

KATHA UPANISHAD

Re-Translated with Commentary

by James Swartz

Chapter 1

1. At the end of his life, desiring Heaven, Natcheketas' father, a pious man, sacrificed a few of his least valuable possessions.

2. Observing the ceremony Nacheketas thought, "These barren cows have yielded all their milk, ate and drunk for the last time. Joyless are the worlds attained by one who sacrifices such useless offerings."

4. He said, "To whom will you give me, father?"

At first the father ignored his son but Nacheketas persisted, asking a second and third time, "To whom will you give me, father? To whom will you give me?"

"To Death I give you!" said the father in anger.

6. Wishing to ease his father's remorse over his intemperate words, he said to him, "Our ancestors took the words of their fathers as truth. Can I do less? Death is not to be feared. See how kernels of corn fall to the ground, decay, and are later reborn."

“I wonder what Death will work through me?” Nacheketas thought as he set out for the house of Death.

Though his father, who was also his guru, didn't actually mean to consign his son to Death, Nacheketas, a strict follower of Dharma, choose to take the words literally. Such was the code of Dharma in Vedic times that all utterances of the guru, even those made in jest, were meant to be taken at face value. Obviously, unless he takes his father's words seriously, the story ends here.

7. When he arrived Death was out collecting souls so Nacheketas remained at his door fasting and awake for three days.

9. Upon his return Death said, “My prostrations to thee, Oh venerable guest. One who fails to offer food to Brahmins certainly sacrifices the company of the good, the rewards of pious giving, sons and cattle. Please choose three boons, one for each day of waiting without food. May auspiciousness befall me.”

Before the caste system became hereditary a person who knew or was striving to know “Brahman,” the Self, was called a brahmin.” Brahmins enjoyed the highest social position because the society respected spiritual principles.

10. Nacheketas replied, “As my first boon I ask that my father be pacified and accept me with love when

you send me home.”

11. Death replied, “He will sleep peacefully and lose his anger when he sees you next.”

12. “Because you take souls there, you must also know the fire sacrifice by which one gains the relative immortality of Heaven. Please teach me this sacrifice.”

“The relative immortality of Heaven” is meant to signify the abode of a soul who has accumulated a store of “good karma.” It was thought that Heaven was a plane where the soul was free of want and enjoyed a blissful life - until the karma that sent it there was exhausted and it was reborn. This is why Nacheketas refers to it as the “relative immortality of Heaven.” In fact the words “relative immortality” are mine. The text uses the words, “svargaloka amrtatvam” which means “the immortality (deathlessness) of Heaven (svarga.) The bliss of Heaven was thought to be longer lasting and more intense than earthy blisses - and hence “immortal.” We discover that this “immortality” is relative when Nacheketas asks for his third boon. According to Vedanta, true immortality, The Self, being infinite, can’t be produced by finite rituals. And being the very Self of the worshipper, it can only be “attained” through knowledge. The purpose of the first two “boons” is to eliminate the “real” world (social and material reality) and heaven (the goal of religion) from the discussion of liberation.

“Indeed, I know the fire leading to Heaven as well as That, seated in the cavity of the Heart, which supports the whole universe” said Death.

“The Fire’ indicates a Vedic fire ritual that was meant to confer a good afterlife on the sacrificer.

15. So He explained the sacrifice, the mantras, how many bricks were required, and how the altar was to be constructed. Pleased that his pupil understood the ritual so well, he proclaimed that henceforth the sacrifice would be called the Nacheketas Fire and asked of the third boon.

