

Day after Day

with

Swami

Dayananda

Saraswati

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FOREWORD

Vedanta is not a book, or a set of books. It is correct understanding of life. Scholarship in Vedantic texts cannot be the goal for a seeker; it is only a tool. Non-recognition of this subtle distinction keeps many scholars of Vedanta away from direct knowledge of Brahman. In this perennial flow of time, there arises occasionally a person in whom the study of Vedanta fructifies into direct knowledge. One such rare jnani is our teacher, Parama Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati. For him Vedanta is a Pramana, that is, a means of direct knowledge. When he teaches Vedanta, it is not a mere text. His unfoldment becomes Pramana in operation and presents a unique vision before us in the language of our day-to-day life. His words make the assimilation of Vedanta teaching an easy task for Sadhaka.

Dr. Swaminathan is one of the foremost devotees of Pujya Swamiji at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, Saylorsburg, PA. Being a doctorate in Physics, he has the incisive intellect required to appreciate the teachings of Vedanta. Pujya Swamiji's teachings are published in the form of various books; together they make a veritable ocean of knowledge. Dr. Swaminathan has dived deep into that ocean and brought out quite a few gems, indeed 365 in number.

If a sincere student of Vedanta takes up one gem-like statement or para per day and reflects upon it, I have no doubt that he will be a liberated jnani after one year.

With Pranams at the lotus feet of Pujya Swamiji,

Swami Tattvavidananda.

I may have all the six ingredients (effort, initiative, courage, intelligence, resourcefulness and perseverance) for success but still there may be something that makes the difference between success and failure. By my prayer, I invoke *daivam*, the seventh factor, to take care of the unknown element.

The Lord is one, effulgent, all-knowledge, without a spot of ignorance. And that Lord is the one upon whom we meditate or whom we pray to, *dhīmahī*. We pray with our heart and mind to that Lord who is effulgent, all-knowing and all-consciousness and who is most worshipful.

Removal of desires is neither possible nor necessary. That I desire is not a problem. The desire becomes a problem when I come under its spell.

The worst part of mechanical thinking is that it automatically gets into an undesirable thinking pattern. Thus, even when you don't want to get sad, you become sad.

Life is nothing but a series of decisions. You have to make decisions in life all the time. And those decisions have to come from a clear mind, not from a confused mind. Therefore, you have to be prayerful so that clear decisions will come to you.

The *Bhagavad gītā* is more than a book of promise. It has a message that is immediately relevant for every struggling human being. It does not present God as infallible, but helps you see that the Infallible is God. In the wake of such understanding, the struggling person relaxes in the awareness of the Infallible.

Any form of prayer is as efficacious as any other. This fact must be understood well, not as tolerance for or accommodation of forms of worship other than one's own, but in terms of understanding that the universal order alone is being implied. There is no pagan's prayer; there is only prayer.

Because all people seek fullness, happiness, they are on the Lord's track alone, although they may not know it. A person who does not know exactly what he or she is seeking keeps on seeking.

While traveling to a particular destination, people may enjoy a few things along the way, but they do not lose sight of their destination. Self-knowledge need not be any different.

Submit-not out of mere faith, but out of wisdom-to the Cosmic Will, infinitely mightier than yours. In this submission, you will shed your load and make yourself an instrument for the expression of the inscrutable ways of the Cosmic Will. And your life shall be lighter than what the word 'light' conveys.

Love resolves contentious division. But to discover love without conditions is beyond the reach of the average survivor-ego, in this highly competitive society. Without the experience of such love there is nothing worthwhile in life to accomplish.

In the Vedic vision, all that is here is the manifestation of *Īśvara*. The order that we see in the world of sound, like any other order, is *Īśvara*. When one is exposed to music, one is in harmony with *Īśvara*. There is joy; there is love. The contentious ego resolves into the experience of *Īśvara* whether one recognizes it as such or not.

I see music as a blessing of *Īśvara* for the self-conscious, self-judgmental human being to survive and experience, for the time being, the reality of oneness with the total, the Lord, without having any qualification for it. I think that is what a blessing is.

Quality of life comes only from a cognitive change. One should know one's own position in the scheme of things in the world. One should know his relationship with the Creator. Without an understanding of oneself, the world and the God, none can hope to have inner leisure.

The more you understand yourself, the world and God, the more you are equipped to accept yourself. You cannot have inner leisure without an understanding of these three.

Life is for the living. Death is for the dead. Living I die if I miss the here and now. Dead I will live if I have my being in the past and future, and here and yonder. Is it living?

From there you moved, which was once a 'here', and 'there', when you reach it, shall be a 'here.' Can you ever move from 'here'? Is there a there? And when such a there is known, is it here or there?

Tether not the soul with the chords of the past and future and then say, 'I am not free.' Snap them there in which you have your soul.

Look back; when you do so, you are in the now. Look ahead; while doing so, again you are in the now. Look at present, aren't you in the now? "Now" is the soul of time in which you have your soul.

Time rolls on in a procession of fresh moments and the body ages. But the mind living with fresh moments is ever young. Time is a devourer only if you take yourself as the aging body. It is no more so if you live in its content, the Eternal Now.

Find you will yourself; The self hitherto unknown but
sought after, The self that is strangely missed and searched
for, The self that you love to be, That you are.

The more you see *Īśvara's* order, the less you are away from the Lord. To recognize this order is to surrender to this order. In surrender you let the order rule your life.

V*ēdānta* does not promise a salvation to the soul. In its vision, the soul is already free from any limitation. Freedom from limitation (*mōkṣa*) is a fact and the release of the individual from this sense of limitation is the outcome of understanding the equation, '*tat tvam asi*' (that thou art).

The whole world (*kṣētra*), including my physical body, mind, and senses becomes evident to me, the knower (*kṣētrajña*). The *kṣētrajña*, *ātmā*, is self-revealing and therefore self-evident, while everything else becomes evident to the self. Any evidence is in terms of knowledge. Any knowledge implies the presence of consciousness or awareness. The invariable factor in all forms of knowledge is but this awareness.

The vision of *Vēdānta* is not so much in presenting a cause-effect relationship between Brahman and the world (*jagat*) as it is in unfolding the *jagat* as non-separate from Brahman. This *sarvātma -bhāva*, a recognition of oneself as the whole, is the vision, *tātparya*, of *Vēdānta*.

The word *ānanda* is meant to draw the attention of the seeker to oneself as the source of all *ānanda*. That means the seeker is limitlessness, fullness, which is experienced as happiness in a conducive state of mind. The recognition of this fact removes the error of seeing oneself as unhappy, ignorant and mortal.

The wave being not independent of water, you don't have to remove the wave in order to see the water. So too, if the thinker, the thought, and what is thought of are dependent upon the *ātmā*, which is the reality of all three, you don't have to remove any of them to recognize the *ātmā*. The recognition is that all three are *ātmā* while *ātmā* is not any of them.

What exactly is the aim of life? It can only be living. I am born not for anything except to live, which is what we find in every organism. A plant wants to live, a bug wants to live, an insect wants to live. Any organism that is born, wants to live. So living is the aim of life, nothing more.

V*ēdānta* is not a topic in books. It is just you, it is your vision, it is your responses to situations. *Vēdānta* helps change your scales of vision. Your emphasis changes, and so small things remain small because you are concerned with something bigger. Thus *Vēdānta* does bring about a cognitive change. Your cognition changes, thereby, a number of changes can take place.

A mature person is one who first accepts facts and then becomes alive to facts. When you relook at what you consider a fact now, you find that it is nothing but some other fact. And so what is the fact? If a person is aware of that, he or she is mature in the true sense. Such a person is called *sthitaprajña*, a wise person.

All of our problems are because of refusal to accept facts. Very often we worry about things we cannot change. We do not know what can be changed and what cannot. If we knew that, we could spare our efforts and divert our energy. Our efforts can gain a direction.

You do not require a particular altar to invoke the Lord. You can invoke Him anywhere, because what is it that is not the Lord? The whole order is the Lord, all the laws are the Lord. That is the appreciation of the Lord on the part of a mature person.

Maturity is nothing but the appreciation of what is. To be objective, to be alive to reality is maturity. These are all simple facts. We are not believing in anything. We just appreciate the facts and do not take things for granted. We are talking about what is, so there is no question of belief.

Since the Lord is everything, He is all the names, all the forms and therefore we can invoke Him in any name, any form. This is the mature way of looking at the worship of God.

Everyone is struggling to be free from being small, limited, bound, mortal and so on. The vision of our scriptures is that you are already free. If you think you are bound, that is purely a notion. That the self is free, is to be discovered. Freedom is your nature and you have to discover that freedom. You better know you are already free.

Memory is not meant for self-judgment but purely for practical things. Without it you will be asking your wife every morning who she is, or you will be eating four lunches a day. To judge yourself on the basis of memory is the silliest thing. Use you memory only as it is meant to be used.

The ways of the mind are simple as long as you don't complicate them. And you complicate them only when you are confused, taking thought as "I" and "I" as thought. If you have that confusion, you will put yourself on all kinds of trips – sensuous trips, psychological trips, even spiritual trips. All of them will prove to be trips requiring further trips, until you trip into the grave. You must know that you are already full. As you are, you are limitless, free from sadness and sorrow.

V*ēdānta* says that the truth is nondual. Nondualism is not monism. Monism simply means one, and one is always available for fractioning, for becoming many. One plus *mithyā* (apparent reality) is still one; this is called nondualism. *Satyam* (non-objectifiable, non-negatable reality) is one, which is yourself. Add the whole world, both known and unknown, is still one. This knowledge makes a great difference in one's life.

Our problem is that we think that thought is I, which is correct, and also that “I” is thought, which is incorrect. I erroneously identify with the thought and become sad and unhappy. The solution is recognizing that while thought is I, I am not thought.

Even while thinking any thought, you are free; just as the actor remains free while playing the role of the beggar. If this is clear, then the world cannot cause a problem for you. *Vedānta* doesn't remove any limitations, it only makes you understand that you are already free from all of them.

For those who know that they seek freedom, there is a teaching whose topic is the Self – its nature; the Self as whole, unisolated from anything. This teaching is *Vēdānta*, which gives you knowledge of your true nature. With this knowledge you find yourself free from all forms of limitation and isolation. Full and complete in yourself, you strike harmony with the entire universe.

When the knowledge that your nature is wholeness is gained, what happens? Once you are the whole, you are the whole, whether you see the creation or do not see the creation, whether you do something in the world or do not do anything. The whole does not acquire a dent by your doing something, or by your not doing something. This knowledge is called liberation, freedom – the freedom everyone loves, wants and struggles for.

There are two types of problems in life; one is a problem for which the solution lies outside the problem; the other is a problem for which the solution is within the very problem. If the solution is contained in the problem and it is still a “problem,” the problem is purely due to ignorance. The problem is caused by the ignorance of a fact and therefore we have a problem instead of a fact. The knowledge of the fact alone solves such a problem.

Situational happiness will always be relative. Every situation has two sides; one side is fine, but the other one is not. This being the case, there is no way of solving the problem of sadness by any situational change.

There are many people who propound positive thinking as a means of overcoming sadness. But this cannot solve the problem of human sadness for good, because where there is positive thinking, there must be a fact that makes it a factual positive thinking. If this is so, there is going to be another fact forming the basis for negative thinking. Positive thinking cannot erase the conclusion, "I am sad."

One can seek what one does not have and one can seek what one thinks one does not have. If one thinks one does not have a given thing and one considers it desirable, one cannot but seek.

Anthing that is considered desirable by us becomes an object of seeking. There are two types of seeking in our life. First is the seeking of things which I look upon as desirable and which I do not have. Things like comforts, money, power, progeny etc., fall in this category. The second kind of seeking also pertains to objects which we consider desirable. But there is a difference. While the first kind of seeking pertains to objects we do not have, this second kind of seeking is for the objects we have, but think we do not have.

If we look at our life and enquire as to what it is that we seek, we find that all the varieties of activities that we undertake are prompted by an urge to acquire something or get rid of something. All the urges that a human being feels fall under three basic categories: (1) to live – to live a day longer, (2) to gain happiness, and (3) to acquire knowledge.

The three conclusions – I am mortal, I am unhappy or incomplete, and I am ignorant – form the basis of all my activities. This three-fold conclusion is the problem. *Vēdānta* says this is an unwarranted problem. In the vision of *Vēdānta*, you are just the opposite of what you take yourself to be. “I am sad” is the problem and that is solved only when I see that “I” as other than sad, as free from sadness. *Vēdānta* says that “I” is free from sadness.

The human being is aware of himself or herself as a person and in the person, one sees *sukhitvam* (the state of being happy) and *duḥkhitvam* (the state of being unhappy). So there arise such complexes as, “I am *sukhī* (happy)”, “I am *duḥkhī* (unhappy).” All our attempts are to remove *duḥkham*, to remove sorrow by bringing about changes in situations. But the problem is not *duḥkham*, sorrow; the problem is the notion, “*ahaṃ duḥkhī*– I am sorrowful.”

It is true that there are problems which have to be faced factually, objectively. But the problem of sadness is centered on you and your vision or notion about yourself and the world. You are the problem when you say, "I am sad." And when you laugh at a simple joke, what are you? You are the solution. There was no fulfilment of a desire nor a solution of an external problem when you laughed. All that happened was that you looked upon yourself as you are. All that is required to be free from sadness is that you look at yourself as you are.

It is said in our scriptures that the mind is the cause for both bondage and liberation. Mind here means your notion about yourself – your conclusion, “I am this much alone.” This notion, this self-judgment is the problem and therefore self-clarity, self-knowledge is the solution. In the vision of the *Upaniṣads*, the self is free.

My natural longing to be free from unhappiness is the further proof of the validity of the vision that I, the self, is free and happy. There is a natural longing to be free from being unhappy. I love what is natural and I want to get rid of what is unnatural. If unhappiness, littleness, were natural to me, if they were the essential characteristics of *ātmā*, the self, I could never give them up. But in deep sleep and in moments of happiness, I do give up all the notions that make me feel small, limited. I find myself happy when those notions are absent.

You may be mortal from the standpoint of the body. You may be blind or deaf from the standpoint of the senses. You may be restless from the standpoint of the mind and wanting in knowledge from the standpoint of intellect. But from the standpoint of “I” that is aware of the body, senses, emotions, knowledge, memories, ignorance, you are self-evident, being simple consciousness or awareness.

A value, any value, universal or situational, is a value for me only when I see the value of the value as valuable to me. Me-the comfortable me-is the source of my values. I fail to follow a universal value only when I do not clearly see its value for me. I make expedient situational choices only when I think such choices will make me feel good.

The expression of my life is just the expression of my well assimilated value structure. What I do is but an expression of what is valuable to me. Other people's values I follow from time to time when it is convenient; but if these values of others have not been assimilated by me, they are simply obligatory values and do not reflect my value structure. They are more a source of conflict than a norm for behavior and are always susceptible to compromise.

Only assimilated values are my personal values. Assimilated values reflect what is valuable to me. An assimilated personal value requires no choice on my part. When I want certain unassimilated values to become part of my value structure, I must exercise deliberation in following them until I am convinced of their value to me – then their observation will become spontaneous for me. For the expression of a value to become spontaneous for me, I must see its value in my personal life.

A simple, factual self-respectfulness is not a harmful quality of mind; in fact, it is a good quality. A problem arises only when self-respectfulness is exaggerated into self-worshipfulness. When self-respect becomes self conceit, it does not just undesirably affect my attitude toward myself, but it manifests in my demand upon others to show me the respect that I feel is my due. When I demand respect from others, I invite many disturbances into my mind.

It is fine to have abilities and to use them; but abilities should be allowed to speak for themselves. My attitude towards my accomplishments should be like a flowering bush towards its blossoms. The bush simply blooms because it is meant to bloom. It asks no respect and claims no glory. It blooms because bloom it must. And this is the way I should be about my gifts and skills.

Whatever gifts and skills I have, they seem to have come with me – why, I do not know. I should simply use them as well as I can because that seems to be what I am supposed to do. People who have a value for these particular abilities may give me some respect if circumstances are right for them to do so. People who have no value for these particular abilities no doubt will ignore them. Neither attitude should make any difference to me. I should let my actions themselves command respect from those who are able and willing to extend it but I should never demand respect.

When I look at my achievement I find that it is there because of certain opportunities I had, as well as because of my personal effort. I cannot claim to have created or commanded the opportunities; they were given to me. Therefore, there is no place for *mānitvam*, self-worshipfulness, when I see the nature of accomplishments for what it is. For whatever abilities I seem to have I should be grateful. My demand for respect from others will go away when I see its foolishness.

To be ready for the study of *Vēdānta*, I should be able to accept myself just as I think I am and be willing to present myself to others as I am. I should like myself as I am but at the same time have a strong desire to find absolute freedom not subject to the limitations that seem to bind me. I should be free of self-condemnation. I should simply like myself but knowing that I seem to be bound, I long to be free. When I suffer from *dambhitvam*, pretentiousness, it is scarcely possible for me to have a true desire to be free.

The value for *ahiṃsā*, non-harmfulness or non-injury, requires daily alertness and sensitivity in all areas of my life. It is a value that finds expression in my attitude toward plants as well as toward human beings and animals. *Ahiṃsā*, is a value for nondestruction or damage to any part of creation, a creation of which I am too a part. I treat all things and beings with sensitivity and appreciation of their common existence with me.

The notions we have about ourselves form a self- image which is the basis for how we interact with the world. We know that certain things belong to us, that certain people are members of our family, that we belong to a certain race of people, and so on. Yet, in this self-image, there appears to be some confusion. If there were no vagueness or confusion about the meaning of the word “I”, then there would be no need to inquire further. But if there is any vagueness or confusion, then knowledge is definitely required.

The word *upaniṣad* is understood to mean well ascertained knowledge of the self that leads one to recognize Brahman, thereby destroying the suffering of wordly life, *saṃsāra*. Because this knowledge destroys all suffering, everyone desires it, even without knowing so. Everyone wants to be the whole. We happen to be the whole, which is why nothing less will suffice. Our attempts to prove ourselves to be special are rooted in this desire to be the whole that we truly are.

The teachings of *Vēdānta* found in the *Upaniṣads* are a *pramāṇa*, a means of knowledge. Just as we have eyes and ears for seeing and hearing, we have *Vēdānta* -a means of knowledge in the form of words-for knowing the self. Its validity is established when you use it to gain knowledge; you will discover that it works and that the knowledge it gives cannot be negated.

In the vision of *Vēdānta*, you are the whole. When the *Upaniṣads* say that you are the whole, you have to see that vision. There is no other way of gaining this knowledge. The *Upaniṣads* have a method of making you discover that fact. As a means of knowledge, they lead you to discover the truth of yourself.

Your thoughts depend on awareness, but awareness is not dependent on thoughts, nor is it affected by thoughts. Your thoughts come and go, but awareness does not. This awareness is unchanging, unaffected, unlimited; it is Brahman. Brahman can be known in this way, not as an object of thought, but as the unchanging awareness present in every thought, the awareness without which no thought could exist.

The recognition of the nature of oneself as awareness is self-knowledge, *ātma-jñānam*. Due to ignorance, I can take myself to be limited, finite, mortal being. That my body is mortal is not the problem; that I am mortal is the problem. And the solution to this problem is to know myself as the unchanging awareness which is the immortal *ātmā*.

There are three basic desires that can be fulfilled through your efforts; the desire for worldly enjoyments, the desire for wealth, and the desire for progeny. Through your actions, these desires can be fulfilled. But immortality, *mōkṣa*, cannot be attained through any action. It can be attained only by knowledge; there is no other way.

Brahman happens to be yourself, so it is always manifest.

There is never a time when it is away from you because you are Brahman, the ear of the ear and the mind of the mind. In every thought, Brahman is invariably present as awareness. Just as water is present in every wave in the ocean, awareness is present in every thought. All thoughts are in awareness. Each thought arises in awareness, has its being in awareness, and resolves into awareness. The knower of the thought is also awareness. Therefore, the knower, knowledge, and the known, all have their being in the awareness that is Brahman.

We seek occasions in which we become pleased and we want to repeat such experiences. If we are unable to become pleased through those experiences, we seek other pleasing experiences instead. Thus the pleased self is the norm for which we constantly search and struggle in life. The pleased self reveals the whole that we truly are which is experientially known to us whenever we find ourselves being pleased. Yet, because of ignorance and error, we fail to recognize this ever-present pleased self.

Only that which is whole and complete can neither inflate nor deflate. That whole is awareness; it is existence itself, the Brahman that makes everything possible, enabling the ear to hear, the eyes to see, the mind to think, and the legs to walk. Brahman lends its existence and awareness to them all. Without Brahman, even *Agni*, the god of fire, could burn nothing, and *Vāyu*, the god of wind, could not blow.

All struggles in life are part of our search for the pleased self, the self that is whole and complete. When we discover it, the purpose of life's struggle is fulfilled. And having discovered it, everything to be done in life is accomplished; nothing remains to be done for the sake of becoming happier or more secure. One who has made this discovery is called *kṛta-kṛtya*, one who has accomplished (*kṛta*) all that is to be done (*kṛtya*). The struggle of life becomes meaningful when it culminates in the discovery of the self. Therefore, wise persons have no laments for things left undone, nor for being born to particular parents, nor for being treated in certain ways, nor for growing up in a certain environment. All these complaints disappear when one becomes fulfilled.

The laws of creation, forming the order of the universe are due to the Lord. The whole creation is a network of laws. Everything functions according to those laws. The world, its laws, and the creatures therein all exist due to Brahman. And Brahman, from the standpoint of creation, is the Lord.

All powers and greatness are ultimately traced to the Lord. Because everything is accomplished with the Lord's help, there is no basis whatsoever for pride. All glories belong to the Lord alone. Yet pride can arise due to ignorance of Brahman. One's own ego is nothing but ignorance. It is fashioned out of identification with many things: body, mind, senses, accomplishments, memories, and so on.

Ignorance is that which is opposed to knowledge; it cannot be the mere absence of knowledge. If ignorance were the absence of knowledge, it would not exist at all. The absence of something is simply an absence, it is nonexistent. So the absence of knowledge would be something nonexistent. But the nonexistent cannot create problems. Only that which exists can be a cause. Since ignorance is the cause for all problems, it must exist. It has some existence; it exists until knowledge takes place.

Knowledge must take place in the mind. Some teachers wrongly say that you must transcend the mind. If you transcend the mind, no recognition can take place because it is your mind that recognizes. To say, “Brahman is beyond the mind” does not mean you must transcend the mind; it means that Brahman cannot be objectified by the mind. Brahman can indeed be recognized in every thought, in every cognition- because Brahman is always manifest; it is never away from you at any time. Even though it is not an object of knowledge, Brahman can be recognized. And since you can recognize it through the mind alone, the mind is not to be transcended.

The Lord is to be meditated upon for the sake of recognizing one's glories as the glories of the Lord. In this way, obstacles to gaining knowledge are removed. *Mala* and *vikṣēpa*, mental impurities and agitation, are removed through this recognition. One who worships the Lord by visualizing him as the repository of all glories, will become beloved to others. People love to be with such person because of the absence of any ego or pride with which to clash.

Why praise the Lord? Praise of the Lord is not for His sake. By praising the Lord, one's pride gets diminished; the attitude, "I have accomplished all this," goes away. An insecure person thinks about the greatness of his accomplishments to feel more secure. But sooner or later, his ego will get deflated. Whenever an ego gets inflated, deflation is sure to follow, like an inflated balloon will eventually burst. The ego is like a big bloated bladder of bluffs! Such an ego can be diminished by knowing that all of one's glories belong to the Lord. The glory of seeing, of hearing, of thinking, or of any accomplishment or skill are all the glories of the Lord who is the source of all glories.

Someone might argue, “The *Vēdāntic* teachings are just theory; you have to practice them.” This incorrect notion is based on “kitchen logic.” Having learned a recipe, you have to go the kitchen and cook; you must practice. In the same way, one may argue, having learned that you are Brahman, you must then do some kind of spiritual practice. But the fact is: you already *are* Brahman. If you have really understood this, there is nothing further to do.

