

Jnana Vahini
Stream of
Spiritual Wisdom

Sathya Sai Baba

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Jnana Vahini

Stream of Spiritual Wisdom



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Foreword

This edition of *Jnana Vahini* improves on previous editions. Some grammatical errors and typos have been corrected, and many sentences have been rewritten to clarify and smooth the presentation —without disturbing the original meaning. Some long paragraphs have been split in two where it made sense and provided easier reading.

The original version of *Jnana Vahini* had no chapter or section titles. We have inserted numbered subtitles in appropriate places.

Sanskrit words have been replaced by English equivalents, to make *Jnana Vahini* more accessible to non-Sanskrit readers. A few Sanskrit words have been retained (in parentheses, following their English replacements) to aid people in analyzing the meanings of the individual words and where Sathya Sai Baba made some play on Sanskrit words.

Several Sanskrit words that have made their way into the English language (e.g. *dharma*, *guru*, *yoga*, and *moksha*) are used without translation, but their meanings appear in the glossary at the end of the book. The glossary also contains people and places mentioned in this *Vahini*.

This edition of is done in .epub, .mobi, and interactive pdf formats so that it can be read easily on tablets such as the ipad, kindle, and nook. In these ebook versions, you generally get to choose the font and font size that best suit you. Clicking on most names of people and places and Sanskrit words will take you to the glossary for a definition or explanation. Your reader should then have a back button to take you back to where you were reading.

With these changes, we hope that the revised *Jnana Vahini* will be of great benefit to earnest seekers in the spiritual realm.

Convenor

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Devotion merges in spiritual wisdom and becomes identified with it. Devotion ripens into wisdom, so do not speak of them as different. At one stage it is called devotion; at a later stage we refer to it as wisdom. Once it is cane, later it is sugar.

Sathya Sai Baba

Preface

Before you read this Book ...

Dear Reader, this is not just another book on the nature of soul and the technique by which it discovers its Reality. When you turn over the pages, you are actually sitting at the feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the *Avatar* of the age, come in answer to prayers of all virtuous people and spiritual aspirant to guide them and grant them peace and perfection. “Place all your burdens on Me,” He says. “Start on the spiritual pilgrimage this very day,” He exhorts. “Why fear, when I am here?” He asks.

His grace is omnipresent; His miraculous powers proclaim His omnipotence; His wisdom, His analysis of the ills of humanity, and His prescription for their cure reveal His omniscience.

You have the unique chance of meeting Him, at the Abode of Peace (Prasanthi Nilayam), and receiving from Him His blessings for the success of your spiritual pilgrimage. He will know and appreciate your earnestness and faith, and you can continue with greater confidence and courage, because He is certain to assure victory. He is the Eternal Teacher of the *Gita*, the Charioteer in your heart.

In the pages of the magazine, published with His Blessings, and named after Him as *Sanathana Sarathi*, He wrote, out of His overwhelming love toward humanity, caught in the meshes of cynicism and credal fanaticism, this series of articles, called *Stream of Spiritual Wisdom (Jnana Vahini)*. Month after month, thousands of readers awaited these articles (in the original Telugu as well as in the English translation), and when they received their copy, they perused it diligently and with reverential eagerness. These articles are now put together in book form for your guidance and inspiration.

—N. Kasturi

Editor, Sanathana Sarathi

Jnana Vahini

Stream of Spiritual Wisdom

1. Remove ignorance by incisive inquiry

Just as thick fog is dispelled by the rays of the Sun, ignorance melts away before the powerful rays of knowledge (Sanskrit saying). Knowledge is acquired by uninterrupted inquiry. One should constantly be engaged in the inquiry of the nature of Brahman —the reality of the I, the transformations that occur to the individual at birth and at death, and other such matters. Just as you remove the husk that covers up the rice, so too you have to remove the ignorance that adheres to the mind, by frequent application of incisive *Atmic* inquiry. It is only when full knowledge is won that one can get liberated, or, in other words, attain *moksha*. After attaining the above-mentioned *Atmic* knowledge, one has to follow the path of Brahman and act according to the new wisdom.

All doubts that afflict the mind have to be solved by consulting those who know or the true teachers one has the chance to meet. Until one gets firmly fixed in the path that the spiritual teacher (*guru*) or sacred text (*sastra*) has shown, one has to steadfastly obey their rules and directions. One has to be in their company or be associated with them in one way or other. Because one can progress very fast if one keeps close to a wise person who has realised the truth, one must, with unrestricted renunciation and sincere earnestness, follow the instructions of the teacher and of the holy scriptures. This is the real penance (*tapas*); this spiritual exercise leads on to the highest stage.

2. Cognize the shining inner Atma as oneself

When ignorance and its concomitant delusion disappear, the *Atma* in everyone shines in Its own splendour. All that we see is as a mirage, the superimposition of something over the Real and the mistaking of that for this. Things have a beginning and an end; they evolve and involve; there is evolution as well as involution. When all is subsumed by involution (dissolution of the world, *pralaya*), only the causal substance (*mula-prakriti*) endures. Only the unmanifested cause survives the universal dissolution.

When gold is melted in the crucible, it shines with a strange yellow glory. Where did that light emanate from? From the gold or the fire? What happened was only the removal of the dross by the fire; the effulgence belonged to the gold itself; it is its very nature. The fire is only an instrument for the removal of the dross. Nothing has been added to the gold by the fire in the crucible!

If fire could give the splendour, then why doesn't a stick or blade or pebble placed in the fire become as shining as gold? One has to conclude that the splendour came not through fire but out of its own inner nature.

The inner presiding *Atma* (*Pratyagatma*) is separate from the five sheaths of the individual (the *pancha-kosas*). It shines with its own splendour; it is the witness of the activities and consequences of the three qualities (*gunas*); it is immovable; it is holy and pure; it is eternal; it is indivisible; it is self-manifested, it is peace; it has no end; it is wisdom itself. Such an *Atma* has to be cognised as Oneself.

3. To realise the Atma, overcome four obstacles

To realise this *Atma*, this embodiment of spiritual wisdom (*jnana-swarupa*), four obstacles have to be overcome: sleep (*laya*), waywardness (*vikshepa*), inertia (*kshaya*), and the enjoyment of bliss (*rasa-aswadana*). Let's analyze them one by one.

Sleep (*laya*). When the mind withdraws from the external world, it enters into deep sleep (*sushupti*), because of the overpowering influence of the objective world (*samsara*). The spiritual aspirant should arrest this tendency and attempt to fix the mind on the inquiry into the nature of the true Self (*Atma-vichara*). The aspirant must keep watch over the mind in order to keep awake and must discover the circumstances that induce the drowsiness and remove them in time. The aspirant must start the process of meditation (*dhyana*) again and again.

Of course, the usual producer of drowsiness and sleep during meditation is indigestion. Overfeeding, exhaustion through too much moving about, want of sufficient sleep at night —these also cause sleepiness and drowsiness. So on those days when you wake up after a sleepless night, it is advisable to sleep a little at noon, although generally all those who engage in meditation should avoid sleep during the daytime.

Don't eat until you feel proper hunger. Practise the art of moderate eating. When you feel three-fourths full, stop eating; that is to say, stop even when you feel you can take a little more. In this way, the stomach can be educated to behave properly.

Over-exercise is also not good. Even walking can be overdone. You can walk until you conquer drowsiness, but remember that you cannot plunge into meditation immediately after you have warded off sleep.

Waywardness (*vikshepa*). The mind seeks to run after external objects, so constant effort is needed to turn it inward, away from the attractions of sensory impressions. This has to be done through the rigorous exercise of the intellect, of inquiry. Discriminate and get the conviction driven into you that these sensory impressions are evanescent, temporary, transformable, liable to decay, and, therefore, unreal (*mithya*) and not truth (*sathya*). Convince yourself that what is sought after as pleasurable and avoided as painful are only the fleeting products of sensory contacts. Train yourself in this way to avoid the distractions of the external world and dive deep into meditation.

A sparrow pursued by a hawk flies in despair for shelter into a house, but it is anxious to fly again into the outer world, right? So also, the mind is anxious to go again into the outer world, from the *Atma*, where it takes refuge. Waywardness is this mental attitude, this urge to run back into the world from one's shelter. Only the removal of waywardness will help the concentration of the mind in meditation (*dhyana*).

Inertia (*kshaya*). The mind is drawn with immense force by all the unconscious and subconscious impulses and instincts of passion and attachment toward the external world and its multitudinous attractions. Therefore, it experiences untold misery and might even get lost in its depths. This stage is called "decline of faculties due to inertia".

The state of inertia into which one is driven by despair cannot be called perfect equanimity (*samadhi*). One might even indulge in daydreaming in order to escape from present misery or start building castles in the air. All this is due to attachment, to the temptations of the outer world.

There is another type of attachment, the attachment to the inner world, the planning within oneself of various schemes to better oneself in the future as compared to the past. Both these form part of what is called decline (*kshaya*). The basis for both is the attraction of the outer world. Attachment brings about desire, and desire leads

to planning.

Enjoyment of bliss (*rasa-aswadana*). When inertia and waywardness are overcome, one attains the bliss of the highest subject-object contact (*sa-vikalpa-ananda*). This stage is called the enjoyment of bliss.

Even this is not the Supreme Bliss, which one does not attain or acquire but simply becomes aware of, so to say. The sweetness (*rasa*) of the differentiating superconscious state is a temptation that one has to avoid, for it is only second best. It is enough joy to act as a handicap. The joy is as great as that of people who just deposited a huge load they had carried for a long time, or that of greedy people who just killed a serpent guarding a vast treasure they wanted to grab. Is the mind content with merely killing the serpent guarding the treasure? No. This is only the preliminary step of overcoming waywardness. True bliss is not experienced until the treasure is actually possessed. Likewise, one must not stop with mere subject-object type of superconscious state (*sa-vikalpa-samadhi*). From such a limited state, one must reach the highest superconscious state (*nir-vikalpa-samadhi*), where there is no mind or any ideation.

4. Eliminate egotism and desire and gain liberation by conquest of the mind

When the Sun rises, darkness, as well as the troubles arising from it, disappear. Similarly, for those who have realised the *Atma*, there is no more bondage and no more sorrow that arises from bondage. Delusion comes only to those who forget their bearings, and egotism is the greatest factor in making people forget their very basic truth. Once egotism enters people, they slip from the ideal and precipitate themselves from the top of the stairs, in quick falls from step to step, down to the very bottom floor.

Egotism breeds schisms, hatreds, and attachments. Through attachments and affection, and even envy and hatred, one plunges into activity and gets immersed in the world. This leads to embodiment in the physical frame and further egotism. In order to become free from the twin pulls of pleasure and pain, one must rid oneself of the body-consciousness and keep clear of self-centred actions. This again involves the absence of attachment and hatred. Desire is enemy number one of liberation (*moksha*). Desire binds one to the wheel of birth and death; it brings about endless worry and tribulations.

Through inquiry on these lines, knowledge is rendered clearer and brighter and liberation is achieved. *Moksha* is only another word for independence—for not depending on any outside thing or person.

If nicely controlled and trained, the mind can lead one on to *moksha*. It must be saturated with the thought of God; that will help the inquiry into the nature of Reality. The consciousness of the ego itself will fade away when the mind is free from pulls and when it is rendered pure. Not to be affected in any way by the world—that is the path to self-realisation; self-realisation cannot be obtained in Heaven (*Swarga*) or on Mount Kailas.

The flame of desire cannot be put out without the conquest of the mind. The mind cannot be overcome without stamping out the flames of desire. The mind is the seed; desire, the tree. Only knowledge of self-realisation (*Atma-jnana*) can uproot that tree. So, these three are interdependent: mind, desire, and knowledge of *Atma*.

5. Brahman is perceived when all traces of “intention” disappear

The one who is liberated while alive (the *jivan-muktha*) is established firmly in the knowledge of the *Atma*. That one achieved it by dwelling on the false-true nature (*mithya*) of the world and contemplating its failings

and faults. By this means, that one developed insight into the nature of pleasure and pain and an equanimity in both. That one knows that wealth, worldly joy, and pleasure are all worthless and even poisonous. That one takes praise, blame, and even blows with a calm assurance and is unaffected by both honour and dishonour.

Of course, those who are liberated while alive reached that stage only after long years of systematic discipline and unflagging zeal when distress and doubt assailed them. Defeat only made them more rigorous in self-examination and more earnest about following the prescribed discipline. They have no trace of the “will to live”; they are ever ready to drop into the lap of death.

The direct perception of Brahman (*a-paroksha-brahma-jnana*) is the name given to the stage in which the aspirant is free from all doubt regarding improbability or impossibility and is certain that the two entities, the individual Self or spirit (*jiva*) and Brahman, were one, are one, and will ever be one. When this state is attained, aspirants will no longer suffer confusion. They won't mistake one thing for another or superimpose one thing on another. They won't mistake the rope for the snake; they will know that all along there was only one thing, the rope.

Also, they won't suffer from superimposing the boundaries of individuality on the Universal (*abhasa-avarana*). That is, they won't declare—as they were wont to do previously—that the effulgence of Brahman is not in them. In the heart and centre of every individual (*jivi*) exists the Supreme *Atma* (*Paramatma*), minuter than the minutest molecule, huger than the hugest conceivable object, smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest. Therefore, spiritually wise people (*jnani*s) who have had a vision of the *Atma* in them will never suffer sorrow. The *Atma* is there, in all living things, in the ant as well as the elephant. The whole world is enveloped and sustained by this subtle *Atma*.

Spiritual aspirants (*sadhakas*) have to direct their attention away from the external world and become insighted; they have to turn their vision toward the *Atma*. They must analyse the processes of the mind and discover for themselves the origin of all the modifications and agitations of the mind. By this means, every trace of “intention” and “will” has to disappear. Afterward, the only idea that will get fixed in the mind will be the idea of Brahman. The only feeling that will occupy the mind will be the feeling of bliss, which arises out of its establishment in the stage of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*).

Such spiritually wise people (*jnani*s) will be unaffected by joy or grief, for they will be fully immersed in the ocean of *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda*), above and beyond the reach of worldly things. The constant contemplation of the *Atma* and its glory is what is connoted by the phrases “practice of Brahman (*Brahma-abhyasa*)” and “cultivation of spiritual wisdom (*jnana-abhyasa*)”.

6. Train the mind to dwell ever on God

The mind is influenced by the passion for objective pleasure and the delusion of ignorance with which it pursues—with amazing quickness—the fleeting objects of the world. So, again and again it has to be led on toward higher ideals. Of course, this is difficult at first, but with persistent training, the mind can be tamed; then it will get fixed in the perpetual enjoyment of the *Om* (*pranava*). The mind can be trained by following the methods of quiet persuasion, promise of attractive inducements, practice of withdrawing the senses from the outer world, endurance of pain and travail, cultivation of sincerity and constancy, and acquisition of mental equipoise (*sama, dama, uparathi, thithiksha, sraddha, and sama-dhana*).

The mind can be turned toward Brahman and the constant contemplation of Brahman by the study of the *Upanishads*, the adoption of regular prayer, sharing with others the ecstasy of devotional singing (*bhajan*), and adherence to truth. Very often, with the progress of meditation (*dhyana*), new desires and resolutions arise in the mind. But one need not despair. The mind can be broken provided one takes up the task in right earnest and follows a regular routine of training. The final result of this training is unlimited, unmodified bliss-consciousness (*nir-vikalpa-samadhi*).

