of Consciousness that illuminates the psyche, just as the heat that heats a metal in sunlight is the quality of the sun. It is this Consciousness that has made manifestation possible. If Consciousness were to disappear, there would be no manifestation to perceive, and you would be in your original state of the fullness of the Potential, the Plenum. If you are able to reject as illusion without any substance all that you see and experience in your Consciousness, then you will be immersed in what remains as Reality. Consciousness will remain merged within Itself without movement.*

According to Mukandaraj, the physical form could be classified into four segments: a) the physical body associated with the waking state, b) the subtle body associated with the dream state, c) the causal body associated with the deep sleep state, and d) the super-causal body associated with the *Turiya* or super-conscious state. Having dissociated from the individual entity, the one that remains as the witness of the four types of the body and the relevant states is the pure *Brahman*. Having thus clearly shown to the disciple that he could not possibly be either the physical body or the subtle body, Mukandaraj then goes on just as relentlessly to show that the disciple is not even the causal or super-causal body. Now, he is, as it were, taking his disciple by the hand and guiding him towards the higher cliffs of *Advaita* or non-duality. He tells the disciple:

*The shadow shows the shape, form and parts of the original body but is really without substance; similarly, the one who says 'I do not know' is an illusion. There is the prior one who knows or witnesses the other one who says 'I do not know'. The fact of not-knowing was known not to ignorance but to knowledge. That knowledge to which the not-knowing was known is Atman. Make no mistake about it. Even if one believes that one does not have Self-knowledge, this very fact could not have been known in the absence of knowledge: I know that I do not know. Therefore, ignorance as such is an illusion: if you know that you do not know why do you unnecessarily involve yourself in the concept of ignorance? This ignorance is itself the causal body of which the physical body and the subtle body are the instruments...*

*Listen now to the symptoms and the quality of deep sleep. Various concepts, based on the events in the waking state, arise in the mind and reflect themselves in the dream state. But when Consciousness, which is the substratum for both the waking state*

*and the dream state, suspends its operation, then comes the state of deep sleep – total non-knowledge. This non-knowledge is true knowledge because it is the absence of both knowledge and ignorance, which are both polaric interrelated opposites. When Consciousness re-emerges into movement, the deep-sleep state forgets its true nature and again identifies itself with the individual entity and accepts the world as real. When, however, ignorance gets discarded, Reality shines just as gold remains in its purity when the impurities are destroyed in the fire. After ignorance has been demolished and Self-knowledge has come about, that which sees the physical, the subtle and causal bodies as a witness, is the supra-causal body – this is the Turiya state. When through Self-knowledge the working bodies and the causal body are demolished, the supra-causal body itself cannot survive: when the effect is destroyed, the cause cannot survive...*

*That changeless state where one is aware of one's self-existence in Parabrahman, Liberation, Reality. Meditation along these lines results gradually into firm conviction, and then one experiences the hollowness of the world. When both knowledge and non-knowledge disappear, then will dawn that Knowledge which is the Absolute Reality. One must recede into the Source whence springs all knowledge. That source is Reality, the immeasurable Potential, the Plenum into which Consciousness ultimately merges itself.*

Mukandaraj has thus brought the disciple to the stage where Consciousness merges into its Source, the stage where conceptualization ceases and duality ends, the stage where the basis of all duality, the polarity of all interrelated opposites, gets demolished into what phenomenally would seem to be a void. Mukandaraj, therefore, proceeds to show to the disciple that what seems to be a void cannot be a void but the Plenum, the fullness of Potential. How can something know, itself, it is a void?

*That Reality which is Self-effulgent is Subjectivity and, therefore, cannot have a seer to see it as an object. Reality, therefore, cannot be a void: it is neither Consciousness in movement nor manifestation nor ignorance but the fullness of pure knowledge, the limitless Potential, beyond comprehension. You are that Reality, the Absolute Plenum, the fullness of Potential that has gobbled up even the concept of the Void, that Self-effulgent Source of everything. It is this Reality that you should understand yourself to be: independent, pure, the witnessing principle whose clear image it is impossible to visualize...*

*You are that Reality where all that is illusory has been absorbed, where the duality of a 'Thou' cannot survive; and so the terms 'That' and 'Thou' have become superfluous.*

Now that the disciple has lost his individuality how will he rest in his natural state? Mukandaraj inspires supreme confidence in the disciple by assuring him that if his advice is clearly apprehended and diligently followed, *“you will have a conviction about your real nature, you will apperceive Reality, and will thus be always calm and peaceful.* Mukandaraj tells the disciple:

*First convince yourself about your true nature as has been expounded so far, and then adopt the regular practice as follows: find a quiet spot, sit quietly, calm and relaxed, and check the outward flow of thoughts. With an attitude of renunciation towards all that is manifest, the mind should be turned inwards, away from the sense objects, to the core of the heart. Then give up gradually your identification first with the gross physical body and then with the subtle body and the causal body, and let your mind be one with space. Release your attention, smoothly and effortlessly, from the gross senses and let it merge with the total Mind or Consciousness. Wherever the attention strays, it should again be brought back into the vacant mind smoothly and gradually, so that with patience the period of concentration (not tension) becomes longer and longer. Whatever object the mind gets attracted to, let your discrimination reject it as illusory and worthless. It is only in this manner that the mind will soon give up its flights of fancy and remain in quietude...*

*Until the mind naturally remains in Consciousness (having given up its affinity with material things), persistent but gentle persuasion is necessary to make it drop whatever it tends to get involved in, and return to its Source. As you keep watching your mind and discover yourself as the witness, nothing else can appear on the screen of your Consciousness: two things cannot occupy your mind at the same moment.*

*When you understand that anything with a shape and form is, by its very nature, a hollow shell without substance, and that what is real is formless – the light of Consciousness – you will be immersed in the depth of Reality. When the mind gets absorbed in Consciousness, all objects disappear from the mind.*

Mukundaraj at this juncture issues a warning to the seeker that if one were to pursue Self-knowledge while being firmly identified with the body as a separate entity, without proper guidance from the Guru, there is the danger of losing one's mind (Self-knowledge cannot be 'achieved' by a sense of doership). Mukundaraj says:

*Do not put yourself in the position of the person who suddenly wakes up in the deepest dark of the night and thinks he has become blind. Do not get yourself enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, see all manifest phenomena as an illusion, and remain peacefully in Reality. Delve within and find out where thoughts arise. Seek the source of all thought – it is this Source, the Consciousness, which must seek and acquire the Self-knowledge: it can only happen...*

*Imagine for a moment that everything that is now manifest, including one's own body, has suddenly disappeared. Where precisely is it that the resulting nothingness would be registered? All that remains is 'I'-Consciousness: inside and outside, there is nothing other than the nothingness of the Void, which is the fullness of Beingness, the Potential Plenum. That on which Consciousness has arisen must surely be prior to Consciousness. Understand beyond any doubt that it is this Source of Consciousness that you are in Reality. It is in Consciousness that everything appears including your sentience – the 'I Am' sense of presence and the psyche consisting of mind, intellect,*

*discrimination and the ego. Once this fact is clearly apprehended, nothing can remain other than Self...*

*Whenever you think, it is the mind that does the thinking; when the 'me' is involved in the thinking, it is the ego; when you are quiet, the very quietude is in the Consciousness itself. Consider this: if you could have remained absolutely quiet, would any mnemonical recollection have ever sprouted? Would there have been any wish, any desire? If you could have remained absorbed in the Consciousness, would you have been troubled by thoughts? Would there have been any cause then to identify yourself with the body as a separate individual? Therefore, my friend, that wherein all ignorance disappears is in a totally different dimension. If there were not something called pure knowledge, the Totality of all Potential, where would the ego have arisen? This pure and perfect knowledge – neither knowledge nor non-knowledge – is not aware of itself. It becomes a witness only when a movement in Consciousness presents some manifestation to witness.*

Mukandaraj winds up this subject by giving an admirable summary, at the same time re-emphasizing the nature of Reality, which all sentient being ARE. He expresses the central concept in one mind-shattering epigram: *“That you do not know is known to no one but yourself – that is itself the Reality from which arose the knowledge that you do not know.”* Can this Source, the Potential of all knowledge, from which arises the very knowingness – the animating Consciousness and the sentience of sentient beings – ever be non-knowledge or ignorance?

Mukandaraj gives his final advice to the disciple:

*Giving up your identification with the body if you would remain quietly absorbed in the sense of the Totality – in the 'I AM' - without attachment, you will know all that is to be known. When you thus remain immersed in Consciousness, the personal, identified consciousness having lost the power of maya, will itself take you to its Source, which is what you Are – Reality. In that state, there is no duality of any kind, all interrelated opposites have been naturally superimposed into nothingness. All there is, is pure knowledge, pure Beingness, pure Subjectivity. One cannot hold it, one cannot drop it, one cannot say it is, one cannot say it isn't. Indeed, it cannot be something one can experience – it is only something that is nothing, to be apperceived, to be felt to BE and to remain in...*

*Hold on to the sense of 'I AM' to the exclusion of everything else. The mind being thus silent, will shine with a new light and vibrate in the Totality. When you keep the 'I AM' feeling in the focus of awareness and watch yourself ceaselessly – when there is continuous witnessing of all movements in Consciousness – the conscious and the unconscious will for a time play the game of hide and seek ['flip-flops' will happen] until finally the two become one and the one becomes the Totality. The individual then merges in the witness, the witness in awareness, in pure Being – who is there then to take a measure of that ecsatcy?!*