The three mantras (16, 17, 18) that discuss the Nacheketas Fire Sacrifice are thought by many experts to be later additions to the Upanishad. And indeed, they are suspicious from a purely Vedantic point of view, in so far as they suggest that unconditional immortality can be gained through ritualism. Indeed, Death says “one who knows the Nachiketa Fire throws off the chains of death, passes beyond sorrow, and rejoices in Heaven” - effects usually mentioned only as the fruit of jnanam, or Self knowledge. It is entirely possible that the text is speaking of Krama Mukti, Gradual Liberation, the idea being that ritualism and meditation on deities can lead to a stopping-off state of relatively infinite bliss, called Brahma loka (the place of limitlessness). It is said that if the yogi remains in this state, he or she will attain complete liberation when the body dies. It is also possible that to bolster the ritualistic view a proponent of

ritualism inserted the verses many centuries ago, since a heated debate about the true meaning of the Vedas has been going on for a least two thousand years. For someone unfamiliar with Vedic spirituality, the discussion about “Heaven” is difficult to grasp because “Heaven” from an individual’s point of view seems to offer all the benefits of Self-Realization - except that one is “reborn” i.e. starts suffering again when the good karma runs out - which is why the text wants us to know that Heaven isn’t the Self. To further confuse the issue in spiritual literature “heaven” is frequently used as a symbol and sometimes synonym for the Self.

20. “When a person dies,” Nacheketas said, “does he or she continue to exist?” Some say we exist after death and others that we don’t. Please tell me what happens.”

22. “On this subject,” Death replied, “even the Gods have their doubts. The self is very subtle and difficult to understand. Don’t press me on this. I’ll give you another boon.”

“This is the only worthwhile question,” said Nacheketas, “and you’re the only one who knows the answer.”

25. “Take anything you want - immeasurable wealth, endless progeny, immortality, fast chariots and beautiful women, but don’t ask what happens to the soul after death” Death replied.

26. “Thank you for the offer but these things wear out the senses. Wealth and children are only useful until you appear. Even the longest life is very short. You keep the beautiful women and fast chariots. I want to know what happens when the body dies. “

The first Chapter is intended to make the point that only someone qualified for enlightenment is worthy of teaching. A person is qualified when he or she has abandoned the quest for happiness in this world and is only interested in Self realization.

Chapter 2

1. Death said, “What is good is one thing, what is pleasant is another. Both bind the soul. It goes well for the one who calmly examines both and discriminates wisely in favor of the good. But the one who unthinkingly chooses the pleasant is verily a fool. After wisely considering my offer you have renounced everything. Consequently you have avoided the path to wealth where many are lost.

‘The Good’ (sreyas) is what is always desirable. Because objects in the world are sometimes desirable and sometimes not they are referred to as ‘the pleasant.’ (preyas) ‘The Good’ means the Self, limitless non-dual Awareness. All the things in the world not desired for themselves but for the sake of the Self. The Self, therefore, is that which is always

desirable.

4. What is known as ignorance and what is known as knowledge are wide apart. I have high regard for those who, like you, choose the path of Self knowledge. Fools think themselves wise and choose the pleasant, the expedient. They go round and round on a tortuous path, like the blind lead by the blind.

6. The Self does not reveal itself to an indiscriminating person fascinated by the lure of wealth. Thinking “This is the only life,” he comes under my control.

Everything one can pursue in this life eventually dies. Pursuing things that don't last indicates a lack of discrimination.

7. Many do not even hear of the Self. Even those who hear of It do not understand It. Wonderful is the one who teaches the Self and rare indeed is the one qualified to hear the teachings. Rare indeed is the one who knows the Self taught by a skillful teacher.

It is rare because of the deep seated tendency of all beings to believe that happiness can be obtained in samsara, the ocean of change.

8. Taught by a person of inferior intellect the Self is not understood and seems to be many things. But when it is taught by one who is the Self no doubt

about it remains. Atman is subtler than the subtlest and is not to be known through argument.

Mere 'experience of the Self' does not qualify a person as a teacher of the Self. A valid means of Self knowledge and the ability to wield it skillfully is also required. Vedanta, sourced in the Upanishads, is such a means of knowledge.

9. You cannot figure it out on your own. But it is easy to understand when taught by someone who knows. You have attained this knowledge now. You are a man of true resolve. May all inquirers be like you!