This bliss-consciousness gives full knowledge of Brahman, which in turn results in liberation from birth and death (*moksha*). The mind must be attuned to the contemplation of Brahman; one must strive to tread the path of Brahman and live in Brahman, with Brahman.

7. Instincts and impulses must be put down

Knowledge of the *Atma* (*Atma-jnana*) can be won only by the triple path of (1) giving up impulses (*vasanas*), (2) uprooting the mind, and (3) analysing experience in order to grasp the reality. Without these three, the knowledge of the *Atma* will not dawn.

The instincts and impulses prod the mind on toward the sensory world and bind the individual to joy and misery. So, the impulses must be put down. This can be achieved by means of discrimination, meditation on the *Atma*, inquiry, control of the senses, control of desires, renunciation (*viveka*, *Atma-chinthana*, *vicharana*, *sama*, *dama*, *vairagya*), and other such disciplines.

The mind is a bundle of impressions (*vasanas*). Verily, the mind is creation (*jagath*) itself; it is all the world for the individual. While in deep sleep, the mind doesn't function, so creation is practically non-existent for the individual. Creation is born (or "enters into the consciousness") and dies (or "disappears from the consciousness") according to the cognitive powers of the mind. Therefore, when the mind is destroyed, the world is also destroyed and one is free, one is liberated, one attains *moksha*.

Whoever succeeds in controlling the consciousness (*chittha*) can have a vision of the *Atma*. Consciousness is the grown-up tree, while the seed is the "ego", the feeling of "I". When the seed "I" is cast aside, all the activities of the consciousness also vanish automatically.

The spiritual aspirant who is earnest for these results has to be ever vigilant. At any moment, the senses might regain their lost mastery and enslave the individual. The aspirant might lose much of the ground already gained. That is why spiritual aspirants are warned away from attachments to the world.

Be ever and always immersed in the search for truth. Don't waste time in the multiplication and satisfaction of wants and desires. One source of pleasure craves another source as a corollary. Thus, the mind seeks again and again to acquire the objects it has given up. So don't yield to the vagaries of the mind. Turn back, even forcibly, from sensory attachment. Why, even prayer can't be done according to the mind's vagaries. One has to stick to the same place and time! The *Atma* itself will sustain such spiritual aspirants and give them strength and steadiness.

8. The one who really knows God becomes God

The one who has subdued the mind will be the same in good times and bad. Grief and joy are but aberrations of the mind. It is only when the mind is associated with the senses and the body that it is affected and agitated

and modified. When one takes in an intoxicant, one isn't aware of pain, right? How does this happen? The mind is then detached from the body, so it isn't bothered by physical pain or discomfort. Similarly, spiritually wise people (*jnanis*) have immersed their minds in the *Atma*; they can establish mental peace and quiet by disciplining the mind.

Spiritually wise people get full bliss from their own *Atma*; they don't seek it anywhere outside themselves. In fact, they will have no desire or plan to find joy in anything external. They are satisfied with the inner joy they get. The greatness of spiritually wise people is beyond description, even beyond your imagination! The sacred texts (*sruthis*) proclaim,

The one who has known Brahman becomes Brahman Itself; the one who has attained the Brahman Principle has become the Highest.

Brahmavith Brahmaiva bhavathi, Brahmavith param aapnothi.

All bubbles are but the same water; so also, all the multiplicity of name and form, all this created world, are but the same Brahman. This is the fixed conviction of the spiritually wise (*jnani*), nay, their genuine experience. As all rivers flow into the sea and get lost, so also all desires get lost in the effulgent consciousness of the realised soul. That is what is termed direct vision of the *Atma* (*Atma-sakshathkara*).

The *Atma* has no death, right? It isn't born, and it is unaffected by the six-fold process of change. It is birthless (*a-ja*), without old age (*a-jara*), without death (*a-mara*), and without decline and extinction (*a-vinasa*). These processes are for the evanescent body; they are the six-fold processes of change. They mean being born, existing, growing, getting old, declining, and lastly dying. The *Atma* has no such modification. It is stable, unshakeable, fixed, the witness of all change in space and time. It is unaffected by transformations, like the waterdrop on the lotus leaf.

Liberation from the tentacles of the mind can be obtained by the acquisition of the knowledge of the Absolute (*Brahma-jnana*). This type of liberation is the genuine self-rule (*swarajya*). This is genuine *moksha*. Whoever grasps the reality behind all this passing show will be untroubled by instinct or impulse or any other urge; they will be the master of the real wisdom.

The robber who has robbed us of the precious gem of *Atma* is no other than the mind, so the gem can be regained by catching, threatening, and punishing the robber. The possessor of that gem is immediately honoured by being installed as Brahman.

9. The four types of spiritually wise people

The spiritual aspirant must seek people who have attained this spiritual knowledge and learn their experience from them, honour them for it, and share their joy with them. Indeed, spiritual aspirants who do so are blessed, for they are on the road to self-rule (*swarajya*). This is the mystery of Brahman, the understanding that there is no other. This is knowledge of the Self (*Atma-jnana*).

There are four types of spiritually wise people (*jnanis*):

- (1) Knowers of Brahman (*Brahmavid*),
- (2) Master knowers of Brahman (*Brahmavidvara*),

(3) Most excellent knowers of Brahman (*Brahma-vidvariya*), and

(4) Supreme knowers of Brahman (*Brahma-vidvarishta*).

These types are differentiated according to the development of the pure (*sathwic*) quality in the spiritually wise person. The first has reached the fourth stage called master of the path (*pathya-pathi*). The second has attained the fifth, the indifferent, detached (*a-samsakthi*) stage. The third has gained the sixth stage, the lack of awareness of material objects (*padartha-bhavana*). The fourth is in the seventh grade, the “beyond” stage (*thuriya*), the stage of perpetual *samadhi*.

Supreme knowers of Brahman (*Brahma-vidvarishta*) are “liberated”, although they are in the body. They have to be forcibly persuaded to eat and drink. They won’t engage in any work relating to the world. They will be unconscious of the body and its demands.

The other three will be aware of the body in varying intensities, and they will engage in worldly work to the extent appropriate to their spiritual status. Those three have to acquire destruction of the mind (*manas*). This itself is of two grades: the destruction of the agitations, including their shapes and forms (*swarupa-naasa*), and the destruction of only the agitations (*arupa-naasa*).

While on this point, readers might be troubled by a doubt. They might ask, who are these who have conquered and wiped out the mind? The answer is: Those who have neither attachment nor hatred, pride nor jealousy nor greed. Those who are free from bondage of the senses. Those who have won the battle against the mind are really the heroes. That is the test. Such heroic people will be free from all agitations.

10. The effects of the three qualities

One who has achieved the destruction of agitations and their shapes and forms (*swarupa-naasa*) would have eliminated the two qualities (*gunas*) of sloth (*thamas*) and activity (*rajas*), and will shine with the splendour of pure serenity (*sathwa*). Through the influence of that pure quality, such people will radiate love and beneficence and mercy wherever they move. (In the already liberated individual (*Brahma-vidvarishta*), even this serene quality (*sathwa-guna*) is absent.)

The serene quality will have as its unmistakable concomitant characteristics: splendour, wisdom, bliss, peace, brotherliness, sense of sameness, self-confidence, holiness, purity, and similar qualities. He who is saturated in only that can witness the image of the *Atma* within. It is when the pure (*sathwa*) quality is mixed with the slothful (*thamasic*) and active (*rajasic*) qualities that it is rendered impure and becomes the cause of ignorance and illusion. This is the reason for the bondage of humanity.

The active (*rajasic*) quality produces the illusion of something nonexistent being existent! It broadens and deepens the contact of the senses with the external world. It creates affection and attachment, so, by means of the dual pulls of happiness and sorrow (the one to gain and the other to avoid), it plunges people deeper and deeper into activity. These activities breed the evil of passion, fury, greed, conceit, hatred, pride, meanness, and trickery.

And the slothful (*thamasic*) quality? Well, it blinds the vision and lowers the intellect, multiplying sloth, sleep, and dullness and leading one on the wrong path, away from the goal. It will make even the seen the “unseen”! One will fail to benefit even from one’s actual experience if immersed in sloth (*thamas*). Sloth will mislead even big scholars, for scholarship does not necessarily confer moral stamina. Caught in the tentacles of sloth, the

pundits cannot arrive at correct conclusions.

Even the wise, if they are bound down by sloth, will be affected by many doubts and misgivings and be drawn toward sensory pleasures, to the detriment of the wisdom they have gained. They will begin to identify themselves with their property, their wives and children, and such other worldly temporals. They will even confuse untruth with truth and truth with untruth! Note what a great trickster this slothful quality is!

11. Illusion hides the individual's true blissful nature

This power of super-imposition that illusion (*maya*) has hides from individuals (*jivis*) the Universal that they are, the being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) that is their nature. All this creation (*jagath*), with its manifoldness, is born out of the ascription of multiplicity where there is only One. When all this evolution is subsumed by the process of involution (*pralaya*), the three qualities (*gunas*) are in perfect equilibrium or balance. This is the stage called balance of the qualities (*guna-saamyavastha*).

Then, through the will of the Super-Will (*Iswara*), the balance is disturbed and activity starts, leading to consequences that breed further activities. In other words, the world originates and develops and unfolds. This is the stage called unbalanced (*vaishamyavastha*). Thus, from the subtle inner unconscious and subconscious to the gross outer physical body, everything is due to illusion (*maya*), or the power of superimposition of the particular over the Universal. That is why these are referred to as non-*Atma*. They are like the mirage, which superimposes water over desert sand. They can be destroyed only by the vision of Brahman or *Atma*.

12. Use the “Who am I” inquiry to cease the agitations

The affection one gets toward one's relations, the satisfaction one gets when one secures the things craved for, the happiness one gets when one utilises such things—all these are bondages that the consciousness imposes on itself. Even sleep and dreams are such “agitations” and have to be overcome before the *Atma* can be well visualised and realised. In sleep, the element of ignorance persists. The “I” and “Mine” feelings produce an endless series of activities and agitations in the various levels of consciousness. But, just as a single soldier in a vantage position can successfully tackle hundreds of enemy personnel who come in single file through a narrow gap, one can tackle each agitation as and when it emerges in the consciousness and overwhelm it. The courage to do this can be obtained through training derived by practice.

All agitations will cease the moment one enters on the inquiry, “Who am I?” This was the spiritual discipline that Ramana Maharshi achieved and taught to his disciples. This is also the easiest of all the disciplines.

First, there must be the yearning to procure one's own welfare (the *subhecha*). This will lead to the study of books about Brahman and its principles, the search for the company of the good, the withdrawal from sensory pleasures, and the thirst for liberation.

Even the divine maxim,

I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)

has a trace of ignorance sticking to it, the *aham* being considered as separate but identical.

This *aham* is so persistent that it will disappear only through ceaseless meditation on the implications of

You are That (*Thath twam asi*)

and the all-inclusive *Atma* or Brahman. This is the enquiry (*vicharana*) stage or basic step in *yoga* (*bhumika*); the stage subsequent to the desire to procure one's own welfare (*subhecha*) stage. By these means, the mind can be fixed very soon on the contemplation of Brahman. Each stage is a step in the ladder for the progressive rise of the mind from the concrete to the subtle and the subtle to the non-existent. This is the last stage, the "state of diminished body consciousness (*thanumanasi*)" stage.

The three stages referred to above and the disciplines they involve will destroy all desires and cravings and illumine knowledge of the reality. The mind is rendered fully holy and saturated with truth. This is called the stage of no-attachment or no-contact (*a-samsakthi*). That is to say, all contact with the exterior world or even with one's own past is wiped out. No attention is paid to the internal and the external; the spiritual aspirant reaches the state of non-cognition of objects (*abhava-pratheethi*), as it is called. Such a person has no awareness of objects (*padartha-bhavana*) of their own; that is to say, no object can create any sensation in this consciousness. The perfect realised soul (*jnani*) is ever immersed in the bliss of the *Atma*, with no awareness of the seer, the seen, and the sight, the triple thread. This is the fourth stage, the "beyond" stage (*thuriya*).

Some are wakeful-dreamy (*jaagrath swapna*); they build castles in the air, planning with the known and unknown, the seen and unseen. Others are extra-wakeful; through many births, their "I" and "mine" have become too deep-rooted. All these are only agitations of the mind (*vrittis*). Wisdom can dawn only when these are destroyed. Until then, however, no matter how much one may know of names and forms, one can't grasp the reality. The ceasing of all consciousness or agitation is the sign of the person who really knows the reality.

13. Remember constantly that You are not the body!

Look at the clouds that wander across the sky; note that they have no intimate lasting relationship with the sky, which they hide but for a few minutes.

Such is the relationship between your body and You, that is to say, You who are of the nature of Supreme Self (*Paramatma*). The body is only a temporary, passing phase, hiding and clouding the truth.

How can the body's behaviour —wakefulness, dream, and sleep— affect the Eternal Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) in any way?

What of your shadow? Isn't it something separate from you? Does its length or clarity or career affect you in any way? Understand that the relationship between the body and your Self is the same. If you take this bundle of flesh and bone as yourself, consider what happens to it and how long you can call it "mine". Pondering over this problem is the beginning of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

This physical frame, built out of earth, fire, water, wind, and ether, breaks up into its components, as all built-up things do! Only ignorance will take it as real; only the uneducated will attach value to it as permanent and eternal. Did this body exist before birth? Does it persist after death? No. It appears and disappears, with an interval of existence! Therefore, it has no absolute value; it is to be treated only as the cloud or the shadow.

As a matter of fact, this physical world is like the mango tree raised by the magician's wand; it is the product of the trickster known as mind. The clay takes the form of pot and pan and plate, and after an interval, it becomes clay once again, shapeless clay. Similarly, all this is the formless existence-knowledge-bliss (*satchidananda*); the

formless (*nir-aakaara*) appearing with form (*aakaara*) for some time, on account of the delusion and ignorance of the mind. Some things are useful, some are not, all because of this name and form.

All forms are He; all are He. You too are He, above and beyond the past, present, and future. You are not this body, which is tied up with time and which is caught in the toils of was, is, and will. Be ever fixed in this attitude. Dwell constantly in the thought that you are of the nature of the Universal Absolute Brahman (*Parabrahman*); then, you will grow into a realised soul (*jnani*).

14. Develop non-attachment: Be in the world but not of it

The mind that is in bondage craves for objects, for the company of men, and it prefers this location or that. Attachment is bondage; non-attachment is liberation (*moksha, mukthi*). To crave is to be imprisoned, to die. To withdraw the mind from all attachment is to be free, to live forever.

For people, it is the mind that either causes bondage or grants liberation.

Mana eva manushyaanaam kaaranam bandha mokshayoh.

The mind runs after an object and gets attached; the senses are alerted; an action results; the mind is rendered happy or unhappy; feeling ensues; fear enters; anger grows; affection develops. Thus, the bonds are tightened.

Fear, anger, and affection are the closest comrades of attachment, the comrades dearest to its heart! All four are inseparable companions, moving always together. That is why even Patanjali was forced to assert, “Attachment runs after happiness.” And what grants happiness? The fulfilment of desire, right? Desire leads to hatred of those who thwart it, fondness for those who feed it, and the inevitable wheel of opposites of likes and dislikes. There is no escape from this for the ignorant.