Sometimes a person argues, “Understanding is not enough; you have to realize Brahman.” The problem here is that there is no difference between understanding and realization. They are the same. You cannot say that understanding is merely intellectual because all understanding takes place in the intellect. There is no such thing as nasal knowledge! Realization is to understand that I am Brahman. Having truly understood this, nothing else remains to be done.

In order to discover within myself a value for accommodation, I should look to the person behind the act. Usually when I am responding to the behavior of the person, responding to his action, I find that it is difficult to be accommodative. When I try to understand the cause behind the action, I put myself in a position to respond to the person, not to the action, and my response to the person can be an accommodative response.

I will never find in one person all qualities which I like or all qualities which I dislike. Any given person is going to be a mixture of things which I find appealing and others which I find non-appealing. Similarly, I am going to have the same impact on others. No one is going find me totally likeable. I am not going to be willing or perhaps be able to change and meet all expectations other people have of me nor are they going to be willing or able to change and meet all of my criteria for them. When I recognize these facts, I will see that every relationship is going to require some accommodation from me. I will never find a relationship which does not require accommodation.

If I cannot see what is behind the actions, nonetheless I keep in mind the fact that many reasons, unknown to me, set the stage for any action on the part of another person. With this frame of mind I will find it natural to be accommodative. In a situation where my response is to the person rather than to the behavior, I will find myself staying calm.

When resentment, dislike, hatred towards someone arise, introduce thoughts which are their opposite. See the person behind the action from an opposite viewpoint, and you will discover in yourself some sympathy or understanding for that person. Your attitude will be one of *kṣānti*, accommodation towards him. In this manner, any resentment, any hatred, that appears is erased, cleaned away on a daily basis.

What is the importance of alignment between thought, word and deed? By non-alignment I become disintegrated. I am no longer a whole person. When there is conflict between my values (my thoughts), my words, and my acts, I suffer a destructive split in myself. I become splintered, I am not ‘together.’ If there is a gulf between me, the thinker, and me, the speaker or actor, the result will be a restless mind troubled by guilts and conflicts. This kind of mind is not a quite receptive instrument ready for learning anything for achieving any end. For such a mind Self-knowledge is a far cry. To be prepared to listen to the teaching of *Vēdānta*, one needs to be ‘together’ – not split.

Any attitude that settles in my mind which is opposed to peacefulness, accommodation, non-injury, non-pridefulness and similar values, can be neutralized by choosing to entertain *pratipakṣa bhāvanā*, the opposite point of view. Jealousy, resentment, selfishness and self-condemnation are only a few of the attitudes which can be handled by *pratipakṣa bhāvanā*. *Pratipakṣa bhāvanā* is a daily act of the mind, like bathing for the body. *Pratipakṣa bhāvanā* thoughts at first may seem false but as they are deliberately done, day by day, they will become real and spontaneous. A mind kept clean in this manner will be a quiet and alert mind. A clean, quiet, alert mind is comfortable with itself and ready to learn and to be taught.

The knowledge of the Self is not a partial knowledge – it is not like the knowledge of a given discipline but is something total, the total content of all knowledge. For this goal, the goal in which all other goals resolve, total commitment is involved. In this total commitment, there must be *sthairyam*, steadiness.

When Lord *Kṛṣṇa* tells Arjuna that *ātmavinigraha*, mastery over the mind, is part of the preparatory knowledge for Self-knowledge, this qualification must be taken as relative. What is relative mastery? Complete mastery is characterized by spontaneity. If I am impulsive or conditioned, I am not a master. If I am deliberate, I am not a complete master. But through deliberateness I can be a relative master. Relative mastery is characterized by alertness and deliberateness. I have relative mastery over my ways of thinking when I rationally examine my thoughts and either consciously accept them or dismiss them. Relative mastery means both submitting all impulse to rational scrutiny and breaking any habit of lapsing into mechanicalness.

We are not separate from the creation. Each one is a part of the creation, a small link in the chain of creation in which everything is interrelated. And so we have a role to play like even a small gland in the body-politic has a role to play. We are also a part of the creation and so we also have to play our part. We are not meant to be merely the witnesses in the creation; we are meant to be participants.

Man is a Self-conscious being, gifted with the faculty of choice. Human mind is not pre-programmed like that of animals and plants and so man has to make a choice in every situation. He has the freedom to do something one way, or to do it differently or not to do it altogether. He has to learn what is proper for him under a given situation and do so accordingly. This is called duty.

Duty is that which must be done whether or not it is in agreement with my likes and dislikes. If the like and duty coincide, the action becomes spontaneous. If the like does not coincide with the duty, the action becomes deliberate – this is *karma yōga* with respect to action. If I do what I fancy, regardless of whether it is proper or not, it is an impulsive action. An impulsive person is in the hands of likes and dislikes and therefore full of conflicts. A deliberate person, who does what should be done, releases the mind from likes and dislikes in course of time. The sense of duty grows upon the person such that the duties are performed as naturally as breathing and eating. The mind of such a person is a fit instrument to appreciate the teaching of *Vēdānta*.

The Lord is the author of the creation and therefore the author of the laws governing the creation. So when the laws are said to have produced the result, it is the Lord who has actually produced it. So every result comes from the Lord. For a devotee, the entire life is based on this fact. I have choice only in performing the action but the result is according to the desire of the Lord. The Lord is impartial and so only the right result comes to me. This understanding brings about an attitude towards the result. The result becomes *prasāda*.

Human being is blessed with the faculty of choice, which no other living being seems to enjoy. With discriminative intellect, we can choose, plan and perform an action with a view to obtaining a desired result, but we have no choice in determining the result of the action. The result is governed by the law of action, the law of cause and effect. The law of action is not within our control. Innumerable factors go into determining the result and we do not have the knowledge of all of them. We know a few of the laws and based on that knowledge, we can judge the outcome of an action with a certain probability but there cannot be certainty.

Action can never fail us; it only produces result. A given expectation may be said to have failed but I have not failed. That I have failed or the action has failed, is a wrong conclusion; only the expectation has been wrong. So nobody has failed. It is only a matter of wrong judgment because man is not omniscient, and so he cannot know all the factors that shape the actions. No one can precisely predict the result. Everyone can make an error of judgment and do. One day or the other, everyone is likely to commit a mistake. But we should understand that we have the freedom or *adhikāra* in *karma* alone and that whatever result comes, is in accordance with the laws governing the action. And we did not produce the laws nor did our forefathers. We call him *Īśvara* or the Lord who is the author of the creation and its laws.

A tranquil, alert, fresh, attentive mind is the mind that learns. But such a mind cannot be acquired as long as likes and dislikes have a hold on the mind. The seekers are advised to perform action with the attitude of *karma yōga*; do whatever must be done and accept the result as *prasāda* from the Lord. There is no attachment to the result; that is, there is no insistence that the result should be in accordance with one's expectation. Then the result loses the capacity to create any reactions and agitations in one's mind. With this alert *buddhi* all the likes and dislikes are rendered ineffective like roasted seeds which cannot sprout. So the *prasāda buddhi* is an insulation against the effects of likes and dislikes.

Action can produce likes and dislikes only if the result is looked upon as a success or a failure. When the result is looked upon as a function of the invariable laws of action, or if it is looked upon as *prasāda* from the Lord, the reaction of success and failure is avoided. The mind is calm and tranquil in spite of apparent successes and failures and no new likes and dislikes are created. The existing likes and dislikes will no doubt create desires and produce actions but creation of new likes and dislikes are avoided. The vicious chain of action-success/failure-likes/dislikes-desire-action is broken. With the attitude of *prasāda buddhi*, or *karma yōga* with respect to the result, an action which is born of likes and dislikes becomes the means of eliminating the very likes and dislikes. The mind free from the reactions of success and failure is free from the agitations of elation and depression. Such a mind is a contemplative mind. It can evaluate the results and learn.

Action is recommended for everyone who entertains desires in the mind. We do not know all the varieties of likes and dislikes hidden in the mind; action is the only way for them to express themselves. They express as action every time and get neutralized. In course of time the mind becomes relatively quiet, freed from the hold of likes and dislikes. Such a mind discovers freedom.

That the mind changes is a blessing. Perception is also not a problem because a human being has sense organs and there are corresponding sense objects in the world. Therefore, this is also a blessing. Thought itself is not a problem because every object creates a relevant thought. Thinking is not a problem nor is inquiry or discovery a problem. Memory is not a problem. Thus a changing mind, perceptions, thoughts, memories – none of these is a problem for the human being. What creates problem is something else – it is the incapacity of the mind to abide in itself when you want it to abide.

A human being is gifted with the ability to choose the action but that does not happen when you react, when you act mechanically. You are a conscious being enjoying a faculty of choice. All the actions should be blessed by reasoning or by the faculty of choice. Every action should have the sanction, should have the signature of your reasoning. Your action can be unreasonable but then you can learn.

We cannot compartmentalize the life into “casual” and “serious.” Life is a series of experiences and such compartments are meaningless. We cannot divide life as business, family, spiritual, material, etc. Life is a whole and it cannot be compartmentalized. Everyone is a combination of materialistic, spiritual, etc., and so everything should be either taken seriously or casually. Nothing is more profound or more profane than the other. In as much as Brahman is the substratum of everything, everything is profound and in as much as everything is *mithyā*, unreal, it is all profane.

Even though objects are many and because of which the thoughts are also constantly flowing, there is a gap between any two successive thoughts. We do not notice this gap because the thought flow is rapid. But there is a stage between any two thoughts when there is no tangible thought. Am I present when there is no thought? Yes, I am present in the form of the thought-free state; formless, silence, awareness I am. In that gap, I exist as silence, *śānti*, peace.

The one end everyone is seeking in life is to be free, complete, full. But freedom is the innate nature of every being and so what denies me the freedom is the ignorance of the nature of the Self. Self-ignorance or *āvaraṇa* is thus the primary obstacle that denies me myself and that is removed by the knowledge of the Self gained as a result of *vicāra* or enquiry into the Self by analysis of the scriptural teachings unfolded by the teacher. This is the primary *sādhana* for knowing the Self, for gaining freedom. Two secondary means or *sādhana*s are recommended for the elimination of two secondary obstacles which are *mala* or impurity in the form of likes and dislikes and *vikṣēpa* or distraction or restlessness of the mind. The secondary *sādhana*s are *karma yōga* for the elimination of *mala* and *upāsana* (worship) and *japa* for the elimination of *vikṣēpa*.

Śama, *dama*, and *samādhāna* are Sanskrit terms often used to indicate different aspects of *ātmavinigraha*, mastery over the mind. *Śama* is understood to mean discipline over thinking at the level where the thoughts arise whereas, *dama* indicates choice exercised over thoughts and actions at the level of sense organ expression. *Samādhāna* means *cittaikāgratā* which literally indicates single pointedness of the mind, the art of applying the mind consistently to a given pursuit for a length of time. The exercise at the level of *śama* and *dama* establishes an abiding mind capable of *samādhāna*. The art of *samādhāna* or *cittaikāgratā* can then be learned by beginning to apply the mind with a sharpened awareness for distractions.

All of *ātmavinigraha*, mastery over the mind, is a matter of alertness and awareness. If I am alert and conscious of what my mind is doing, I always have choice over my ways of my thinking. With choice, I can change. I can conform behavior to values. With choice, I can learn from mistakes. With choice, I can hold to commitments in the face of distraction. Choice requires alertness which makes possible relative mastery over my ways of thinking.

Dispassion is not suppression of desire. Dispassion and self-suppression are contradictory states of mind; they are mutually exclusive. Self-suppression is predicated on the presence of passion to be overpowered or crushed. In dispassion there is nothing that requires suppression. Dispassion is gained by clearly seeing objects for just what they are, without subjective distortion, and how objects relate to me, to my happiness and my welfare.

To become free from the compelling drive that is called *rāga*, the desire for *artha*, things, and *kāma*, pleasures, I must by analysis and discernment recognize that no number of things ever makes me secure nor does any amount of pleasure fill my sense of emptiness. I must discover that my struggle to fulfill my senses of want is endless. No accumulation of wealth is ever enough to silence the inner anxiety, no pleasure sufficient to bring lasting fulfillment.

When I don't place my security, my fullness, my happiness on things, they gain an objective disposition for me. They become just objects for me, which I can assess for what they are rather than for what I subjectively expect from them. I see money as money, not as a guarantee against insecurity. I see a house as a house, not as a source of happiness. I see land as land, not as an extension of myself through possession. I see things as they are and do not give them any extra subjective value. When objects are stripped of the subjective values (which they seem to have when I look at them as a source of happiness) projected upon them by me, I am objective about them. I am dispassionate. This is the mental state of *vairāgya*.

V*airāgya*, dispassion, is a state of mind brought about by understanding, not a state of mind compelled by a commitment to self-denial or deprivation. *Vairāgya* is not born out of fear or teeth-clenched effort of will but is born of sheer understanding. It is a knowledge produced by observation, inquiry and analysis, in which I look at what and why I desire and what I achieve through fulfillment of my desires. The understanding born of this analysis reduces this world to an objective fact for me, releases it from the tangle of my own subjectivity, the tangles of my *rāgas* and *dvēṣas*, my likes and dislikes which bind me to situational happiness.

It is my subjective value for things which makes what is a simple object into an object of special distinction, an object peculiarly important to me. By such objects I become bound. Why? Because I bind myself, not because the objects bind me. I am bound to objects because of the subjective value I place on them, a subjective value based upon my failure to understand their inability ever to deliver what I expect from them. Things do not catch and hold me. I catch them. The handle is in myself – my subjective values based upon failure to understand the limitations of things to fulfill me. When I understand, the handle disappears and I see things as they are. This state of seeing is called *indriyārthēṣu vairāgyam*, dispassion toward sense objects.

In correct understanding of myself and my relationship to the world there is no room for either pride or self-condemnation. I see the world – me included – as it is: the world is filled with wonderful opportunities; therefore, I make use of these opportunities as a source of learning, I make use of this vehicle, the body-mind etc., to the best of my ability. It is my means to shed ignorance. I see that personal credit for anything is irrelevant and cannot be substantiated. I simply enjoy the world as a field for the discovery of knowledge, without pride, without egotism. This is the attitude of *anahaṅkāra*, freedom from an individualized ‘I’ identification.

See life objectively, just as it is, so that you will be able to make use of the time that is available in your hands right now. Available time is precious time. Make use of it – consciously, alertly. Consciously use your time for your activities and pursuits. Work. Play. Sleep. Eating, relaxing, walking, make use of time consciously and then you won't find one day that time has passed over you and suddenly you are old. If you make use of time alertly, consciously, you are a Swami of time, a master of time.

A possessory attitude rather than an ownership attitude toward anything is a relief whether it be towards house, money or one's own body. A possessory attitude puts the relationship with the thing claimed in factual perspective which promotes dispassion and objectivity. The relationship is seen for what it is; non-exclusive, impermanent but at the same time a presently existing entrustment of possession to be enjoyed and properly maintained. This is the right attitude toward my mind, toward any wealth I may have, toward the people around me – to all of them I relate myself with *asakti*, with no clinging attachment, no attitude of ownership. I recognize ownership as purely notional; that possession alone is factual. I reduce all my false notional ownership relationships to factual relationships.

One gains dispassion toward sense objects when one recognizes the sense objects do not have the capacity to produce lasting happiness or security. In *asakti* the dispassion highlighted is toward the relationship between oneself and things. It is the dispassion discovered when one sees clearly that there can be no valid nor lasting 'attachedness' to anything; that is, there is no valid 'ownership' of anything.

There are pleasant facts and unpleasant facts. There are comfortable facts and uncomfortable facts and all the time the facts keep changing: now pleasant, now not so pleasant; now comfortable, now uncomfortable. The weather is too hot; the weather is just right; the weather is too cold. I feel tip-top; I have come down with the flu. Each day brings its facts of all kinds. My job is to greet all the facts with sameness of mind. I accept and enjoy the comfortable facts for what they are, the facts of the moment. Similarly, I accept without reaction the uncomfortable facts for what they are. I simply do whatever the situation calls for. If I can make an uncomfortable fact more comfortable, I do so. If I cannot, I accept and do whatever is required.

The factual response is the approach to situations of a truly practical person. One is most practical when one sees situations objectively. This is the real human strength. Human strength is not found in powerful miracles but in the quiet mind of the one who faces situations as they are. Such a one is a strong person. Human weakness is the inability to accept situations, to face facts. Human strength is the strength of reducing situations to simple facts.

When I strip away all of my subjective projections from the facts of each situation, I will have sameness of mind in every situation. It is not the fact but my like or dislike projected onto the fact that causes my mind to react. As I reduce situations to facts without projection of my emotional reactions upon them, my mind assumes a poise that makes it easier to appreciate the vision of *Vēdānta*. A relatively poised mind – one not muddled by projections upon itself and external situations – is necessary to appreciate the teaching of *Vēdānta* which deals with the nature of ‘facts.’

V*ēdānta* reveals the reality of the ‘facts’ of the objective world to be but *mithyā*, ‘apparent.’ However, for the mind to be ready to see the ‘apparentness’ of that which is ‘objective’ (and to be ready to discover what it really is seeking – non-objectifiable, non-negatable reality), it must first strip its own subjectivity from objective reality. When I am projecting upon the facts of the objective world, my own subjective reality based upon my likes and dislikes, I will be too muddled to see the truth found in the teaching of *Vēdānta* which, distinguishing the apparently real, unfolds the nature of Reality itself.

A mind that is ready for the teaching of *Vēdānta* is a mind which sees objective fact objectively, which does not convert fact into a subjective problem but meets each situation with sameness of attitude, with a mental poise free from complaint. Such a mind, without subjective reaction, simply, quietly determines what needs to be done in a particular situation.

The result of any action is always appropriate to the action, that is, the result is in accordance with the laws of the Lord, but those laws are not all known to me. The result is shaped by many laws – known laws, unknown laws, visible laws, invisible laws. I can have no knowledge or control over all the factors involved in producing a result. The actual result is always taken care of by the interplay of all the appropriate natural laws of the creation. Therefore any result really comes from the Creator, the Lord.

Prasāda buddhi, the graceful acceptance of all results, brings, *nityaṃ samacittatvam*, sameness of the mind in the face of the desirable or the undesirable. Thus *nityaṃ samacittatvam* is the result of the more basic attitude of *prasāda buddhi* which itself is grounded in a steadfast devotion to the Lord, seeing the Lord as the giver of the results of all actions.

If there is *mayi ananyayōgēna avyabhicāriṇī bhaktiḥ*, unswerving devotion to Me (the Lord) through seeing nothing other than Me (the Lord) as the giver of the results, there naturally will be *nityaṃ ca samacittatvam iṣṭāniṣṭōpapattiṣu*, sameness of mind for desirable and undesirable results. This kind of devotion frees one from any kind of reaction. One simply sees things just as they are, as simple facts. Facts become problems only because I refuse to accept them. I refuse to accept facts because I had wanted them to be different. But if, when the facts arrive, when expectations turn into result, I take the result as *prasāda*, there will be no refusal of acceptance.

When I have the attitude of *ananyayōgēna bhaktiḥ*, non-separate devotion toward the Lord, my standpoint toward myself, toward my actions and the results that come, will be a factual attitude. I will see that as a human being enjoying free will, I can choose to act or not to act, but the results of my actions are not subject to my choice. This understanding will free me to review the results factually and choose further actions rationally. However, when my attitude is that (i) I am the cause of the results of my actions, and (ii) the acceptability of the results of my action is determined by what I like and what I dislike, I will have a frame of mind which leads to responding to the world with reactions and not action. A mind in the grip of reaction loses its freedom of will to act.

A mind graced by the devotion which sees the Lord as the giver of all the results of action will have a few reactions because it knows: human freedom of will is given to choose actions not their results; results come from the Lord in accordance with His laws; because results come from Him, there never is a wrong result nor a result which one does not accept. Cheerfully, one accepts, with even mind, what comes from His hand. Such a mind, free from reactions is quiet and receptive. It can deal with negative emotions and is master over its mood. Objective and serene, a mind like this, is ready to discover the fact of *ananyayōga* – the fact of one’s non-separateness from the Lord and creation.

V*icāra*, inquiry into the basic, profound questions about myself such as Who am I? What is this creation? Who is God? What is the relationship between me, God and the creation?, requires special sensitivity of the mind, a sensitivity beyond what is needed to inquire into the functioning or description of tangible objects or processes. *Vicāra* into something tangible – how to make bread or even the grammar of a language – is aided by having changing objects to see, to watch; one can see the *vikāra* (modifications) taking place upon things, whether in a pan of dough or upon the nouns and verbs. But when the *vicāra* is inquiry into the self, we are dealing with something which, although fundamental, is not tangible. Self is not a tangible object which lends itself to trial and error methods, checked by gross perceptions. The knowledge of the self must be seen as a whole. To appreciate the knowledge of the Self, to see the Self for the non-objectifiable wholeness which it is, requires a mind that is contemplative and sensitive.

Limitlessness is not something that can be created or produced. If limitlessness exists, it is ever existent – an ever existent fact to be discovered. If my essential nature is that of a limited being, I can never become limitless. Limitlessness, by definition, can never be the end product of a process of becoming. An endless series of limited things will not constitute limitlessness. Limited means cannot produce limitlessness. Limitlessness either is or it is not.

The basic knowledge to be discovered in life is the knowledge of what is: what is real, what is fundamental. What is sought is the knowledge of the Truth or fundamental nature of oneself, the creation and the Creator. This knowledge of the Truth of what is – the Truth of everything – is the meaning of *tattvajñānam*. The basic knowledge of the Truth can also be called the knowledge of the Self, *ātmajñānam*, because, upon inquiry, the irreducible reality of oneself turns out to be not different from the irreducible reality of God and creation. In fact, this value can be described as not losing sight of Self-knowledge as one's primary goal – having an overwhelming value for that goal so that it does not become eclipsed by other goals but remains always in one's mind as the primary purpose in life, the recognized end behind all other ends that may be sought.

Although my usual experience is that of being limited, on the basis of my innate need to be free, backed by limitations that freedom may be my nature, I am led to search for knowledge of the Truth of myself to discover whether or not I am that being I want to be. If the freedom I seek is an accomplished fact, my failure to appreciate that fact can only be due to ignorance; and if my only problem is one of ignorance, search for the liberation becomes a search for the knowledge which will dispel the ignorance that keeps me from knowing myself as I am.

The last section of the *Vēdas*, the *Upaniṣads* known as *Vēdānta* or as the *Jñānakāṇḍa* (the part relating to knowledge) does not deal with the achievement of unachieved results. *Vēdānta* involves no means and ends. It just throws light upon what is. Knowledge is just seeing what is. *Vēdānta* lights up the fact. Whether *Vēdānta* talks about the world, or about creation, or about God, the Creator, or about the *dēvatās* or about any other subject, all discussion only throws light upon one basic fact: that there is no difference between the individual, the world and God. This non-dual fact of the identity of me, God and the world is *tattva*, the basic, irreducible Truth of everything. And, it is this *tattva*, Truth, which is unfolded by the teaching of *Vēdānta*.

Every untruth is always in some sense connected to the truth (although perhaps not in such an obvious sense as a leg or trunk is connected to the elephant). It is truth when an untruth is known as untruth; in this sense every untruth is connected to truth. In another sense there is a connection because the very status of untruth is dependent upon some truth – fact which the very untruth contradicts or does not completely or adequately reflect. Without truth, there could be no untruth. If one inquires sufficiently into untruth the inquiry will lead to truth. For example, in the classic *Vēdānta* illustration of the ‘rope-snake’ in which a coil of rope mistakenly is thought to be snake, inquiry into the nature of the ‘snake’ will reveal the rope, the rope being the truth of the ‘snake.’