This is one of the most frequently ignored statements in Vedantic literature owing to a persistent egoic belief that 'teaching' is merely 'intellectual' and therefore useless because enlightenment is 'experiential.' If this is a non-dual reality everyone everywhere is experiencing the Self all the time. The belief that one can 'get enlightened' through some special experience is due to ignorance of the non-dual nature of reality. It is quite possible to know that you are ignorant of elementary particle physics but it is extremely likely that you do not know that you are ignorant of your real nature. Therefore help is needed.

10. The results of action are never eternal because you can never obtain the eternal by what is non-eternal. I have performed the Nacheketa sacrifice by finite means and attained the relatively eternal

position of Death.

One fundamental issue that needs to be cleared up once one ready to receive teaching is the issue of karma. It is impossible to progress on the path of Self knowledge as long as there is a belief that spiritual practice can produce enlightenment. Therefore the verse unequivocally states that what is eternal cannot be obtained by what is non-eternal i.e. practice. Discrimination, the fundamental practice of Vedanta, however, is not included in this statement because the fruit of discrimination is knowledge, not a special experience.

11. You have seen beyond the fulfillment of your desires and understood the value of seeking the foundation of the universe, the rewards of sacrifice, the shore where there is no fear, that which is great and adorable and you have with firm conviction discarded interest in them all.

12. The wise who by means of inquiry into the Self realize the subtle unmanifest ancient effulgent Awareness that shines in the intellect and rests in the body leave joy and sorrow behind.

This mantra indicates where the Self is to be realized: in the purified intellect. The fruit of Self realization is liberation from suffering.

13. The one who has heard these teachings and understood them clearly separates the Self, the essence of Dharma, from all objects and rejoices in

the realization of the Self. Limitless freedom is possible for you.”

The path of knowledge is the discrimination between the unchanging Self and its many changing forms.

14. ”Please tell me what is other than virtue and vice, right and wrong, cause and effect, the past and the future,” Nachekets said.

15. “The Vedas say Om, the limitless Self, is most desirable. For the realization of It many live celibate lives and do penance,” Yama replied.

I have purposely avoided using the traditional Sanskrit term Brahman for OM, the Self, in my translations because it is an intimidating word. It is often translated as ‘the Absolute’ for example. The most practical and useful term is Consciousness or Awareness (chaitanya or chit) because it is easily identifiable. I use these terms interchangeably. Consciousness is not the subjective activities occurring in the mind/intellect. It is the Awareness in which they occur.

16. Om is the unchanging Self. The one who knows it obtains everything desirable.

This verse is not saying that if you get Self realized you will get everything you want in the world. Because it is for the sake of the Self that worldly things are desired one’s desires dry up with the realization of the Self. The absence of desire is

equivalent to obtaining desirable objects since the objects are only valued because they remove the desire.

17. It is the ultimate support. Realizing it one revels in the infinite.

It is the ultimate support because the realization of the Self destroys one's belief in one's smallness and inadequacy. When one feels incomplete and inadequate one tends to seek support in the world. This is not a useful solution because the world is capable of supplying only intermittent support.

18. The Self came from nothing and nothing comes from It. It is unborn, eternal and most ancient. It is not killed when the body is killed.

If you are the Self and you depend on nothing you are free.

19. If you think you kill or you think you can be killed you are wrong. It neither slays nor is it slain.

The Self is not a doer. Doing is the result of a complex set of impersonal factors.

20. It is subtler than the subtlest, greater than the greatest and seated in the hearts of all beings. A desireless mind sees Its majesty and is freed of sorrow.

An extroverted mind roiled by fear and desire is incapable of apprehending the subtle Awareness

'hidden' in the Heart. 'Heart' means 'essence', not the physical organ. Essence means that without which a thing will no longer be what it is. Remove sweetness and you no longer have sugar. Remove the Self and you have no you.

21. Unmoving it travels far. Only the pure minded can understand That which rejoices and rejoices not.

This verse means that it pervades everything. There is no place where it isn't. It is not a person, subject to emotions and feelings.