Impure gold is melted in the crucible and emerges shining and bright. The mind rendered impure by passion (*rajas*) and ignorance (*thamas*), by anger and conceit, by the impressions of a thousand attachments and desires—this mind can be made bright and resplendent by putting it into the crucible of inquiry and heating it on the coals of discrimination. That brightness is the light of realisation, of the knowledge that You are the *Atma*.

Like the dust storm that covers everything with dust, desires, attachments, thirsts, and cravings all blacken the mind. They have to be kept away so that the splendour of the Self might merge in the splendour of the Supreme Omniself (the *Paramatma*).

Whatever the crisis, however deep the misery, don’t allow your grip over the mind to get loose. Tighten it further, fixing your eyes on the higher values. Don’t allow the mind to stray away from the holy tabernacle of the heart. Make it bow before the *Atma* within.

Thus, one can proceed from merging with the differentiated (*sa-vikalpa-samadhi*) to merging with the undifferentiated (*nir-vikalpa-samadhi*). Delusion must disappear without even a trace; then only can one merge with the Undifferentiated. There is no duality there; it is Brahman and Brahman alone. All bonds of ignorance (*a-vidya*), desire (*kama*), etc., fall away, and one is genuinely, fully free.

15. Self-realization is the ultimate goal of life

The snake shoves off its coil and has nothing more to do with it. Develop that attitude of non-attachment. Escape from the body delusion. The weak can never grasp this fact. By constant meditation on the *Atma* and its glory, one can come out of the tangles of the world and worldly affairs. The earnest spiritual aspirant (*sadhaka*) must divert all their attention and effort from the sensory world and fix them on the eternal Brahman.

Humanity did not arise merely to wallow in casual joy and fleeting happiness. It is insane to believe so. Identifying oneself with the “I” and getting attached to “mine” —that is the root cause of sorrow and ignorance. Where there is no egotism, there will be no cognisance of the external world. When the external world is not cognised, the ego can’t exist. Therefore, wise ones will dis-identify themselves from the world and behave ever as the agent of the Lord, being in it but not of it.

Once, in the midst of conversation, Vasishtha spoke to Rama; “Listen, Rama, the valiant! The individual with ego (*jiva*) is a bull reclining in the shade (delusion, *moha*) of a vastly spreading tree in the forest (the objective world (*samsara*). It is bound by the rope of desire, so it is infected by the fleas and insects of unrest and worry and disease. It rolls in the mire of wrong, while struggling in the dark night of ignorance to slake the thirst of the senses. Then, some good people who are wise untie it and take it out of the dark recesses of the forest. Through discrimination (*viveka*) and inquiry (*vichara*), they achieve the highest intellect (*vijnana*), and through this intellect they are able to grasp the truth, to realise the *Atma*, to know the *Atma*. That is the ultimate goal of all life, the stage that is beyond the past, present, and future.”

But one point has to be clearly noted and always remembered: merely giving up external activities connected with the satisfaction of sensory desires is not enough; the internal cravings have to be uprooted. The word *thrishna* covers both of these: the internal promptings and the external proceedings. When all promptings cease, it is called free of desire (*muktha-thrishna*). Knowledge of the *Atma* and faith in the *Atma* —only these can destroy the irrelevant thirsts.

The spiritually wise person (*jnani*) who declares, “I am Brahman”, utters this truth from the sincerity of the experience. When the gross and subtle are transcended, when the mind (*manas*), the intellect (*buddhi*), and the life force (*prana*) are sublimated, that is to say, when the Self is no longer bound by feelings, thoughts, impulses, and instincts, only existence (*Sat*) remains, pure and unalloyed Absolute Brahman (*Parabrahman*).

Hence, the spiritually wise person feels one with the Omnipresent, the Omnipotent. But the uneducated, the uninitiated, the people who have not taught themselves the first steps of spiritual discipline —they feel that they are one with their physical frame.

16. Being-Awareness-Bliss describes the experience of Brahman

The expression being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) indicates the Eternal, without form (*nir-aakara*). What form can we posit of the All-pervasive, the All-inclusive? “*Para*”, or “*Param*”, means super, beyond, above, more glorious than all. *Parabrahman* indicates the One beyond and behind everything, grander than anything in the three worlds. It is non-dual, unique, eternal, and infinite. “Two” means difference, dissension, inevitable discord. Since Brahman is all-pervasive, It is one and only one. It is indivisible and indestructible.

Realising this fact is the highest wisdom (*jnana*).

The word Brahman is derived from the root *Brih*, meaning to expand, to increase, to enlarge, etc. *Brihath*

means big, enlarged, gross, high, etc. *Purusha* has its root *pri*, meaning to fill, to complete. *Pur* means a town “full” of inhabitants, that is to say, the body, in a figurative manner of speaking. He who completes or is immanent in or who fills it is the *Purusha*.

The word *Atma* has *Aap* as its root, meaning to acquire, to earn, to conquer, to overcome etc. He who knows the *Atma* can earn all knowledge, has acquired everything, has earned the knowledge of everything because the *Atma* is omnipresent. He is then fixed in Being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*), i.e. in the embodiment of Brahman. Being is the essence of peace (*santhi*), and awareness is the essence of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*); together with bliss, they form the embodiment (*swarupa*) of Brahman.

The *Taithiriya Upanishad* has declared,

Through bliss (*ananda*), all this is born;
Through bliss, all this is living;
In bliss alone, all this is merged;
In bliss, all this rests.

The category “*Atma* within (*antar-atma*)” has the same attributes as the category Brahman: It is bliss-born, bliss-full, and bliss-merged. The more the knowledge (*jnana*), the more the awareness of bliss (*ananda*). The spiritually wise person (*jnani*) has joy as the right hand, helpful in all emergencies and always willing and able to come to their rescue.

Bhuma means “limitless”. The *Chandogya Upanishad* declares that bliss (*ananda*) inheres only in the limitless, the Eternal, the Brahman. Another word used by the spiritually wise to describe their experience of Brahman is “the One whose nature is splendour, glory, or effulgence, who is Illumination itself (*jyothi-swarupa*)”. Ten million suns cannot equal the splendour of the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*). The word *santhi-swarupa* indicates that It is peace (*santhi*) Itself. In sacred texts (*sruthi*) like *Ayam Atma Santho*, it is proclaimed that the Supreme Self is Supreme Peace (*Prasanthi*) Itself.

This is why the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*) is characterised as eternally pure, eternally intelligent, eternally liberated, eternally illumined, eternally content, eternally conscious, etc. It is wisdom Itself, so it is the embodiment of all teaching. It is not attached to anything, so it is ever free. At the very moment that the Brahman is tasted, all hunger ceases and all desires come to an end, so It grants content.

The highest intellect (*vijnana*) is the name given to the actual experience of the Brahman; it is a special type of wisdom (*jnana*), unlike the common fund of information obtained from the study of books. The net result of the study of any branch of learning, the fruit of all that study, is also sometimes referred to as highest intellect. The unique wisdom of the Brahman is known by a variety of names, like experiential wisdom (*jnana*), insightful wisdom (*vijnana*), intuitive wisdom (*prajana*), consciousness (*chit*), and pure consciousness (*chaithanya*).

The opposite of pure consciousness is the unconscious or inert (*jada*). The knowledge of Self-realisation (*Atma-jnana*) makes everything conscious, active. Brahman is eternally conscious (*nithya chaithanya*).

17. Atma is immanent nonchanging Unity beyond time and space

Realised souls (*janis*) will feel that the *Atma* immanent in everyone is their own *Atma*. They will be happy that they are themselves all this; they will see no distinction between one person and the next, for they can

experience only unity, not diversity. The physical differences of colour, caste, and creed, which adhere only to the body, are marks of only the external body.

The *Atma* has no parts (is *nish-kala*); It is without blemish (*nir-mala*), unaffected by desire, anger, greed, affection, pride, and envy; It is without activity (*nish-kriya*); It is creation (*prakriti*), which undergoes all these modifications, or at least gives the impression that it is so modified. The Supreme Spirit (*Purusha*) is but the eternal Witness, the Ever Modification-less.

Of what can you say, “This is truth?” Only of that which persists in the past, present, and future, which has neither beginning nor end, which neither changes nor moves, which has uniform form, a unified experience-giving property. Well, consider the body, the senses, the mind, the life-force, and all such. They move and change; they begin and end; they are inert (*jada*). They have three qualities (*gunas*): sloth (*thamas*), activity (*rajas*), and purity (*sathwa*). They are without basic reality. They cause the delusion of reality. They have only relative value; they have no absolute value. They shine only out of borrowed light.

Absolute truth is beyond the reach of time and space; it is indivisible (*a-parichhinna*). It does not begin; it is always and ever existent. It is the basis, the fundamental, the self-revealing. Knowing It, experiencing It, is experiential wisdom (*jnana*). It cannot be marked out as such and such and explained by some characteristics (it is *a-nir-desya*). How can something that is above and beyond the intellect and the mind be described through mere words?

It is also termed “invisible to the eye (*a-drisya*)”, the eye being the optical apparatus that undergoes change and that is very limited in its capacity. Brahman can never be grasped by anything elemental or physical. Through Brahman, the eye is able to see, so how can the eye perceive Brahman itself? The mind is bound by the limitations of time, space, and causation. How can the Supreme Self (*Paramatma*), who is superior to these and unaffected by them, be limited by them?

The terms *a-mala*, *nir-mala*, and *vi-mala* applied to the Supreme Self connote the same meaning: *a-mala* implies absence of impurity; *nir-mala*, without impurity; and *vi-mala*, having all impurity destroyed. So too, the terms *a-chinthya* (incapable of being conceived) and *a-vyavaahaarya* (without any activity) applied to Brahman for activity or work imply the existence of another or others, whereas It is unique and unaware of any move toward or away from another.

Know that creation (*jagath*) is the form (*swarupa*) of the secondary one (*Virat-purusha*), who arose from Brahma, the form imposed by illusion (*maya*) on the super-soul. Brahman is that which has become or appears to have become all this, the Inner Motive Force (*Antar-yamin*). In the without-quality (*nir-guna*) aspect, it is the primal cause, the cosmic womb (*Hiranyagarbha*), of which creation is the manifestation. Grasping this secret of the universe and its origin and existence—that is experiential spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

18. Highest spiritual wisdom is Brahman

Many people argue that spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is one of the attributes of Brahman, that it is of the nature of Brahman, a characteristic of Brahman, etc. But such opinions arise only in the absence of actual experience, of actual attainment of spiritual wisdom. Arguments and discussions multiply when there is no first-hand experience, for the realisation of reality is individual, based on revelation to oneself.

I declare that experiential knowledge (*jnana*) is Brahman, not a mere characteristic or attribute or quality of Brahman. The *Vedas* and spiritual texts (*sastras*) announce that Brahman is Truth (*sathyam*), Knowledge (*Jnanam*), and Bliss (*Anandam*), not that Brahman has these and other attributes. When Brahman is known, the knower, the known, and the knowledge all become one.

Indeed, Brahman cannot be described as such and such; that is why it is referred to as just “It is”, or “Being (*Sat*)”. Spiritual wisdom is also just Being, no more no less. The sacred revelations (*sruthis*) use the word *Vijnana-ghana* to indicate Brahman, right? That word means: the sum and substance of the highest Knowledge (*vijnana*), knowledge with a capital K. Only those who are unaware of the sacred revelations will assert that spiritual wisdom and Brahman are distinct. Spiritual wisdom is Brahman; distinction is impossible. It is a sign of ignorance to posit a difference.

All knowledge that is limited by the three qualities (*gunas*) is ignorance (*a-jnana*), not the spiritual wisdom of the transcendental, which is above and beyond the ignorant (*thamasic*), passionate (*rajasic*), and even the serene (*sathwic*) motives, impulses, and qualities. How can such limited knowledge be spiritual wisdom? Knowledge of the transcendental has to be transcendental too, in an equal measure and to the same degree.

It might be said that Brahman has form, while spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is formless, but both are formless in the real sense of the word. The apparent form of Brahman is the result of ignorance (*a-vidya*); form is attributed to Brahman only to serve the needs of the embodied soul during the period of the embodiment. The Absolute is reduced to the level of the conditioned, because the soul is also conditioned in the body. Not to know that this human interlude is but the conditioned state of the *Atma* is to be reduced to the dullness of the beast.

19. Take up the chief path to acquire spiritual wisdom: devotion

“Spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is the panacea for all ills, troubles, and travails.” This is how the *Vedas* describe it.

There are many paths to acquire this wisdom, and the chief among them is the path of devotion (*bhakthi*), which was adopted by Vasishta, Narada, Vyasa, Jayadeva, Gauranga, and other great people. As the oil is to the flame in the lamp, so is devotion to the flame of spiritual wisdom. The heavenly tree of joy of wisdom thrives on the refreshing waters of devotion. Understand this well.

It is for this reason that Krishna, who is the personification of divine love (*prema*) and who is saturated with the quality of mercy, declared in the *Gita*,

I am known by means of devotion.

Bhakthyya-maam abhijaanaathi.

Why was this declaration made? Because there are no hurdles in the path of devotion. Young and old, high and low, man and woman—all are entitled to tread it. Who among people are in urgent need of medical treatment? Those who are badly ill, right? So too, those who are groping in ignorance (*a-jnana*) are first entitled to the teaching and the training leading to the acquisition of spiritual wisdom. Why feed those who have no hunger? Why drug those who are not sick? Brahman or spiritual wisdom is the drug for the de-realisation of the falsely realised, the removal of the fog of misunderstanding (*a-jnana*). It will sweep away the dirt that hides the truth.

20. Everyone can win spiritual wisdom, regardless of status, class, or sex

Everyone, whatever the status, class, or sex, can win spiritual wisdom. If women aren't entitled to it, why is it mentioned that Siva taught *Vedanta* to Parvathi? How did the great *yogi* Kapilamaharshi teach the *sankhya* system to his mother, Devahuthi? How did Yajnavalkya, the great sage (*rishi*), impart the essential principles of *Vedantic* philosophy to his wife, Maitreyi, as mentioned in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*? The *Upanishad* cannot be false. The scriptures that mention these facts speak only the truth.

There is no doubt that sage Mathanga is a great ascetic. Doesn't the *Ramayana* declare that he taught the woman Sabari the secret of the sacred doctrine of Brahman? Is that statement false? Coming to this age itself, who does not know that the scholarly wife of Sureswaracharya contended with Sankaracharya himself in philosophic discussion of Brahman?

So the chief qualification for the path leading to spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is only spiritual discipline, the spiritual exercises (*tapas*) in which one is engaged, not the irrelevant consideration of caste, creed, or sex. Leaving all other matters aside, one should concentrate on spiritual discipline.

The Lord is accessible and available to all. He is all mercy. No one except the Lord has the authority to declare anyone unfit for the discipline of spiritual wisdom. If you reflect a little deeper, you will realise that the Lord would not deny anyone the chance to reach Him. How can the flame deny refuge to sparks of the same fire? How can the sea deny refuge to drops of that sea? The Lord also will not refuse or reject.

A father with four sons cannot state that one of them has no right to a share in his property. It wouldn't be just or proper. Then what should be said of the Lord, who is devoid of the slightest tinge of partiality or prejudice and who is full of mercy? To attribute favouritism to Him is to commit sacrilege.

Referring to this question of who is or isn't entitled to knowledge of Brahman (*Brahma-vidya*), Krishna said in the *Gita*,

I have no favourite. Nor do I dislike anyone. Whatever might be the caste, whether the person be man or woman, whoever worships Me with faith and devotion will reach Me. Nothing can stand in their way. I too will manifest in the hearts of such.