The study of *Vēdānta* (*śravaṇam*) includes the analysis of untruth in order that with the recognition of the untruth as untruth the proper kind of inquiry can be undertaken to reveal Truth. The truths (sense organ data and logical conclusions based on sense data) gathered through the use of one's ordinary means of knowledge are all 'blind men's elephant-truths'; at best such 'truths' are only functional, negatable 'facts', immediately useful but subject to contradiction by other 'truths' and by complete Truth. Just as the fact of the complete elephant contradicts the incomplete, wrongly identified truths of its parts, so does the absolute Truth of 'what is' contradict both the negatable truths of the *pramāṇas* which reveal objectifiable reality and the conclusions of philosophies based on incomplete truth or untruth.

Ś*ravaṇam*, hearing, is the primary *sādhana* to gain the knowledge of Oneself. *Mananam*, reflection, frees the knowledge from doubts. *Nididhyāsanam*, contemplation, eliminates the habitual erroneous notions which obstruct the knowledge. *Mananam* and *nididhyāsanam* are aids to *śravaṇam*. Notwithstanding *śravaṇa* and *manana* there may be some problem with habitual thinking which opposes the fact of oneself. Before ‘hearing’ and ‘reflection’ the erroneous notions of opposite thinking are conclusive. But after knowledge such notions are habitual rather than conclusive. To eliminate habitual ‘opposite thinking’, contemplate. Contemplate on what you know to be yourself. See the fact that you are fullness that knows no lack. The more familiar one becomes with the fact of oneself, the less will be the opposite attitude.

The ends and means I want (or do not want) others to choose because of the way such choices affect me establish a standard in me by which I judge the propriety of the goals and the means I choose myself – a standard which takes into consideration the impact of my choices upon others. Such values comprise commonsense ethics, which are recognized and confirmed scripturally in a more comprehensive ethical doctrine – religious in nature – called *dharma*.

The religious ethics called *dharma*, found in the *Vēda*, confirm commonsense standards, specify further religious “do’s and don’ts”, and add the concept of *puṇya* and *pāpa*—results produced by good or bad actions, now or hereafter. According to *dharma*, human action has an unseen result as well as an immediate tangible result. The unseen result of the action accrues in subtle form to the account of the “doer” of the action and in time, will fructify tangibly for him as a “good” or “bad” experience – something pleasurable or painful. The subtle result of good action, *puṇya*, fructifies as pleasure; the subtle result of bad action, *pāpa*, fructifies as pain.

Dharma occupies the first place in four categories of human goals, because the pursuit of security, *artha*, and pleasures, *kāma*, needs to be governed by ethical standards. *Artha*, striving for security, comes second, because it is the foremost desire for everyone. Everyone is obedient under the doctor's scalpel precisely because everyone wants to live. Granted life, one then wants to be happy, to pursue pleasures, *kāma*. I want to live and live happily; and both pursuits, the struggle for security and the search for pleasure, must be governed by ethics. The last category is the goal of liberation, *mōkṣa*, ranked last because it becomes a direct pursuit only when one has realized the limitations inherent in the first three pursuits.

M*ōkṣa*, like *dharma*, is a peculiarly human pursuit not shared by other creatures. Even among human beings, liberation is a conscious concern of only a few. These few recognize that what they want is not more security or more pleasure but freedom itself – freedom from all desires. Everyone has some moments of freedom, moments when one seems to “fall into place.” When I “fall into place” I am free. When I do not want anything to be different, I know that I have fallen into place with what is. I know fulfillment. I need to make no change to become contented. I am for the moment free from the need to struggle for some change in me or the circumstances. If I should fall into place permanently, requiring no more change in anything, my life would then be fulfilled and the struggle would be over. The pursuit of *mōkṣa* is the direct pursuit of that freedom everyone has experienced for brief moments when everything has “fallen into place.”

The gain of security and pleasures assumes such importance because it is through their gain that one hopes to escape from want, inadequacy, and incompleteness and become a free, adequate person. “I want to be a complete person. As I am, I am not complete”, is the common experience of everyone. This urge to be complete stems from seeing oneself as apparently incomplete. The high degree of human capability for self-perception makes possible the human judgment of lack of completeness. All struggles in life are expressions of the urge to be complete. The conclusion that I am an incomplete person either accurately reflects my nature, or is a mistake. This will have to be decided. If it reflects my true nature, there is no need to seek further knowledge about myself for the sake of changing my conclusion that I am incomplete. On the other hand, if it is an erroneous conclusion, then I need to know more about myself in order to discover the completeness that seems to be hidden from me. Until it is determined whether I am complete or incomplete, the fact is that I see myself as an incomplete person.

If you look at closely the variety of changes you work to bring about in the situations in your life, you will find that you make changes so that you will feel adequate. My attempt to change the situation is really an attempt to change myself. I do not try to change the situation in which I am at home with myself. But when I see myself as inadequate, I add new things into my situation so that I may feel better; or, I may eliminate some aspects from the situation in order to be comfortable.

Most changes one seeks are not for the sake of the change, but for one's own sake. When I am comfortable I stop all compulsive change-seeking. Through most of my change-seeking I am actually interested in a change in myself. The change I really want is the one that will make me comfortable in any situation – so adequate, so complete that no situation will bother me. If I became so, situational change for the sake of completeness would not be necessary for me. Compulsive change-seeking centers on oneself alone – in the hope that through change one can become a non-deficient, adequate person.

The gain of pleasure rests upon the convergence of three constantly changing factors, never fully predictable, nor, even under one's control. Moments of pleasure require the availability of the object, availability of the appropriate, effective instrument for enjoying the object, and the presence of the proper frame of mind for enjoyment of the object. Of course, we do have moments of joy from time to time, but being dependent upon the alignment of three changing factors they last but a moment. The objects of enjoyment are limited, bound by time. In the very process of enjoyment some gets expended, and all are subject to change, in the hands of time. The instruments of enjoyment also are time-bound, limited, and not capable of consistent performance. And the mind, being what it is – whimsical, capricious – gets tired of what it once eagerly desired and sought. Thus, trying to maintain a moment of pleasure is like throwing a saddle over three wild horses, sitting astride all three, and being able to successfully guide them in one direction.

Maturity is shown not by seeking better experiences but by discovering, through an analysis of experiences, the basic human problem: what one wants is to be non-deficient, adequate and that experiences do not make one non-deficient, adequate. A mature person, then, is someone who, having analyzed his own experiences, has discovered that the total adequacy he seeks, is not gained through effort. He knows that regardless of his experiences he finds himself to be an incomplete person at all times. He recognizes that what he really wants is a drastic change in himself, not a situational change. He wants some change that will make him a non-deficient, completely adequate person. He sees also that all the changes that he wants to bring about are only changes for the sake of helping him become an adequate person.

Knowledge is the grasp of what is. Experience is the direct perceptual participation in an event. Experience can lead to knowledge, but the impression of experience need not be knowledge. Experience has to be assimilated in terms of knowledge. Knowledge includes experience. Knowledge can contradict experience. Knowledge can also resolve the contradictions in experience. Knowledge cannot be contradicted.

Everyone is born vastly ignorant. Not absolutely ignorant, because even a tiny infant, although his ignorance is immense, knows a few basic things: to ask for food; to fear a fall; to recognize a smile. The vast ignorance of the newborn includes the ignorance of the self. The ignorance with which one begins life includes ignorance of oneself as well as ignorance of everything else. Ignorance is one thing for which one need not work. As one gains knowledge through the use of valid means of knowledge, *pramāṇa*, one sheds ignorance.

Ignorance is something one is born with. Knowledge is nothing but the shedding of it, *ajñāna nivṛtti*. The gain of knowledge is not creation, *śṛṣṭi*. The gain of knowledge is only a negation – negation of ignorance. Knowledge is covered with ignorance. All one does is remove ignorance; then knowledge is so to speak gained. Knowledge is not something produced or created. Knowledge always is. Knowledge is what is.

Achievement in life falls under two categories. The first category, which we know very well, is the achievement of the not-yet-achieved, *aprāptasya prāpti*; the second, not uncommon but less well recognized, is the achievement of that which is already achieved, *prāptasya prāpti*. *Aprāptasya prāpti*, being dependent upon effort, will necessarily be limited. Therefore, the achievement of adequacy which is the fourth human goal, liberation or *mōkṣa*, cannot fall under the heading of the not-yet-achieved. The adequacy one seeks is nothing less than limitlessness. One seeks to discover oneself as a full, complete, adequate being without even any hint of limitation. This discovery does not – cannot – take place through a process of becoming.

For self-knowledge, self-inquiry is necessary. Inquiry is necessary because of the contradictory information my experiences have given me about myself. I have had two types of experiences; one type of experience has led me to conclude that I am inadequate; another type has shown me to be an adequate being. I need to reconcile these two types of experiences to see the fact that I am an adequate being. To accomplish this reconciliation I must conduct a self-inquiry called *ātma vicāra*. This inquiry into the self which leads to discovery of the nature of oneself, is called *Vēdānta*.

If there is a solution to the peculiar human problem of one's constant struggle for completeness, then that solution lies in knowledge alone. When it has become clear to me that it is not possible for me to become a complete, adequate being through the gain or loss of things, nor can I rid myself of the urge to become an adequate being, then I know I must gain knowledge of myself. The adequate being I want to be cannot be produced by a process of becoming. No action can produce limitlessness; therefore, there is only one way out – not the one of action, but the one of knowledge. To gain the limitlessness I seek, I must already be that fully adequate being whose adequacy is hidden by ignorance. I need a means to shed that ignorance.

The gain of the adequacy that everyone seeks, has to be a gain that does not involve a process of becoming; it has to be a gain without effort. The only thing that can be gained without effort is something that has been gained already; something already there. It is necessary to “gain” something that is already there when that something is separated from the seeker, not by time or distance, but by ignorance. If the seeker does not know that what he seeks is there, it will be “as though” away from him. To gain such a thing requires not action, but knowledge.

All objects other than oneself can be known from perceptual data and perception-based inference. But what is the means of knowing the knower, the subject? There does not seem to be a way at one's disposal to know oneself, the knower, who knows the objects. For knowing oneself there is a need for a valid means of knowledge capable of dispelling self-ignorance – some means other than sense-based perception and inference. Words, *śabda*, in their own right, independent of perception, can be a valid means of knowledge.

The knowledge brought by words can be direct or indirect. Whether the words bring direct or indirect knowledge depends upon the object. If the object is beyond the scope of one's perception or experience, the knowledge born will be indirect. Indirect knowledge, no matter how useful, is never completely true to the object. It is always subject to a later modification upon direct knowledge. However, if the object is not away from one but is at hand, experienced but not recognized, then words can give direct knowledge, a knowledge true to the nature of the object.

When it is said that one is self-ignorant, this does not mean that one is totally without knowledge of oneself. If one were totally ignorant about oneself, a mistake about oneself could not be committed. If I did not have the kind of evolved mind that can appreciate “I am”, then I would not consider myself to be an inadequate being. If “I am” is unknown to me then I cannot conclude that “I am inadequate.” When I have no consciousness of an object, I do not commit a mistake with regard to it. However, when I am conscious of something but don’t recognize it for what it is, it is then that I commit a mistake. When something is an immediate, existent fact, not recognized out of ignorance, words can produce direct knowledge of that fact. In fact, if adequacy is one’s nature, then when a teacher creates the appropriate context for the words to convey their meaning, the statement, *tat tvam asi*, “that thou art” – you are that adequate being you seek to be – can give direct knowledge of oneself as an adequate being.

Like any instrument of knowledge, words must be handled appropriately under the right conditions so that they give valid knowledge of the object. For eyes to work, there must be enough light. For ears to discriminate a given sound, there must be the right volume, the right distance, and the right notes. For the nose to work, there must be no blockage from cold. For the words of *Vēdānta* to work as an instrument of knowledge, they must be properly heard from the teacher who knowing the methodology can make the words deliver the knowledge of oneself. Words unfolded in a particular context – used in accordance with a particular methodology – are the means of knowing oneself.

M*ōkṣa* is not an equivalent to salvation, as is commonly thought. Nor is it some kind of accomplishment other than yourself. As freedom from something, however, *mōkṣa* could be considered a negative accomplishment of sorts. Nevertheless, there is nothing more positive than *mōkṣa*. *Mōkṣa* is not freedom from *artha*, security, or *kāma*, pleasure. That which *artha* provides, *mōkṣa* cannot provide. But that which *mōkṣa* provides cannot be provided by *artha*, *kāma* and *dharma* combined. A person who has *mōkṣa* also has the freedom to pursue the other three human ends, *artha*, *kāma*, and *dharma*, if he or she so chooses. This, then, is real freedom and not freedom from these pursuits.

The culmination of one's life is not aging; it is the ability to discern oneself as one who is secure and happy. This discerning is part of growing up. Once the fact that one is secure and happy has been discerned, even though one may continue in one's various *artha* and *kāma* pursuits, one has taken the necessary step for *mōkṣa*. However small the step, the step has been made. Having "stepped into" the teaching of *Vēdānta*, the necessary step has been taken.

Marriage cannot be an end in itself. If it is, there will be problems and the marriage will end. Marriage is a means, not an end, whereby husband and wife each seek freedom from insecurity. Freedom from insecurity is their common end and they help each other. Together, as companions, they make the journey. This most significant aspect of marriage is acknowledged in the seven steps of a Hindu marriage ceremony. Only when these seven steps have been taken has the marriage taken place. Each of the seven steps represents one aspect of the couple's journey for which the destination is *mōkṣa*.

When we say that something is beyond one's inference and perception, we do not mean that is beyond the mind. We mean it is not available for one's inference and perception. Still it has to be known and any knowledge takes place only in the mind. Therefore, where does self-knowledge take place? Only in the mind (*manasā ēva anudraṣṭavyam*). Because all knowledge has to take place in the mind, you cannot go "beyond the mind" to gain self-knowledge.

There are two types of subject matter, *sādhana* and *siddha*. *Sādhya* is what is to be accomplished. Any question related to *sādhya* is only to understand how to do something, like cooking, for example. There is an order governing how everything has to be done. Certain elements are involved and, therefore, must be understood. What has to be done is also understood. And that is the end of it. One may do it or not do it. By practice, one eventually acquires the knack for it. When the subject matter is something you have to accomplish later, when it is dealing with means and ends (*sādhana* and *sādhya*), there can be choice.

There is no choice involved when what is to be accomplished is already accomplished, *siddha*, but not understood. Knowledge is not open to choice; it is always true to its object. Nor do I have a choice in knowledge once the means of the knowledge and the object of knowledge are aligned. To know an already accomplished fact requires proper questioning in order to remove whatever may be blocking the knowledge from taking place. Why should you be denied the knowledge of yourself once it is unfolded? What exactly is the obstruction? Is it that you do not follow what is being said? And, once the obstructions have been identified, they have to be removed, one by one, because you are Brahman. The whole pursuit, then, is one of removing all doubts.

There are many ways of looking at the meaning of the word *Nārāyaṇa*. The word *nara* is used to refer to a human being. It also means indestructible, that which always remains (*na rīyatē*, not destroyed). *Nara*, therefore, can only refer to that which pervades everything and is timeless *ātmā*. *Ātmā* refers to “I”, the essence of the subject who performs various actions and enjoys various forms of experiences. Therefore, the real meaning of the word *nara* is to be understood from the *śāstra* to be the all pervasive and timeless *ātmā*, *paramātmā*. That which belongs to *nara*, is *nāram* or *jagat*, the world. The world is born out of the all-pervasive, timeless *paramātmā*, is sustained by *paramātmā*, and goes back to *paramātmā*. *Nara*, then, is the entire world and the one who knows it (*ēti*) is *Nārāyaṇa*, the omniscient Lord, *Paramēśvara*, with reference to the world. Therefore, the same *ātmā*, the *nara-ātmā*, the human being, is the omniscient *paramātmā*, *Paramēśvara*, the Lord.

In nonduality there is no second thing. Only in duality can there be fear. Fear cannot exist in nonduality because there is no second thing to fear. That you are everything, and that there is nothing other than you is what is meant by nonduality. Nonduality means that you are the whole. Nonduality is something to be understood by yourself.

No one understands totally what it means to be omniscient, to be all-knowing. To understand all-knowledge you must be all-knowing. However, our knowledge is limited. From this limited knowledge we can always know a little more, but that also will be limited. What we can very easily understand, however, is limitation in knowledge. From that we are able to appreciate that an omniscient person is free from limitation with respect to knowledge. This is what is meant by having an appreciation of omniscience. Who is the omniscient person? Is he or she another kind of person or one of us? There is, therefore, a great deal of knowledge to be known in order to appreciate *Īśvara*, the Lord.

Prayers are also a *karma*, an action. Because it is an action, it necessarily produces a result. The result is two-fold; seen (*dr̥ṣṭa-phala*) and unseen (*adr̥ṣṭa -phala*). That you are able to invoke the Lord is the result, the visible result, the *dr̥ṣṭa phala*. You have someone to rely on, someone who is all-powerful, almighty, all-knowledgeable, unlike anyone else you know. From this you can gain a certain strength, knowing that you can draw on this power to the extent that your capacity to draw on it allows. It is like having a huge reservoir of water. You need not bring all the water at once; it need not matter that your receptacle is small. Just knowing that there is so much water in the reservoir gives you a certain strength. There is also *adr̥ṣṭa phala*, the unseen result of prayer. This is what we call grace – benefits which we cannot attribute to a particular day's prayer.

Prayer is also a *karma*, an action. Because it is an action, it necessarily produces a result. The result is two-fold; seen (*dr̥ṣṭa-phala*) and unseen (*adr̥ṣṭa-phala*). In a prayer, what you really release is an invisible force causing the *adr̥ṣṭa phala*, the unseen result. The very system, the laws, that produce certain results and which are not visible to us are reorganized by prayer. Through prayer certain elements are introduced into this invisible system causing it to reorganize itself. However, we do not know how it will be reorganized. This is why the results are called grace. Since you are not able to relate an unseen result to a given course of action on your part in the immediate past, we are constrained to call this result grace. Because of this grace certain situations happen in our favor. What is generally taken to be impossible is made possible by grace. In fact, all of life is like that – the impossible made possible.

Every work begins with a prayer in recognition that any successful undertaking involves three important factors: effort (*prayatna*), time (*kāla*), and the unknown factor (*daiva*). We ourselves are capable of providing the effort and we can also wait out the time it takes for the result to come. Success or failure, however, is accounted for by the third factor, the unknown factor, *daiva*. Therefore, we cannot fail to take *daiva* into account. *Daiva* is there whether one takes it into account or not. In spite of all one's efforts and waiting, one does not always get what one wants. There seems, then, to be some unknown factor over which one has no control. This unknown factor is what we call as *daiva*, grace.

Grace is something you earn by prayer. It is not an arbitrary decision on the part of God. Otherwise, God would be just another autocrat who goes about distributing packets of grace every morning, and missing us more times than not. We do not consider grace to be the result of our actions because we do not know which action produces grace. Although it is the result of prayer, we have no direct knowledge of whether it is cumulative or the result of one single prayer. All we know is that there is a plus factor as well as a minus factor in our success. Thus we find that in spite of all our effort, there is something else which makes the difference between success and failure – *daiva*, the unknown factor.

The Lord is called Hari because he is the one whose grace removes everything. The Lord is a robber, a remover, of all your problems, of everything that you don't want. Lord Visnu is called Hari and Lord Siva is called Hara. Their names both come from the same root, *hr*, to rob, to remove.

We have a concept that everyone is born and we even have a horoscope to prove it. We know that we were born at a given time and take this to mean that there was a time when we were not. This is a well-trenched notion about the “I” – that I was born, that I am getting old, that I am going to die, and so on. If you were born, you will naturally get old. The notion that you are getting old is going to be there as long as you think you were born. In the vision of the *Gītā* there is no such thing as birth for you. *Ātmā*, “I am”, is not born.

In every perception, there are two *buddhis*. *Buddhi* is knowledge. One *buddhi* is with reference to the object and the other is with reference to its existence. One is called *sat-buddhi* (“is-*buddhi*”) and the other is *asat-buddhi* (“is-not-*buddhi*”). This “is-not-*buddhi*” has to be explained. The problem is that we take the “is-not” as “is” and get confused. This confusion leads to *sukha* and *duḥkha*. When we see a pot, a “pot-*buddhi*” is there and we say “The pot is.” That *buddhi*, having a pot as its object, undergoes a change similar to the changing frame in a moving film. It is this *buddhi* that is called *asat-buddhi*. That which does not undergo a change is called *sat-buddhi*. What is it that remains? *Sat*, “is”, is always there. “Is” always is. Therefore, it is called *sat*, that which does not change, whereas the object whose *buddhi* changes is called *asat*. The object is *asat* because the *buddhi* keeps changing. We recognize it differently. In every perception, then, there are two *buddhis*: the “object-*buddhi*” and the “is-*buddhi*.”

Sat-buddhi is existence-awareness, *sat-cit*. The *sat-buddhi*, always joins with something in the form of knowledge and reveals, for example, “The pot is.” When the pot is gone, the tree is. When the tree is gone, something else is. When everything is gone, I am (*aham asmi*). Between two thoughts everything is gone except awareness. And although everything does go between two thoughts, awareness does not require everything to go in order to be. Awareness is always there. Whatever comes, awareness is and if everything goes awareness is, There is only one thing that is *sat* and that is awareness.

The world is one of opposites – heat and cold, for example, and these opposites give us pleasure and pain (*sukha* and *duḥkha*). We cannot totally remove ourselves from the opposites or remove them from us. This is not to say that one should not make an attempt to improve a situation. A discriminative person remains the same with reference to the opposites. Pleasant and unpleasant situations do not affect the person. Such a person is aware of their coming and going, of their constantly changing nature. One who is discriminative, who accepts situations happily, and who does not allow himself or herself to be swayed by either pleasant or unpleasant situations is one who is fit for self-knowledge or one who has already has this knowledge.

The *ātmā* alone is and everything else is *nāma-rūpa*, only an addition to that *sat-buddhi*-an addition that does not bring about any addition. Just as the pot form does not bring about an addition to the clay, so too, the addition of a *nāma-rūpa* to the *sat-buddhi* does not bring about any change to it. This is the vision of *Gītā*. The *sat-buddhi* is always qualified by an attribute: “is” in the form of a tree, “is” in the form of a pot, “is” in the form of something, and that form keeps on changing. That which changes is *asat*, *mithyā*, whereas *sat* remains ever the same.

The symbol of knowledge, *jñāna-mudrā*, is formed by joining the three fingers and separating them from the index finger. The index finger then joins with the thumb to form a circle. The index finger, also called the accusing finger, stands for the self and usually joins the other three, representing the body, mind and senses. By separating them out, we see that the body, mind and senses are all *anātmā*, not I. Whatever is not *anātmā* is the self and is revealed by the teaching as identical with the limitless Brahman, represented by the thumb. Without the thumb the fingers cannot grasp anything. It is important that the thumb be away from the fingers in order to do so. Similarly, the limitless Brahman is away from, unattached to, the body, mind and senses. Without the limitless Brahman, the body, mind, and senses have no being, much less any function. Previously, we thought of ourselves as limited. The circle created by the index finger and thumb signifies that, because we now have the knowledge of nonduality, the sense of limitation is gone. Just as a circle has no beginning and no end, we know ourselves to be limitless.

When we say, “Thought is,” that “is-ness” is awareness, *ātmā*. Awareness is and thought is incidental; a thought is a *nāma-rūpa*. A thought that has an outside object is called perception. If there is an object perceived outside sense perception, then there is inferential knowledge, imagination, or memory. Whatever it is, the thought “is” is nothing but awareness conditioned by *nāma-rūpa* and if there is no *nāma-rūpa*, then what “is” is still awareness.