22. Those wise souls who see the bodiless limitless all-pervading Self sitting in the perishable body do not grieve.

Life forms are made of inert matter and Consciousness. Matter...the body, mind, and intellect...seem conscious and limited because of their proximity to Consciousness. Confusing the two causes suffering. When the Self is separated from its material encasements suffering ends.

23. It cannot be realized by Vedic study or by clever thinking or much hearing. Choose only the Self and it will reveal itself to you.

This is not to say that the intellect is not the vehicle for Self realization, only that thinking from the ego's limited platform will not produce Self realization. The intellect needs to be exposed to a valid means of Self knowledge like Vedanta, learn the method of

discrimination between the Self and its forms and apply the knowledge to effect the separation.

24. But the one whose mind is disturbed and who violates dharma while pursuing selfish ends will never realize the Self.

This verse further emphasizes the importance of the mind for Self realization and that it be free of anxiety for the results of its actions before it can apply its resources to separating the Self from its many subjective and objective forms.

25. To the Self the greatest being is but a small bowl of rice and death a condiment.

Chapter 3

1. Knowers of the Self refer to the individual and the Self sitting in the heart cave as shadow and light saying that they are enjoyers of their good deeds... as are those who perform the Nackiketa Fire.

This verse is not strictly true in so far as the Self is not directly an enjoyer of the fruits of its actions. It could be considered an indirect enjoyer in the sense that without Awareness, no enjoyment can take place. But the Self is not an incomplete individual with desires that needs results to complete itself through its enjoyment of life. Furthermore it cannot act because it is non-dual. Action requires duality.

So it is actually incorrect to call it an enjoyer although if actions and results are taking place it is the awareness of them.

2. May we master the sacrifice that takes us to the relatively immortal joys of Heaven and the sacrifice of knowledge that takes us fearlessly across the ocean of samsara.

Spiritual practice purifies the mind so it is useful for Self realization in so far as Self realization will not take place...except perhaps temporarily...in an impure mind. But it will not produce permanent Self realization. Only the 'sacrifice of knowledge' i.e discrimination of the Self from its many forms results will cause lasting Self realization.

3. See the Self as the Lord of the chariot, the body as the chariot, the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as the reins.

4. The senses are the horses and the paths they follow are the sense objects. The wise say the Self is an enjoyer when united with the body, mind and senses.

The natural structure of the human personality is expressed in this metaphor. Because without Awareness there is no personality the Self is called the 'lord.' It's knowledge...that it is whole and complete...should control the decisions that the intellect (the charioteer) makes, the intellect being the most subtle manifestation of the Self in the

world of Maya, duality. The intellect in turn should control the mind (emotions) so that one's life (the chariot) stays on the correct path. The mind should in turn keep the senses in check.

When Self ignorance is operating the structure of the personality is turned upside down. The mind... one's sensations, feelings, emotions...are enshrined as the 'lord' of one's life, the intellect is downline and provides rationalizations and justification for the mind's pursuit of objects in its endless and frustrating attempt to feel good. In this extroverted and unholy situation the Self is completely 'hidden.'

5. A mind without Self knowledge is uncontrollable like a horse that has not been trained.

6. But when the mind knows the Self it behaves like a well disciplined horse.

7. The thoughtless and impure minds of those who do not know the Self circle endlessly in the whirlpool of samsara.

Samsara is the unfortunate existential situation of minds that do not know the Self. It is a state of bondage to desire and the activities it produces. A sense of incompleteness causes the desire to complete oneself in the world which produces actions which produce more desire which produce more actions, etc. etc. ad infinitum.

8. But a discriminating mind is a controlled mind and easily realizes the unborn Self.

9. With a discriminating intellect in charge of the mind one easily realizes the all pervading Self.

Discrimination means that the individual understands the limitation in terms of happiness involved in the pursuit of worldly things. This is not too say that a discriminating person does not perform actions for the results, only that he or she understands that any desired result that comes from action will only temporarily erase the sense of incompleteness that is motivating the action. He or she also understands that the results of one's actions are not in the hands of the doer of the action and is therefore prepared to accept unwanted results as the unfortunate cost of doing business in the world.