Is the *Gita* mistaken? No, it speaks profound truth.

21. Wisdom consists of the feeling of oneness without distinctions

There is another wrong belief current today. It is said that in order to be entitled to the practice of spiritual exercise for the realisation of Brahman—like prayerful repetition of the name (*japa*) and meditation (*dhyana*)—one must adhere strictly to certain modes of daily conduct laid down in tradition and thus attain purity. I do not agree. As an analogy, should a bedridden person have to take a course on medicine before being allowed to take medicines? To require a person to be pure and good and to follow certain codes of conduct before treading the path of God is to say that someone must be free from disease in order to deserve medical treatment! How absurd.

Purity, goodness, etc., are all consequences of the journey toward God; they can't be insisted upon as essential for starting upon the path. The taking in of the drug will gradually induce health and cheer; health and cheer should not be insisted upon before the drug is even prescribed or supplied! This obvious fact is ignored by many; that is a serious malady indeed!

All those suffering from the malady of ignorance (*a-jnana*) must read and ponder over the books dealing

with the treatment of that disease, namely, the experiences of the great elders in the field of spiritual endeavour. Only then can they understand the real state of things.

One other secret of success has to be kept in mind. Every course of medical treatment involves some regulation and restriction of diet, movements, habits, and conduct. These should not be neglected or taken lightly. In fact, if the doctor's advice on these matters is not strictly followed, even the costliest or latest or most efficacious medicine will be ineffective.

Consider the people who underwent the treatment —drugs, restrictions, limitations and all— and successfully emerged from the sickroom hale and happy! They are of all castes and ages and of both sexes. Vasishta was born of a public woman; Narada's mother was a washerwoman; Valmiki belonged to the hunter caste; Viswamitra was a warrior (*kshatriya*); Mathanga was a member of the depressed classes. The inference is that what is important enough is constant meditation on the Lord, not the labels of caste or creed. Wisdom (*jnana*) is the attainment of the feeling of Oneness, the realisation that there is nothing high or low. That is the true divine Principle, the Brahman.

A sugar doll has head, neck, arms, and limbs, but each part is as sweet as the other. From head to foot, it is one uniform sweetness; there cannot be two types of sweetness. That is why it is said to be not dual (*dwaita*) but non-dual (*a-dwaita*). Those who emanate from the Lord's face and those who emanate from His feet are both His children. The realisation of this truth is the sign of wisdom (*jnana*).

Some trees, like the jack tree, bear fruit from the root up to the topmost branch! Does the fruit near the ground differ from the fruit on the tallest branch? No, they are all the same? Or do they taste differently, like distinct fruits? Of course, among the fruits some may be tender, some unripe, some a little ripe, and some fully ripe, and they may differ in taste, too, as is only natural. But never can you find bitterness in the bottom and sweetness in the top or sourness in the middle. Tender, green, and ripe are three stages, or three characteristics.

22. Caste depends more on qualities than on birth

So too, the four castes are four characteristics (*gunas*). According to their nature and their activities, the four castes have been ordained. Like the fruits on the same tree, some tender, some green, and some ripe, men are classified into four groups according to their stage of development, which is judged from their actions and character.

Those in whose thoughts and behaviour the pure quality (*sathwa-guna*) predominates are grouped as *brahmins*, who are progressing along the path toward Brahman. Those in whom the active quality (*rajoguna*) is dominant are referred to as protectors or warriors (*kshatriyas*). Thus, the scriptures (*sastras*) have spoken of ingrained qualities as the basis of caste, not otherwise. Why? The *Gita* itself proclaims that the four castes have been established by the Lord, taking into consideration (1) the dominance of any of the three qualities (*gunas*) and (2) the practice of actions (*karmas*) like repetition of the name (*japa*), meditation (*dhyana*), and other disciplinary duties!

Although born as a labourer (*sudra*), a person does attain *brahmin*-hood through the struggle toward Brahman and spiritual exercise. Although born as a *brahmin*, if that ideal and the effort to attain it is not found, one becomes a labourer.

Good conduct (*anushtana*) and strict discipline (*nishta*) are the criteria, the deciding factors.

The inner *Atmic* principle is the same in all. It knows no caste or class or conflict.

23. Accept the rigours of spiritual discipline and follow the path of devotion

To realise that the Self is beyond all these lesser categories, devotion (*bhakti*) is the first requisite. Devotion merges in wisdom (*jnana*) and becomes identified with it. Devotion ripens into wisdom, so don't speak of them as different. At one stage it is called devotion, at a later stage, wisdom. Once it is cane, later it is sugar.

Through devotion, the individual soul (*jiva*) is transformed into Siva —or rather, it knows it is Siva and the soul-idea disappears. To posit oneself as a soul is ignorance (*a-jnana*); to know oneself as Siva is spiritual wisdom.

A white cloth that has become dirty is dipped in water, soaked in soap, warmed, and beaten on a slab in order to restore its colour and condition. So too, to remove the dirt of ignorance that has attached itself to the pure being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) *Atma*, the water of unblemished conduct and behaviour, the soap of Brahman, reflection on the warming of repetition of the name and meditation, and the slab of renunciation—all three necessary. Only then can the fundamental Brahman-hood of the *Atma* shine forth.

It doesn't help if the soap is good but the water is dirty. All that soap and all that bother of heating and beating are sheer waste, for the cloth continues as dirty as ever. This explains why many aspirants fail. Though they have meditated on Brahman for many years and studied about it for long, their modes of behaviour and conduct are all wrong. The fault lies in the water, not in the soap! The daily habits, acts, and activities are mean and low, and the meditation (*dhyana*) on Brahman is all a waste.

In their ignorance, people hesitate to accept the rigors of spiritual discipline, considering them as so many fetters to free living. They decry the divine command and denounce divine grace. That command is not understood and appreciated; it is disobeyed and even fought against. But the wise one who plants wheat will be blessed by a harvest of wheat; the fool who plants tare weeps because wheat does not grow. For everyone in the world, whether we believe it or not, two plus two make four; the result does not depend on your likes and dislikes. The fact that in every being there is the Supreme is a similar inescapable reality. God will not give up if denied or enter if invited. God is there, as the being's very Being. This is the truth, and if you want to know it and experience it, develop the vision of the spiritually wise (*jnani*); without that vision, you can never see it. Just as the telescope alone enables you to see things that are far away, so the "wisdomscope (*jnana-drishti*)" is essential to see Brahman immanent in every being.

Just as the child refuses to believe in things beyond its circle of vision, the weakling, who is afraid of the travail of winning that intelligence (*drishti*) refuses to believe in the all-pervasive, all-inclusive Brahman!

24. Serve selflessly, without attachment to the fruits thereof

A set of people with curious ideas have cropped up recently, and they strut about with great pride, for they have no yearning for God, even no use for God; they engage in service (*seva*), and they are satisfied with service! But the essence of service is selflessness and abnegation of the fruit thereof, and these service people have no right to look down upon the godly and the spiritual aspirants as inferior. For that is but reaching for the fruit while neglecting the tree! Selfless service is the final fruit of the Godward discipline. That is the attitude of renunciation of the fruit of action (*who reall*). How can the fruit be gained without the long and laborious nurture of the tree? The

very foundation of renunciation of the fruit is love (*prema*) toward all beings, love that seeks no reward. Without spiritual experience of this higher love, selfless service is impossible.

At present, the world is full of people who clamour for good profit for themselves but are unwilling to give good value for the things they receive. They want God, but they are engaged in the cultivation of some other crop! They don't seek God and strive for God day and night; on the other hand, they have installed the god of wealth in their hearts and spend all their time and energy worshipping it and praying for its favour.

How pure is the heart full of devotion (*bhakti*) to God and love (*prema*) toward all things! Selfless service is possible only by such; the rest only prattle about it and pretend to be impelled by it. Only those who are well established in the faith that all are children of God, that He is the inner motive force of every being, can include themselves in that class of social servants.

Those who say they have no use for God or devotion have egotism as the core of personality and exhibition as its outer rind. However much is written and read, that egotism will not wither away. Ego consciousness leads to self-aggrandizement, and when self holds sway over the heart, no deed worthy to be styled service can emanate from them. It is sheer selfish greed that makes one label the deed as service.

Ignorance will not vanish until this discrimination dawns:

This world is only God and nothing else.
Everything, every being, is but His manifestation,
Bearing withal a new name and a new form.

Love this truth, and believe in it. Then you have the right to speak of service (*seva*), devotion (*bhakti*), and righteousness (*dharma*) as well as the authority to preach these three paths. Knowledge of the reality will show you that service, devotion, and righteousness are all one and indivisible. Without that knowledge, selfless service, etc., become mere exercises in hypocrisy.

Every act done with the consciousness of the body is bound to be egotistic; selfless service can never be accomplished while immersed in the body-consciousness. But consciousness of God (*Deva*) instead of body (*deha*) will bring forth the splendour of love (*prema*). With that as inspiration and guide, one can achieve much good without even knowing or proclaiming selfless in outlook. For such a person, it is all God's will, His play (*leela*), His work.

25. The paths of devotion, wisdom, and non-attachment are inseparable

Light is wisdom. Without light, all is darkness. If you haven't secured the lamp of wisdom (*jnana*) to illumine your path, you stumble along in the gloom, with fear as your companion. There is no falsehood greater than fear, no ignorance mightier than that. Decide therefore to travel in the daylight of spiritual wisdom and be worthy of this human birth. Through your success, you can even make the lives of others worthwhile.

Non-attachment (*vairagya*) depends upon spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) as well as devotion (*bhakti*). Deprive non-attachment of that basis, and you will find it crumbling fast. Why, this is the prime cause for the want of spiritual progress at present. All these three have to be emphasised in spiritual discipline; they are not to be separated and striven for individually.

Devotion includes spiritual wisdom. Non-attachment isolated from devotion and wisdom, wisdom isolated

from devotion and non-attachment, and devotion isolated from non-attachment and wisdom —each is ineffective. The best that each isolated path is capable of is to give some training in purity. Therefore, never develop conceit and declare that you are a devotee or spiritually wise or non-attached. Spiritual aspirants (*sadhakas*) must dip in the triumvirate (*triveni*) of devotion-wisdom-nonattachment. There is no other way to salvation.

26. See life as a manifestation of the three qualities

Before everything, be pure and holy. There are plenty of spiritual aspirants, but few of them are pure in heart. For example, observe this fact: Many people religiously read the *Gita* over and over again, many expatiate on its meaning for hours and hours, but people who practise the essence of the *Gita* are rare. Instead, people are now like gramophone records, reproducing someone else's song, incapable of singing themselves, ignorant of the joy of song. They are not spiritual aspirants at all. Their spiritual discipline doesn't deserve the name.

Life must be seen as only the manifestation of the three qualities (*gunas*), as a play of temperaments pulling the strings of the dolls. This awareness must saturate every thought, word, and deed. That is the wisdom (*jnana*) you need. All else is ignorance (*a-jnana*).

27. Be spiritually wise: without ego, without desires, with equal love for all

The spiritually wise (*jnanis*) will have no trace of hatred in them. They will love all beings; they won't be contaminated by the ego; they will act as they speak. The ignorant (*a-jnanis*) will identify themselves with the gross body, senses, and mind, things that are but tools and instruments. The eternal pure *Atma* is behind the mind, so this mistake of the ignorant plunges them into trouble, loss, and misery.

All the names and forms that fill up this universe and constitute its nature are but creations of mind. Therefore, in order to perceive the truth, the mind has to be controlled and its wayward fancies calmed. The ever-flickering waves of the lake have to be stilled so that you can see the floor clearly, right? So too, the waves of ignorance that ruffle the mind have to be stilled.

Keep the mind away from low desires that run after fleeting pleasures. Turn your thoughts away from them and direct the thoughts toward permanent bliss, which is derivable from the knowledge of the immanent divinity. Keep before the mind's eye the faults and failures of sensory pleasures and worldly happiness. Thus, you will be helped to grow in discrimination and non-attachment and to make spiritual progress.

Just as gold melted in a crucible gets rid of dross and shines in its pristine glory, so too, one has to be melted in the crucible of *yoga* by the fire of detachment (*vairagya*). Being possessed of this spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is the sign of *samadhi*, as explained by some.

For those capable of self-control along these lines, the native power will gradually assert itself, and the Reality that is now misunderstood will be rid of that fog. Patiently cultivate the habit of meditating on your *Atma*-hood and see the particular as the universal. Through *samadhi*, progress is guaranteed and liberation is won.

The springs of egotism, etc., arise from ignorance of the basic truth. When knowledge of the *Atma* arises, ignorance, with its brood of worry and misery, will vanish. The mark of the spiritually wise (*jnani*) is the absence of egotism, the extinction of desire, the feeling of equal love for all, without any distinction. These are the fundamentals of knowledge of Self-realisation (*Atma-jnana*).

28. The Lord's eyes, ears, hands, and feet are everywhere

You can see without eyes, hear without ears, speak without the tongue, smell without the nose, touch without the body, and walk without legs. Yes, and experience without even the mind. For you are the pure essence itself; you are the Supreme Self.

You have no understanding of this truth, so you are drowned in ignorance. You feel that you are only the senses, so you experience misery. The five senses are bound up with the mind; the mind separately activates the senses and is affected by their reactions. People read through the mind-associated eye, so they fail. But the spiritually wise (*jnanis*) have the divine eye (*divya-chakshu*), for they have divine vision. And they can see and hear without the aid of the senses.

As said in the *Gita*, the Lord's feet are everywhere, the Lord's hands are everywhere. His eyes, His ears are everywhere. So He sees all, He does all. Devoid of senses, He makes all senses function. To grasp this mystery, the path of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) has to be trodden. This path is very helpful. When people develop into full wise persons (*jnanis*), they themselves becomes It, It merges in them, and both become indistinguishable. Then, they realise that they are the inscrutable, the indefinable Brahman, not limited by the illusory superimposition of name and form.

When fire burns, its light can be discerned from a distance, but those who are far can't hope to feel its warmth. So too, it is easy to describe the splendour of knowledge (*jnana*) for people who are far from acquiring it, but only those who have actually neared it and felt it and are immersed in it can experience the warmth, the joy, the melting away of the illusion.

For this, continuous concentrated spiritual exercises (*tapas*) and continuous meditation on God are needed. The pure Essence can be known by the spiritual discipline of devotion (*bhakti*), and in fact the goal of devotion is indeed spiritual wisdom.

29. The world is the Lord's three-act play

When an author writes a play, the entire play will already be in their mind before setting pen to paper. Act after act, scene after scene, with no picture of the entire drama in their mind, the author will never entertain the idea of writing it at all, right? But take the case of the audience. They grasp the story only after the drama is fully over; it unfolds itself scene by scene. Once they have understood the theme, they too can confidently describe to others the purport of the play.

Similarly, for the Lord, this drama of time in three acts —the past, present, and future— is clear as crystal. In the twinkling of an eye, He grasps all three. For He is omniscient, and it is His plan that is being worked out, His drama that is being enacted on the stage of creation. Both the actors and the spectators are lost in confusion, unable to surmise its meaning and its development. For how can one scene or one act reveal its meaning? The entire play has to be gone through for the story to reveal itself.

Without a clear understanding of the play in which people are acting their roles, they hug the mistake that they are souls (*jivis*) or spiritual aspirants (*sadhakas*) and waste away their lives, beaten by waves of joy and sorrow.

