

Notes on
Spiritual Discourses
of Shri Ātmānanda
(arranged by subject)

TAKEN BY NITYA TRIPTA

Proposed third of all editions
(first edition arranged by subject)

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Preface

Shrī Ātmānanda was a householder sage who lived in Kerala State, India, 1883-1959. His worldly name was Krishna Menon, and he served as a respected police officer under the Travancore Maharaja's administration.

The notes in this book were taken in the last nine years of his life, by a close disciple, Nitya Tripta (Balakrishna Pillai). These notes were first published at Trivandrum in 1963. Subsequently (since about 2004) they have been freely available on the Internet; and a second paper printed edition has been published in December 2009 by Non-Duality Press and Stillness Speaks.

The second edition is in three volumes, with the notes arranged by date. To make the notes more readily accessible, this third edition is now brought out as a single volume abridgement, with the notes rearranged by subject. The subjects are in alphabetical order, as can be seen from the table of contents.

The abridgement has been accomplished mainly by making a selection of 937 notes, from the 1451 notes of the full version. The original note numbers have been retained, so that the reader will easily be able to see where notes have been left out. Some relatively minor abridgement has been effected within some of the notes; and a further abridgement by omitting most of the introductory sections, the appendices and the index of the second edition.

Some added notes, explanations and translations were given in square brackets. Wherever square brackets occur, the contents have been added by the second and third edition editor.

A glossary is added at the end, for readers unfamiliar with Sanskrit philosophical terms.

For more information about Shrī Ātmānanda and his teachings, an electronic edition of the complete book is available for free download in Acrobat pdf form at: <http://sites.google.com/site/advaitaenquiry/>

Editor of second and third editions, February 2010

Transliteration scheme

For ordinary readers, a simplified transliteration has been used for Sanskrit and Malayalam names and even for the titles of cited texts. But, for detailed quotations, a more exact transliteration has been used, for the sake of textual accuracy.

For Sanskrit, the exact transliteration is the standard one, using the usual diacritical marks, except that ‘e’ is written as ‘ē’ and ‘o’ as ‘ō’. This slight modification is needed to have a common transliteration scheme which applies to both Sanskrit and Malayalam.

For the simplified transliteration of Sanskrit characters, there are the following departures from standard academic practice: ‘r’ is written as ‘ṛi’, ‘ṛ’ as ‘ṛī’, ‘l’ as ‘lī’, ‘l’ as ‘lī’, ‘ñ’ as ‘n’ or ‘ng’, ‘ñ’ as ‘n’ or ‘ny’, ‘ś’ as ‘sh’, ‘ṣ’ as ‘ṣh’.

For Malayalam characters that don’t occur in Sanskrit, the following transliterations are used:

‘ഉ’ is written as ‘i’. Thus, ‘ഉള്ളിൽ’ is written as ‘uḷḷil’.

‘ഴ’ is written as ‘r’. Thus, ‘എപ്പോഴും’ is written as ‘eppōrum’.

‘റ’ is written as ‘r’. Thus, ‘അറിവു’ is written as ‘arivū’.

‘റ്റ’ is written as ‘ṭ’. Thus, ‘പറ്റി’ is written as ‘paṭṭi’.

I apologize to Malayalam speakers for whom some of these usages will be unfamiliar. But I think that they are needed for the sake of those who do not know Malayalam.

For the ordinary reader, this scheme of transliteration is meant to indicate an approximate pronunciation, even if the diacritical marks are ignored. However, it may help to note that unmarked ‘c’, ‘t’ and ‘d’ are soft. In particular, ‘c’ is pronounced like ‘ch’ in ‘chat’; and ‘t’ and ‘d’ are pronounced as in the Italian ‘pasta’ and ‘dolce’. By contrast, ‘ṭ’ and ‘ṭ’ are pronounced more like the hard ‘t’ in ‘table’, and ‘ḍ’ like the hard ‘d’ in ‘donkey’. Where ‘h’ occurs after a preceding consonant, it does not indicate a softening of the consonant (as it may in English). Instead, it indicates an aspirated sound that occurs immediately after the consonant.