10. Beyond the senses are the sense objects. Beyond the sense objects is the mind. Beyond the mind is the intellect and beyond the intellect is the Macrocosmic Mind.

11. Beyond the Macrocosmic Mind is the Unmanifest and beyond the Unmanifest is the Self, beyond which there is nothing. It is the end, the highest goal.

The structure of creation is presented to include macrocosmic factors in these verses. The purpose of these verses is to indicate that Consciousness is

unattached and 'beyond' all created structures. 'Beyond' is an unfortunate term because it implies that the Self is not present and available. 'Beyond' is meant to indicate that the Self is not to be found in sense objects, the pleasures of the senses, feelings, thoughts, beliefs and opinions, all of which come from the macro cosmos, the societies that condition us.

12. Because the Self is hidden in all beings it does not shine forth...but it is seen by Seers with keen and subtle understanding.

'Seeing' means knowing. It is not some special kind of physical or psychological insight. It is 'understanding,' what 'stands under' or supports one's life. This understanding is: there is only one Self and it is limitless, whole and complete.

13. The wise should control the senses with the mind and the mind with a discriminating intellect. The intellect should resolve itself into the Macrocosmic Mind and the Macrocosmic mind should be resolved in the peaceful Self.

The 'resolution' of the intellect into the Macrocosmic mind simply means that one should understand that one is not the author of one's thoughts. What we think, feel and believe, comes from the world around us. Our thinking is 'conditioned.' When you see that the content of your mind is universal you can let go of the anxiety that comes from believing you are to blame for your

conditioning.

The resolution of the Macrocosmic Mind into the Self means that you understand that all thought is 'not Self.' Therefore, because you are seeking freedom you let go of your identification with thought and are free to identify with the limitless Self which is 'beyond' thought.

14. Arise, awake! Seek the great teachers and realize the Self! The wise say the path, difficult to navigate, is sharp and narrow like a razor's edge.

The spiritual path is difficult because as one's discrimination develops one discovers more and more subtle delusions. One needs to be eternally vigilant because it is easy to 'fall off' the path, identify with beliefs and opinions that prevent appreciation of one's wholeness.

15. Know that which is soundless, tasteless, touchless, formless, imperishable, beginningless and endless, beyond the Unmanifest and free yourself from the jaws of death.

'Death' in Vedic spiritual literature does not necessarily refer to the death of the body. It is generally used as a metaphor for change. Freedom from the incessant insecurities of the world is the goal of spiritual life.

16. The wise one who hears and repeats Nachiketas' dialogue with Death is glorious indeed.

17. Whoever recites this secret before an assembly of Brahmins or at the time of sacrifice to the forefathers attains immortality.

Chapter 4

1. The self existent Self created the senses with outgoing tendencies. Therefore we see the external world and not the Self. But the wise turn the senses away from the world and, seeking what is everlasting, realize the Self within.

Self condemnation for one's extroverted pursuit of happiness is unnecessary because the Self caused this situation in the first place. Here 'Self' does not refer to pure non-dual Awareness, but to the Self in its role as Creator. Remember, reality is non-dual and therefore the creation is only an appearance in Awareness. When you realize the problem you can turn your attention toward the Self and 'seek within.'

2. Those ignorant of the Self pursue sense pleasures and fall into the snare of death but the wise do not seek the immortal in fleeting things.

Again, 'death' here just means that the pleasure that comes from contact of the senses with their objects always ends. Sense pleasure as a life strategy is inherently frustrating for this reason.

3. That because of which the senses know their objects is That by which one knows what is to be

known. This is what you desire to know.