When the mystery is cleared and the play is discovered as mere play, the conviction dawns that you are He

and He is you. Therefore, try to know the truth behind life, search for the fundamental, and bravely pursue the underlying reality. Seekers of wisdom (*jnana*) must always be conscious of this.

The Lord is in every heart, in the subtle as well as the gross forms. So the spiritually wise (*jnani*), who has had a vision of the *Atma* presiding over the inner stage, will never be affected by sorrow; it can never hold sway over the spiritually wise. The *Atma* is in the ant and the elephant, in the atom and the atmosphere. Everything is saturated with Brahman.

30. Make God your constant focus

Seekers must divert their attention inward from the exterior world; they must discover the origins of the agitations of the mind. This process will diminish and destroy the activities of the mind, which make them doubt, discuss, and decide. From that stage onward, the exhilaration of being Brahman oneself will be constant. This will stabilise the being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) that arises from the experience.

The spiritually wise (*janis*) can never be affected by joy or sorrow, however big; they will be immersed in the ocean of *Atmic* bliss (*Atma-ananda*), blissfully unaware of the world around, far above and beyond its coils.

This is the discipline called the practice of Brahman (*Brahma-abhyasa*), that is to say, the ever-present exercise of remembering the basic Brahman of the universe, praying to the formful aspect of that Brahman, speaking of His glory, being in His company, and living always in His presence. That is why the *Panchadasi* says,

Thoughts dedicated to Him alone, speech devoted to Him alone, conversation centred on Him alone – this one-pointed existence is referred to by the wise as the discipline of spiritual wisdom.

Thath chinthanam, thath kathanam, anyonyam thath prabodhanam, ethath eka param thwam cha, jnana- bhyaasam vidur budhaah.

This is the lesson taught in the *Gita* by Krishna:

They fix the mind on Me, they survive only because they breathe me, they inform each other about Me, they talk only of Me – they are happy and content with these only.

Math chinthaa madhgatha pranaa bodhayanthah parasparam, kathayanthascha maam nithyam thushyanthi cha ramanthi cha.

This ceaseless thought of the Lord is also referred to as reflection on Brahman (*Brahma-chinthana*) or cultivation of spiritual wisdom (*jnana-abhyasa*) or the *Atma* (*Atma-abhyasa*).

31. Calm the mind by steady, continuous discipline

The mind pursues only exterior objects either because of the pull of the senses or because of the delusion caused by superimposing the characteristics of permanence, etc., on the external world. So the mind has to be brought back to travel to the correct goal again and again.

At first the job is hard. Still, by proper training, all the agitations can be calmed by the prayerful repetition of *Om*. The training consists of controlling the mind by good counsel, superior attractions, withdrawal from sensory

objects, ability to bear the ups and downs of fortune, steadfastness or faith, and poise or equanimity (*sama, dama, uparathi, thithiksha, sraddha, and sama-dhana*).

If, at first, the recalcitrant mind is shown the sweetness of devotional singing (*bhajan*), the efficacy of prayer, and the calming effects of meditation, then it can be slowly turned toward meditation of Brahman. It must also be led on by the cultivation of good habits, good company, and good deeds. Meditation will, as it proceeds further and further, give rise to greater and greater keenness. Thus, the mind has to be caged in the cave of the heart. The final result of this discipline is no less than undisturbed, undifferentiated equanimity (*nir-vikalpa-samadhi*).

This *samadhi* is, really speaking, knowledge of Brahman itself, the wisdom (*jnana*) that grants release, or *moksha*. The discipline for this consists of three exercises: the giving up of craving, the elimination of mind, and the understanding of the Reality. These three have to be cultivated uniformly and with equal ardour. Otherwise, success cannot be ensured; no one of them is enough. The instincts and impulses (*vasanas*) are too strong to yield easily; they make the senses active and greedy and bind the person tighter and tighter. So that the mind won't achieve mastery, attention has to be paid to the sublimation and subjugation of the senses and the promptings behind them, to the development of self-abnegation, and the relentless pursuit of reason and discrimination. When the mind is won, the dawn of wisdom (*jnana*) is heralded.

The aspirant (*sadhaka*) has to be ever-vigilant, for the senses might recoil any moment, especially when the *yogi* mixes with the world and worldly. The basic truth must be kept constantly before the mind's eye. Wants shouldn't be multiplied. Time shouldn't be frittered away, no, not even a minute. The craving for one pleasant thing will give rise to another craving for a still more pleasant thing. Cut at the very root of desire itself and become master of yourself. The renouncing of desire will take you fast to the pinnacle of spiritual wisdom.

Liberated people (*jnanis*) will be unaffected by joy or sorrow, for how can events produce reactions in them who have wiped out their minds? It is the mind that makes one "feel"; when one has taken a drug that deadens the consciousness, one feels no pain or even joy, for the body is then separated from the mind. So too, when it dawns, spiritual wisdom separates the mind and keeps it aloof from all contact.

By special discipline, the turbulence of the mind can be calmed. As a result of this, it becomes possible to taste the bliss of the *Atma*, free from its pulls. The mind attracts people outward and offers only external objective joy, but wise ones know these joys to be fleeting. The *Atma* is enough for them to fulfil all their desires for happiness, complete and permanent. So, they will have no need for the external world.

32. Worship the great souls who have won wisdom

Liberated people (*jnanis*) will also acquire some special powers through their beneficent resolutions, their beneficent promptings and purposes. Through these, they can attain whatever they wish. The greatness of the status of liberated people is indeed indescribable, beyond your imagination. It is of the same nature as the splendour and magnificence of the Lord Himself. Why, they become the Brahman that they have always been. That is why it is declared,

The one who has known Brahman becomes Brahman;
that one attains Brahman-hood.

Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi,

Brahmavid aapnothi param.

The fact that this world is unreal and that Brahman alone is real must become patent; then, all impulses are destroyed and ignorance is demolished. The gem of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) has been stolen by the mind, so regain the gem by catching the mind. The gem entitles you to the status and dignity of Brahman, which you assume immediately.

The great souls who have won this knowledge of self-realisation (*Atma-jnana*) deserve worship. They are holy, for they have attained Brahman—which is the right of everyone in the world, however great or whatever the spiritual discipline (*tapas*). That is the kingdom they seek, the honour for which they aspire. This is the great mystery, the mystery elucidated in the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, and spiritual texts (*sastras*). The solving of this mystery makes life worthwhile; it is the key to liberation.

Truth and untruth must be cut apart by means of the sharp sword of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*). It keeps the world afar and brings the residence of the Lord within reach. That residence is eternal bliss (*nithya-ananda*), the highest bliss (*param-ananda*), the bliss of Brahman Itself (*Brahma-ananda*).

33. Illusion makes Brahman appear as soul, God, and world

Worldly illusion (*maya*), by means of its power of (1) hiding the real nature and (2) imposing the unreal over the real, makes the one-and-only Brahman appear as the soul (*jiva*), God (*Iswara*), and the world (*jagath*)—three entities where there is only one! The faculty of illusion is latent, but when it becomes patent, it takes the form of the mind. It is then that the seedling of the huge tree (that is, this world) starts sprouting, putting forth the leaves of mental impulses (*vasanas*) and mental conclusions (*sankalpas*). So, all this objective world is but the play of the mind.

The individual soul and the Supreme Being are caught up in this proliferation, and they are inseparably intertwined in the world, so they are also creations of mental processes, like the things appearing in the dream-world.

Imagine the individual soul, the Supreme Being, and the world as having been painted; the pictorial world has both the soul and the Supreme Being incorporated in it, and all three appear as different entities, although they are created by the same paint. So also, the same mental process creates the appearance of the soul and the Supreme Being as pervading and immanent, in the background of the world.

It is illusion (*maya*) that produces the illusion of soul, Supreme Being, and world; this is declared by the oral texts (*sruthis*). Didn't the *Vasishta-smrithi* make clear that mental processes are responsible for the magic dance of He and I, this and That, and mine and His? The expression "I am God—This (*Soham-idam*)" found in that text indicates the soul (*jiva*), the Supreme Being (*Iswara*), and the world (*jagath*). "*Sah*" means He, the Unmanifested, the Super-soul, the Power beyond and above, the Supreme Being (*Iswara*). "*Aham*" means "I", the entity enveloped by the consciousness of doer, etc. "*Idam*" means this objective world, the perceivable sense-world. So, it is clear that these three are only the products of mental processes and have no absolute value; their value is only relative.

In the waking stage and during dreaming, these three appear as real, but during deep sleep or while unconscious (as during a fainting fit), the mind is not working, so the three don't exist! This fact is within the experience of all. Therefore, it is easy now for you to realise that all three will disappear for good when, through spiritual wisdom (*jnana*), the mental processes are destroyed. Then one gets release from bondage to all these three, and

one knows the one and only entity. In fact, one gets established in knowledge of nondualism (*a-dwaitha jnana*).

Only spiritual knowledge won by the analysis of the mental processes can end illusion. Illusion flourishes on ignorance and absence of discrimination. So, spiritual education (*vidya*) spells the doom of illusion.

34. Destroy illusion by inquiry into the nature of Atma

Fevers originate because of your actions; they flourish on wrong methods of life and diet; they grow with the growth of such wrong conduct. The idea of the snake, which is an illusion (*maya*), flourishes on the ignorance of the real nature of the rope; it grows and becomes deeper the more one forgets the rope, which is the base. The ignorance that prevents and postpones inquiry into the nature of the *Atma* makes illusion flourish; illusion fostered by this attitude becomes as thick as darkness. When the flame of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) illumines, the darkness is dispelled, along with the illusion of the individual soul (*jiva*), the Supreme Being (*Iswara*), and the world (*jagath*).

Inquiry (*vichara*) makes the snake disappear; thereafter, only the rope remains. So too, illusion and the blossoming of that illusion through the mind as the soul, world, etc., will all disappear as soon as inquiry is done about the reality of appearance. One knows that there is nothing other than Brahman. Brahman alone subsists.

To the question, “how can one thing appear as two”, the reply may be given that, prior to inquiry, Brahman appears as the world (*jagath*), although its real nature hasn’t undergone any change at all, just as the pot was understood as pot before inquiry revealed that it is basically only clay. Crown, earring, and necklace all appear as different until inquiry reveals that they are all basically, fundamentally, gold. So also, the one Brahman is apparent in many forms and under various names and thus gives the impression of multiplicity. Brahman alone is, was, and will be. The conviction that this world is but a superimposition is the real spiritual knowledge (*vidya*), which is the end of all ignorance.

The hare’s horn is non-existent; it is a description of something superimposed. Only knowledge of the reality will destroy the idea forever; then, the false idea will melt away. Only the ignorant will stick to illusion (*maya*) as truth; the wise will at best designate it as “indescribable” or “beyond explanation”, for it is difficult to explain how illusion originated. We know only that it is there, to delude. The wise refer to it as “the hare’s horn”. Thus, it is spoken of in three different ways, according to the point of view of each.

When unthinking children are frightened by calling out, “Watch out! a ghost is lurking there!”, they believe it to be true and get terribly frightened. So too, unthinking, ignorant people get convinced of the reality of the objects around them through the influence of the illusion (*maya*). However, those endowed with discrimination (*viveka*) distinguish between the true Brahman and the false world (*jagath*); others, unable to do so or to find out the real nature of illusion, simply dismiss it as “beyond description (*a-nir-vachaneeya*)”.

35. Attaining enlightenment destroys ignorance as well as enlightenment!

The wise (*janis*), who have clearly grasped the truth, characterise it as the mother, whose corpse is cremated by the son! It is the experience of illusion (*maya*) that gives rise to “the revealing wisdom (*jnana*)”. The child spiritual knowledge (*vidya*) kills the mother as soon as it is born. The child was delivered for the very purpose of matricide, and its first task is naturally the cremation of the dead mother.

When tree rubs against tree in the forest, fire starts and the fire burns both. So too, the knowledge (*vidya*) that arose from illusion (*maya*) destroys the very source of that knowledge. Ignorance (*a-vidya*) is reduced to ashes by knowledge.

Like the expression “hare’s horn”, which is but a name for a non-existent thing, illusion (*maya*) is non-existent, and one has only to know that to dismiss it from the consciousness. So say the spiritually wise (*jnanis*).

Nor is this all. You label anything nonexistent as ignorance (*a-vidya*) or illusion. Whatever becomes meaningless, valueless, untrue, baseless, and existenceless when knowledge grows, that you can take to be illusion’s manifestation.

Another interesting point is this: It may be argued that since illusion produces spiritual enlightenment (*vidya*), illusion is right and proper and deserving of respect, but the enlightenment that arises out of it is also not permanent. As soon as ignorance is destroyed through enlightenment, the enlightenment also ends. The trees and the fire are both destroyed when the fire finishes its work.

The nut of the kataka tree that is placed in water to remove the dirt in it is itself wasted away in the process. So, spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is the gaining of this end, the attainment of complete vacuity, equilibrium, peace.

36. Direct experience is obtained by continous reflection on truth

The knowledge derived from the mere hearing of *Vedanta* cannot be termed direct knowledge. Since the error of taking one thing as another is not removed by actual experience in such a learning process, how can it be treated as direct or authentic? No, it cannot be; it is indirect only.

Of course, by hearing about the essential nature (*swarupa*) of the Brahman, which is only Being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*), one may be able to picture it or imagine it. However, one has to actually “see” the Brahman, who is the witness of the five sheaths of the individual —the food sheath (*anna-maya*), the sheath of vital airs (*prana-maya*), the mental sheath (*manomaya*), the sheath of the intellect (*vijnana-maya*), and the sheath of supreme bliss (*ananda-maya*).

You may know from the scriptures (*sastras*) that Vishnu has four arms, with the conch (*sankha*), disk (*chakra*), mace (*gada*), and lotus (*padma*) in each of them. You may even picture Him as such in meditation. Yet, unless you have actually “seen” Him by your own vision, the knowledge gained by the study of iconography can never be honoured by the adjective *direct* (*pratyaksha*).

Since Vishnu’s form is considered different and outside when understood through the study of the scriptures (*sastras*), what you get is really indirect inference, not direct experience. Though a person is ignorant of the fact that the Brahman is His own self (not different or outside), why can’t he realise Himself as Brahman as soon as he hears the exposition of a maxim like “You are That (*Thath twam asi*)”, which reveals that basic Truth? But he doesn’t.

You may doubt whether the knowledge obtained from scriptures (*sastras*) about things different from you, like Heaven, etc., has any value, but you shouldn’t declare so! For the same scriptures have said, by means of divine pronouncements, that you are the Brahman Itself, that You are fundamentally Brahman and nothing else. They also warn you that direct experience is not obtained by merely hearing these divine pronouncements!

The progress of aspirants is of this nature: They reason out with faith and care what they have heard until

they understand the characteristics of the *Atma* in an indirect way. Then, to bring that knowledge into the field of actual experience, they take up the process of reflection (*manana*), i.e. revolving it in the mind (*manas*).

37. *Atma* is the Universal Cause and Seer

The *Atma* is present everywhere and is in everything. It is unaffected. It is omnipresent, like ether (*akasa*). It is even beyond the ether —It is the ether in the universal consciousness (*chit*), so It is referred to as “beyond (*param*)”. It is described in the oral texts (*sruthis*) as “This Supreme Lord is unattached (*asangohyayam purushah*)”.