Second and third edition editor

Why such open talk?

50. WHY SUCH OPEN TALK?

A disciple asked: Why was secrecy so strictly observed in expounding the Truth in the old shāstras [texts]?

Gurunāthan: Evidently, for fear of jeopardizing established religion and society. Religion had no place except in duality and social life. It was the prime moving force of social life in ancient times. But the concept of religion could not stand the strict logic of vēdāntic Truth.

The sages of old, who recognized the great need of religion in phenomenal life, expounded the ultimate Truth under a strict cover of secrecy, thus enabling religion to play its role in lower human society. But religion in the present day world has been dethroned in many ways, and ungodly cults have come into existence in large numbers.

Therefore it is high time now to throw off the veil of secrecy, and broadcast the whole Truth in the face of the world which has already advanced much, intellectually.

On devotion to a living Guru

ācāryavān puruṣō vēda

Chāndogya Upaniṣhad, 6.14.2

This means: ‘He who is blessed with a Kāraṇa-guru alone knows the Truth.’

The following Malayalam verse is the instruction of Shrī Ātmānanda to the few earnest aspirants of Truth, as to how and when they should direct and express their sense of deep devotion.

bōdham yātorupādhimūlam udayam ceytō, bhajikkēṇṭatum
pūjikkēṇṭatum uḷḷaliññatineyām śrīdēsīkōpādhiyāy,
ellām satguruvām upādhi maṛayunnērattatallāte
kaṇṭānyōpādhiyil āvidham bhramam udiccīḍāt irunnīṭaṇam .

Shrī Ātmānanda, Ātmārāmam, 1.34

‘That particular person through whom one had the proud privilege of being enlightened, that is the *only* form which one may adore and do pūja to, to one’s heart’s content, as the person of one’s Guru. It is true that all is the Sat-guru, but *only* when the name and form disappear and not otherwise. Therefore, the true aspirant should beware of being deluded into any similar devotional advances towards any other form, be it of God or of man.’

Nitya Tripta

Absence

855. WHAT IS THE ABSENCE OF A THING?

The absence of anything is not directly perceived. It is only the background that is really perceived, and the absence of a thing is superimposed upon that background.

1042. WHERE IS CONSCIOUSNESS IN GREATER EVIDENCE?

Suppose an empty space is shown to you, for you to sit down. At once you recognize the absence of a seat there and refuse to sit. But in the case of the actual chair pointed out, no active thought is called for and you safely ignore the part played by Consciousness. Relatively speaking, the play of Consciousness is more evident in the former than in the latter.

929. WHAT OBSTRUCTS THE REALITY?

The presence as well as absence of the object. When you see the wall without the usual picture hanging on it, you form a percept and a concept together – the concept getting the better of the two. The percept is the absence of the picture and the concept is the idea of the presence of the picture. It is clear that the wall, as it is, will never be perceived if your attention is directed to either of the two. Similarly, the Reality behind the world is obstructed both by the presence of the world in the waking and dream states, and by its absence in the deep sleep state. You have to transcend both in order to reach the background.

1264. WHAT IS LIMITATION?

The presence of objects and absence of objects are respectively termed ‘limitedness’ and ‘unlimitedness’, or ‘conditionedness’ and ‘unconditionedness’, of consciousness. The so called unconditionedness is also a limitation put upon Consciousness, and is generally called ‘samādhi’ [‘meditative absorption’]. Truth is still beyond.

Absolute and relative

159. RELATIVE (SĀPĒKṢHYA)

‘Relative’ means in relation to Me; and not in relation to other objects, as is ordinarily understood. Everything is connected with Me first, and only through Me to something else.

115. HOW TO BRIDGE THE GULF BETWEEN THE RELATIVE AND THE ABSOLUTE?

There is absolutely no bridge which can take you from the relative to the Absolute. The only bridge existing is Consciousness. But here, there is only the bridge and no one to cross over. So a jump alone is possible, to take you across.

The Absolute ceases to be the Absolute if it stoops to give directions in worldly matters. But the disciple is corrected by his Guru, even in the relative sphere. Thus you are led on to the Absolute.