Sat is always only *cit-ātmā* and the word *satya* can only mean *cit*. Self-existent awareness alone can be *sat*. Either word, *sat* or *cit*, will bring in the other word because what has to be *cit* has to be *sat* and what has to be *sat* has to be *cit*. Thus, the *sat* will bring in *cit* and *cit* will bring in *sat*. Because everything depends upon this *sat-cit*, *sat-cit* becomes limitless (*ananta, ānanda*). If everything depends upon *sat-cit*, is there any limitation for *sat-cit-ātmā* ? There is no limit because everything is *sat-cit-ātmā*. Therefore, from the *sat-cit-ātmā* standpoint, there is no distance between itself and everything else nor is anything separate from it. The subject is *sat-cit-ātmā*, the object is *sat-cit-ātmā*, and the means of knowledge, the thought (*ṛtti*) is also *sat-cit-ātmā*. All three are *sat-cit-ātmā* alone. Thus, *sat-cit-ānanda* is the *svarūpa* of the *ātmā*; *sat* is not going to be nonexistent at any time; and *asat* cannot be kept as it is because it is constantly changing.

A product, a creation (*kārya*, *vikāra*), is entirely dependent on *satya*, that which is self-existent. If *satya* itself depended upon something else, it would not be *satya*. The self-existent *satya* is called *kāraṇa*, cause. That which is cause is said to be *satya* because it is a cause like clay with reference to a pot. Because clay is cause for the pot, it is *satya*-but only for the pot. Another example is thread as the cause or *satya* for the cloth. From these two examples, we see that *satya* is *kāraṇa* and *kāraṇa* is *satya*. A product is *mithyā*, *mithyā* meaning *asat*, because it is dependent upon a cause, as is the case for pot and cloth. Whereas, *sat*, is not dependent upon anything else and undergoes no change whatsoever.

It is generally thought that truth cannot be defined, whereas a *Vēdāntin* would say that truth alone can be defined. Everything else can be only conditionally defined and so requires further definition. That which is not negated at any time is defined as truth or *satya*. Because what is not negated at any time is *satya*, one cannot say that an object such as pot is *satya* because it did not always exist. Furthermore, it may be broken tomorrow. Nor is it always the same pot, since yesterday it was in one form and today it is in another. The pot is also not *tuccha*, totally nonexistent, because if it were nonexistent, it would not be perceived or known to hold water. Between *sat* and *tuccha*, then, there is a reality and the ontological definition for this order of reality is referred to as *asat* or *mithyā*. Therefore, any definition of an object which is *mithyā*, is a point of view subject to still further definition. Being neither *sat*, existent, nor *tuccha*, totally nonexistent, how can *mithyā* be defined? There is no explicability for *mithyā*. That there is no explicability is its explanation. We are not just getting lost in *mithyā* and then saying it is all unexplainable. It is inexplicable in the sense that it cannot categorically be said, "This is *satya*."

Any *pramēya*, anything that is seen by you (*dṛśya*), any object that is available for your *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge) as an object, is *anitya*, noneternal. Why? Because anything that is seen is within the time-space framework alone and is therefore *anitya*. You cannot say a pot, for example, is *dṛśya* and also *nitya*. To say that something is *dṛśya*, seen, means that it is changing every second. It is never the same because it is within time, and time is an element which keeps on effecting change. Any object, then, is never the same; it is always different. What is available for you to know is therefore always *anitya* and is never *nitya*. Because *ātmā* is not available as an object of knowledge, it is *apramēya*.

The doership that one has can either be with reference to an enlightened doer or an unenlightened doer. An enlightened doer is one who knows, “I am not the *kartā*,” even though he or she still performs actions. This is not to say that there is no doer; there is a doer, but its reality (with reference to the person) is negated. No one can perform action without a sense of doership. That “I perform the action,” everyone has to recognize. Even to speak, one has to identify with the body and the organ of speech and, thus, there is a *kartā*. There is a subject and an action done—a talker and the act of talking, for instance. But it is an enlightened *kartā*, meaning that the person does not look upon himself or herself as the *kartā*. The *ātmā* is no longer mistaken to be a *kartā*. Thus, there is an enlightened *ahaṅkāra* and an unenlightened *ahaṅkāra*.

The *ahaṅkāra* is not something to be afraid of. All that we are aiming at is the removal of the ignorance which makes the *ātmā* a *kartā*, a doer. The *ātmā* is free from all action and this is not known by one who looks upon the *ātmā* as the *kartā*. The one who thinks, “I subject myself to the influence of the world” or “The world is too much with me,” does not know the *ātmā*. The world is not too much with you. The world is you and you are free from the world. That “I am the basis, the *sat*, of the whole creation and, at the same time, I am free from everything,” is something that I must understand. It is this *jñāna*, knowledge, that is taught in the *Gītā*.

When the *ahaṅkāra*, the ego, identifying with the body, performs an action, it is the physical body that performs the action in keeping with the *ahaṅkāra*'s intention. The body is at the disposal of the *kartā* and undergoes a lot of change. It also becomes an object of action when someone else pushes it. The body is, therefore, a *vikriyāvān dēhaḥ*; not only does it undergo change, but it is meant to do so. The body is born (*jāyatē*), exists (*asti*), grows (*vardhatē*), undergoes certain modifications (*vipariṇamatē*), declines (*apakṣīyatē*), and dies (*vinaśyati*) because it is *vikriyāvān*, that which is subject to change. Due to a lack of understanding, this physical body and the *ātmā* are taken together. *Ātmā* is taken to have a physical body as an intrinsic attribute. Therefore, I become as good as the physical body. Here, the discrimination, the *vivēka*, required is that while the *dēha* is subject to change, *ātmā* is not. It is neither born nor does it die.

Ā*tmā* was not born because there was not a time when it was not in order to be born. It was always there. Nor will it die because, having not come into being, there will never be a time when it will not be there. Thus, it is not subject to birth or death. It is *nitya* and *śāśvata*, meaning that it does not decline. If *ātmā* does not decline, does it grow (*vardhatē*)? *Ātmā* was always ever grown, meaning that it never grows. Only that which has a feature, an attribute, can grow and decline, wax and wane, bulge and contract. *Ātmā* having no features whatsoever, no limbs or attributes, is *purāṇa*, ever new. *Ātmā* is free from any manner of modification. In no way is it subject to change. No one can effect a change on *ātmā* because it is not available for objectification and does not have any feature or attribute (*avayava*) to receive such an action. Nor does *ātmā* itself undergo a change to perform any action. Therefore, being both *akarta*, and *akarma*, *ātmā* is *aśōcya*, not a source of sorrow. *Ātmā*, whose *svarūpa*, nature, is fullness, *ānanda*, can only be *aśōcya*.

The person who is a *sarva-karma-sannyāsī* is called a *vidvān*, one who is wise. All the *karma* that the *vidvān* has done so far, all the prayers, *yōga*, and other forms of discipline, and even a life of *sannyāsa* have found their fulfillment in this *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*. Thereafter, there is no question of such a person doing certain *karmas* in order to create some result. There is nothing more to do. All the prayers have been fulfilled in this particular discovery and it is for this discovery alone that the prayers and other *karmas* were performed.

S*arva-karma-sannyāsi* means the one who does not have the notion that “I am the doer” (*kartṛtva-buddhiḥ*). For such a person, there is no doership in the *ātmā*. You are not a *sarva-karma-sannyāsi* by merely not doing *karma*. You may be a *karma-sannyāsi*, but not a *sarva-karma-sannyāsi*. If you do not do *karma* and you have *kartṛtva-buddhi*, you are still only a *saṃsārī*. A *sarva-karma-sannyāsi* is a *jñānī*, one who is totally free from all *karmas*. Even if *karmas* are performed, the *jñānī* does not perform any action. All that takes place for the *jñānī* is that the sense organs, backed by the mind, engage themselves in their own fields of activity. The *jñānī* does not look upon himself or herself as the *kartā*. This is the actual meaning of *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*.

How can I gain the knowledge of the *akartṛ-ātmā* ? The knowledge of *ātmā* is not knowledge of an object, but rather the removal of ignorance about the subject itself. There is a knower who has ignorance about himself or herself and removal of that ignorance is the knowledge *akartṛ-ātmā*. This knowledge (*vṛtti-jñāna*) is “I am not the doer” (*ahaṃ akartā*). This thought (*vṛtti*) is capable of destroying the ignorance about oneself. A particular fact – that I the *ātmā*, the non-doer – is not known and ignorance of this fact is removed by a *vṛtti* brought about by the teaching (*upadēśa*). The *vṛtti*, having done its job, goes, along with the ignorance.

There are two types of negation. One is a physical negation (*niṣēdha*) and the other is negation by knowledge (*bādhā*). When you see the sun rise, you enjoy it and negate it also, because you know that the sun does not actually rise. This is negation by knowledge, *bādhā*- you see and still you negate. *Bādhā*, then, is a different type of negation and is how the *kartrtva-buddhi* in the *ātmā* is negated. *Bādhā* negation is not a simple negation. Once *bādhā* is there, regardless of what the *jñānī* does, he or she knows, “I perform no action.” This is the knowledge, *jñāna*, and there is no way of losing it. This is what we call *sarva-karma-sannyāsa*. It does not mean that a person will not do any action. It means that the *sat-cit-ānanda-ātmā* does not perform any action. While performing *karma*, the *sarva-karma-sannyāsī* sees there is freedom from action. In action, he or she sees actionlessness. The one who knows this is called *buddhimān*; such a person has the knowledge (*buddhi*) and has done everything that has to be done (*kṛtsna-karma-kṛt*), because he or she knows that *ātmā* is *akartā*, always full (*pūrṇa*).

Only that which is subject to time can be *asat*. That which is not subject to time is *sat*. *Sat* cannot be dismissed because dismissal implies prior existence and posterior nonexistence, both of which are in terms of time alone – past, present, and future. That which is not subject to time and for which time itself is a dismissible object is called *satya*, *ātmā*. Neither the *jīva* nor *ātmā* is subject to negation, the *jīva* and *ātmā* being one and the same. What can be negated, however, is the notion that “I am limited” (*jīvatva*). The essence or *svarūpa* of the *jīva* cannot be negated, only the notion that “I am a *jīva*.”

For the *dēhī*, the one who indwells the body, the *dēha*, there is no death and for the *dēha*, there is no survival. The body is bound by time, subject to change, and it keeps on changing all the time. There is no time when the body does not change. Because it is always changing, it is called *śarīra* or *dēha*, *dēha* meaning that which is subject to cremation and *śarīra* meaning that which is subject to disintegration, that which is buried. The choice, then, is only between these two! The *dēha* is always subject to death and is always dying. It is not that one day it dies; rather, it keeps on dying all the time. You cannot stop it, whereas in the case of *dēhī*, you cannot destroy it. Both facts must be seen clearly. This being so, there is no cause for grief – *aśōcyān anvaśōcastvam*. That there is no cause for grief is the vision of the *śāstra*.

There is no absence for the self, which is real, *sat*. It is not subject to negation in any of the three periods of time (*abādhitam satyam*). This statement cannot be shaken because that which is not subject to negation cannot be negated and truth, *satya*, is not subject to negation. You yourself are the truth. If you have any doubt, try to negate yourself. The very person doing the negation is the one you are trying to negate. You find, therefore, that it is impossible to negate yourself. Anything that is negatable is not *satya*. Therefore, the one who goes on negating is *satya*, the only one who cannot be negated; everything else is subject to dismissal. That which is not subject to negation can only be the *ātmā*, the self. Thus there is no absence (*abhāva*) for the *ātmā*.

One may say that *sat-cit- ānanda* are attributes of the *ātmā*. Why then can *sat* not become *asat*, *cit* not become *acit*, and *ānanda* not become *duḥkha*? This does not happen because *sat-cit- ānanda* are not attributes as such. They are implying words (*lakṣaṇa*) for the *ātmā*, that which is being implied (*lakṣya*). The implied meaning is the very nature, *svarūpa*, of the *ātmā*. Attributes are something other than the *svarūpa* of an object. The *ātmā* is not a substantive enjoying certain attributes. In fact, it is free from all attributes. If *sat* were an attribute, what would the substantive be? The substantive is *sat*, so its *svarūpa* is *sat*. Thus, *sat*, is not an attribute of the *ātmā*. Similarly, *cit* is also not an attribute. *Sat* is *cit*; *cit* is *sat*. *Cit* stands for awareness and this is what we call *sat*. Because the *ātmā* is limitless, the word *ānanda* also comes in to imply its *svarūpa*.

The *ātmā* is said to be *avikārya*, not subject to modification at any time, because it does not have attributes to subject itself to change. Another reason that *ātmā* cannot undergo change is because it is not in time. *Ātmā* has always been as it is now. This being so, knowing this *ātmā* as it has been revealed by the *śāstra*, corrects our thinking. I thought I was the body-mind-sense-complex, (*kārya-karaṇa-saṅghāta*) and therefore, a mortal, a doer, an enjoyer, a *sukhī*, a *duḥkhī*, one moment happy and the next unhappy. Knowing the *ātmā* as it is, as *sat-cit-ānanda*, all the previous notions about *ātmā* are given up.

You can choose a life-style of *karma-yōga*, performing *karma* with a prayerful attitude. Or, you can choose a life of renunciation involving only *sāṅkhya*, knowledge. *Sāṅkhya* and *sannyāsa* go together, since *sannyāsa* is taken for the sake of pursuing knowledge to the exclusion of any other activity. By simply becoming a *sannyāsī* one does not become enlightened. A *sannyāsī* also has to gain knowledge. Similarly, by *karma-yōga* alone, you do not gain liberation. You have to gain knowledge. Knowledge, therefore, is common to both. Knowledge liberates, for which you require a mind which has been made ready by *yōga*. Any technique that helps to acquire steadiness of mind is useful and may be employed even by a *sannyāsī*.

The various means and ends talked about in the *Vēda* are all limited so that any result you derive from the *karmas* enjoined is also going to be limited. The wise person is one who knows he is limitless (*para-brahma*). When a person is limitless (*ānanda*), where is the necessity of looking for *ānanda*? Because the very nature (*svarūpa*) of the person is *ānanda*, one who has this knowledge does not look for *ānanda* just as a sugar crystal does not require any sugar at all to make itself sweeter. When you are *ānanda*, you do not require any source of *ānanda*, any source of security—which is exactly what you are seeking through all these *karmas*, means and ends. Therefore, the various means and ends mentioned in all four *Vēdas* will only be of as much use as the small ponds and wells are when there is water, water, water everywhere! When the ponds and wells are already flooded by water, where is the pond or the well, in fact?

The vision of the *Gītā* is that you are already free (*para-brahma*), you cannot be improved upon. Since you are already *para-brahma*, it is knowledge alone that liberates you. To gain it, you should find a teacher and ask for the knowledge. In spite of the availability of such teaching, however, there is no guarantee that one will gain the knowledge because the place where it must occur may not be ready. Knowledge has to take place in the mind. Physically, one must be a mature person, an adult, but this does not mean that the mind, the *antaḥkāraṇa*, is ready for the teaching. A certain maturity, a certain *vivēka* is necessary. The teaching may be given for the asking, but the mind must be ready for it. You must be desirous of the knowledge, not out of curiosity, but out of a certain discrimination (*vivēka*) on your part. Then only can you ask for this knowledge and hope to receive it. The mind that is necessary in order to receive the knowledge is accomplished by *karma-yōga*.

The recognition of *Īśvara* as the *karma-phala-dātā*, the giver of the results of the action, is what makes you appreciate *Īśvara* in your daily life. *Karma* I can do, but *karma-phala* is something that takes place because of the laws that are the Lord. Therefore, every action producing a result, even a small action like opening and closing the eyelids, is the work of the Lord. In every action, there is an intended result that sometimes happens and sometimes does not. It is all according to the laws. Therefore, as a *bhakta*, a devotee, I continuously confornt *Īśvara* as I receive my *karma-phala*.

In a religious approach to life one recognizes *Īśvara*, the Lord, as the giver of the results of the action (*karma-phala-dātā*) and oneself as only the doer of action (*karma-kartā*). Since every result comes from *Īśvara*, I take it as *prasāda*, a Sanskrit word that covers both the tangible results and the intangible, the grace. What converts a *karma-phala* into a *prasāda*? Purely, one's recognition that it comes from the Lord. It is not verbal; it is seeing, understanding. This is where the word "experience" can be used, if at all. Recognition that *Īśvara* is the *karma-phala-dātā* converts every *karma-phala* into *prasāda*. *Prasāda* is not an object; it is a way of looking at the object. Once everything is *prasāda*, I have nothing really to complain about. I have only something to learn. When the *karma-phala* comes, I take it as *prasāda*. If it is less than I wanted, it is still *prasāda*. And if it is exactly what I wanted, opposite to what I wanted, or different from what I wanted, it is all *prasāda*. As every *karma-phala* comes, there is a sameness in your reception of it.

The *Gītā* provides a two part definition of *karma-yōga*: *samatvam yōga ucyatē* and *yōgaḥ karmasu kauśalam*. With reference to the results of your actions, there is a sameness (*samatva*) in your response. Gaining this attitude of *samatva* depends upon the recognition of *Īśvara* as the *karma-phala-dātā*, the giver of the results of action. Whatever result you gain, the laws do not cheat you in any way. Therefore, as a *karma-yōgī* you have the same attitude (*karmaphalē samatva-buddhiḥ*) towards both the desirable and undesirable results of your actions. Then, with reference to action itself, because there is choice involved, as a *karma-yōgī* you exercise your choice based on certain norms. These norms are what are meant by the words “*dharma*” and “*adharma*.” They are universal, common to all (*samānya-dharma*).

As a *karma-yōgī* one exercises choice in action based on certain norms. These norms, otherwise known as “*dharma*” and “*adharma*”, are universal common to all (*samānya-dharma*). Although common to all, *samānya-dharma* must be interpreted to accommodate a given situation so that it is appropriate to the situation. This interpreted *dharma* is referred to as *viśeṣa-dharma*. *Viśeṣa-dharma* is when someone other than yourself is the beneficiary. *Samānya-dharma* and *viśeṣa-dharma* should always be the governing factors when exercising one’s choice with reference to a given action. One cannot go by one’s *rāga-dvēṣas* alone. When one goes by *dharma* and not by one’s *rāga-dvēṣas*, one is living an ethical life. Such a life, however, may not be *yōga*. *Yōga* comes into the picture only when *Īśvara* is taken into account.

The Lord is not only the creator but also the creation. Therefore, the creation is nonseparate from *Īśvara* and *Īśvara* is both the efficient and material cause of the creation. No product (*kārya*) is separate from the material of which it is made. The status of being both the efficient and material cause is, therefore, what is meant by *Īśvara* and is the reason why the creation is nonseparate from the creator. The creator, on the other hand, is independent of the creation in the sense that even without the creation, the creator remains. At the time of dissolution, the entire creation goes back to *Īśvara*, who alone remains. If the Lord is the creator and the creation is nonseparate from the creator, then the law of *dharma*, being part of the creation, is also nonseparate from *Īśvara*. Therefore, *dharma* becomes *Īśvara*. The law of *karma* also becomes *Īśvara* in the same way. That is why we can worship the Lord as *dharma* and even give him two hands and two legs, in the form of *Rāma*.

When we say *Rāma* was an *avatāra*, we do not need any history at all. Whether *Rāma* existed or not is irrelevant because he is looked upon only as the Lord. He is *dharma*. A name and form are given only for the sake of worship and meditation, and is how *Rāma*, *Kṛṣṇa* and others are presented. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* is joy itself. He is nothing but joy, in fact, which happened to have developed two hands, two legs, a head and so on, called *Kṛṣṇa*, and then, taking a flute in hand, walked about. Therefore, whether *Kṛṣṇa* existed or not does not mean anything. *Kṛṣṇa* is a particular name and form given to *Paramēśvara* whose nature is joy (*ānanda-svarūpa*). Similarly, *Rāma* portrays the Lord as *dharma*. Thus, we look at the Lord from various aspects in the creation and represent these aspects with many different gods called *dēvatās*.

What happens when I look upon *dharma* as *Īśvara*? If I merely conform to *dharma*, I am an ethical person. But I look upon *dharma* as the Lord. I worship that Lord by doing what is to be done by me at a given time and place. *Dharma* is something already established and I come to sense it. Therefore, what is to be done by me, I do. *Kṛṣṇa* said by doing the *karma* that is to be done by us, we are worshipping him. Because of our recognition of *Īśvara*, whatever action we perform is our offering (*arcanā*) to the Lord. We offer our actions unto the Lord, who is in the form of creation and who continues to do the job of creation. We are one of His limbs. We perform our role, which is an important one. Otherwise we would not be here.

To be in harmony with the world, with what is to be done, with the law of *dharma* that governs all *karma*, is *karma-yōga* (*yōgaḥ karmasu kauśalam*). Therefore, you choose your *karmas* recognizing *Īśvara* as *dharma*. Then your actions are an *arcanā* to *Īśvara*. This attitude results in *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*, purification of the mind. Once this happens, it takes no time at all for self-knowledge (*jñāna*) to take place. Since *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi* is all that is required, all the steps have been completed: *karma-yōga*, *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*, and *jñāna*. Through *karma-yōga*, the mind is purified, and when the mind is pure, knowledge takes place and *mōkṣa* is gained. *Karma-yōga*, therefore, is for *mōkṣa* alone.

*K*arma-yōga takes care of *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*. Then knowledge is gained (*jñāna-prāpti*). By performing *karma* with the proper attitude, you prepare yourself to be totally freed by knowledge and that knowledge is gained only when the *antaḥkaraṇa* is *śuddha*, pure. We say that *karma-yōga* takes care of it because *karma-yōga* purifies the mind. Once the *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi* is taken care of, that is, once the impurities (*aśuddhi*) of the mind are taken care of, the person is no longer under the enthrallment of his or her likes and dislikes. Because he or she enjoys a certain composure, self-knowledge (*ātma-jñāna*) is not far away. A person is a *karma-yōgī* for only *ātma-jñāna*. Therefore, he or she continues to listen to the teaching and reflect upon it so that it will become a reality.

Karma-yōga is a step for gaining the knowledge. With reference to our actions, we must use our discretion (*kauśala*). What is not to be done is avoided and what is to be done is done properly. And any action we do is done with the attitude that it is our offering to the Lord (*Īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhyā*). This is yoga. Discretion, then, is with reference to the choices involved in action and involves one's appreciation of *Īśvara* as well. Inaction is not going to solve the problem, even though *sannyāsa* is referred to as the giving up of all action (*sarva-karma-sannyāsa*), something that is not physically possible. No one can avoid action totally. The renunciation of all *karmas* is strictly in terms of knowledge. This knowledge can only take place in a person whose mind is clear (*śuddhi*). Such a person is either a *karma-yōgī* or a *sannyāsī*, a person who has taken to the life of renunciation (*sannyāsa*). Knowledge is possible for both *sannyāsīs* and *karma-yōgīs*.

There is no greater delusion in this world than wanting a solution to a problem that is centered on I and expecting the solution to be outside of the I. This great delusion (*mahā-mōha*) is due to a lack of understanding of what I am about, what the world can give, what my problem is, what I really I want, and so on. The impurity (*kalila*) of this delusion is what is given up by discriminating between the *ātmā* and the *anātmā* (*ātma-anātmā-vivēka*).

The Upanisad statement, “I am the whole,” cannot be dismissed or improved upon. It has given me the last word. It says I am limitless, I am infinite, I am Brahman, I am the whole, I am all that is here. Who is going to improve on this? No one can improve *sat-cit-ānanda*. Nor can anyone dismiss it because it is myself. There is nothing better possible. Anything that one comes to know later will not disturb one’s dispassion either. One will have the same dispassion towards what one comes to know in the future as one has towards what one knows now. Whatever comes will be from the world which has no independent existence apart from Brahman. Nothing can come from outside the world and nothing more can come from Brahman because it is one (*ēka*). Knowing this is what is meant by *vivēka*, discrimination.