The *Atma* is unaffected and untouched by anything; it is beyond everything and devoid of agitation or activity. Don’t doubt whether it is unlimited or not. It is beyond the three limitations of space, time, and causation. You can’t state that the *Atma* is in only one place and not in another. It is not limited by space. You can’t state that it exists at one time and not at another. It is not limited by time. *Atma* is everything; there is nothing that is not *Atma*. *Atma* is All, so it has no limitation of name or form like material objects (*vasthus*) have. *Atma* is full and free. Knowing this is the highest truth, the fullest knowledge (*jnana*).

A doubt may be raised here: If the *Atma* is immanent in everything, like the ether, isn’t it a transformation (*vikara*), a change? No. Existing, emanating, growing, changing, declining, dying —these are the six transformations. But the *Atma* is the universal, eternal witness, cognising ether and the other elements, so it has no modifications at all. It is changeless (*nir-vikara*).

Saying that the *Atma* is changeless means that some other things have modification (*vikara*). So, the question may be asked how the word nondualism (*a-dwaitha*) can be used. Now, some things have modification and some don’t. But when there is nothing besides *Atma*, it is wrong to speak of a two-fold entity —it is not two, it is one! There is no doubt possible of this; it cannot arise. How can it be said that there is nothing outside the *Atma*? For this reason: the *Atma* is the cause of all this, and there can be no distinction between cause and effect. The cause cannot be without the effect, and the effect cannot be without the cause.

Some might be suffering under the doubt: How can the *Atma* be the Universal Cause? The *Atma* is the Universal Cause because it is the Universal See-er. The see-er is the cause of all the delusion of this world. The see-er creates silver in the mother of pearl, as well as the varied scenes of the dream world. So too, for the multiplicity of things experienced during the waking stage, the *Atma*, who is the see-er, is the instrument, right?

38. Attachment and affection are the result of delusion

The world is a play of illusion (*maya*). Because of this play, the world seems to be subject to evolution of names and forms and involution of the same until the whole is melted in dissolution of the world (*pralaya*). The illusion disappears with the illumination of spiritual knowledge (*jnana*), just as light dispels the delusion of the snake with which the rope was covered! Then, the knowledge that the *Atma* is all fills and fulfils; one is *Atma* through and through! The sacred texts (*sruthis*) also declare this.

The *Atma* is always content and blissful. To you, one thing appears more attractive than another, so this sensual attachment and affection are the results of delusion and greed. It is like a dog that gnaws a bone; when blood oozes out of its tongue and gets mixed with the bone, it relishes the bone the more for that additional taste. When

it gets another bone, it drops the first one and runs after the second. Thus, the *Atma* superimposes its inherent bliss upon the external, evanescent object and envelops that object with a certain attractiveness.

Objects are taken to be pleasure-giving, but they are not really so; they only add to the grief. This affection toward things seen through the deluded eye is ever-changing, and it is limited, not unlimited.

39. The nature of Atma is Being-Awareness-Bliss

The attachment to the *Atma* won't undergo any modifications. Even when the senses and body fall, the *Atma* will remain and infuse bliss. It is unlimited and indestructible. Everyone has attachment to the Self, or *Atma*. It is of the nature of the highest bliss (*param-ananda*). For this reason, it is also described as of the nature of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*).

Are these three the characteristics or qualities of the *Atma*? Or are they its essence, its nature? A doubt of this type may arise. Redness, heat, and splendour are the nature of fire, not its attributes. In the same way, *Atma* has being, awareness, and bliss as its very nature. Fire (*agni*) is one, and *Atma* is also one, though both may appear as different. Liquidity, coldness, and taste are of the very nature of water; yet, water everywhere is the same, with no diversity.

Atma is one; it subsumes all, and by knowing It, all is known. The *Atma* is the witness of the five sheaths (*kosas*) of the individual: the food, vital-air, mental, body, and bliss sheaths (*anna-maya, prana-maya, manomaya, vijnana-maya, and ananda-maya kosas*).

How can *Atma* be all-knowing, it may be asked? *Atma* is consciousness (*chit*), and all else is inert (*jada*). *Atma* alone can know, and nothing else is capable of knowing. And *Atma* knows that all else is *Atma*. Can the pot know the ether (*akasa*) inside it? Although it does not know, the ether is there all the same. But the *Atma* in people knows even the inert in the presence of the senses. Thus, the body, the house, the field, the village, the country are all "known". So too, the unseen items like heaven are "understood".

Though the multiplicity of body, country, etc. is non-existent, they appear so because they are formed by the tendencies of the mind; they simply appear on the screen as different and varied. In the dream, though one experiences a multiplicity, one knows that they are unreal creations of one's own mind; this is clear to the witness of the dream. Similarly, the experience of the waking stage is at most a mental picture. People also talk of heaven, though they have no experience of it.

40. The realisation of "I am Brahman"

The investigation of the truth and unity behind all this is the duty of the wise (*jnanis*), their real characteristic. Some people declare that they have had realisation! How can that be taken as true? Consider the statement "I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)". The soul (*jivi*) that is the "I" is a mutable entity (*vikari*), so how can it possibly grasp this statement? A destitute cannot realise that he is a monarch; so too, mutable entities like people can't grasp the immutable Brahman or posit that they are Brahman.

Who is this soul that calls itself "I"? Reflecting on this problem, one will see that the "I" is the immutable Ever-witness, the *Atma*, which, forgetful of its real nature, considers itself affected by change through sheer ignorance. When one deliberately spends thought on one's identity, one will know that "I am not a changeable (*vikari*);

I am the witness of the ego, the ego that suffers continuous modification.” From this step, one will proceed to identify the Immutable See-er or Witness (*sakshi*) with oneself. After this stage, there is no difficulty in realising “I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)”.

How can it be said that the witness realises “I am Brahman”? Who is it really that realises it? Is it the witness, or soul, who calls itself “I” and undergoes modification? If we say that the witness understands, the difficulty is that it is the witness of the “I”, and it has no egotism or “I am (*Aham*)” idea. If it is said that it is the “I am”, then how can it be the witness also? If it is the “I am”, it will have to be subject to modifications. Then the witness also becomes changeable (*vikari*)! It can have no idea like, “I am Brahman”, so it can never understand “I have become Brahman.” Therefore there is no meaning in saying that the witness realises “I am Brahman”.

Then who is it that so realises this Truth? It becomes necessary to say that it is the soul (*jivi*), the “I” that does so. Note that the practice of meditation on identity with Brahman is done by the ignorant (*a-jnanis*) to obtain liberation from the shackles of that illusion. The witness has no ignorance (*a-jnana*), so it has no spiritual knowledge (*jnana*) and no need to get rid of it! Only the ignorant need to take steps to remove it. Qualities like ignorance or knowledge attach themselves only to the soul, not to the witness. This is proven by actual experience, because the witness that is the apparent basis for knowledge and ignorance is devoid of both, while the soul is actively bound up with these two.

Some may doubt how this distinction came to be. “Does the witness (*sakshi*) know the soul (*jivi*), the “I”, which changes and gets modified and agitated? And again, “who is this witness? We are not aware of it”, they may assert. By undergoing the sorrows of ignorance (*a-jnana*) and seeking solace in the study of *Vedanta*, one infers that there must be a witness who is unaffected by the passing clouds. Later, the witness (*sakshi*) or *Atma*, which one knew by reasoning, is realised in actual experience when the superimposition of illusion of the world is removed by spiritual exercise.

The experience of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) is available only for the soul (*jivi*), for it alone has ignorance (*a-jnana*). So, it is the soul, not the witness, that knows “I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)”. After the dawn of that knowledge, “I-ness” will disappear, for one becomes Brahman.

Now, who is it that saw? What is it that was seen? What is the sight? In the statement “I saw”, all these are latent right? But thereafter, to say “I saw” is meaningless; it is not correct. To say “I have known” is also wrong; by merely seeing the immutable once, the mutable soul cannot be transformed into the witness (*sakshi*)! Seeing the king once, can a beggar be transformed into a monarch? So too, the soul who has once seen the witness cannot immediately become the witness. The mutable soul cannot realise “I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)” without first getting transfused into the witness.

If it is said that the soul, who has no idea of its basic substratum, can by reasoning realise that it is Brahman, how then can it “declare” so in so many words? When one has become king, the kingship is recognised by others and not declared by the king himself, right? —that is a sign of foolishness or want of intelligence.

Caught up in the coils of change, it is very hard —well nigh impossible— to realise that one is just the witness of all this passing show. So, the soul (*jivi*) must first try to practise the attitude of a witness, so that it can succeed in knowing its essential Brahman nature. Getting a glimpse of the king inside the fort does not help the beggar to acquire wealth or power; so too, the soul not only must know the witness but must become the witness —who is more ethereal than the sky, beyond the three-fold category of knower, known, and knowledge, eternal,

pure, conscious, free, and blissful. Till then, the soul continues as soul and cannot become Brahman.

As a matter of fact, as long as “I” persists, the state of witness (*sakshi*) is unattainable. The witness is the inner core of everything, the “immanent”, the embodiment of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*). There is nothing beyond it or outside it. To say that such fullness is “I” is meaningless. It is also wrong to call it a vision or a direct experience of the Lord (*sakshatkara*).

41. The sacred revelations allow a restricted identity of soul and Brahman

The sacred revelations (*sruthis*) also did not consider the soul (*jiva*) and Brahman as of the same nature. The more important identity, according to the sacred texts, is of the ether (*akasa*) within one pot and the ether in another pot. The ether in the pot is the same as the ether in the pan; the ether in the pan is the ether that has filled everything everywhere. The ether in the pot is the ever-full immanent ether. That is the primary general principle (*mukhyasamanaadhi-karanya*). The wind in one place is the wind in all places; the sunlight in one place is the sunlight everywhere; the God in one image is the God in all images. This type of identity has to be grasped.

So too, the witness in one body is the same as the witness in all.

The sacred revelations don’t declare that the soul (*jivi*) is Brahman, as the statement “I am Brahman (*Aham Brahmasmi*)” would indicate. Instead, they do allow a limited, restricted identity. That is to say, the I-ness of the soul has to be eliminated by reasoning; then, Brahman remains as balance, and knowledge of “I am Brahman” dawns; this is the restricted process of identity. Continuing as a soul, one cannot grasp the Brahman essence. The beggar has to forget his body to recognise that he is the king; so also, people have to bypass the human body, which is the base for their I-personality, to realise their nature, which is divine.

The human personality has to be discarded by inner devotion and discipline and the acquisition of the divine. Then, knowledge dawns that one is divine. Limitations of the individualised Self (*jivi*) has to be overcome before Brahmahood dawns.

Of course, one can get a glimpse of the Brahmahood during deep sleep, when one is free from all mental agitations (*vikalpas*). The dream-body (*taijasa*) during the dream stage becomes the creation (*viswa*) in the deep sleep stage and ponders, “Did I travel all this time over various lands and undergo multitudes of experiences? Wasn’t all this a fantasy? I was never involved in all this; I was happily sleeping, unaffected by everything.” Just as someone recovering from intoxication or freed from illness, or as a beggar coming by a fortune and forgetting their indigence, people realise their divinity and enjoy divine bliss.

Experiencing identity with the Lord, the individualized Self (*jivi*) declares, “I am Brahman. Where has all the changing world fled? How deluded I was to be caught in the tangle of soul and world (*jagath*)! Past, present, and future don’t really exist at all. I am the embodiment of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda-swarupa*), devoid of the three types of distinction.” He is immersed in the bliss of Brahman. This is the fruition of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

42. Realise your true Self by destroying all limitations

The soul can realise itself only by the destruction of all limitations. The mind is the greatest of these. The mind undergoes two stages while being destroyed: destruction of form (*rupa-laya*) and destruction of the formless

aspect of the mind (*a-rupa-laya*). The agitations of the mind stuff are the forms (*rupas*). Then comes the stage of equilibrium where there is the positive bliss (*ananda*) of being *sat* and awareness (*chit*), where also the formless mind disappears. The annihilation of the mind is of two kinds, namely, the mind pattern and the mind itself. The former applies to sages liberated while still alive; the latter to the liberated when deceased (*videha-mukthas*). Now, only the destruction of form (*rupa-laya*) is possible. This makes the person enjoy the bliss derived from the experience of identity with Brahman.

So, the mind is a limitation of the individual soul (*jivi*). It has to be conquered; the body-consciousness must disappear; steady faith has to be cultivated in wisdom (*jnana*). Delusion will then fade away. All “I-feeling” will go, and every moment, the spring of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*) will well up in the individual. That is the real direct experience of the Lord (*sakshathkara*). The great masters also emphasise this discipline and dwell on this bliss. This, verily, is the truth.

43. Four qualifications for inquiry into the Atma

To entitle one to inquiry into the *Atma*, one must be endowed with the four qualifications. Scholarship in all the *Vedas* and scriptures (*sastra*), asceticism, mastery of ritual, dedication to repetition of the name of God (*japa*), charity, pilgrimage —nothing will help in granting that authority. The sacred revelations (*sruthis*) say,

So equanimity, self-control, withdrawal of the senses, and steadfastness only these confer that title, not caste, colour, or social status.

Shaantho dhaanthah uparathih thithikshah ...

Be one a pundit versed in all the holy scriptures, a wise person (*vidwan*), or an illiterate, child, youth, or old person, a celibate, householder, forest dweller, or renunciate (*brahmachari, grihastha, vanaprastha, or sanyasin*), a *brahmin*, soldier, merchant, or labourer (*kshatriya, vaisya, sudra*), or even an outcaste, man or woman —the *Vedas* declare that

Everyone is qualified, provided they are equipped with the four qualifications (*sadhana-chathushtaya*).

Mere reading of the scriptures (*sastras*) does not entitle one. Instead, the attainment of the four qualifications mentioned therein is essential.

The doubt might then arise: How can a person who has not read the scriptures attain the four qualifications? My reply is, how does the person who reads scriptures attain them? “Because one knows the scriptures, one acts in a spirit of dedication to the Lord, gets mental purification thereby, and acquires renunciation (*vairagya*) and other qualifications in increasing measure.”

But then one asks: How can these be cultivated by one who doesn’t know the scriptures. Well, why can’t they be cultivated? By the accumulated fruit of the educative influences and good deeds in past births, it is possible to get qualified for inquiry into the nature of *Atma* (*Atma-vichara*) in this birth, without scriptural study.

44. Mastery of the scriptures is not enough

Now the following question might arise. While efforts in previous births are rewarded by endowment with the four qualifications, how can study of the scriptures (*sastras*) here and now not help! Some persons are

also handicapped by the evil effects of past *karma*, and they don't get fruit from scriptural study. But as far as character and bent of mind are concerned, the lucky ones who have engaged in good deeds in past births are at an advantage. The student whose study is handicapped by past mental impressions (*samskaras*) is as unlucky as the aspirant who has failed to develop a spiritual bent of mind by activities in past births.

Well! Even when one has mastered the scriptures, if one hasn't taken up spiritual exercises (*sadhana*), one cannot grasp the *Atmic* basis of existence. Of course, one who has understood the scriptures has greater chances of entering upon a course of spiritual exercises and practising them more steadfastly. The merit acquired in past births appears now as a keen thirst for liberation, as a sincere endeavour to approach a *guru*, as a determined struggle to succeed in spiritual exercises, and it comes to fruition with the realisation of the *Atma*. Success comes to those who have faith (*sraddha*) more than anything else. Without faith, the prompting to translate what has been read in the scriptures will be absent and scholarship will hang as a burden on the brain.