220. WHAT IS MEANT BY RELATIVE EXISTENCE?

All questions relating to the Absolute can be explained only by illustrations from the world, where both parts are objective. The example of the pot and the earth is taken up here as an illustration, in order to answer this question.

The pot has no existence independent of the earth of which it is made; or in other words, the pot's existence is derived from the earth, which has a relatively more permanent existence. Similarly, objects have no existence independent of the self or the 'I'-principle. That is, the existence of the world is only relative to the subject 'I'.

Here, the 'I' is not gross like the earth in the illustration. Still, the 'I' is much better known than anything objective or gross. The existence of this 'I', though not apparent to the senses, is accepted by all persons alike.

Everything else has an existence only in relation to this 'I'. Things depend upon varying proofs to establish their existence. But the 'I' alone stands in need of no such proof at all. It is self-evident (svayam-prakāsha) – self-luminous.

248. HOW TO THINK ABOUT THE ABSOLUTE?

Strictly speaking, it is impossible to do so. Spiritual sādhakas [aspirants] are often asked to think of the Absolute. The Absolute is clearly beyond all thought, and therefore it is impossible to think of it directly. There is no need for that sort of thought either, because you are always that. In order to think of the Absolute in any manner, you have to objectify it.

You need only to eliminate yourself from all that is non-ātmā [not self]. When that is done, your real nature shines all alone, in its own glory. That is Ātmā [true self], which is self-luminous,

Therefore, what the sādhaba is actually asked to do is only this. In the guise of thinking of the Ātmā, think of all that is non-ātmā – all that constitutes mind, senses and body – and eliminate them from yourself. When left alone, you stand as Ātmā.

Inert instruments can never think of the self-luminous 'I'-principle. So you should never attempt to speak or think of this 'I'. But if ever you happen to think of this 'I', then just eliminate the thinking part alone, which is inert, and you remain as you are.

Shrī Vidyāranya's exposition of this Truth takes you only to the tether end of witnesshood, and leaves you still as a witness. But you should go even a step beyond the witness, to the ultimate Reality itself – proving that there is nothing else to be witnessed and that you are all alone: the Absolute.

Actions

953. HOW TO EXAMINE AN ACTION (DOING)?

It has to be done subjectively and not objectively. Then the doer and the deed both vanish, not being present in the doing.

1233. 'I KNOW I AM.' HOW TO PROVE THAT THIS IS NO ACTION?

I say I am the doer and I am the enjoyer. The doer is not the enjoyer. But I am both. So I am the non-doer background of both. I know doing and enjoying. This knowing is my nature, not an action: for it never parts from me.

Therefore, 'I know I am' means: 'I shine in my own light.'

830. WHOSE IS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION?

The instrument is dead and inert. It can never be made to share responsibility for any deed.

It is not the chopper that cuts the tree. It is the 'living-ness' you transmit to the chopper that cuts it. Similarly, body, senses and mind are mere instruments under the true living-ness or awareness, the 'I'. That 'I' is alone responsible for all action.

Action is only *tripuṭī* [triad of doer, doing and deed, or subject, activity and object]. Knowledge pertains only to the 'I'. When you examine the *tripuṭī*, it vanishes in its due order, leaving you as knowledge.

694. HOW ARE ACTIONS AND IDEAS RELATED?

Ideas, repeated often, express themselves as actions – we might call them 'solidified ideas'. Other ideas, which are not repeated, remain as ideas 'not solidified'. These two might look different on the surface, but in essence they are the same.

481. HOW TO PRODUCE THE BEST RESULTS OF ACTION?

If you lose yourself in any action, that action will be most successful, in the sense that it produces the best results. How to attain this self-forgetfulness?

Direct the mind to its source, the Absolute, leaving a simple *samskāra* [silent inclination] that certain actions are to be performed. When the actions are thus left to themselves with the sense organs, and the lower reason is not available to guide them, some principle from within – evidently the higher reason – automatically takes the full responsibility of guiding the actions.