A wise person or a *sthita-prajña* is one who is happy (*tuṣṭaḥ*) and does not depend on any other object or situation to be happy. By one's own awakening to oneself alone one is happy. For a *sthita-prajña* the knowledge born of inquiry into the analysis of the *ātmā* and *anātmā*, is well established and he or she is happy with himself or herself (*ātmani ēva ātmanā tuṣṭaḥ*). Such a person, being awake to the fact of the *ātmā*, being happy for no other reason, gives up all desires that arise in his or her mind. Lord *Kṛṣṇa* indicated that giving up all desires (*sarvān kāmān*) does not mean that the *sthita-prajña* has no desires, but that as they arise in the mind (*manōgatān*), they are given up (*prajahāti*) meaning the desires are not pursued. In this way, the wise person gives up all desires.

Desires (*kāma*) are divided into two types: *rāga* and *dvēṣa*. *Rāga-dvēṣas* being nothing but desire, the common word for both of them is *kāma*. *Rāga-dvēṣas* are also of two types: binding and nonbinding. Whenever the *śāstra* talks about *kāma*, *rāga*, or *dvēṣa*, it is referring only to those that are binding; that is those desires whose fulfillment is meant to make me happy. Desires are binding only if one takes oneself to be a *kartā*, a doer. Only then does one have things to do; only then can there be dereliction of duty. If on the other hand, one does not look upon oneself as a *kartā* and are awake to the knowledge of oneself, there is no question of the self being a doer. Therefore, there is no doership and nothing to be done.

A wise person or a *sthita-prajña* is one who is happy with oneself and who can totally accept oneself because the self is acceptable. The self is perfect; it is not imperfect. Perfection means that there is no sense of imperfection whatsoever. The self is free from any sense of imperfection and the whole creation, the whole world, the universe, is nonseparate from the self. Because the self is complete (*pūrṇa*), it cannot be improved upon. Just as the sweetness of sugar cannot be improved upon, so too, the fullness of the *ātmā* cannot be improved upon. Being awake to that fact, the person is happy. This, then, is the *lakṣaṇa*, the definition of a wise person. To be wise requires wisdom, nothing else! How a wise person walks, talks, and sits means nothing. Wisdom alone makes one wise, just as being friendly is the only way to make friends. There is no other way.

Love is nothing but the expressed form of fullness (*ānanda*). Just as wheat flour takes on names such as bread, rolls, and muffins, so too love is subject to various forms. The different names given to wheat represent modifications of the wheat. Similarly, love is a simple emotion, which is a modification or manifestation of *ānanda*. If you analyze love, you will find nothing but *ānanda*, in fact. The manifest form of *ānanda* is love and love itself turns into such natural qualities as sympathy, compassion, and giving, depending on the situation. When that same love is distorted in any way, it becomes *kāma* leading to negative emotions such as greed, anger, depression, and so on. All of these, then, are nothing but one expression of *ānanda*-love. This is why we say love is Bhagavan, meaning that the expressed form of *ānanda* is Bhagavan.

What is Bhagavan? The essential form of Bhagavan is *sat-cit-ānanda*. The expressed form of *ānanda*, *Īśvara*, the Lord is love. The modifications of this love can be either positive or negative. Sympathy and compassion are examples of the positive modifications of love, whereas negative modifications are anger, greed, jealousy, and so on. All that is there is one *ānanda*, expressed or unexpressed. Unexpressed it is the *svarūpa*, the very nature of fullness, which is the definition of *ānanda*, expressed it becomes love (*prēma*). The *sthita-prajña* is one who discovers the *ānanda* in himself or herself and knows that there is nothing other than oneself. “I am the whole” means that the person is the fulfillment of all desires. The discovery of oneself and the fulfillment of all desires are not separate but identical.

A wise person is not swept away by either *sukha* (pleasure) or *duḥkha* (sorrow) and is free from like, fear and anger (*vīta-rāga-bhaya-krōdhaḥ*). Freedom from *rāga* implies freedom from *dvēṣa* also. They are a pair. The happiness of those who are not in the hands of *rāga-dvēṣa* is not determined by their *rāga-dvēṣa*. Their *rāga-dvēṣas* do not affect their being happy with themselves; the *rāga-dvēṣas* no longer have any teeth. They may be baby *rāga-dvēṣas* or old *rāga-dvēṣas*, but either way, they do no bite because they cannot bite. They can only be enjoyed. This is why the *rāga-dvēṣas* of the wise are referred to as non-binding. They are absolutely toothless.

Fear exists only when desire is there and desire is there only when *rāga-dvēṣa* is there. *Kāma* indicates duality – “I am this much alone. Everything else is other than me and I have to get it.” Thus there is duality, meaning that there is a difference between *jīva*, the individual, and *Īśvara*, the Lord (*jīvēśvara-bhēda*). Naturally, then, there will be fear because of the difference between the individual and the world. Duality between the individual and the world means duality between the individual and the individual. Once you accept a duality between the individual and *Īśvara*, you will find difference (*bhēda*) everywhere. In the world of duality one is an insecure person; therefore, the fear of danger from another source will always be there because the “other” will always be there. One can even be afraid of oneself if one has created a split in oneself. Fear never rests in only one thing. A second thing is necessary for fear to occur. Therefore, the one who has no duality is not only free from *rāga-dvēṣa* but also free from fear.

A wise person does not dance for joy over desirable situations or hate undesirable situations (*śubha-aśubham tat tat prāpya na abhinandati na dvēṣṭi*). The word *śubha* means that which is auspicious, pleasant and desirable and *aśubha* means that which is unpleasant, like death, disease, and so on. To hate an undesirable situation is nothing but refusal to accept a fact. A wise person does not hate a given situation, meaning that he or she accepts it as it is, and therefore does not subject himself or herself to sorrow. In the face of both the pleasant and unpleasant, the auspicious and inauspicious, the wise person is the same (*samaḥ*). For a *yōgī*, it is a matter of attitude, born of a certain understanding, whereas for a *jñānī*, it is a natural, spontaneous expression. This is the only difference.

One has a variety of desires depending on the objects for which one has affection and attachment. Desire is not a problem, but once a well-shaped desire has been formed, once it is no longer in the fancy state, one has to deal with it. One has to fulfill the desire and this causes one to take action. If one can fulfill the desire, there is no problem. More often than not, however, the desire is not fulfilled. When the desire is unfulfilled it turns into anger (*krōdha*). Thus desire is the cause for anger. If there is no expectation with reference to desire, there will be no anger if the desire is not fulfilled. The point is not to avoid anger by avoiding desire. Rather, one has to remove the sting from one's desires, for which attitude is very important. That everything should happen as one wants it is not a realistic expectation. The *rāga-dvēṣas*, one's likes and dislikes, have to be neutralized.

From attachment, desire is born and from desire, anger is born. From anger, delusion takes place and from delusion, the incapacity of the mind takes place. Once anger is born, delusion, loss of wisdom, and the destruction of the person just take place. Control is possible only before anger; afterwards, what happens is history. Given that meditating on desirable objects creates problems for you, meditate upon the *pratyagātmā*, the inner self.

There are different forms of contemplation wherein the same *pratyagātmā*, inner self, is seen from different angles; the limitless self (*pūrṇa-ātmā*), the detached self (*asaṅga-ātmā*), the self as witness (*sākṣī-ātmā*), the action-free self (*akartā-ātmā*), the enjoyment-free self (*abhoktā-ātmā*), and the ever-full self (*ānanda-ātmā*). *Ātmā* is to be recognized in these different ways. By contemplating upon the *ātmā* in this manner, the *rasa* (taste) for the sense objects go. How can they remain? If you know, “I am all of this (*aham idam sarvam*),” the *rasa* cannot be there. Thus *rasa* goes away in time and your knowledge becomes well-established and clear (*tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*).

A *mumukṣu* is one who is desirous of liberation (*mōktum icchuḥ*). He or she wants *mōkṣa*, for which self-knowledge is required. The sense organs of a *mumukṣu* are freed from *rāga-dvēṣa*, meaning that they are not backed by *rāga-dvēṣa*. His or her pursuits are not dictated by *rāga-dvēṣa*, but by *dharma* and *adharma* alone, what is proper and improper. His or her mind moves only according to his or her will. In other words, the person is a *karma-yōgī* pursuing knowledge while engaged in freeing himself or herself from the hold of *rāga-dvēṣa*. This latter pursuit marks the difference between a *karma-yōgī* and a *sannyāsī*. Whether the person is a *sannyāsī* or a *karma-yōgī*, he or she is one who has the senses and mind together. Such a person gains satisfaction or tranquility (*prasāda*). The satisfaction, the contentment, is with oneself. The mind is steady and there is an almost total absence of agitation and self-dissatisfaction.

A*hankāra* is nothing but a notion, the “I” notion. When the reality is “I am everything,” there is no ego. Ego is only when you compare yourself with another person. “He does not have as much as I have” is ego. But there is no other person at all. All that is there is me. There is no ego, no doer; there is only *aham*, I. That “I am a doer” is a notion, whereas “I” is I. For one who has no “I” or “mine” sense because everything is himself or herself, where is the question of having a desire? Knowing this, then, the wise person has no binding desires.

There is no Brahman other than *ātmā*. *Ātmā* is Brahman. If *ātmā* is Brahman, it is a matter for understanding. It is not a state; it is knowledge gaining which the person is no more deluded. One's old ignorance does not come back. Such notions that were based in ignorance, such as "I am a *Jīva*, a mortal, a doer, an enjoyer," also do not return. Knowledge gained is gained for good. *Ātmā* is Brahman. When its *svarūpa*, its nature is understood, there is no more *jīva*. The individual is gone. There are no false notions about oneself and the old delusion does not return.

*M*ōkṣa is always for oneself; it is not for anyone else. Because the self is already *mukta*, *mōkṣa* can only be gained by knowledge of the fact that the self is liberated. *Mōkṣa* is already accomplished in the self and one can gain this knowledge without giving up *karma*, as Janaka and others like him did. *Karma* is only opposed to knowledge when performed purely for fulfilling one's *rāga-dvēṣas* and not for neutralizing them. Such *karma* is without any doubt binding in nature. The *karma* that is undertaken by oneself with an attitude of *karma-yōga* helps one to gain the kind of mind necessary for the knowledge to take place.

Once self-knowledge is gained, all action is spontaneous. Whatever is to take place, will take place. No one is going to stop it. Once a person is no longer bound by his or her *karma* or by any *rāga-dvēṣa*, the question of performing or not performing *karma* simply does not arise. How the person lives, whether he or she lives a life of activity or a life free from all activities, depends purely on the person's *prārabdha*. He or she is no longer controlled by likes and dislikes. Even the desire for *mōkṣa*, for liberation, is gone, having been fulfilled by the knowledge of the truth of oneself.

*P*rārabdha-karma is generally accompanied by the free will that a human being has. This free will can interfere with the *prārabdha-karma* in many ways-modifying it, mending it, working against it, and doing anything else to it that free will can do. Given that *prārabdha-karma* and free will go together, every situation is both *prārabdha*-based and will-based. Where *prārabdha* stops and free will begins, no one can say. There is no way of knowing which one brought you to a particular situation. In the wake of self-knowledge however, free will is not a factor. Only then does *prārabdha* alone take care of your life. If it is in your *prārabdha* to teach, you teach. If you are to sit quietly, then that is what you do and if you have to rule a kingdom, you rule the kingdom, just as Janaka did.

Action is always result-oriented. No one can perform action without expecting a result. Expectation of a particular result alone makes the action meaningful. An action performed without expecting a result is meaningless. An action is always done for some purpose, even if it is *kartavya*, what should be done by you. Thus the purpose of any action is always known, whereas whether the purpose is going to be fulfilled is definitely anyone's guess! The results are not in your hands. You can only plan what you will do, then do it, and keep on doing it. An *ātmavit*, a knower of *ātmā*, would perform whatever action was to be done by him with the same enthusiasm as people who are attached to the results, but without the attachment – minus the anxiety and heartburn, in other words.

A mature person is one who has ethics, for which one need not have religion. A person can be ethical without being a *karma-yōgī*. He or she becomes a *karma-yōgī* only when there is an appreciation on the part of the person, that *Īśvara* is the giver of the results of the action (*karma-phala-dātā*). A *karma-yōgī* is a *bhakta*, a devotee, one who does not look upon one's possessions as one's own. For such a person, a physical body is given, the world is given, opportunities are given, resources are given, skills are given, time is given, place is given. Everything is given. Only when one appreciates the given, and also the giver behind the given, is there *karma-yōga*.

If what is to be done by you at this time and place and what you want to do happen to concur, then your action is spontaneous and no thinking is required. Also, when what is not to be done is something that you do not want to do, avoidance or withdrawal from such action is spontaneous. Thus, with reference to certain *rāgas* and *dvēṣas*, there is spontaneity because you are in harmony with *dharma*. You do not rub against anything. The laws are not being rubbed against; in fact, you are in harmony with the whole set-up. But if your *rāgas* - *dvēṣas* do not conform to right and wrong, *dharma* and *adharma*, there is a rub.

Even though you have *rāga-dvēṣas* that have no connection with your *dharma*, you still have a choice. You can choose not to go along with your *rāga-dvēṣas*. You need not have anything to do with them. The only connection there need be is that they happen in your mind; you need only to recognize them, nothing more. But in terms of choice in action, you go with what you want in accordance with the norms of *dharma*. *Svadharmā* means what is to be done by oneself, one's own *dharma*, *dharma* meaning *karma* here. One's *svadharmā* may not be as productive, as convenient, or as pleasant as one might want. Duties are certainly not always pleasant; they can be unpleasant also. Nor may they be remunerative or convenient. But whatever your *svadharmā*, that is what you have to do.

Generally speaking, there are three orders of reality. One is absolute reality (*Pāramārthika*), that which is *satya-jñāna-ananta-brahma*, free from all attributes, and upon which the entire world depends. Then there is empirical reality (*vyāvahārika*), which accounts for the world and all that is in it, space, air, fire, water, earth, the sun, moon and stars, the natural law and so on. Included in this order of reality are the various situations that cause joy and sorrow, as well as your physical body, mind and senses. All means and ends, *sādhana* and *sādhya*, also have an empirical reality, some of which are already known to you and others are revealed by the *Vēda*. Thirdly, there is a purely subjective (*prātibhāsika*) order of reality such as we experience in dream.

Between the empirical reality and the subjective reality there is a difference. The entire creation, empirical reality, is called *Īśvara-sṛṣṭi* the Lord's creation, and the projection of one's own mind is called *jīva-sṛṣṭi*, the individual's subjective creation. At all times, we are confronting these two orders of reality, the empirical and the subjective, on the basis of the one absolute reality, *satya-jñāna-ananta-brahma*.

An *avatāra* is something like an actor who appears on a stage. The actor knows very well that he is not the role. *Kṛṣṇa* as an *avatāra* knew he was playing a role. His birth can be considered neither *pāramārthika*, absolutely real, nor *vyāvahārika*, empirically real. Thus in terms of orders of reality, there is only one possibility remaining to account for an *avatāra*, *prātibhāsika*, albeit a different type of *prātibhāsika* because the *avatāra* knows He is playing a role, that it is not real but is just a play. This is like a magician who makes things appear by his or her own powers. For those who are watching what the magician is doing, everything is real, but for the magician it is all *māyā*, magic. Similarly, a *jñānī* performing an action does not look upon himself or herself as a *kartā*. This means there is no real *vyavahāra* for a *jñānī*. From his or her standpoint, meaning from the standpoint of *ātmā*, everything is *prātibhāsika*.

Why does an *avatāra* come? It is not to enjoy *punya-pāpa* because these do not apply to an *avatāra*. Nor does an *avatāra* come to suffer the life of a *saṃsārī*. An *avatāra* comes for three-fold purpose only. First, He protects the people who are committed to a life of *dharma* (*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnām*). If they are protected, then *dharma* is protected. This protection is carried out in many ways, one of which is by the *avatāra* chastising those who do things that are not in keeping with *dharma* (*vināśāya duṣkṛtām*). This is the second reason for the *avatāra* to come. In either case, His real task is to establish or, more appropriately perhaps, reestablish the *dharma* (*dharma-saṃsthāpanārthāya*). This is the third but real reason for the advent of an *avatāra*.

R*āga* and *dvēṣa*, likes and dislikes, always go together and being powerful, are binding in nature. When there is a binding *rāga-dvēṣa*, such as “This must happen for me (*rāga*),” “This must not happen for me (*dvēṣa*),” fear (*bhaya*) becomes inevitable because there is always some apprehension with reference to one’s *rāgas* and *dvēṣas*. There is always the fear of things not happening according to one’s expectations because *rāga* implies expectation. Whenever there is expectation, there is a possibility of it not being fulfilled and when this happens there is a sense of failure. Fear of failure will always be there because one is not omniscient. We need to understand that fear of the undesirable and unknown will always be there as long as we are driven by our *rāgas* and *dvēṣas*.

If a *rāga* is not fulfilled, one's desire, *kāma*, turns into anger against whatever is preventing the desire from being fulfilled. Thus anger, *krōdha* is there with fear when one's life is controlled by *rāga-dvēṣas*. Whereas, when one lives a life of *karma-yōgī*, the *rāga-dvēṣas* are neutralized. By paying attention to his or her *rāga-dvēṣas* with the right attitude, a person becomes *vīta-rāga-bhaya-krōdha*, meaning one who is relatively free from desire, fear and anger.

There is no real difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*, any seeming difference being due to *upādhi* alone is *mithyā*. Since this difference is *mithyā*, nondifference is *satya*, which is all that counts. This vision of nondifference (*abhēda-buddhi*), the vision of the identity of *jīvēśvara* as reflected in the statement “You are That (*tat tvam asi*),” is made clear by further analysis (*manana*) and contemplation (*nididhyāsana*). Those people in whom this vision is clear are referred to as *māmupāsritāḥ*, those who have totally resolved into the *Paramēśvara* alone. For them there is no longer the mistaken notion that the *jīva* is separate from *Paramēśvara*.

For *mōkṣa* you require knowledge and for knowledge you do not require anything else except *vicāra*, inquiry. Thus the pursuit of knowledge itself is the means. Then what about all the other disciplines? They are meant for preparing the mind so that this knowledge can take place. This is what is meant by purification of the mind or *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*. Therefore, the other disciplines are all secondary means, whereas knowledge is the primary means. To say that these other disciplines are secondary is not to say that they have no place. The distinction to be understood is that these other disciplines are indirect means for *mōkṣa* in that they prepare or purify the *antaḥkaraṇa* while the pursuit of knowledge is the direct means for the knowledge that is *mōkṣa*.

It is often said that the spiritual path is extremely arduous. But, if you really understand what “spiritual” is, you will find there is nothing arduous about it. What is arduous about constantly hearing that you are fullness, *ānanda*? If the goal is *ānanda*, fullness, happiness, how can the way to the goal be unpleasant? The path is *ānanda* and the way is *ānanda*. There is never a dull moment.

The *Gītā* teaches both *yōga-sāstra* and *brahma-vidyā*. *Karma-yōga* is right attitude and includes values, disciplines, right living, prayer and so on. Whatever is relatively gained by all of these is gained in full measure, absolute measure, in knowledge. There is tranquillity in *yōga* and tranquillity in knowledge. In *karma-yōga*, the tranquillity and cheerfulness are in degrees, whereas in *jñāna* they are abiding and natural.

A*kartā* means “I am Brahman” and the mind is also Brahman. The mind is me, but I am not the mind. The *buddhi* is me; I am not the *buddhi*. The body is me; I am not the body. The world is me; I am not the world. Everything is Brahman, whereas Brahman is not any one thing. Therefore, the self and Brahman are identical, knowing this is self-knowledge.

For the wise person, all *karma* and everything connected to the *karma* is Brahman. In fact, this is all self-knowledge is about. There is nothing separate from *ātmā*, which is Brahman. This is the knowledge that makes the person wise. *Ātmā* is equated to Brahman, Brahman is *jñāna*, pure awareness, and therefore not subject to time, space or attributes. It is *satya*, pure existence, and *ananta*, limitless, which is the basis, the truth of everything. Time-wise, *ātmā* is limitless, and place-wise, it is also limitless. There is nothing independent of this *satya ātmā*. Being dependent on *satya*, which is *param brahma*, everything else is nothing but *param brahma*, which is *ātmā*, oneself.

Because awareness is never created, it was always there, just as the Lord was. In fact, the Lord is this awareness, the *caitanya*, and as such, is not created. In other words, the Lord does not create Himself, the *caitanya*. The Lord is the awareness that is the mind, the senses, and everything else. Given this fact, who is there? Only the Lord is there; there is no individual. All that is there, including the physical body, the physical universe, the mind, and the subtle universe, are all included in the Lord. What is left out is awareness that is you. And the awareness that is you is the same awareness that is the Lord.

The Lord is in essence uncreated awareness; therefore, all that is there is the Lord. And what is created by the Lord is nonseparate from the Lord while what is uncreated by the Lord, the awareness that is the Lord's essential nature, continues to be the Lord. All that is there is one whole that is the Lord. Therefore, you are not an individual separate from the Lord.

There is an order involved in gaining self-knowledge. First, there is *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* as a means of knowledge. Then, as a result of this *śraddhā*, a commitment arises that causes a person to give up everything and pursue the knowledge by approaching with the proper attitude a teacher. One who approaches the *guru* has both *śraddhā* in the *śāstra* as the means of knowledge and commitment to the knowledge. In addition, the person must have the sense organs under control. This means that one does not propitiate one's fancies and one's mind is steady. These three factors being there, the knowledge will be definitely gained.

A *karmi* is interested in *karma-phalas*, which are many and varied, and for which the person performs a variety of actions. If however, the *karmi* becomes a *karma-yōgī* he or she will not be doing these actions for heaven, power, wealth, or something else, because the person has no interest in such things. The *karma-yōgī* is interested only in *mōkṣa*. He or she goes about doing the various actions that are to be done purely for his or her own *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*, the preparation of the mind that is required in order to be freed from *rāga-dvēṣas*. Fulfillment of *rāga-dvēṣas* is not the criterion for the *karma-yōgī*. His or her motive is rather to gain mastery over the *rāga-dvēṣas*.

*A*ntahkaraṇa-śuddhi is itself a kind of *mōkṣa*, freedom from the hold of *rāga-dvēṣas*. This is the first *mōkṣa*. Then freedom from the sense of bondage, freedom from *ajñāna*, is the ultimate *mōkṣa*. One is the nature of maturity and the other of the nature of *jñāna*, knowledge. Maturity itself is an accomplishment, for which one takes to the life of *karma-yōga*. Later, there is the further accomplishment, knowledge.

Sannyāsa, meaning renunciation of action, is not the means to *mōkṣa*, nor is *karma-yōga*. *Jñāna* alone is the means. Only by knowledge is *mōkṣa* gained. There is no other way because the bondage from which *mōkṣa* is sought is ignorance. Therefore, whatever you follow, knowledge is common. Separate paths are not mentioned anywhere in the *śāstra*. All that is mentioned are only two life-styles (*niṣṭhā*) the pursuit of activities (*pravṛtti*) called *karma-yōga*, and the giving up of all activity (*nivṛtti*), called *sannyāsa* or *jñāna-yōga*. This is all the *śāstra* talks about and both of these life-styles are meant for *mōkṣa*.

The self does not become nondual by any process. It is only by knowledge that the self is discovered to be nondual. By knowledge the person discovers the fact that he or she is the nondual self that is the self in all. In the wake of this knowledge, the person comes to be called *sarva-bhūta -ātmā-bhūta-ātmā*, he or she performs no action even though appearing to be so, being free from the sense of doership. Such a person performs *karma* according to his or her *prārabdha* for the welfare of the world or just to sustain the body, but he or she is not tainted, stained or affected by the result of the *karma* whatsoever.

A *karma-yōgī* is a devotee. A devotee is one who looks upon *dharma* as nonseparate from *Īśvara* or as the mandate of *Īśvara*. What is commonly called *bhakti-yōga* is actually *karma-yōga*, because only a devotee can perform actions as an offering to the Lord. Thus, the *karma-yōgī* performs an action saying, “I perform this action for the sake of *Īśvara* (meaning according to His mandate, His order). I happen to be in this situation and this is to be done. Let it be an offering (*arpaṇa*) to the Lord.” A *karma-yōgī* sacrifices his/her likes and dislikes and performs action with the awareness of *dharma* for the sake of *Īśvara*.