Since renunciation (*vairagya*), etc. are the qualifications for realising *Atma*, scholars and the rest are equally entitled to it. Isn't it only through spiritual exercises (*sadhana*) that the *Atma* can be known? Then why bother with the mastery of all the scriptures (*sastras*)? Well, to know the Self, scriptures are not indispensable; having known it, they are unnecessary. But all that is inferred from scriptures is only indirect experiences; direct perception is impossible by any means other than spiritual exercises. Direct understanding alone is spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

45. See the Atma by unraveling the five sheaths of the body

What exactly is inquiry into the nature of the *Atma* (*Atma-vichara*)? Not the study of the attributes of *Atma*, as given in books, but the analysis of the nature of the "I", laying bare the enveloping five sheaths (*pancha-kosas*), through concentrated discrimination that is directed inward. It is not inquiry (*vichara*) of the external world or the outer objective world, or the academic scholarship directed toward the interpretation of texts. It is the analytical penetration of the secret of the *Atma*, achieved by the keen edge of intellect.

Is it then impossible to realise the *Atma* through study of the scriptures (*sastras*)? The answer is: yes, it is impossible. The *Atma* is of the nature of being-awareness-bliss (*satchidananda*). It transcends the gross, subtle, and causal bodies (*sthula*, *sukshma*, and *karana sariras*); It is the witness of the waking, dream, and deep sleep stages. How could a mastery of the meanings of these words give direct vision of *Atma*?

How, then, is the *Atma* to be seen? By unraveling the five sheaths that cover up the personality, by negating each of them, experiencing "not this", and passing beneath and beyond to the substratum of the *Atma*, the Brahman, which all the while appeared varied and manifold.

Anything misplaced in the home must be searched for in the home itself—it can't be found by a search in the woods. The Brahman hidden by the five sheaths must be searched for in the five-sheathed body, not in the woods of scriptural lore.

Though Brahman cannot be discovered in the scriptures (*sastras*), the scriptures do tell you of the five sheaths (*pancha-kosas*) and of their identification marks and characteristics, so, by exercise of the intellect, it is possible to reach down to the *Atmic* truth.

46. Approach the preceptor for help in grasping the Atma

Then one might ask, how can one not versed in the scriptures master the process of this analysis and consummation? One can learn it from a *guru*, or an elder spiritual aspirant (*sadhaka*), right?

But one fact has to be emphasised again. The *Atma* principle is beyond the reach of even the most profound pundit who has learned the scriptures (*sastras*); it can be understood only by direct experience. That is why it was said of old that even that pundit has to approach a *guru*, a person who has already had the vision. Without guidance from such a teacher, *Atma* cannot be grasped. Even Narada had Sanatkumara as *guru*, Janaka had Suka, and other saints had other *gurus*. Maitreyi (the consort of Yajnavalkya), the unlearned Leela, and Chudala are examples to show that, without prolonged study of the scriptures, also women in the past learned the knowledge of the *Atma* (*Atma-vidya*) from the *guru* and attained success.

47. The grace of the Lord makes everything else superfluous

Of course, when one has the grace of the Lord, the *guru* often becomes superfluous, for the Lord makes everything known. Whatever else a person may not have, however deficient they may be in the usually accepted qualifications, if they are blessed with the grace of the Lord, they can certainly have a vision of the *Atma*.

Glossary

This glossary contains many Sanskrit words, people, places, and literature that Sathya Sai Baba uses in His discourses, especially discourses appearing in this volume. The glossary attempts to provide comprehensive meanings and detailed explanations of the more important Sanskrit words, for the benefit of lay readers who are interested in Hindu religion and philosophy.

In an electronic version of this volume (e.g. an e-book for the Ipad, Kindle, or Nook), you can click on most names, places, people, and Sanskrit words within the text in order to immediately access the word in this glossary. Your device will also have an arrow or other link to press to get back to the text. When compound words are hyphenated, individual words are given.

aakaara. Form.

abhasa-avarana. Superimposing the boundaries of individuality on the Universal.

abhava-pratheethi. Non-cognition of objects.

acharya. Spiritual teacher, preceptor..

a-chinthya. Incapable of being conceived.

a-drisya. Invisible to the eye.

a-dwaita. Nondualism, monism, the doctrine that everything is God, the philosophy of absolute oneness of God, soul, and universe.

agni. Fire element.

aham. The knower, the “I”.

aham Brahmasmi. I am *Brahman*, or I am divine.

a-ja. Birthless.

a-jara. Decline, diminution.

a-jnana. Ignorance, stupidity.

a-jnani. Ignorant person.

akasa. Sky, Space, ether, the subtlest form of matter.

a-mala. Absence of impurity.

a-mara. Without death.

ananda. Divine bliss. The Self is unalloyed, eternal bliss. Pleasures are but its faint and impermanent shadows.

ananda-maya kosa. The sheath of bliss, the innermost sheath of the body.

a-nir-desya. Incapable of description.

a-nir-vachaneeya. Beyond description.

anna-maya kosa. Food sheath, the material or gross outer layer of man.

antar-atma. The *Atma* within; the inner Self.

antar-yamin. Inner ruler or Being that guides all creatures.

anushtana. Spiritual or good disciplined conduct.

a-parichchinna. Indivisible. Without parts.

a-paroksha-brahma-jnana. Direct perception, knowledge of Brahman.

Arjuna. Krishna's disciple, in the *Bhagavad Gita*; third of five Pandava brothers. See *Mahabharatha*.

a-rupa-laya. Dissolution of the formless.

a-rupa-naasa. Destruction of the formless or mental agitations.

a-samsakthi. Indifferent, non-attachment.

Atharva-veda. The fourth *Veda*. *Atharva* means "fourth".

Atma. The real Self, one's divinity, God, the substance of everything, the unseen basis, the spark of God within. The *Atma* is unchanging and immortal; It does not die.

Atma-abhyasa. Practice of remembrance of the *Atma*.

Atma-ananda. *Atmic* bliss, bliss of Self-realization.

Atma-chinthana. Contemplation on *Atma*.

Atma-jnana. Knowledge of Self-realization; awareness of *Atma*.

Atma-sakshatkara. Direct vision of the *Atma*; Self-realisation.

Atma-vichara. Inquiry into the *Atma*.

Atma-vidya. Knowledge of supreme reality or *Atma*.

Atmic. Of or relating to the *Atma*.

Aum. Om; Designation of the Universal Brahman; sacred, primordial sound of the universe.

Avatar. Incarnation of God. Whenever there is a decline of *dharma*, God comes down to the world assuming bodily form to protect the good, punish the wicked and re-establish *dharma*. An *Avatar* is born and lives free and is ever conscious of His mission. By His precept and example, He opens up new paths in spirituality, shedding His grace on all.

a-vidya. Ignorance.

a-vinaasi. Without decline and extinction.

a-vyavaahaarya. Without worldly action.

Bhagavad Gita. Literally, Song of God. Portion of the *Mahabharatha* that is a dialogue between Arjuna, one of the Pandava brothers, and Krishna. See *Mahabharatha*.

Bhagavan. Divinity; term of reverential address; Sathya Sai Baba is called *Bhagavan* by his devotees.

Bhagiratha. King of Solar Dynasty, son of Amsuman. Gave up his kingdom for enlightenment, but eventually returned as king.

bhajan. Congregational chant group worship by devotees with devotional music in which repetition of holy names predominates.

bhaktha. Devotee of the Lord.

bhakthi. Devotion to God.

bhuma. Vast, limitless, the eternal, the changeless.

bhumika. Basic step of *yoga*.

Brahma. The Creator, the First of the Hindu Trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Siva

(the Destroyer).

Brahma-abhyasa. Practice of remembering Brahman.

Brama-ananda. Bliss of realising Brahman.

brahma-chari. Student, celibate, first stage of life of a *brahmin*; one who dwells in God consciousness.

Brahma-chinthana. Ceaseless thought of Brahman.

Brahma-dhyana. Meditation on Brahman.

Brahma-jnana. Knowledge of Brahman.

Brahman or **Brahmam.** Impersonal Supreme Being, primal source and ultimate goal of all beings. Thus, It is identical to the *Atma*.

Brahma Sutras. Spiritual text of *Vedantic* teachings in short maxims, attributed to Vyasa.

Brahma-vid. Knower of Brahman.

Brahma-vidvara. Master knower of Brahman.

Brahma-vidvariya. Excellent knower of Brahman.

Brahma-vidvarishta. Supreme knower of Brahman.

Brahma-vidya. Spiritual attainment, knowledge of Brahman.

brahmin. First of four castes of social order, the priestly or teacher caste; a person belonging to this caste.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. The *Upanishad* that sets forth teachings maintained by Yajnavalkya regarding Brahman.

brihath. Big, enlarged, gross, high.

buddhi. Intellect, intelligence, faculty of discrimination.

caste. The four castes of social order are: *brahmin* (priestly or teacher), *kshatriya* (warrior, protector), *vaisya* (trader, merchant, agriculturist), and *sudra* (worker, helper).

chaithanya. Consciousness, intelligence, spirit.

Chaithanya. Fifteenth century Vaishnava mendicant reformer; taught the path of love and devotion to the *Avatar* of Sri Krishna.

chakra. Disk; wheel; a weapon used by Krishna.

Chandogya Upanishad. One of the ten important *Upanishads*; a great collection of theological-philosophical-allegorical utterances. Includes glorification of *Om*, *Gayatri*, and Brahman.

chit. Consciousness, knowledge, awareness.

chittha. Mind stuff, memory, subconscious mind.

Chudala. Sainly wife of King Sikhidwaja. When he renounced his kingdom, she gave him instruction in *Atmic* knowledge and brought him back to the throne.

dama. Control of the outer senses.

deha. Body.

deva. Deity, celestial being, god.

Devahuthi. Daughter of Swayambhuva Manu, wife of Kardhama Prajapathi; and mother of sage Kapila.

dhana. Wealth, possessions, superior attractions.

dharma. Right action, truth in action, righteousness, morality, virtue, duty, the dictates of God, code of conduct.

Dharma defies a simple translation into English.

dhyana. Meditation.

divya-chakshu. Divine eye.

drishti. Vision, seeing, intelligence.

dwaitha. Dualism, the doctrine that the individual and the Supreme Soul are two different principles or entities.

Dwapara-yuga. Third in the cycle of four ages. See *yuga*.

gada. Mace.

Ganga. The 1560-mile-long Ganges river; starts in the Himalayas and flows generally east into the Bay of Bengal; the most sacred river of India.

Gauranga. Name for Chaithanya, a great saint.

Gayatri mantra. A very sacred *Vedic* prayer for self-enlightenment; it is repeated piously at dawn, noon, and twilight devotions.

Gita. Literally, song. Short for *Bhagavad Gita*.

grihastha. Householder, one of the four stages of life.

guna. Quality, characteristic. The qualities of *sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas* (serenity, passion, ignorance) are general universal characteristics of all kinds of mental tendencies and actions/ thoughts, which are prompted by specific kinds and mixtures of these three qualities. For example, *sathwic* food is health-giving, strength-giving and delightful; *rajasic* food is spicy, sour, or salty and brings on diseases; and *thamasic* food is impure, old, stale, tasteless, or rotten. See *thamas*, *rajas*, *sathwa*.

guna-saamya-avastha. State of perfect balance of qualities.

guru. Preceptor, teacher, guide to spiritual liberation.

Hanuman. Son of the Wind God and a great “devotee servant” of Rama. He was part man, part monkey.

Hiranyagarbha. Cosmic divine mind; cosmic womb; golden egg first created by Brahman from which all creation issued.

idam. This.

Iswara. Lord, God, Supreme Being; another name for Siva.

jaagrath. Waking state.

jaagrath-swapna. Wakeful-dreamy.

jada. Inert matter.

jagath. Cosmos, world of change, creation.

Janaka. A self-realized king; Sita’s father and Rama’s father-in-law. His ancestor was Nimi, a great emperor.

japa. Soft prayer or repetition of the name of God.

Jayadeva. Sanskrit poet; wrote the *Gita Govinda*, which describes the early life of Krishna.

jiva. Individual or soul, in a state of non-realisation of its identity with Brahman. It is unaware of its own nature and is subjected to sensations of pain and pleasure, birth and death, etc.

jivan-muktha. One who is liberated in this life.

jivi. Individual or soul.

jnana. Sacred knowledge; knowledge of the spirit, pursued as a means to Self-realisation. It is direct experience of God, as the Soul of the souls. *Jnana* makes a man omniscient, free, fearless, and immortal

jnana-abhyasa. Cultivation of spiritual wisdom.

jnana-drishhti. Wisdom eye.

jnana-swarupa. The embodiment of spiritual wisdom.

jnani. Wise man, realized soul.

jyothi-swarupa. Illumination itself.

Kailas. Siva's mountain abode; Bhagiratha performed penance here to bring down the river Ganga.

Kali-yuga. Fourth in a cycle of four ages; the evil age; the one we are now in. See *yuga*.

kama. Desire, lust, worldly fulfillment; one of four goals of humans.

Kapila, Kapilamaharshi. Ancient sage-philosopher; prime exponent of one of the six systems of philosophy known as *sankhya*, which emphasizes duality of spirit and nature.

karana. Causal or cause.

karma. Action, deed, work, religious rite, the totality of innate tendencies formed as a consequence of acts done in previous lives. Every *karma* produces a lasting impression on the mind of the doer, apart from affecting others. Repetition of a particular *karma* produces a tendency (*vasanas*) in the mind. *Karma* is of three kinds: (i) *praarabdha*, which is being exhausted in the present life; (ii) *aagami*, which is being accumulated in the present life, and (iii) *samchitha*, which is being accumulated or stored to be experienced in future lives. *Akarma* is action that is done without any intention to gain the consequences; *vikarma* is action that is intentionally done.

kataka. Tree whose nut purifies water.

Kauravas. Family that fought Pandavas. See *Mahabharatha*.

kosa. Sheath.

Krishna. The *Avatar* of Vishnu in the *Dwapara yuga* (era), prior to the present *Kali yuga* (era).

kritha-yuga. First age of man, Golden age of truth. See *yuga*.

kshatriya. Soldier, protector, warrior; see *caste*.

kshaya. Decline, loss, inertia; go to destruction.

laya. Merging, dissolution, absorption, sleep.

leela. Divine sport or play.

Leela. Woman who attained heaven through her devotion.

Madhwacharya. 13th cent. exponent of dualist philosophy; lived in the South Indian court of Vijayanagar; author of *Vedantic* works; founder of a sect of *Vaishnavas*; refuted monism of Sankaracharya.

Mahabharatha. Ancient epic in poetic form, by sage Vyasa; describes conflict between the Pandava brothers and their cousins, the 100 Kaurava brothers. It contains the *Bhagavad Gita*, the metaphysical teaching of Krishna to Arjuna.

mahavakya. Great aphorism.

Maitreyi. Female consort of Yajnavalkya; one of the greatest sage-philosophers in the *Upanishads*. Maitreyi was known for her wisdom. See *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

manana. Reflection, meditation, understanding.

manas. Mind, the inner organ, which has four aspects: (i) mind (*manas*), which deliberates, desires, and feels; (ii) intellect (*buddhi*), which understands, reasons, and decides; (iii) the 'I' sense, and (iv) memory (*chitha*). The mind, with all its desires and their broods, conceals the Divinity within man. Purification of the mind is essential for realisation of the Self.

manomaya-kosa. Mental sheath of the body.