Thus, under the supreme guidance of the all knowing *vidyā-vṛitti*, [higher reason] the actions happen to be fulfilled to a wonderful degree of perfection. But if ever the ego comes in, in any form anywhere in the course of the action, things go wrong lamentably.

The apparent life of every Sage, if closely observed, will provide numerous instances of the mysterious fulfilment of phenomenal activities in all perfection, without an effort on his own part and without his claiming the least credit for it.

976. HOW TO PERFORM AN ACTION UNATTACHED?

Worldly actions can be performed in two ways:

1. By identifying yourself completely with body, senses and mind. Then the action is spontaneous, as in the lay-man.
2. By standing behind and controlling body, senses and mind in order to achieve certain results, as in the case of the yōgin. You are still the apparent I, but more detached from the body, senses and mind.

There is still a higher kind of action which is not strictly worldly.

3. Stand beyond the mind as the witness of all the activities of the mind. As witness you are unaffected by objects or actions and so you are unattached in your action.

Activity and rest

261. WHAT IS MY RELATION WITH ACTION AND INACTION?

Action depends upon inaction, and inaction upon action, for their very existence. This is impossible; and so both are non-existent, as such. Therefore, I stand transcending both.

Any particular feeling, pursued to its very source, suddenly disappears; and you will be thrown unawares into your real nature of Peace.

329. HOW IS ACTIVITY AND INACTIVITY RELATED TO TRUTH?

From inactivity, you cannot get to the beyond without something active coming to your help. But from the active sphere, you can rise straight to the Ultimate, merely by understanding it aright.

1316. PEACE AND ACTIVITIES OF BODY AND MIND

One can be said to be perfectly healthy in body and mind only if no part of the body or mind makes itself felt. A part makes itself felt only when there is something wrong with it. You know that you have a head only when it aches.

You know things in the waking and dream states by separating them from yourself. That is when duality comes in. So, in the case of the healthy man, the body and mind continue to function smoothly, without making any one of them specially felt. And in this way, he remains in a state of external peace, short-lived though it may be.

But in deep sleep, you stand in your own glory, when neither the body nor the mind comes in to disturb your real nature of Peace. Even with phenomenal knowledge, at the moment of knowing, you stand in identity with the object, in perfect Non-duality. It is only subsequently that you import thought and separate the thing known. When there is identity, thought or recognition is impossible.

All this is concerning the involuntary experience of peace one has occasionally, though this peace depends upon the incidental subsidence of activity. This is made permanent and independent of the presence or absence of activities in the case of the

jīvan-mukta [see glossary], by his conscious experience of the nature of Peace, his own real Self. The apparent activities of his body, senses and mind do not disturb the tranquillity of his nature.

127. CONSCIOUSNESS AND ACTIVITY

Consciousness is always your centre, in all your activities.

This fact is only to be understood, and not to be thought of, during the activity itself. It will hamper your activity, and sometimes even stop it, if you think of Consciousness during the activity. So think about the Consciousness part therein, which is your own nature, only after the activity is over and when you are free.

But, before the activity, you can take the vague thought, avoiding all details, that Consciousness is the background of all activity.

358. HOW TO KEEP MY CENTRE DURING ACTIVITY?

The different spheres of an ordinary man's experience are: (1) doing, (2) perceiving, (3) thinking, (4) feeling, and last of all (5) knowing. The first four kinds of activities are always changing, and the last alone is changeless.

Whenever you have an experience of any of the first four types, ask yourself the question: 'To whom is it that the particular experience occurs?' You will see without any difficulty that it is not to the ultimate 'I'-principle, but only to one of its four mediums or instruments. Then why do you worry about them in the least?

Know that you are the knower, always at your centre, and be at Peace. What more is needed?

The instrument and the background can be represented as shown below:

Doing, perceiving, thinking and feeling	Media or instruments
Pure 'I'-principle	Background

372. WHAT IS THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVITIES?

Usually, man has three different kinds of activities – perceiving, thinking and knowing – the former two being false and the last alone real.

Invariably, the first two false activities alone are recognized in worldly transactions. And the last, but real activity is sadly ignored, though the word 'knowing' is used indiscriminately.