As long as your likes and dislikes dictate your activities, you are bound to have problems of frustration, anger, and so on. Because of the pressure of *rāga-dvēṣas*, such problems cannot be avoided. Whereas, if you have *Īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhi*, devotion to the Lord or an awareness of the Lord as *dharma*, you are in harmony with the Lord. This is why there is always a sense of relief when you do something that is right. There is a certain satisfaction because there is no rubbing against the law. You know what is right and, if this done, you find you are in harmony. There is no conflict. This absence of conflict is *śānti*. On the other hand, if you go against the *dharma* in order to fulfill your *rāgas-dvēṣas*, conflict (*aśānti*) will result.

As an individual you are endowed with certain means of action-hands and legs, for example, and with these you participate. You are not a mere witness; but are an active participant in the creation, which itself is *Īśvara's* order. In keeping with this order, there is a huge offering (*yajña*) going on and you contribute to it through active participation. This active participation is nothing but doing what is to be done by you when it is to be done and you do it for *Īśvara* and not for fulfilling your *rāga-dvēṣas*. This way you enjoy a certain attitude which gives you composure. You simply accept the *karma-phala* as *prasāda* and there is no reaction on your part to the result of your actions.

Unlike a technique or a discipline, *karma-yōga* is not a particular action. There is no particular situation in which you follow *karma-yōga*. *Karma-yōga* is your life and, as a *karma-yōgī*, you are a devotee, whose devotion is not spasmodic. It is not something that comes every now and then, and then goes away. A person who has *Īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhi* is one who is abidingly devoted to *Īśvara*, taking things as they come. And when such a person performs action, he or she conforms to *dharma*. This awareness of *Īśvara* is what brings about the change in the person.

There is no after-death *mōkṣa*. If there is survival after death, there is only travel – not *mōkṣa*. *Mōkṣa* is not an event in time; it is an accomplished fact. *Ātmā* is always liberated (*mukta*). If bondage were real, even God could not remove it because it would be a reality, God's own reality. Nor can God remove a bondage that is false because it is not there. No one can remove something that does not exist, not even God. God can only teach and make you understand that there is no bondage.

The knowledge of Brahman is not something you can lose because it is oneself. Thus, the one who knows Brahman abides in Brahman. Knowing Brahman is not a matter for memory. Memory is something that you collect about an object. Here the person was ignorant about the nature of *ātmā* and that ignorance is no longer there. Because the self is always there, there is no question of forgetting the self. The person who knows Brahman is Brahman and he or she remains Brahman. Even after death the person is Brahman!

Human life is divided into two activities: one is to gather all sorts of nonsense as a child and the other is to learn how to manage them all. Somewhere along the way, you are able to realize that what you had gathered as a child has nothing to do with what you are now. Only the person who realizes this and addresses the problems that arise can be called *nara*. Until then, the person is still a child; he or she is not an adult. Adulthood begins only when the person begins to address the problems. Until then, the person continues to behave like a child.

If a person is able to master the force born of desire and anger, *kāma* and *krōdha*, he or she has made it as an adult human being. Such a person is a *sukhī* and also a *karma-yōgī* because to master the *vēga* of *kāma* and *krōdha* requires a certain attitude.

Maturity implies expressing one's free will in its highest form, meaning that one can voluntarily appreciate and offer a prayer. Prayer and prayerful attitude are the expressions of a mature will. In fact, they are based on will alone. No one is driven to prayer. One is driven to swear, to cry, and to a variety of things, but you can never be driven to prayer. Even if one prays in a moment of distress, the will is expressing in its highest form.

In the act of prayer, you do not see the one to whom you pray. *Īśvara* is nowhere around. All you see are the contending forces that you have to deal with. Therefore, if in the process of living, a person is able to appreciate an *Īśvara* and offer a prayer to Him, that person becomes a *karma-yōgī*. Without this, the *kāma-krōdha-udbhavam vēgam*, the force that is released by desire and anger, is not easy to master. This particular religious conversion, as it were, has to take place in the person. And this *karma-yōgī*, this mature person, is a happy person.

There are two types of *sādhana*, *bahiraṅga-sādhana*, or external means; and *antaraṅga-sādhana* or internal means. Doing *karma* is doing what is to be done by you with the right attitude and proper values. In other words, *karmayōga* is called *bahiraṅga-sādhana*. Meditation (*dhyāna*), wherein the mind alone is involved is called *antaraṅga-sādhana*. It can be a prayer, a contemplation, or any inner discipline, but it is purely internal. No limbs are involved, nor is the organ of speech. Therefore, one type of *sādhana* is internal and the other is external. The external means takes care of your likes and dislikes because these can be worked only through your interactions with the external world. For gaining steadiness of mind and the composure necessary to gain self-knowledge, the internal means of *sādhana* is important.

Meditation, *dhyāna*, is an action born purely of mind and remains in the mind; therefore, it is purely a mental action. It is a mental activity in which the subject matter is *saguṇa-brahma*. *Saguṇa-brahma* means limitless Brahman, *satya-jñāna-ananta-brahma* as *Īśvara*, the cause of the world. Meditation is further defined as that in which all the thoughts other than those concerning the chosen object are removed and only those concerning the chosen object flow for a length of time. Another aspect of meditation is that when the mind moves away from the object of meditation, you simply bring it back. Bringing the mind back is a part of the definition of meditation.

Contemplation, *nididhyāsana*, is another mental activity where the object of meditation is Brahman with no attributes, *nirguṇa brahma*. It is *svarūpa-dhyāna*, contemplating on the truth of Brahman. One contemplates on certain words or statements such as – “I am the whole (*aham pūrṇah*),” or “My nature is existence-awareness-limitlessness (*aham satya-jñāna-ananta-svarūpah*).” This contemplation implies thought in that one brings up a word and sees its meaning.

A meditative or contemplative disposition is not created by one's will, although one can will oneself to sit in meditation. Such a disposition happens when one is ready for it and that readiness is what is meant by the preparedness of the mind. Gaining this preparedness is not given over to the hands of time, but is created by living a life of *karma-yōga*.

Prayer can bring about *ātmā-viśuddhi*, purification of the mind, the prayer itself bringing about a certain change on your part – a glad acceptance of what has gone before, or what has happened in your life, against which we are always fighting. This glad acceptance of the past requires a certain intimate acceptance on your part, a prayerful acceptance of what has already happened. Therefore, prayerful meditation takes care of your *rāga-dvēṣas* in terms of the past-what I would like to have happened, what I should have done, what should not have happened to me etc., all the things that usually bother a person. This, too, is what we call *ātmā-viśuddhi*, as well as the release of various *kaśāyas*, *samskāras* or impressions, that are deep within the person, those unassimilated, undigested, hurtful experiences that are stored in the form of memories and which involve a certain pain.

Identifying oneself with one's thoughts or the physical body, thinking that anything that happens to the body happens to me, is an obstruction (*pratibandhaka*), a great impurity (*aśuddhi*), for the one who desires liberation. This identification has to be removed. Anything that has to be removed, anything that is unclean, is called *aśuddhi*. To eliminate *aśuddhi*, contemplation is helpful. Contemplation is not for *ātma-jñāna*, it is for *ātma-viśuddhi* alone.

Meditation is not a technique; meditation is life. Therefore, in the *Gītā*, Lord Krishna referred to the meditator as *mat-para*, one for whom the Lord, *Paramēśvara*, is everything. The mind of such a person will stay with the object of meditation because there is nothing more to be gained than *Paramēśvara*, *Paramātmā*, which is everything. The one for whom what is to be accomplished is that *Paramātmā* alone is called *mat-para*.

Awareness has no *samyōga* or association. *Samyōga* is possible because of ignorance (*avidyā*); by definition, ignorance is capable of making the impossible possible. *Avidyā* can make snake out of rope and mirage water out of desert. Ignorance can do all of these things because there is lack of knowledge. This means that the connection (*sambandha*) between *ātmā* and *anātmā* is brought about purely by *avivēka*, the lack of discriminative knowledge alone.

The association with sorrow, *duḥkha-samyōga*, is an association born of lack of discrimination. The dissociation, *viyōga*, from this *duḥkha-samyōga* can only be by knowledge. Association with *duḥkha* is due to a self-loss, a self-confusion, and therefore a self/not-self identity, that is resolved by discriminative knowledge. In other words, I have to know that *ātmā* is *ātmā* and *anātmā* is *ātmā*, but that *ātmā* is not *anātmā* and therefore, there is nothing separate from me.

It has been said that in the present age, Kali Yuga, devotion is the easiest path. You simply surrender to the Lord and He will take care of everything. But what do you surrender? Whom do you surrender? Since everything belongs to the Lord, who are you to surrender anything? The I that wants to surrender is the *ahaṅkāra*, the ego. It is a false entity; it is not *aham*, I, *ātmā*. The *ahaṅkāra* is a notion and it cannot go away unless you falsify it. This falsification of the ego is what is called *jñāna*, knowledge, and surrender as well.

Dropping notions about oneself is difficult because ignorance is involved. At the same time, it is easy because all you have to do is to destroy the ignorance. The destruction of ignorance is only difficult if your mind is not prepared. A prayerful life prepares the mind for the knowledge that is *Vēdanta*. In the wake of this knowledge, all the notions about oneself get dropped.

In any moment of joy or happiness, the seeker-sought difference is resolved, there being nothing but *ātmā* even though there is an object or situation involved. Take music, for example. The music is there, the person enjoying the music is there, and the appreciation of the music in the form of thoughts, *vyttis*, are also there. In this music *sukha*, the division between these three is resolved; the differences between knower, knowledge and known experientially coalesce into one whole experience, called *sukha*. And what makes the experience whole? *Ātmā*, whose nature is oneness, awareness, makes it *sukha*.

A successful meditator is one whose daily life is free from *adharmā*. The one whose life is free from the conflicts born of *adharmā*, *vigata-kalmaṣa*, gains *atyanta sukha*. This *sukha* is not eternal bliss; it is one's nature, *svarūpa*. It is the *sukha* that is recognized as the nature of every form of *sukha*. In any form of *sukha* that you get, the *sukha* is because of *svarūpa-sukha*, the wholeness that is the nature of Brahman. Born out of the knowledge that the self is Brahman, the meditator is said to gain this *svarūpa-sukha* easily.

Knowledge of oneself, *ātmā-jñānam*, is not memory based. Only knowledge that is memory based can be forgotten. Whatever you have, you can always lose. Memory is for me, *ātmā*. Because memory is something I have, I can lose it. But, in *ātmā-jñānam*, what is known is myself alone. The self-ignorance I had before is gone in the wake of knowledge wherein the self is equated with Brahman. Once gained this knowledge is never lost.

Ā*tmā* is never *parōkṣaḥ*, inferred, believed or presumed because it is *nitya-aparōkṣaḥ*, always directly known by you. Whether you are a confused person, a discriminating person, or a *jñānī*, *ātmā* is never *parōkṣaḥ*, whatever be the situation. As a *samsārī*, “I am” is *aparōkṣaḥ*; as a *vivēkī*, “I am” is *aparōkṣaḥ*; and as a *jñānī* also “I am” is *aparōkṣaḥ*. Therefore, *ātmā* is *nitya-aparōkṣaḥ*, always self-evident. As a self-evident *ātmā*, there is no difference between *Īśvara*, Brahman, and oneself. One never becomes *parōkṣaḥ* to Him; nor does He become *parōkṣaḥ* to one. This is what we call *advaita*, the nondifference (*abhēda*) between *Īśvara* and *jīva*.

Objectivity means that you look at things as they are. There is no judgment involved here, just an understanding of things as they are. When I look at a given object, I see that there are a lot of projections involved. Therefore, I see these projections for what they are and deal with them. By separating them in this way, I can look more objectively at how the object is going to make my life any better than it is now. Doing this again and again is *abhyāsa* and seeing the limitations of the objects is *vairāgya*. Repetition is essential because the subjective value is something that is deliberately imposed upon the object by me and does not go away just like that.

There are two types of *bhakti*. One is *sādhana-bhakti*, a devotion to *Īśvara* as a means. This is the devotion of a *jijñāsu*, the one who desires to know the truth of *Īśvara*. The other type of *bhakti* is *sādhya-bhakti*. It is the devotion of a *jñānī* who understands *Īśvara*, who recognizes the truth *Īśvara* as *ātmā*. The *sādhya-bhakti* is a *bhakti* that has fulfilled itself, a devotion in the form of absolute love – *parama-prēma-svarūpa-bhakti*. What is this absolute love? Between the object of love and the person who loves, there is no difference at all. Love consumes all the differences. That is what we call absolute love and it is only in the form of knowledge. The non-difference is already accomplished because *Īśvara* is *ātmā*. This is a fact which only has to be recognized.

When there is already non-difference between *Īśvara* and *ātmā*, its recognition is called *ananya-bhakti*. *Ananya* means there is no other. The altar of *bhakti* and the seeker, the devotee, are one and the same self. That *bhakti* is not time-bound or comparable because it is a fact. This is the devotion of a *jñānī*. For him all the *bhakti* has fulfilled itself and still he is a *bhakta*, if we consider a *bhakta* as someone who is in union with *Īśvara*. For a *jñānī*, *Īśvara* is immediate, *aparōkṣa* because *Īśvara*, the cause of everything, is non-separate from *ātmā*.

Paramēśvara is understood through the *śāstra*. But even after exposure to the *śāstra* and analysis of it, one can still have the orientation that he is the body. There is a difference between an orientation and a confusion. A simple confusion requires clarification only once. When there is an orientation you have to remember. It does not go away just because you have resolved the confusion. Nor does it go by a single recollection of what you know. To help remove the orientation that *ātmā* is the body and body is *ātmā*, what is called as *deha-ātmā-buddhi*, there is exposure to the teaching, direct and indirect. Then there is what is known as *brahma-abhyāsa* which consists of dwelling upon that, *tat-cintanam*, talking about it, *tat-kathanam*, and mutual discussion among seekers, *anyōnyam tatprabōdhanam*. Contemplation is also included. Living with this knowledge in this way for a length of time is remembering, *smaraṇam*.

For a *mumukṣu*, dwelling upon *Paramēśvara* is a matter of love. And it is very natural because *ātmā*, is of the nature of absolute love. What I really love is my pleased self, *ātmā*. And since *ātmā*, is *Paramēśvara* whose nature is *ānanda* it cannot be more pleasing; there is nothing more to be desired. And nothing new is produced either because *ātmā* is already existent as *Paramēśvara*. The result is not effort born; it is born purely of recognition. There is no effort involved; nothing new is added; nothing old is removed. The accomplishment is of an already accomplished fact. Therefore it is *sulabha*, easily gained.

To mistake something one must have some knowledge of it. One must see the rope to mistake it for a snake. Similarly *ātmā* has to be known in some way before one can commit any mistake about it. *Ātmā* is always self-evident, *nitya-aparōkṣa* and evident enough for the *buddhi* to commit a mistake uniformly. Then one keeps compounding it and through experiences the mistake gets more and more complicated. This is what we call living. There is one fundamental error followed by a variety of others. These enrich the original mistake. It is buried under all the other mistakes one is busy correcting.

The ignorance of *ātmā* is different from ignorance of an object like a pot. There are a lot of things in this world, like a pot, which you do not know and are therefore, objects of your ignorance. *Ātmā*, however, unlike a pot, is not an object of ignorance or knowledge. It does not have its basis in *yōga-māyā*, that is, *māyā* united with three *guṇas*, and therefore, cannot be an object of *yōga-māyā*. It is self-evident and is the basis of both ignorance and knowledge. The knowledge which has to take place in the *buddhi* is now covered or obstructed by the products of the three *guṇas*. The obstruction is not for *ātmā*; it is for the mind where the knowledge has to take place. Therefore we say that there is ignorance of *ātmā* until the knowledge takes place. In other words, it is there until it goes away for good!

Any *vṛtti* leading to knowledge can be produced by only a means of knowledge, a *pramāṇa*. For the *vṛtti* that removes self-ignorance, our known means of knowledge, perception and inference will not work because they reveal only objects. Only *śabda pramāṇa* can create the *vṛtti* that destroys ignorance of the subject, *ātmā*. *Ātmā* is not created by the *pramāṇa*; it is because of *ātmā* that the *pramāṇa* can even be operated. It is the *vṛtti* that is created. And the *śāstra* is the *pramāṇa* which can create this new knowledge *vṛtti-jñānam*, by a sentence that reveals the truth of the knower. This sentence, the *mahā-vākya*, created the *vṛtti* that removes the ignorance of the nature of the knower. That *vṛtti* is *akhaṇḍa-ākāra--vṛtti*.

A*khaṇḍa-ākāra-vṛtti* means that between the object of knowledge and the knower there is no difference. What is common between *Īśvara* and the *jīva* is limitlessness, *akhaṇḍa*. After negating the differences, the *śāstra* says *tat tvam asi*, that *Īśvara* is you. This creates a *vṛtti* that brings about the understanding that the meaning of the word you and the meaning of the word *Īśvara* are the same. What abides as the basis of everything, *jīva* and *Īśvara*, is one awareness. This particular recognition, brought about by the *vṛtti*, takes place in the mind destroying ignorance of the fact that *ātmā* is *akhaṇḍa*, limitless.

I*śvara* with his *māyā* is the greatest magician. He creates all these forms and names which, if analyzed, do not exist at all. All that is there is awareness. But still the names and forms appear. That is the magic. But He does not come under the spell of his magic. All the *jīvas*, however, are very much under the spell. To break it what should you do? You go to the *māyāvi* and ask him what the trick is. You must seek the *māyāvi*. That is what the *śāstra* does. It tells us who this *māyāvi* is and what is this *māyā*. It is like a magic book that reveals the secret of what looked like a great trick. You expected to discover something miraculous and complicated. When it is explained, it looks so simple. Once you know, all your seeking seems foolish.

When one says, “this entire world,” generally one excludes one’s own body. That is the whole problem. Everything that is created has to be included – your physical body, *prāṇa*, senses, mind, the entire subtle and gross world. All this is *Īśvara* who in reality, is nothing but awareness, Brahman. When you say, “I,” that I is Brahman. There is no other I. Awareness is Brahman and Brahman is *Īśvara*. So where is *Īśvara*? You, awareness, are the only *Īśvara*; there is no other. Everything is *Īśvara* and therefore everything is you. This is what we call *jīva-Īśvara-abhēda*, the non-difference between the individual and *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is nothing but Brahman, awareness, the awareness that is yourself. This is *aparōkṣa*.

There is no such thing as success and failure; it is all our own creation. We set arbitrary goals for ourselves and then judge ourselves as a success or failure. The very word success has an element of subjective judgement and therefore, so does failure. These opposites are all created by our own *īchā* and *dvēṣa*. *Īchā* is *rāga*, what you want. *Dvēṣa* is what you do not want. Some opposites are created by *Īśvara*, like hot and cold, night and day. What you do and do not want are created only by you. You will be caught between the horns of the opposites if you have powerful likes and dislikes. Only then will you have delusion about success-failure, gain-loss etc. These consume your attention, keeping you busy and worried either about the previous failure or the imminent failure.

A person who is not under the spell of *rāga- dvēṣa* has a mind that can discern that the real problem is that one is subject to *rāga- dvēṣa*. Such a person, after analyzing his/her experiences, finds that fulfillment of *rāga-dvēṣa* is not exactly what one is seeking. He/she wants only to know what *Paramēśvara* is and seeks his grace for that knowledge. And to know *Paramēśvara* is to know oneself alone; there is no other *Īśvara*. He is not separate from oneself nor from the world and if there is any sense of separation it is due to ignorance alone.

The words of the *śāstra* create a mind that is fulfilled and resolved, the opposite of a mind in pursuit of *rāga-dvēṣas*. That is why listening to the *śāstra* is to be done again and again, *paunaḥ punyēna śravaṇaṃ kuryāt*. It creates an orientation. Even though there is only one thing to be understood, *tat tvam asi*, the elaborate study of the *śāstra* is to keep the mind exposed for a good length of time to this thinking about realities. While doing *śravaṇaṃ* there is naturally *manana*. Doubts are raised and removed. Through this exposure one gets a certain insight; a certain *vastu-jñānam* takes place and upon that one contemplates and gains increasing clarity. This is *nididhyāsana*.

Spending one's time on *śravaṇam*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* is reflecting on *Paramēśvara*. This is *brahma-abhyāsa* – *tat cintanam*, *tat kathanam*, *anyōnyam tat prabōdhanam*. Reflecting on the subject matter, talking about it to others and discussing with fellow students trying to understand and help each other is all part of *brahma-abhyāsa*. This is what is meant by taking refuge in *Paramēśvara*.

When a given phenomenon, like the sun, is looked upon as *Īśvara*, *Īśvara* is considered the material cause, *upādāna-kāraṇam*. This is the *adhi-bhūta* vision of *Īśvara*. When *Īśvara* is considered as the efficient cause, the *nimitta-kāraṇam* of the sun, it is *adhi-dēvatā*. These are the two levels: *Īśvara* is in the form of this world, *adhi-bhūtam*, from whom nothing is separate and also as all the *dēvatās*, *adhi-daivam*, the one from whom no *dēvatā* is separate.

To know something you must see it as it is. If you know a rope as a rope you know the truth of it. Similarly, knowledge of the truth of *Īśvara* makes you a knower of *Īśvara*, rather than a knower of a particular form. If you superimpose Bhagavan on a particular form, then it is for the purpose of worship which is fine but that is not knowing the truth and without knowing the truth, there is no question of reaching *Īśvara*. Bhagavan says only the *jñānī* reaches me; his *ātmā* is myself alone. This knowledge is *mōkṣa*.

Situations call for certain actions. What is to be done becomes very obvious and relevant to that, there is a *sañkalpa* in your mind, “This is to be done.” That is *Īśvara-sañkalpa* because you did not create the situation nor the sense of propriety that dictates the action. That propriety is the order that is uncreated by man which we call *dharma*. Certain things are to be done and in doing them you surrender your *ahañkāra*. When the *buddhi* is offered in the pursuit of the truth of *Īśvara* or in surrendering the notion of doership and the mind is offered in the form of *sañkalpas* conforming to *dharma*, such a person is not in conflict. He gains *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi* and it is not going to take time for him to understand who *Īśvara* is.

There are three possible obstructions for *mōkṣa*. One is ignorance, *āvaraṇam*. The self is already free so I must recognize the fact that I am identical with Brahman and therefore, free. Knowledge of this is *mōkṣa* and what denies it is ignorance. For any knowledge to take place the mind must be prepared. For knowledge of *ātmā*, lack of preparedness may be in two forms. One is *mala*, impurities gathered in previous births unfold as difficult situations in this birth. To neutralize these, we do daily duties and prayers. The other obstruction is agitation of the mind. The mind has to be rendered steady by meditation. Purity and steadiness of the mind go together. As one increases so does the other. *Karma*, meditation, and inquiry into the *śāstra* are the three means of dealing with the three obstructions.

When a form is involved in meditation it is called *upāsana*. There are two types of *upāsana*: *sampat-upāsana* and *ahaṃ graha-upāsana*. In *sampat-upāsana*, you impose upon an ordinary object something greater. Two objects are involved, the one you know and the other you impose upon it. This *sampat-upāsana* gives you steadiness of mind, thereby a capacity for absorption and a degree of inner composure. In *ahaṃ graha-upāsana*, Brahman, the cause of everything, is equated to *aham*, “I”. It is something like a contemplation but it is not pure knowledge because there is a *vr̥tti* involved connecting two things. It is at the level of *ahaṅkāra*. Since the *ahaṅkāra* has not been negated, the recognition has not yet taken place.