4. Know That all-pervading Awareness which sees the dream and waking...and grieve no more.

5. Know that honey eating Awareness, enjoyer of objects, the ruler of time, and fear no more. This is that which you are seeking.

As pointed out above Awareness, the Self, is not an enjoyer in the sense that the individual is an enjoyer. The Upanishads are scientific statements often couched in poetic metaphorical language. One should not think that when one is Self realized one is going to get some kind of special enjoyment from the world. Self realization means that one understands that the understanding that one is whole and complete is the highest bliss because it sets one free from the vagaries of experience.

The Self is the ruler of time because it is changeless. A Self realized person is free of time related stress because he or she is unconcerned with what is happening, has happened or will happen.

6. The knower of the One seated in the five elements and born first...that fire of Consciousness...seated in the cave of the Heart abides therein. This is that which you want to know.

The Self is unborn but existed prior to the existence

of the cosmos therefore it is said to be 'born first.'

7. The one abiding in the Heart who manifests as the life force and the elements is what you seek to know.

The 'Heart' is a purified Subtle Body. When the Subtle Body, the mind/intellect instrument is free of binding vasanas it is possible to see the Self reflected in it.

8. The all-seeing Consciousness that, like fire, is hidden in wood and concealed like a foetus in the womb is worshipped by Self inquirers and ritualists. This is what you wish to know.

9. No one goes beyond That because of which the sun rises and sets. This is what you wish to know.

The Self is 'That because of which the sun rises and sets' because no action can take place without the blessing of Consciousness. The sun is matter. Because it is not conscious it cannot move on its own.

10. What is seen here is there and what is there is here. If you see difference between here and there you move from death to death.

There is a persistent dualistic view that the Self is hidden in some transcendental place 'beyond' the earth and that to experience it one needs to leave the body and go to another dimension or plane of experience. The verse says that what you are

experiencing at each and every moment is the Self. So rather than attempt to escape one should inquire into the nature of one's own mind, the instrument of experience.

If you are chasing Self experience you will be continually frustrated because every discrete experience dies.

11. By the mind alone is the Self to be realized. There is no difference between the seen and the unseen. See a difference and move from death to death.

This verse is intended for those who think the mind is the enemy and should be stopped or destroyed or transcended. You cannot 'gain' the Self by getting rid of anything because the Self is you. How can you get rid of yourself? Even if you could you wouldn't because it is for the sake of your self that you do everything. Therefore inquiry is the only way to get what you already have because it produces Self knowledge. The Self is only 'hidden' by ignorance. No gain or loss can remove ignorance. Only knowledge removes it.

12. Know the thumb-sized Self residing in the center of the body as the Lord of Time and fear no more. This is what you seek to know.

'Thumb-sized' means subtle. It is said to be located in the heart or the center of the body, between the eyebrows, etc. for the purposes of meditation. In

fact the body is in the Self, not the other way around.

13. That thumb-sized smokeless flame is the same today and tomorrow. This is what you seek to know.

Flame is a common Vedic Self symbol because fire provides light. Physical light is a common symbol of Consciousness, the 'light' in which what is known is known.

14. As rain falling on a mountain top runs down in all directions, the one who sees difference runs everywhere in search of happiness.

In the dualistic dream there are endless possibilities, none of which lead to lasting satisfaction.

15. As pure water poured in pure water retains its purity the pure intellect of knower becomes one with the pure Self.

When through inquiry one removes one's dualistic orientation the mind/intellect 'merges' into the Self. This is not an experiential merger but a realization that the Self is all there is and that I am it.

Chapter 5

1. The city of the Unborn, whose self knowledge never changes, has eleven gates. Meditating on It the mind attains liberation and grieves no more.

The Self is unborn, meaning it is not subject to time and duality. Liberation comes after a period of deep inquiry into the Self. The purpose of the Upanishad and all Vedantic texts is to provide guidance for one's inquiry. The 'city of eleven gates' is the body, the various orifices the 'gates.'