The vēdāntin proves and shows you that even the first two false activities owe their very existence to the third one. You must always bear in mind that when knowledge dawns, perception and thinking vanish.

570. ACT KNOWINGLY.

This is the practical instruction by which the 'I' is visualized.

In all human activities, there is a fundamental difference between the words expressed and the actual activity. The words 'I see him', 'I hear it' etc. are quite in order. But in the activity proper, the first and the most important part 'I' is lamentably

ignored and the activity or objectivity part alone emphasized. This is responsible for all bondage. The only means to liberation is to fill the omission you have so ignorantly made.

In all your daily activities, try to bring the 'I' to the forefront. If you succeed in doing this, you have gone a long way towards visualizing the 'I'. When you do this exercise for some time, you will find that you are that changeless principle in all activity and that the activities themselves change every moment. This clearly proves that action, perception, thought and feeling do not go into your nature at all.

The activities of the ignorant man (or the objective part of them) usually cloud the 'I'-principle in him. But this exercise removes all possibility of such clouding of the 'I'-principle, since the 'I' is emphasized every moment.

My role is to remain changeless in the midst of incessant change, or to be unaffected by all opposites like happiness and misery. To make this possible, one has to understand that one is beyond all opposites and that one is neither the doer nor the enjoyer.

When you say every activity belongs to you, it means that nothing belongs to you in fact, or that I am the 'svarūpa' ['true nature'] without their touching my svarūpa.

1025. WHAT SHOULD I EMPHASIZE IN MY ACTIVITIES?

Every man has three distinct and progressive perspectives of the world: through the senses, the mind and Consciousness.

Through the senses, you perceive only gross objects. As you transcend the first and reach the second stage, you perceive only subtle objects or ideas. In the last stage, everything appears as Consciousness.

The Guru wants you only to recognize and emphasize sufficiently this last perspective of Consciousness. If you succeed in doing at least this much after listening to the Truth from the Guru, you will without doubt get established in the Reality. Emphasis on any or both of the first two perspectives ties you down as a jīva [personal ego].

1073. THE ACTIVITIES OF THE IGNORANT MAN, THE SĀDHAKA AND THE JĪVAN-MUKTA

An activity has two parts, the material part and the knowledge part. No activity is possible unless it is recorded in knowledge.

The ignorant man, in his perceptions, ignores the knowledge part and emphasizes only the material object part.

The sādḥaka [spiritual aspirant] tries in the beginning to emphasize at least equally the knowledge part and the material part, and towards the end of his sādḥana gives more emphasis to the knowledge part than to the material.

The jīvan-mukta [see glossary], at heart, ignores the material part completely and recognizes or emphasizes only the knowledge part; but knowingly, he appears to emphasize the material part as well.

1187. SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN ACTIVITY

In every activity, there is only object and no subject.

Examine any activity. There seem to be two 'I's, functioning simultaneously: the ego or apparent 'I' as the doer, and the 'I'-principle or real 'I' as the knower. The former is *ever*-changing and the latter is *never*-changing. Therefore I am always the knower and never the doer. Thus there is no doer or subject, and there is only action without an actor.

The real 'I'-principle is present in all action. You believe that an actor or subject is indispensable for every action; therefore you conclude that the 'I'-principle is acting. Really, the 'I'-principle is not concerned with the acting at all. Thus you are no doer, enjoyer or perceiver, but only the knower.

At every step, the presence of Consciousness is absolutely necessary, in all thoughts, feelings and sensations. This Consciousness is unconcerned with the object or the activity.

For further corroboration, you may examine the deep sleep state. You had no thinking, feeling, or sensation in deep sleep. Therefore the 'I'-principle, as pure Consciousness, alone was there.

Advaita (Non-duality)

233. HOW CAN WORLDLY EXPERIENCE LEAD ONE TO ADVAITA?

When you see a thing, your seeing and the form seen become one and stand as Knowledge. Then only is the experience complete, and then you cannot even say that you saw.