In *nididhyāsana*, contemplation, there is no difference between what you mediate upon and what you get. That is why *nididhyāsana* is entirely different from *upāsana*. In *upāsana* the *jīva* and *Īśvara* are two different things, whether it is *sampat-upāsana* or *ahaṃ graha-upāsana* where you superimpose *Īśvara's* attributes on the *jīva*. Even so, *upāsana* can pave the way for *jñānam* and is therefore considered a fruitful meditation. Contemplation, however, based on *śravaṇa* and *manana* is entirely different from any type of meditation.

If what you have understood is somehow contradicted by experience, *nididhyāsana* is to be done. *Śāstra* says you are *sat-cit-ānanda*. If you do not think so, you are making a judgement about yourself on the basis of your mind and require further inquiry. Until you understand you must study the *śāstra* which is a *pramāṇa*. *Vēdānta* reveals that you are the whole. So you cannot say that you have studied *Vēdānta* and are now turning your attention to something else to fulfill yourself.

If you say that in spite of knowing *ātmā*, you do not see that you are *ānanda*, logically it cannot be true. But experientially there seems to be a contradiction wherein there is knowledge and at the same time, some problem. You cannot say that you do not know, nor can you say that you know you are Brahman because you have problems. You have to eliminate the obstruction which is a condition of mind that seems to stand against the very knowledge that you are free. That knowledge seems to be affected by a process of habitual thinking which you take care of in a variety of ways; the main way is *nididhyāsana*.

Contemplating upon the knowledge that I am *Īsvara* is not an action. Wherever a statement of fact is repeated or contemplated upon, no result is produced because it is already accomplished, *siddha-viṣaya*. An already accomplished fact is not the result of an action because it is not produced. *Karma* can produce, modify, cleanse, or help you reach something, as we have seen before. The fact is *ātmā* is Brahman, like fire is hot. It is a statement of fact and as such it has to be understood. *Śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana* are the three-fold means to understand this and they are adequate.

Ō *m* is a word for Brahman. *Ātmā*, the conscious being is Brahman and that Brahman is *Ōm*. You contemplate on the meaning of *Ōm* as yourself being everything. Then *Ōm* takes the mind to contemplation. *Ōm* can also be a sound symbol, a *pratīka*. It is purely a symbol on which you superimpose your indirect knowledge of *Īśvara*. Because there is no direct knowledge it is purely for *upāsanā*. *Ōmkāra* is both *param* Brahma and *aparam* Brahma. It is *aparam* if it is a *pratīka*, a symbol for *parōkṣa Īśvara*. It is *param* if it is contemplated on as *param-ātmā* who is identical with *pratyag-ātmā*.

Any knowledge is true to its object. The knowledge of the crystal is as true as the crystal in the sense that all the properties of the crystal are contained in your knowledge of the crystal. But in knowing a crystal, you are the knower of it and different from the crystal. The self, however, is not a known object. The “object” of the self is the self that knows. So the knower of the self and the object of knowledge of the self are the same. In other words, the subject and object are one. Once this is known, ignorance is removed and the *virtti* that removed the ignorance goes away leaving the *phalam* – the resolution of the knower, known, knowledge differences. When these are destroyed, all other differences are also destroyed. I see that every piece of knowledge is nothing but myself, every object of knowledge is non-separate from myself and the knower, of course, is non-separate from myself. All the three of them depend entirely upon the self.

Among all the *pavitras*, that which purifies, *ātmā-jñānam* is the *uttamam*, the most exalted because it removes the very concept of purity and impurity. *Ātmā-jñānam* alone calls the bluff of the *ahañkāra*, the nucleus of all problems. *Ahañkāra*, ego, is “I”, but “I” is not ego. I is *Parabrahma*. It not only cleanses one of all things done in this life, it eliminates all the *puṇya-pāpa* of previous lives. By prayer we neutralize some of the *pāpa-karmas* to an extent and also eliminate some guilt. But any amount of expiatory action can only neutralize a finite number of *pāpa-karmas*. *Brahma-jñānam* wipes out everything. As Sankara says, it burns *karma* which has been accumulated for thousands of births along with its root.

One can think that there is a lot of effort involved in gaining *ātmā-jñānam*. In fact, it is very easy to pursue, *susukham kartum* because you need not make any effort, you have simply to know. The means of knowledge, *pramāṇa* is available, the teacher is there; all you have to do is expose your *buddhi*. The *śāstra* makes the *ahaṅkāra* drop. *Ātmā* is *sat-cit-ānanda*, all you have to do is expose yourself to the teaching and see exactly what the words say. Your will or effort is not involved. This is what is called surrender. You need not do anything, the words take care of the job of revealing what the self is.

For any knowledge to take place the person must have adequate preparation, *adhikāritvam*. For *ātmā-jñānam* this preparedness is maturity. Daily experiences are good enough to make you a mature person if you are ready to learn. Be cognizant of your behavior and that of others. Maturity does not require any special experience, just understanding of experiences. Nor do you have to be someone special in order to mature. It depends entirely upon just how much attention you pay to your own behavior, your own thinking. Society provides enough frustrations, invokes enough anger. It does not deny you the material that is necessary for growth. You simply have to understand it, thereby maturity is assured.

It is a common understanding that the objective of *ātmā-jñānam* is to eliminate the *ahaikāra*. Then the question will naturally arise, “If I eliminate the ego, *ahaikāra*, how will I engage in any pursuit?” We do not eliminate the ego. We say the ego is *ātmā*, but *ātmā* is not an ego. This amounts to elimination of ego because you think *ātmā* is ego, which is not true. The ego appropriates to itself the status of being I, of being some kind of an independent being. In fact, it is a misappropriation which only brings in limitation and bondage.

The whole pursuit of *ātmā-jñānam* is done only in an atmosphere of devotion. In such an atmosphere one cannot claim credit for any achievement because one recognizes so many limitations. One surrenders to the Lord who is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the entire world, invoking His grace. Pursuing *Īśvara* in an atmosphere of *bhakti* is not an academic pursuit. Nor is it a purely religious pursuit because there is so much *vicāra*, inquiry, involved. To recognize *Īśvara* as *karmaphaladātā*, the giver of the fruits of action and *karmādhyakṣaḥ*, the one who presides over all *karmas* is *bhakti*. Any possibility of action is because of *Īśvara* such that at both the level of doing the *karma* and the level of receiving the results one has an appreciation of *Īśvara*.

Oftentimes people ask if the Lord is all-pervasive, if he is in me and outside me, why should I pray? Drop the 'if.' The Lord is everywhere. If you know that, there is no need to pray. But if you do not know, pray in order to get that knowledge. You seem to see yourself as separate from the Lord who is omnipotent, omniscient and includes you. To that Lord whom you have not understood, pray. "I am told that you are all-pervasive, O Lord. Show me how you are all pervasive. How I am included in you? If only the Lord is there, then how am I the Lord? Please reveal this to me." This act of prayer is as important as the spirit behind it. Without the act there will be no spirit unless you are a *jñānī*. But for a person who is not a *jñānī*, even if the spirit is absent as long as the act is there, the spirit will come.

As a *sādhana* for *antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi*, an act of *bhakti* is very important. It will instill devotion because it does imply a certain degree of surrender and recognition of one's limitations. This can lead to helplessness but when it is accompanied by the recognition of *Īsvara* as limitless, the act of devotion makes this appreciation very real. The attitude of surrender becomes more and more real through the act of surrender. So the act is important as the very attitude until the attitude does not come and go. If it is an abiding attitude you have no need to perform an act of devotion.

One has to understand that *Īśvara* is in the form of *mōkṣa*, freedom. If one wants that, one works for *antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi*, mental purity. When *dharma* is *Īśvara*, even duties are for *Īśvara*. What is to be done becomes important because it is looked upon as *Īśvara*, thereby *rāga-dvēṣas* are relegated to the background. Then the special rituals that one performs are meant for no other result than *antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi* leading to *mōkṣa*.

If you recognize all glories as *Īśvara's* glories, your pride, your *ahaṅkāra* diminishes. What stands between you and *Īśvara*, after all, is your ego. That ego has to be dilated and then dismissed by knowledge. How do you deflate the ego? Only by the recognition that all glories belong to *Īśvara*. This clarity in thinking should help you to recognize that there is no personal accomplishment at all and everything is *Īśvara's*. That paves the way for understanding what *Īśvara* is.

A *jīva* is *kiñcijñah* because he has *avidyā-upādhi*, which seemingly limits *ātmā*. Whereas *Īśvara* has an *upādhi*, called *māyā*, which does not limit. On the other hand, it makes *ātmā* omniscient and the cause of the world. Then in the expressed form, the *jīva* has a given *buddhi* through which he can know some thing. But *Īśvara*, through *māyā-upādhi* is *sarvajñah*. The concealing power, *āvaraṇa-śakti*, of *māyā* is present in the *jīva* so he cannot know everything. Whereas for *Īśvara*, that *āvaraṇa* does not exist. There is only the capacity to create. Thus, the very *māyā* which keeps the *jīva* under its spell becomes a glory for *Īśvara*. That is the first *vibhūti*. *Māyā* itself becomes the *vibhūti* for *Paramēśvara saccidānanda ātmā*.

By knowing that *Īśvara* is everything one becomes one with *Īśvara*. How is that? The first step is knowing *Īśvara* is the maker and material cause and therefore the effect, the creation, is nonseparate from himself. If *Īśvara* is everything, one's physical body is *Īśvara*, one's mind is *Īśvara* and one's senses are also *Īśvara*. What is not *Īśvara*? If everything that is created is *Īśvara*, perhaps consciousness is not *Īśvara* because it is not created. But this is not possible because what was there before creation was *sat*. If consciousness is uncreated, that is exactly the *sat*, the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*. Therefore, knowing *Īśvara*, one becomes one with *Īśvara*. This is the second step. The separation between the Lord and oneself is simply swallowed in the vision of the *Īśvara*. Therefore, the vision of *Īśvara* is the vision of oneself, the vision of the whole.

There are two ways of going after things; either for the sake of being happy or happily. Going after things to discover happiness generally does not work. And if you are happy with yourself as a person, then you need not go after things. It does not produce any result for you. But then, you can do things joyfully.

Only when you discuss what you think you know, you discover what you do know. Clarity takes place only when you begin to part with the knowledge you have, sharing it with another person. Any vagueness becomes very evident. The sharing of knowledge can also be mutual in a discussion among seekers. Both are part of *brahmābhyāsa*, the *sādhana* for knowing Brahman, yourself. There is no other *sādhana*. It is not something that is going to emerge at some time in the heat of meditation. The self is yourself. It is never hidden at any time. The only thing that covers it is ignorance. Therefore, listen and reflect on what you have understood by sharing it with others and in discussion among seekers.

Om, Bhūr bhuvassuvaḥ, tat savitur varēṇyam, bhargō dēvasya dhīmahi, dhiyō yō naḥ pracōdayāt : Om is Bhagavan. *Bhūr bhuvassuvaḥ* are the three worlds, gross, subtle and unmanifest, *sthūla-sūkṣma- prapañca* and *kāraṇa*. *Om* is all three; it includes everything. *Tat*, that (Lord). *Varēṇyam* is the most worshipful. *Dhīmahi* means we meditate upon, as a *sādhana*. Later, when it is understood, it is contemplated upon. We contemplate upon the one who is *dēvasya*, self-effulgent and *savituh*, all knowing. The one who is all knowing is symbolized by *savitā*, the sun because in brilliance such as the sun's, there is no trace of darkness, a symbol of ignorance. The sun is always likened to the Lord because it has no taint of darkness, unlike the moon which has patches. That Lord, *yaḥ*, who is all-knowing, *bhargah*, may he brighten, *pracōdayāt*, our, *naḥ*, minds, *dhiyah*. This is prayer. In contemplation we have the meaning; the all-knowing Lord (as the self) illumines our minds.

Any existent thing in this world that has some glory, whether in terms of knowledge, power, beauty, some brilliance, skill, or any fame is all part of Bhagavan's *vibhūti*. You will find that glory in many forms. Every blade of grass is *Īśvara's* glory; the sun, moon, and stars are all *Īśvara's* glory. If I recognize his glory, I become *Bhagavān's vibhūti*. Even the capacity to appreciate beauty is a glory of *Īśvara*. When you know that all glory belongs to *Īśvara* you can no longer be jealous.

Wherever there is any brilliance, any skill, one should be able to appreciate it as *Īsvara's* glory. It does not require great knowledge to see that these capacities that we have are all given to us. Nothing is really created by anybody. Simple observation of your own life, of your own powers will reveal that everything is given to you. The whole world is given. What is it that is created by you? If you have power to create, to bring things together, that is also given. What is created by us is nothing. The more you see this, the more objective you will find your ego. And an objective ego is as good as non-existent – even if it is not enlightened. That is the devotee's ego, which is good enough to discover *ātmā*. It becomes pure and can therefore discover *śuddha-ātmā*.

In order for Brahman as *Īśvara* to have the status of creator of everything, omniscience and appropriate power are necessary. Appropriate power means a power in keeping with the nature of the *jagat*. Whatever is the order of reality of the world, that is the reality of the power that creates it. When we analyze this creation, we find it is *mithyā* and therefore, there must be a *mithyā* power which has created it. That power is called *māyā*. As the *mithyā* creation by definition has no independent existence, *adhiṣṭhāna-ananyatvam*, its cause, *māyā* also fulfills this definition, being not independent of Brahman.

How do we know that Brahman seemingly conditioned by *māyā* is the *jagat kāraṇam*? For knowing this, the *pramāṇa* is only *śruti*. That Brahman is the cause of the creation is revealed by the *śāstra*. It also reveals that you are that *satyam jñānam anantam brahma*. You can also have an immediate appreciation, *aparōkṣa-jñānam*, of this. Then the problem is to account for the world. For the creation of the world, there must be an inherent power which has the same degree of reality as the *jagat*. That Brahman gains the status of *jagat-kāraṇam* through an inherent power *māyā*, is also known for certain only through *śāstra*, although the existence of a *māyā* power can also be accepted by a supporting inference. Therefore, the same *caitanyam* which is the common basis for *Īśvara* and the *jīva* must have *māyā* to make it the cause for the creation.

We have two forms of *Īśvara*; one is *śuddha-caitanyam* pure, limitless awareness, the second, *māyā-avaccinna-caitanyam*. Is there a third? If *caitanya* is the *svarūpa* of *Īśvara*, that *svarūpa* is also available here as *jīva*. Awareness obtaining in your *antaḥkaraṇa*, in other words conditioned by your *antaḥkaraṇa* is called *jīva*. Therefore *antaḥkaraṇa-avaccinna-caitanyam* is another form of *Īśvara*. *Caitanya* conditioned by the *antaḥkaraṇa* is an individual knower, *pramātā* etc. This is another form.

If one looks upon this entire creation as the form, the body of *Īśvara*, we have what we call *Virāṭ*. That single form which includes all forms is called the cosmic form, *Virāṭ-svarūpa*. It establishes that nothing is outside *Īśvara* and upon appreciating that, you discover in yourself a devotion to *Īśvara*. Because of the appreciation of the cosmic form you can understand that *Bhagavān* is in charge of everything. This does not mean you do not take responsibility for what you do, what you are. In fact, the law of *karma* helps you take responsibility for your lot, your parentage etc. and happily accept it not passing blame to anybody. You accept responsibility for what you are because of past deeds. Other forces might have contributed to what you are, but at the same time you understand that you have a free will. You can add to or reorganize yourself, be an emotionally fragile person or a person who refuse to be fragile. All this is in your hands. At the same time, as an individual *jīva*, you are not in total control.

In praising an individual, there is always an element of flattery. But when there is no limit to the virtues any amount of praise will not be excessive. Any praise we offer *Bhagavān* is going to be only inadequate. From our limited knowledge, how much can we know of omniscience? Yet only if we know it, can we really appreciate all-knowledge and give due praise. Since *Bhagavān* is always more than our praises, whatever we say, we will never be guilty of exaggeration. In such praise of *Bhagavān*, people discover joy. And it is but proper because *Bhagavān* is joy.

When the Lord is the cause and the sustaining factor of even gods like Brahma, Indra and so on, it is proper for all those who know his glories to surrender to him. In other words, the Lord is the ultimate altar of surrender. Seeing one's own accomplishments as the glories of the Lord, one becomes objective and dispassionate in one's life. There is an ego, but it is so thin it does not cause any discordance to the harmony between the individual and the world, which is all the glory of the Lord. The ultimate surrender of the ego is in the wake of the knowledge of the oneness of the *jīva* and *Īsvara* revealed by such sentences as *samō ham sarvabhūtēṣu*. "I am the same in all beings." Here knowledge and surrender are identical.

P*ratimā* is that by which you are able to illustrate something, a replica like a statue of a person, for example. It is created to resemble the form of a person and you recognize it as a representation of him. Suppose I want to create a *pratimā*, an equivalent of *Īśvara*. What will I create? The whole *jagat* is *Īśvara*. His glory cannot be limited nor can a symbol be created which will represent *Paramēśvara*. We only create a *pratimā* and then let it stand for *Īśvara*. We cannot create a real *pratimā* for *Paramēśvara* because nothing is separate from him.

Generally we are committed or devoted to a number of things – money, one’s partner, duty and so on. And there is a little bit of devotion to God also. On certain days of the week or at certain times of the day we turn our attention towards God. Because our devotion is divided among various things, God has to wait for his turn. Then slowly a person finds that the little bit of devotion he had for the Lord has grown to cover a few more things. He finds that money is also Bhagavan, wife is Bhagavan, children are Bhagavan, till finally the whole world is Bhagavan. That is *ananya-bhakti*. The devotion goes nowhere else except to Bhagavan. This requires a lot of inquiry, *vicāra*. The more you look into it, the more you see *Īśvara* as everything. There is nothing other than *Īśvara*. Your devotion to the Lord grows as you understand who he is until you find that there is nothing outside.

How can I perform an action for the sake of *Īśvara*? If *Īśvara* specifically tells me to do something, for his sake I can do it, as we often do for others. But *Īśvara* does not directly ask me for anything. Doing *karma* for *Īśvara*'s sake means for *dharma*'s sake, not for the sake of one's *rāga-dvēṣas*, likes and dislikes. Understanding *dharma* as Bhagavan's creation you adjust your behavior to conform with *dharma*. As a *karma-yōgī* one is not interested in *dharma-artha-kāma*. Although he has *rāga-dvēṣa*, his actions are done as *yōga* for *mōkṣa*'s sake.

What is to be done in a given situation is *svadharma*. It is the appropriate course of action in a given situation. This can conflict with what I like or do not like to do. As long as what is to be done is in keeping with my *rāga* or what is not to be done corresponds to my *dvēṣa*, there is no problem. But more often than not, *dharma* and *adharma* are pitted against *rāga* and *dvēṣa*. When *rāga-dvēṣas* are in keeping with what is to be done, they assume the status of *dharma*. And we should know that what is against *dharma* is against *Bhagavān* because he is the moral order. Without any education every human being has knowledge of *dharma* and *adharma*. At least we are clear about what others should and should not do to us. That we all commonly sense and that we all commonly sense something, that is order. Moreover, the moral order and free will are connected. We do have a faculty of choice. If we did not, there would be no necessity for a moral order because we would be perfectly programmed like the animals. Because I have a free will, I can always choose to align it with *dharma* and not with my *rāga-dvēṣa*.

Bhakti is dedicated action to *Īśvara* who is in the form of *dharma*. One who conforms to *dharma* and avoids *adharmā*, looking upon *dharma* as *Īśvara* is a *bhakta*, a *karma-yōgī*. The *karma-yōgī* not only offers all actions to *Īśvara*, but also he meditates upon *Īśvara*. So *karma-yōga* is not merely service. It is any activity performed with *Īśvara* in view including prayer and meditation. *Karma* is three fold, mental, oral and physical. If *Īśvara* is invoked in any one them, it is *karma-yōga*. There is no separate *bhakti-yōga*.

As human beings we are endowed with the faculty of choice. We can choose to act in keeping with the commonly accepted norms or not. These norms are not created by a human being. They are part of creation so conformity to them is making oneself not separate from *Īśvara*. *Dharma*, like other natural laws, is not visible mandate from *Īśvara*. For example, we do not see the law of gravitation but only its manifestation in a falling object. Similarly, we do not see *dharma* but it is manifest in our natural urges like not wanting to be hurt. From that we understand that non-injury is *dharma*. That is why it is said that conscience is God. Conscience is nothing but *dharma-adharma* manifest as our own common sense appreciation of right and wrong. Conformity to that as *Īśvara* is worship. When one's likes and dislikes are made subordinate to *dharma-adharma*, one becomes a *karma-yōgī*.

Dedicating action to *Īśvara* by acting in accordance with *dharma-adharma*, right and wrong, and not *rāga-dvēṣa* is worship. Those who perform actions with this attitude of *Īśvarārpaṇa-buddhi*, are “*matparaḥ*”, their commitment is to *Īśvara*, nothing else. He is the ultimate end, not the last end but the end. These people want *mōkṣa* for the sake of *mōkṣa* and have ascertained that *Īśvara* is *mōkṣa-svarūpa*. They know that they have to gain knowledge of *Īśvara*; that is their ultimate as well as their immediate end. Everything else becomes an aid, *sahakāri*, to that end. They realize that they have to prepare themselves for that end by gaining *antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi*. Accordingly, they live a life of *karmayōga* to neutralize *rāga-dvēṣas*.

*M*ōkṣa is only by knowledge, *jñānādēva*, not by *karma* or by anything else. You are already non-separate from *Īśvara* and recognition of that fact is freedom, *mōkṣa*. If that is not *mōkṣa*, there is no *mōkṣa* because if you are not limitless right now, there is no possibility of becoming limitless. All you have to understand is that there is only one thing and you are that one thing. It is already accomplished. To be free, you have only to shed your ignorance and know, *jñānādēva mōkṣah*. To remove the ignorance, you require proper effort and perseverance. There is no difficulty in gaining knowledge other than becoming prepared. That preparedness is given by Bhagavan.

A combination of *karmayōga* and meditation can win *Īśvara*'s grace to create the condition for *jñānam* which is *mōkṣa*. The *antaḥkaraṇa-naiścalyam* gained by meditation and the *antaḥkaraṇaśuddhi* gained by *karmayōga* make one qualified for *jñānam*. A vague *jñānam* becomes very clear. *Īśvara* cannot give *mōkṣa* directly because *Īśvara* is the *svarūpa* of the person. He can only give *jñānam* and he need not assume a special form to do that. Any teacher who knows this is as good as *Īśvara*. What *Īśvara* can give is an opportunity for knowing. It is the *adrṣṭa-karma-phalam* of your prayers. That gives you a situation free from obstructions, thereby you gain the *jñānam*.

Īśvara's grace is manifest even when you are seeking to know the identity between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*. To merely accept the possibility of nonduality requires *Īśvara's* grace, *Īśvarānugrahādēva puṃsāmadvaitavāsanā*. Even to discern that nonduality is the solution to the problem of *saṃsāra* and to get the right person to help you requires grace because this ocean of *saṃsāra* is vast.

The grace of *Īśvara* can provide a situation necessary for *jñānam*; it cannot be a cause for *mōkṣa* because *mōkṣa* is not created. The cause of *saṃsāra* is ignorance of reality like the cause of the serpent is ignorance of the rope. By knowing the rope the perception of the serpent and all the attendant fear goes. Similarly, by knowing the truth of *āt̄mā*, *anātmā-buddhi*, thereby *saṃsārītvam* based upon that goes.

Seeking *Īsvara's* grace is part of taking charge of your life. You take responsibility for your life and the results follow. If you are not well, you go to a doctor and if you are not able to go to the doctor by yourself, you can ask somebody to take you. That is intelligent living. *Īsvara-anugraha* does not come in some peculiar form. It is the result of your own efforts.