2. It dwells in the heavens and as the fire burning on the altar. It is the guest dwelling in the house and the Indweller in the body. It dwells in the Gods, in limitless space and in sacrifice. It is born as the mountains and the waters. It is true and great.

Everything is the Self, even the things that seem to stand alone.

3. This adorable Self draws the breath in and sends it out. It is worshipped by the senses.

The Self 'lives' without breathing. When it is in a body and doesn't know who it is, it thinks it is a doer. It thinks it is breathing, walking talking, eating, sleeping, digesting food. This verse is to remind the doer that it is not a doer.

4. What remains when it leaves the body? This is what you want to know.

What remains is food for worms.

5. You do not live because the breath goes in and out. You live by the grace of the One controlling the breath.

6. I will now reveal the secret of the Eternal and what happens to the soul after death.

7. Some souls are reborn, others become non-moving forms according to their deeds and their understanding.

The nature of one's conditioning determines the form one will take in the succeeding birth. Nature provides an environment suitable for the working out of one's tendencies. If you practice yoga and purify the mind you will likely get a comfortable birth in a family with spiritual values. If sexual greed is your predominant vasana nature may determine that the body of a rabbit is best for you.

The reincarnation idea is a wash, however, because nature mercifully removes the memory of the previous birth so there is no conscious connection with the past. It is the intention of the Upanishad to teach the law of karma...as you sow so shall you reap... not to motivate the individual to plan for a better birth since Self realization closes the karmic account of the individual. When you understand how your thinking causes karma you can shape the kind of life you want here and now, in so far as you are free to change the way you think.

8. The One who remains awake when everything

sleeps, the granter of all desires, is pure immortal Awareness. All the worlds rest on That. None go beyond It. This is what you seek to know.

Self realization is the realization that you never sleep or wake, that you are the Awareness of both physical and spiritual sleep and waking. The idea that one is 'awakened' passes for enlightenment these days, as if some kind of experience changed your existential status. If you are awake now but were not awake before you are not real. 'Waking' is an imprecise symbol of the re-discovery of one's limitless nature in the wake of the loss of one's Self ignorance. It is direct knowledge which is often characterized as 'awakening.'

9. As fire takes the shape of what it burns the Self takes the shape of everything it enters but remains unchanged.

10. As air takes the form of what it enters Awareness takes the form of what it enters yet remains unchanged.

The Self does not 'become' the world. Through its power of Maya it projects the creation as if it were an image on a screen. The screen never 'becomes' the images; it only provides a substrate on which they can appear.

11. As the sun, the eye of the world, is not defiled by the impurities of the eye that sees it, the Self of all is untouched by the miseries of the world.

12. Lasting happiness comes only to those wise people who looking within in their hearts see the One that makes the manifold possible.

Knowing that you are whole and complete actionless Awareness, and not the body/mind experiencer, gives lasting happiness.

13. Eternal peace comes only to those wise people who see the Eternal...the fulfiller of all desires... seated in the non-eternal and shining as the Consciousness in the conscious.

14. Of that indescribable bliss the wise say, 'This is That. How can I know it? Does it shine on its own or is it only reflected light?

"This is that." Self realization is the discovery that the fullness that you thought was only available elsewhere is actually always present in the form of your Self. You cannot 'know' it because you are it. Or, better yet, Self realization is the understanding that you have always known the Self. The last question is rhetorical. Self realization is the discovery that you, the 'light' shine on your own. You don't need anything other than your own existence to validate you. Hence Self realization is called liberation.

15. Neither the sun nor the moon nor the stars shine There, much less these worldly fires. Shining, everything shines after It. All is illumined by Its light.

This beautiful mantra answers the last question posed in the previous mantra. The last two mantras present both indirect and direct Self knowledge. The presentation of the Self as 'there' is indirect knowledge. The revelation of the identity of 'That' and 'This' is direct knowledge. Indirect knowledge needs to be converted to direct knowledge to set you free. If it isn't the Self will always remain an object.