Mathanga. A great sage; it is he who cursed Vali.

maya. Delusion. The mysterious, creative, and delusive power of Brahman through which God projects the appearance of the Universe. *Maya* is the material cause and Brahman is the efficient cause of the Universe. Brahman and *maya* are inextricably associated with each other like fire and its power to heat. *Maya* deludes the individual souls in egoism, making them forget their true spiritual nature.

mithya. Mixture of truth and falsehood; neither true nor untrue, but something in between. The world is not untrue (*asat*) but *mithya*.

moha. Delusion caused by false identification, infatuation.

moksha. Liberation from all kinds of bondage, especially the one to the cycle of birth and death. It is a state of absolute freedom, peace, and bliss, attained through Self-realisation. This is the supreme goal of human endeavour, the other three being, righteousness (*dharma*), wealth and power (*artha*), and sense-pleasure (*kama*).

muktha. Free, liberated.

muktha-thrishna. Yearning for liberation.

mukthi. Liberation; final release or emancipation from the cycle of birth and death. See *moksha*.

mula-prakriti. Causal substance; basic nature.

Narada. Sage-bard; traveled the world chanting *Narayana*. Famous for creating disputes, resulting in solutions for the spiritual advancement or victory of the virtuous. Expert in law and author of texts on *dharma*.

Narayana. The Primal Person, the Lord, Vishnu.

nir-aakaara. The state of formlessness.

nir-dheshya. To be described.

nir-guna. Without qualities, attributeless.

nir-mala. Without blemish, pure.

nir-vikalpa. Undifferentiated, without ideation.

nir-vikalpa-samadhi. Undifferentiated deep communion, transcendental absorption.

nir-vikara. Changless, without transformation.

nish-kala. Having no parts.

nish-kama-karma. Renunciation of the fruit of action.

nish-kriya. Without activity.

nishhta. State, condition, steadiness, regulated behaviour, excellence.

nithya. Eternal, permanent

nithya-ananda. Eternal bliss.

Om. Designation of the Universal *Brahman*; sacred, primordial sound of the Universe.

padartha-bhavana. Non-cognition of material objects.

padma. Lotus.

Panchadasī. Work on *Vedānta*, by Madhwacharya.

pancha-kosas. Five sheaths of the individual: food, air, mind, intellect, bliss.

Pandavas. Sons of Pandu; family of 5 brothers that fought the Kauravas: Dharmaraja, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva. See *Mahabharatha*.

Para-brahman. Universal Absolute Brahman.

param. Beyond.

Param-ananda. Highest bliss, union with Brahman.

Param-atma. Supreme Self, Supreme *Atma*.

Parvathi. Siva's consort. Also known as Gauri (fair complexioned) and by other names.

Patanjali. Author of the *Yoga Sutras*, which form the foundation of the *yoga* system of Indian philosophy.

pathya-pathi. Master of the path.

Prajapathi. Creator of this world; God presiding over creation. Also called Manu, Surya's son.

prajnana. Highest wisdom.

prakriti. Nature, the Divine Power of Becoming. Also known as *maya*, *avidya*, and *sakthi*; the world of matter and mind as opposed to the spirit. *Prakriti* has three dispositions or *gunas* (*sathwa*, *rajas*, and *thamas*), which go into the make-up of all living and non-living beings in the Universe, in varying proportions leading to the appearance of infinite multiplicity in form, nature, and behaviour.

pralaya. Dissolution of the world.

prana. Life-breath, life force, vital energy, the five vital airs of the body. English doesn't seem to have names for these vital airs, so we list them with their Sanskrit names: *prana* (located in lungs), *apana* (flatus, which moves downward through the rectum), *vyana* (diffused throughout the whole body), *samana* (navel; essential to digestion), and *udana* (rises through throat to head).

prana-maya kosa. The second, subtle sheath of man, consisting of the vital airs and the nervous system.

Pranava. *Om*; the sacred seed-sound and symbol of Brahman. "The most exalted syllable in *Vedas*". It is used in meditation on God. It is uttered first before a *Vedic mantra* is chanted.

prasanthi. Supreme peace, equanimity.

pratyagatma. The inner 'I'.

pratyaksha. Direct knowledge, perceptible, before one's eyes.

prema. Ecstatic love of God; divine love of the most intense kind.

pundit. Learned scholar, wise man.

purusha. Perfect person, supreme lord, soul.

Purusha. Primeval male, Supreme Spirit.

rajas. Passion, activity, restlessness, aggressiveness. Associated with colour red. See *guna*.

rajasic. Adjective form of *rajas*, passionate, emotional.

rajoguna. Quality of active nature, passion, restlessness, aggressiveness. Associated with colour red. See *guna*.

Rama. Avatar of the *Thretha yuga* (era). Hero of the *Ramayana*; killed the wicked Ravana to rescue his wife Sita, who had been kidnapped. “*Rama*” means “he who pleases”.

Ramana Maharshi. Indian sage, 1879–1950, who taught the path of Self-inquiry.

Ramayana. This sacred epic, composed by Sage Valmiki, deals with the incarnation of Vishnu as Sri Rama, who strove all his life to reestablish the reign of *dharmā* in the world. The *Ramayana* has played an important role in influencing and shaping the Hindu ethos over the centuries.

rasa. Taste, sweetness, essence of enjoyment.

rasa-aswadana. Enjoyment of bliss.

Ravana. Lord of demons and king of Lanka, who abducted Sita (Rama’s wife).

Rig-veda. First *Veda* composed by the sages, consisting of 1028 hymns. Oldest religious text in world

rishi. Sage, wise man.

rupa. Form, figure, appearance.

rupa-laya. Dissolution of form.

Sabari. A woman ascetic living in the hermitage of her teacher, Sage Mathanga; Rama gave her salvation.

sadguru. True teacher to be followed.

sadhaka. Spiritual aspirant.

sadhana. Spiritual discipline or exercise; self effort.

sakshat-kara. Divine spiritual experience or vision; direct experience of the Lord.

sakshi. Witness.

sakthi. Great universal power, divine energy, strength.

sama. Control of the senses, peace, equanimity, tranquility. Also, quiet persuasion, good counsel.

sama-dhana. Mind control by equanimity.

samadhi. Literally, total absorption. The state of super consciousness resulting in union with or absorption in the ultimate reality, the *Atma*; perfect equanimity. The state that transcends the body, mind, and intellect. In that state of consciousness, the objective world and the ego vanish and Reality is perceived or communed with, in utter peace and bliss. When people realise in this state their oneness with God, it is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

Sama-veda. Collection of certain verses of the *Rig-veda* arranged for liturgical purposes.

samsara. Worldly life; life of the individual soul through repeated births and deaths. Liberation means getting freed from this cycle.

samskara. Inborn desire, mental impression of acts done in former state of existence. Purificatory ceremony or sacrament.

Sanatkumara. One of four sons of Brahma.

sankalpa. Will, resolve.

Sankara. Also **Sankaracharya.** Celebrated philosopher, preceptor of non-dualistic *Vedanta*. Defeated all religious opponents in debates throughout India.

sankha. Conch.

sankhya. One of six leading systems of spiritual Vedic philosophy, attributed to sage Kapila. Its chief object is

the emancipation of the soul from the bonds of worldly existence.

santham. Equanimity, serenity, tranquility.

santhi. Peace, equanimity, serenity, tranquility.

santhi-swarupa. Embodiment of peace.

sanyasin. Renunciant, mendicant.

Saraswathi. Goddess of learning and eloquence, a daughter of Brahma. Also, an underground river, originating in the upper Indus river basin and joining the Ganga and Yamuna rivers at Prayag or Allahabad

sarira. Body.

sastra. Holy scripture; sacred text; that which commands, orders, directs with authority.

sat. Existence, being, good, real.

sat-chit-ananda. Existence-knowledge-bliss, or being-awareness-bliss

sathwa. Purity, calmness, serenity, joy, strength, goodness. Associated with colour white. See *guna*.

sathwa-guna. Quality of purity, calmness, serenity, joy, goodness, strength. Associated with colour white. See *guna*.

sathwic. Adjective form of *sathwa*; serene, pure, good, balanced.

sathya. Truth.

sa-vikalpa. With differentiated ideation, thoughts of difference.

sa-vikalpa-ananda. Bliss of the highest subject-object contact.

sa-vikalpa-samadhi. Subject-object type of superconscious state.

seva. Selfless service; service to others while trying to serve the God within them.

sevak. One who engages in service; server; worshipper.

shadbhaava. Six-fold.

Sita. Wife of Rama; brought up by King Janaka who found her in a box in the earth. Also, a tributary of the Ganga, flowing westward.

Siva. Destroyer in the trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Siva. The embodiment of spiritual wisdom and God of Gods, Mahadeva.

soham. I am God.

sraddha. Faith.

sruthi. Sacred revelations orally transmitted by *brahmins* from generation to generation, differing from traditional law codes (*smrithi*). Divinely sourced scripture; *Veda*; divine words known by revelation; that which was heard or listened to.

sthula. Gross, material, superficial.

subhecha. Yearning for one's spiritual welfare; the first stage of higher knowledge (*jnana bhumika*).

sudra. Labourer, the fourth caste of workers. See *Caste*.

Sugriva. Monkey-king, brother of Vali; with his army of monkeys headed by Hanuman, assisted Rama in defeating Ravana.

Suka. Divine son of author of the *Mahabharatha*, Vyasa. Visited King Janaka, who instructed him in the path to

liberation. Also, a messenger of Ravana was named Suka.

sukshma. Subtle.

Sureswaracharya. One of the foremost disciples of Sankaracharya.

sushupti. Deep sleep state.

swapna. Dream state.

swa-rajya. Self-rule.

swarga. Heaven.

swa-rupa. Form, essential nature, true nature of Being, embodiment.

swa-rupa-naasa. Destruction of the agitations, including their shapes and forms.

taijas. Splendid, luminous (from *tejas*).

taijasa. Entity associated with dream state composed of mind, intellect, five vital airs, five senses of perception, and the five elements; the experiencer of the dream or subconscious state, “light” of the subconscious.

Taithiriya Upanishad. One of the ten most important *Upanishads*; it is the philosophical portion of the *Black Yajur-veda*; the other part is called the *White Yajur-veda*.

tapas. Concentrated spiritual exercises to attain God, penance, severe austerities.

thamas. Dullness, ignorance, delusion, inactivity, passivity, inertia, sloth. Associated with colour black. See *guna*.

thamasic. Adjective form of *thamas*, dull, ignorant, passive.

thamoguna. Quality of dullness, ignorance, delusion, inactivity, inertia, sloth. Associated with colour black. See *guna*.

thanumanasi. State of attenuated body consciousness.

Thath. That, the Godhead.

Thath twam asi. You are That. One of four great statements expressing the non-difference of individual soul with Brahman, the supreme absolute Self, in *Vedantic* philosophy.

thithiksha. Fortitude, forbearance.

Thretha-yuga. The second in the cycle of four eras. See *yuga*.

thrishna. Thirst, desire, and associated activity to fulfill desire.

thuriya. “Beyond” stage in *samadhi*; fourth stage beyond waking, dream, and deep sleep. Superconscious state.

triveni. triumvirate (three things).

Triveni. Confluence of the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and the subterranean Saraswathi at Prayag. (Allahabad).

Upanishadic. Relating to the *Upanishads*.

Upanishads. The very sacred portions of the *Vedas* that deal with God, humanity, and universe, their nature and interrelationships. Spiritual knowledge (*jnana*) is their content, so they form the *Jnana-kanda* of the *Vedas*. Principle message is nondualism: unity of Brahman and *Atma*.

uparathi. Control of mind by withdrawal from senses.

vairagya. Detachment, renunciation.

Vaishnavite. A person belonging to *Vaishnavism*, one of the major branches of Hinduism. It focuses on worshipping Vishnu and his ten incarnations.

vaishamya. Unbalanced.

vaisya. Business person, trader, merchant. See *Caste*.

Vali. A great monkey-king; brother and enemy of Sugriva.

Valmiki. The saint-poet who wrote the *Ramayana*.

vanaprastha. Forest-dweller, hermit; third of the four stages of life.

vasana. Inclination, impression of anything remaining in the subconscious mind from past action.

Vasishta. One of the greatest sages (*rishis*) of ancient times; priest of the solar race of kings; revealer of several *Vedic* hymns. Had sacred, wishfulfilling cow called Nandini.

Vasishta-smrithi. Law book written by Vasishta.

vasthu. Thing, object.

Vedanta. The doctrine of either pure non-dualism, i.e. the identity of Brahman and the *Atma*, or conditioned non-dualism; the end or bottom line of the *Vedas*, which declares this doctrine.

Vedantic. Of or pertaining to *Vedanta*.

Vedas. The oldest and the holiest of the Hindu scriptures, the primary source of authority in Hindu religion and philosophy. They are four in number: the *Rig-Veda*, *Sama-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, and *Atharva-Veda*.

Vedic. Of your relating to the *Vedas*.

vichara. Inquiry, analysis and reflection of the nature of the Self or truth.

vicharana. Enquiry, analysis.

videha. Deceased, free from body.

videha-muktha. One liberated when deceased.

vidwan. Wise person.

vidya. Spiritual education, spiritual knowledge, learning, that which illumines, that which gives light, supreme teaching.

vi-jnana. Highest wisdom; discriminating faculty of the intellect; spiritual wisdom beyond the material plane.

vi-jnana-ghana. Sum and substance of spiritual wisdom.

vi-jnana-maya kosa. Body sheath of intellect, intuition.

vi-kalpa. Negativity, indecisiveness.

vi-kara. Modification, adaptation, change

vikari. A mutable entity.

vi-karma. Wrong action.

vi-kshepa. Waywardness; distracted or diffused mind that obstructs concentration.

vilasa. Play, manifestation; diversionary activity.

vimala. Having all impurity destroyed.

vinasa. Destruction, extinction.

Virat-purusha. First incarnation of Brahma; Cosmic Divinity; Lord in His form as the physical manifested cosmos.

Vishnu. The Preserver in the trinity of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu, and Siva (the Destroyer).

Viswamitra. Sage; known for his efforts to equal Vasishta. Born as warrior Kausika, who, by the power of the *Gayatri*, transformed himself spiritually. Early counselor of the young Rama.

viswa. Totality, whole creation; also a name of the individual soul in the waking state.

viveka. Discrimination.

vrittis. Agitations of the mind, consciousness.

Vyasa. Compiler of the *Vedas* and author of the *Mahabharatha*, *Mahabhagavatham*, and *Brahma Sutras*.

Yajnavalkya. Great *Upanishadic* personage. Priest and guru of King Janaka. Taught the monistic doctrine (*adwaitha*) of the identity of *Atma* and Brahman in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

Yajur-veda. Second *Veda*, consisting of a collection of sacred texts in prose relating to sacrifices.

Yamuna. Holy river rising in the Himalaya mountains at an elevation of 10,849 feet and flowing for 860 miles before joining the Ganga.

yoga. (a) Union of individual self or *Atma* with the Supreme Being or Universal Self; act of yoking. (b) Spiritual discipline or exercise aimed at control of the senses. (c) Science of divine communion. (d) self control. No single definition of *yoga* suffices. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* define *yoga* as a series of eight spiritual steps leading to union with God.

yogi. One who practices *yoga*.

yuga. Era or age. There is a cycle of four yugas: *Kritha*, *Thretha*, *Dwapara*, and *Kali*. The present age is the *Kali yuga*.