Ātmā cannot be any more evident than it is now and it is not opposed to ignorance of yourself either. *Ātmā* will not protest. As light is not opposed to what you read, similarly *ātmā-caitanyam* is not opposed to what you think. If ignorance is there, awareness is there; if ignorance is not there, awareness will still be there. Only a *vytti* that occurs in the *buddhi* revealing the nature of *ātmā* is opposed to self-ignorance. *Ātmā caitanyam*, awareness, which is the nature of *ātmā* is not opposed to ignorance.

Doing *karma* for *Īśvara's* sake cannot be for His benefit because Bhagavan by definition is *pūrṇah*, complete. He has all that one could wish for in absolute measure. So it is not for His sake. If you do it for your sake, then it is not *karmayōga*. You become a *karmatha*. Doing *karma* for *Īśvara's* sake is doing it as an expression of your devotion to Him. This is *Īśvarartham karma*. Further, *Īśvara* is in the form of *dharma*. We view *Īśvara* as the *upādāna-kāraṇam* recognizing that the very order in the world is *Īśvara*. Or we can say it is the *dharma* of the one who is eternal, *sanatanasya dharmah*. In this *Īśvara* becomes the *nimitta-kāraṇam*. Conformity to His order is *Īśvararpitakarma*. Either you think, “I perform this action for the sake of *Īśvara*,” or “In conforming to *dharma* I am worshipping *Īśvara*.” Both are similar.

When you act according to *dharma* and in contradiction to your *rāga-dvēṣa*, you are suppressing your ego and uniting yourself to *Īśvara*. This is the worship which we call *karmayōga*. Though your own likes and dislikes, which are purely centered on yourself are initially suppressed, in time they are sublimated. Once you have a value of *dharma*, the *rāga-dvēṣas* get naturally relegated to the background. Then it is not suppression but success in the form of maturity and elevation of the person.

Growing up implies appreciation of *dharma*. Every day we have to make choices and if we are confused about what is right and wrong, it is better to be an animal. It is not confused nor does have any conflict. Maturity in a human being implies the appreciation of *dharma*. Then there is no suppression. Because *dharma* is rooted in *Īśvara*, love for *dharma* becomes love for *Īśvara*. That is *bhakti*. To live a life of *karmayōga* one must have an awareness of *Īśvara* being in the form of *dharma*. It is a very alert life.

Karmayōga is not doing a lot of things. Though a *karmayōgī* may be very active, that is not what makes him a *karmayōgī*. It is not the amount of activity but the attitude that makes a person a *karmayōgī*. Though he may be very busy, a *karmayōgī* has no anxiety about what he is doing. He has no fear or conflict and goes about doing what is to be done with an inner relaxation. All that he does is for *Īśvara*. That is *karmayōga*. The *ahankāra* gets deflated and *rāga-dvēṣas* get neutralized.

Karmayōgīs perform all *karma* offering it to *Īśvara* and also take the *karmaphala* as given by *Īśvara*. At both levels *Īśvara* is involved. This is true *karmayōga*. There are two functions for *Īśvara*. One is *karmadhyaksah*, the Lord who presides over the laws of *karma*, without whom no *karma* is possible. With that appreciation you will have very mild *rāga-dvēṣa*. If they are predominant so that it is not possible to offer all *karmas* to *Īśvara*, when the *karmaphala* comes to you, take it as something from *Īśvara*. That means you have offered the *karmaphala* to him. You become the *kartā* and Bhagavan the *karmaphaladātā*, the one who gives the results of the action. This is the second function of *Īśvara*.

When every *karmaphala* is taken as something that comes from *Īśvara* your *rāgadvēśas* get neutralized. We have to act this out. It is not simply a matter of understanding. Though understanding is necessary, the attitude stays with you when you keep on acknowledging that *karmaphala* is from *Īśvara*. If you repeat it to yourself, not simply mechanically, you develop the attitude of *prasāda buddhi*. Like when you make it a habit to say “Thanks” you develop an attitude of gratitude. Similarly here, “This is *prasāda*” has to be repeated. The awareness that *Īśvara* is the *karmaphaladātā* has to be maintained by somehow expressing it so that the *prasāda buddhi* becomes a reality.

In prayer, will is used and in fact, is expressed in its highest form. If you have the will to earn money it is not surprising because money will immediately produce a difference in your life. Similarly, if you want name, fame, or power etc., and you exert your will to get them, there is nothing extraordinary about that. But in prayer there is no immediate result. You still pray very earnestly. That means it is the highest expression of will, pure will.

*A*hañkāra and mamakara support each other's existence. Unless you say "these things are mine" ahañkāra cannot really be sustained. But even relatively speaking there is nothing one can claim to own if you analyze it. A mature person looks upon everything as belonging to *Īśvara*. He finds himself endowed with a few things towards which he has the attitude of a trustee and does not suffer from the inflated notion that he has accomplished everything he has, a notion rooted in ignorance. This is a person who through *vivēka* has gained maturity and is relatively free from a sense of insecurity. He knows very well that what will happen will happen and thus he enjoys a certain relaxation and readiness to face things as they come. There is trust in himself, trust in *Īśvara* and therefore, a lot of inner freedom. That is mature ahañkāra, but still not enlightened. A kind of mamakara remains though not to the degree generally seen. This person is a *karmayōgī*, a *bhakta*.

Between *ātmā* and the *dēha* there is a *granthi*, a tie, bought about by *avidyā*, ignorance. From that comes *kāma* followed by *karma*, old and new. By this three-stranded string, *avidyā-kāma-karma*, together called *hṛdayagranthi*, an individual is bound and is released when that knot is untied. Doing varieties of things only makes it more knotted since action stems from a failure to understand the original problem. As in untying a tangled ball of yarn, pulling at the wrong threads will only make the ball more tangled. You must get the “hang” of it; then the knot will resolve. Spiritually also, you must first understand that seeking a solution within *saṃsāra* is only complicating the problem. The problem is ignorance and to determine that you need *vivēka*. *Dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, *mōkṣa* are the four strands hanging from the tangled ball of *saṃsāra*. If you pull on the first three, you are tightening the knots. Pursuing *artha* and *kāma* only create further problems and though *dharma* resolves problems to an extent it does not untie the fundamental knot. For that you have to remove *avidyā*. When you do, the knot resolves because there is no longer any doubt about whether *ātmā* is Brahman or limited, *kartā* or *akartā*, *bhōktā* or *abhōktā*.

Death is always around the corner, mobile in the form of every vehicle, and stationary in the form of microbes and so on. There is no escape from death for it is the nature of the body to die. Since the body is put together, it is therefore, subject to disintegration. The more intimately you understand this, the less of a problem death becomes, and the more disposed you are to celebrate life. You are fearless with reference to death only when you celebrate today. That you wake up in the same body tomorrow is itself a matter for celebration. Perhaps, for one more day you can do something useful. You plan well for only one day. Even a plan for the future is only today's plan; tomorrow you may change it if the changing circumstances require that, but for today you have a plan. If you live like this, you can laugh at death, or at least face it very squarely.

What is really required to overcome fear of the future is the inner strength, the 'spiritual strength' of knowing just how little you require to survive. Then you have no fear. Just to live is not a major accomplishment. Even a mosquito lives. Go to a jungle, and see how many creatures there are. It is teeming with millions of life forms. What retirement plan do they have? They all live day to day, and in doing so, keep teaching us how to live. This fear of what will happen in the future is meaningless.

So much of our fear of the future is centered on loss – loss of life, loss of name, loss of power, loss of hair, loss of teeth, loss of health, loss of possessions, loss of relationships. Suppose you lose some power that you have. Just look at yourself without power. If you strip yourself of whatever power you have, you are still there very much as a person. Essentially, nothing is lost. And look at the person who has power. See what problems he has centered on his power and his fear of losing it. By inquiring in this way cognitively, we locate the thinking that triggers the emotion of fear and then neutralize it by further inquiry. One has to do that. It is a kind of job done so that the antibodies arise even as these thoughts arise. It is intelligent living.

To assimilate self-knowledge as something that is very much with oneself, one has to contemplate upon oneself, with a certain mastery over the senses etc. That is why one-pointedness, *ekāgratā*, is implied in meditation. One makes the same knowledge gathered from the teacher and the *śāstra* very immediate, very well known, with no doubt at all. In other words, free from all obstructions. One stays with the knowledge until a time comes when one does not need to stay with it because it is oneself. Till then, there is a seeming attempt to stay. This tendency to spend time in contemplation is very natural to a person who has spiritual wealth, *daivī sampat*.

M*anaḥ prasādaḥ* is mental cheerfulness. It is mental because sometimes you can put on an appearance of cheerfulness, but not mentally cheerful at all. A discipline which helps you acquire and maintain mental cheerfulness is called *tapah*. It involves a prayerful attitude, and an acceptance of yourself and of the situation in which you find yourself. This includes acceptance of the past, and of the world as we find it. Futuristic conjectures are also resolved in an attitude of surrender and simple appreciation.

It is the simple things that bring about cheerfulness. It involves living one day at a time, for that is a life in keeping with reality. Today is real; tomorrow I may not be here at all. That does not mean I worry about what will happen tomorrow. Today I am alive, and what is to be done this day, I just do. The future can take care of itself. If I can manage today, tomorrow I have only one day to manage. This is the truth about life. Your whole life, all you have to manage is one day. Even if you are worried, your worry is only for one day. Yesterday's worry is gone. What happened yesterday was yesterday. It is not today. If yesterday you made a mistake, that is fine. You are wiser for it. If you are worried about it today, not only yesterday was spoiled, today also is wasted in worrying about what happened yesterday. With reference to the result of action, and what is to be done, a certain surrender allows you to live happily. The future will take care of itself. This one day at a time never goes away.

There is a law that what will be will be, *bhavitavyam bhavatyēva*. This is an important shock absorber. What is to happen will happen; I do what I can. That is the truth about living. Did you ever think you would be where you are today? It all happens, thanks to one thing or the other. You find yourself in a given situation because there is a certain plan going on underneath. Let it unfold itself. You take things day by day and shape whatever comes your way. You don't allow yourself to be like driftwood; you hold the gear alright, but at the same time, you recognize that there is certain unfoldment taking place in your life which has its own meaning. That meaning you discover and face as it unfolds.

Let life be full of surprises. If you know that everything will happen according to your plan, you need not even live. Just imagine if you know everything that is going to happen. All the menus for your whole lifetime, what are you going to eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner, everything is completely mapped out and made known to you. There is no fun in this. There are no surprises, no turns of events. If you want to have some surprises, make your plans, do what you have to do, and leave the outcome to the factors that shape the unfolding of events. What is to happen to you, your own *prārabdha* and that of others, are all intertwined. This is how things happen. If you have understood and assimilated even what happened so far, you have an attitude that is ready for surprises. That is cheerful attitude, *manaḥ prasādaḥ*.

Whenver concern or anxiety arises in life, we resolve it by bringing back the proper attitude. Just remind yourself that it is nice being yourself. Say to yourself, “It is nice being myself.” In whichever area you have to change, make efforts to change. If necessary, take help, even the help of prayer. I don’t have to prove myself to anybody. If another person thinks ill of me, it is his problem. I just accept myself as I am. “It is nice being myself.” Have a sentence like this and repeat it now and then like a *mantra*. You will find you are together as a person.

When you get up in the morning, acknowledge that it is nice being alive. You don't take life for granted. It is one more day for celebration. Plan how you will celebrate today. Even under the shower you can start celebrating. Like this, celebrate the day with what you are doing. It does not mean that you must make a cake everyday. Anything that you do is a celebration. "I am alive today. It is nice being alive. It is nice doing what I do." That is what the attitude, mental cheerfulness, *manaḥ prasādaḥ*, is.

You are in charge of your life to an extent, but if you think you are totally in charge, you are mistaken. Everything is given including the ego that thinks it is in charge. If the ego is the I-sense in the body-mind-sense complex, that “I” is given to you, along with the body, mind and senses. And if you find that you have no control over your behavior it is because that itself is “I.” Naturally you will go by whatever happens in the mind. If you feel like giving up, then you give up. If you feel like doing something, you will do it. There is no discrimination, *vivēka*, available for you, unless you can step aside and see that you have only jurisdiction over actions, never the results. Then again, everything is given to you as your own *prārabdhakarma* by *Īśvara* who is indweller. According to that *prārabdhakarma*, things happen. How are you going to deal with that? It is better to give to *Īśvara* exactly what belongs to him. You do what you have to do, he does his job. At the very level of yourself as an individual related to *Īśvara*, the Lord, you don’t dictate all the terms. So why do you take charge of things for which you have no responsibility?

The acknowledgement of our limitations is such an important thing. We have no power over so many things. Certain situations have simply got to be faced, and faced with intelligence. Not facing an inevitable situation is unintelligent. When you surrender your disposition to *Īśvara* who is identified as *prārabdhakarma*, then you accept that what is to happen will happen, *bhavitavyam bhavatyēva*. For that *Īśvara* has to be recognized as the one who is in the form of law of *karma* itself.

This creation is a huge ritual, *yajña*, in process, in which you are a wheel or a cog. Your place is very important, otherwise you would not be here. The very fact that you are in this contemporary society, or in a particular situation, however insignificant you may think it is, is significant. You are significant. In a large piece of machinery the bolt may think its job of sitting tightly is unimportant since it seems to be doing nothing at all. But sitting tightly is very important, for if it doesn't, the whole machine will come to a halt. Therefore, you are aware where you are because you have to be there. Whatever role you are called upon to play is important; that is why you are there.

If you take the help of *Īśvara*, you don't blame yourself and then you allow yourself to let go of the past and get into the flow of situations as they unfold themselves day after day. Today the situation is in the particular form; tomorrow it will be another form, and the next day it is going to be something different. That is what makes life interesting. After all, if tomorrow is going to be exactly like today why should we have tomorrow? But every day is a bundle of surprises. There is always something new happening to keep us interested. If I let go of my past and don't think that I am in charge of everything, but that *Īśvara* in the form of *prārabdhakarma* is in charge, I get into the flow of events and do what I can do. The relief in this is not ordinary.

The creation is something like a boiling pot of water. You find an arrangement of bubbles that keeps on changing. But it is all logical. One bubble is big and another is small. One has burst already and another is just breaking the surface. There is logic that determines why a bubble is here now, why one is big or small etc. They all follow some laws, which perhaps we have not yet decoded. We are like bubbles. Each one of us has to do certain things at a certain time and this is *Īśvara-icchā*. When the called-for actions are done with a mind that has this appreciation, it is an offering to *Īśvara*.

Karmayōga is a life of surrender, a religious life. *Īśvara* has to be accepted, and therefore, there is no secular *karmayōga*. When you want to accomplish things without *Īśvara*, you create a lot of unnecessary pressure because you are taking charge of things that you are not capable of controlling. When you make yourself responsible for things for which you are not responsible at all, you build up pressure and invite problems. In the beginning you may enjoy some success, but later, you will suffer a breakdown. In *karmayōga*, efficiency is natural because you are free from anxiety. When there is no pressure, all your faculties are available to you because you do not spend your time worrying about what will happen. You just do what you can do.

When you accept *Īsvara*'s order you have an attitude, "Things happen as they should. I do what I can." This attitude helps you to resolve your resistance. You resist a situation because you cannot control it. And you want to control the situation because of innate fear of losing some security. There is always fear, fear of being rejected, fear of being abandoned, fear of being dismissed, fear of being dubbed useless. That fear is always born of the sense of insecurity and it makes you resist and control situations. The more you accept *Īsvara*, the more you accept yourself. This is the best deal, really speaking.

In the world, in any deal, generally there is a give and take. You give something and you get something in return. You give your time, skill or advice and get some money, power or name and fame. But in accepting *Īśvara*, you give yourself. This is the biggest giving. This is the greatest deal in the world. The deal is a loss, self-loss really! When you give yourself to *Īśvara*, then what is there is only *Īśvara*'s order. The ego is so informed, so enlightened that it lets the order of *Īśvara* work. This is *Īśvara-bhakti*.

Bhakti is resolving the ego in *Īśvara*. You cannot circumvent this and go to the *ātmā* straight away. Since you are in the world, you have to settle account with the world. Settling account with the world means to settle many accounts: one's account with one's mother, father, neighbor and so on. And either people are not available to settle accounts or they are not ready to do so. So settling account with the world is impossible. And therefore you put all the people into one basket, *Īśvara*, and settle account with Him straight away.

Everyone is governed by the laws of *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is the creator as well as the creation; he is not simply a creator of the world, sitting somewhere 'there'. All the order that is here is the handiwork and expression of *Īśvara*. So, the more you see these laws, the more compassionate you become, not only towards others, even towards your own mind. You become compassionate towards yourself. That is called settling account with *Īśvara*.

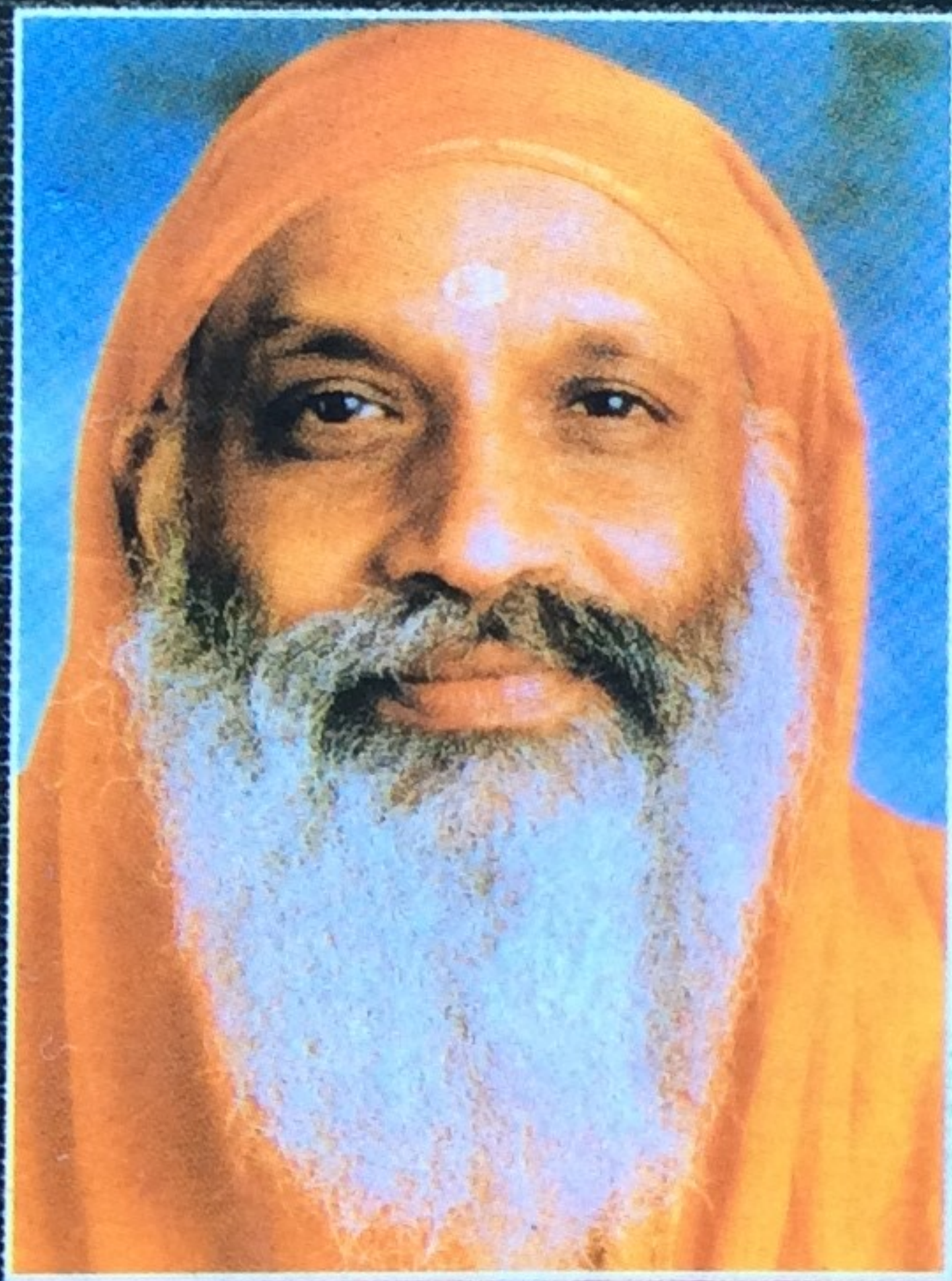
A life free of complexity is a life of least resistance to the order of *Iswara*, the order that includes the moral laws and the laws of *karma*. In fact, the law of *karma* and *dharma* are one and the same, because *dharma* produces *punya-pāpa* which form the very order. The law of *karma* centered on one's free will and *dharma-adharma* are highly interconnected. Therefore, to that one Lord who is in the form of the very order of *dharma*, the order of *karma*, one surrenders and does what is to be done. We confirm to *dharma* because *dharma* is *Bhagavān*.

Settling account with *Īśvara* is to let *Īśvara* enter your life. But how to let *Īśvara* enter your life? Letting *Īśvara* enter your life means just opening up your heart to Him and letting Him rule your life. It is a very beautiful thing. The more you relate to *Īśvara*, the more you understand that things work the way they do because of certain laws. You understand, “Desires are given to me and the capacity to bring about changes is also given to me. I do whatever I have to do and see that the place and the relationships are more pleasant.” You do whatever you can and still let *Īśvara* work His way. That is letting *Īśvara* enter your life.

Vēdanta is a teaching tradition and the tradition looks upon it as a *pramāṇa*. Either you accept it as a *pramāṇa* or you do not even touch it, because to prove that it is not a *pramāṇa*, there is no *pramāṇa*. The validity of an independent means of knowledge is not proved by another means of knowledge. The eyes see and the ears hear. Only ears have to prove whether they hear or not. Eyes have no access to prove whether the ears hear or not. Similarly whether *Vēdanta* works or not, only *Vēdanta* has to prove, not anything else. Therefore looking upon *Vēdanta* as a *pramāṇa* puts you in a frame of mind which is called *śraddhā*. By this *śraddhā* one gains the knowledge that *ātmā* is Brahman, the limitless. That is why the *Bhagavad Gītā* says, “*śraddhāvān labhatē jñānam* – the one who has *śraddhā* gains the knowledge.”

While choosing his course of action, a *karmayōgī* is conscious of the Lord in the form of *dharmā*, *karmādhyakṣa*, and at the time of facing the results, he is aware of the Lord as the giver of the fruits of the action, *karmaphaladātā*, and receives that result as *prasāda*. This is the person for whom the basis of all actions is *Īśvara*. He is called *madvyapāśrayaḥ*. Because of *Īśvara*'s grace he gains an end which does not come to an end. This is *mōkṣā*. How does he get *Īśvara*'s grace? Because he is *madvyapāśrayaḥ*, he gains *antaḥkaranaśuddhi*, whereby there is cheerfulness, clarity and tranquillity. Then there is exposure to proper teaching, *upadēśa*, for without the grace of *Īśvara*, he will not find a proper *guru* and have access to the *sāstrā*. The body and mind must also be conducive for his pursuit as well as the surrounding conditions. All these are *īśvaraprasāda*. If one really looks into it, one will find the whole pursuit is nothing but *īśvaraprasāda*.

Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati is an eminent scholar and an outstanding teacher of the Brahma Vidya, the truth revealed by the Upanishads at the end of the Veda. He belongs to a lineage of traditional teachers who help students to understand Vedanta by creating a proper context to convey complex ideas in simple terms. Through his teaching Swamiji helps every student to see the truth revealed by the Upanishads as a verifiable fact. He combines his deep scholarship and vivid communication skills with his pragmatic view of society. This is evident in the way he blends in the different situations of life into his teachings and discussions.



Swami Dayananda Saraswati has been teaching Vedanta for over thirty five years. He has conducted a number of three year courses in Vedanta both in India and the USA. More than two hundred and fifty of Swamiji's students are teaching around the world. Swamiji has established three institutions of learning. Two of them are in India, respectively, in Anaikatti near Coimbatore and in Rishikesh. The third, the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, is located in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania, USA.