Chapter 6

1. The ancient tree of samsara has its roots above in That and its branches spread below. That is limitless and immortal and all the worlds rest in It. None surpasses It. Verily, this is That.

The dream of limitation can only come out of the Self, assuming that reality is non-dual which scripture and our epiphanies proclaim.

2. The whole world evolved from Awareness and vibrates by virtue of Awareness. That Awareness is a great terror, like a crackling thunderbolt. Know it and become immortal.

3. For fear of It fire burns, the sun shines and the elemental forces stream forth.

One only fears the 'other,' never one's Self. In so far as the Self's forms seem to be other than the Self they are poetically said to 'fear' It. We need to be

constantly reminded that reality is non-dual because the appearance of duality is so convincing.

4. Know this Self before the loosing of the fragile knots that tie you to this body or be reborn again in created worlds.

Self knowledge neutralizes one's karma and prevents rebirth.

5. Look for it in the world of the ancestors or the heavenly realms and it will not be seen although it is there. See it only in yourself, reflected in a pure mind.

6. Knowing that the senses rise and set on their own, unaided by the Self, the wise grieve no longer.

If the senses and mind programmed by the vasanas engage their respective objects automatically one need not trouble oneself to hook them up. One's sorrows are directly proportional to the need to change one's experience of life. Everything one needs is supplied automatically. Therefore there is no need for doership.

7, 8. The mind lies beyond the senses and the intellect beyond the mind. Beyond the intellect is the Macrocosmic Mind and beyond it the Unmanifest. Know the immortal all-pervading unseen Self beyond and free yourself from change.

9. It cannot be seen with the naked eye. Perceive it in the Heart with a steady intellect and mind and

become immortal.

10. When the perceptive organs and the mind become still and the intellect no longer moves is the state most suitable for knowing It.

The idea that nothing need be done to realize the Self is completely contradicted by this verse. The mind will not purify itself and fix its attention on the Self on its own. It takes work.

11. Firm restraint of the senses is Yoga. But remain vigilant because Yoga comes and goes.

This work is Yoga, holding the mind on the Self so that inquiry can take place. Because Yoga is an effort it is subject to change. At this stage of the spiritual journey the mind regularly unhooks itself owing to the extroverting pressure of unpurified vasanas. Therefore it needs to be brought back over and over again until the vasanas exhaust and Self knowledge takes place. Even once realization has taken place the mind should be carefully monitored until it remains connected effortlessly. This is called sahaja Samadhi.

12. The Self cannot be reached by speech or mind. Nor can it be seen with the eyes. It can only be attained by the one who says, "It is."

13. It should be realized as Existence, the reality of both the seen and unseen.

Perhaps the most daunting obstacle to Self

realization is the fact that the Self is hidden in plain sight. It is so obvious than it is completely overlooked. It is nothing more than one's existence. If you 'are' you are enlightened, i.e. the 'light'...because existence is Awareness.

14. When desire ceases to dwell in the Heart, what is mortal is known to be Immortal. Such is the teaching.

The most obvious mark of Self realization is a lack of desire to complete oneself through objects and activities. A person who claims to be enlightened but pursues things in life is deluded.

15. One hundred and one are the nerves of the Heart. One turns up and passes through the top of the head. Journey through it and attain immortality. One hundred others lead elsewhere.

Follow your desire for the Self to the exclusion of all else and you will succeed. This verse also presents the core idea of the ancient science of kundalini yoga.

16. The inner Self, the size of a thumb, is seated in the Hearts of all beings. With perseverance one should draw It away from the body as one pulls the pith from a reed. Know It as pure and deathless.

Discriminating the Self from its many forms is the path to Self realization.

17. Through the science of Yoga Nacheketas freed

**his mind of impurities and gained Self knowledge.
So it is with anyone who follows this path.**

Peace Chant

May the Self protect us both.

May It be pleased with us.

May we acquire the required resolve.

May our study result in illumination.

May there be no bad feelings between us!

Shanti Shanti Shanti