You stand as seeing itself, or Knowledge. The object seen is also seeing. Thus the seen and the seeing become one in you, the Knowledge. Therefore, the experience of seeing a thing is pure *Advaita*.

The seeing appears to be split up into the seeing and the seen. But this is impossible, and therefore *dvaita* [duality] is never actually experienced.

You depend upon your knowledge alone, to establish that you see a thing. When you know a thing, the thing is covered by Knowledge, or it is Knowledge expressing itself in the form of the thing. Or, to be more accurate, Knowledge expresses itself. This is pure *Advaita*, and is the experience of all.

When Knowledge dawns, the object disappears completely. You say you perceive a thing only when the perception is complete. Then the object loses its objectivity and becomes one with you. This is nothing but Advaita.

'When you say you perceived an object, the object is not there and you are not elsewhere.'

11. HOW TO ESTABLISH ADVAITA IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF AN OBJECT?

When I say 'I know an object', the knower and the object known both disappear; and the Knowledge alone remains. Thus separated from the knower and the known, the knowledge can no longer be called limited. It is pure. It is absolute. So, during every perception, I remain in my real centre, as pure Consciousness.

It has already been proved that just before and after every perception, I am in my own real nature. The knower, knowledge and the known are themselves three distinct

and separate perceptions, each appearing in a particular sequence corresponding to that in the expression ‘I know it.’

Thus, it stands established that nobody is ever shaken from his own centre of consciousness and peace.

1166. WHAT IS ADVAITA (NON-DUALITY)?

Ātmā, the ultimate Truth established by Advaita, is the only thing that *is*. Everything else is only an appearance on it.

Truth is imperceptible, and the ordinary man knows only his perceptions. Advaita is a method of leading the ignorant man from the percept (object) to the ultimate Truth. Advaita refers to duality (or two). This ‘two’ is very often misunderstood to be the numerical two. But no, this ‘two’ stands for the basic ‘two’, viz. the subject and the object, or the perceiver and the perceived – the father of the many.

Your recognition of this basic two is otherwise called the basic error. Removal of this error and the re-establishment of the ultimate Truth is the purpose of Advaita (Non-duality).

onnāyaninneyiha raṅṅenu kaṅṅaḷavil
uṅṅāyoriṅṅal bata miṅṅāvatalla mama
paṅṅēkkaṅakkevaruvān nin kṛpāvalikaḷ
uṅṅākayeṅkal iha nārāyaṅāya namaḷ

[When what has always stood as one
is seen as two, there comes to me
a sad frustration and regret,
which can’t be rightly spoken of.
To bring about the true, original
account, Lord may Your kindness
rain on me that worships You.]

Eruttacchan, Harināma-kīrtanam, 2

The quotation points to you – as Happiness, in the retreat into deep sleep every day. This process [of removing error] is easy enough. Infinite diversity can easily be reduced to the basic duality of subject and object. Applying the tests of Truth – namely changelessness and self-luminosity – to the subject and object, they are easily disposed of as mere appearance and unreal. But when the appearance is so disposed of, the common background which is pure Consciousness remains over and responds to all the tests of Truth. Therefore it is that Truth itself which appears as the diverse world.

The positive always has a taint of the mind in it. When the world is negated as unreal, it does not mean that the Truth is positive. Positive is also a relative term, within the realm of the mind. Truth is beyond both positive and negative, and is the background of both. But the term ‘positive’ is first utilized as a means to eliminate from you all that is negative. When everything negative is thus disposed of, what remains over as the supposed ‘positive’ no longer appears positive. Its relativity being lost, it stands in its own glory as the ultimate Truth. Therefore, the Ultimate is pointed to in a negative manner, as Non-duality.

713. CAN ADVAITA BE APPLIED UNIVERSALLY?

No. It is forbidden in one context alone. That is in the presence of the Guru. Everywhere else, you can boldly apply Advaita and rise to the Ultimate.

It is true that Advaita is the highest. But it was there all through time, and it did not come to your notice or help you in the least. It needed only a *single ray, through a word, from the flood-light of the physical Guru*, to enable you to see Advaita and to visualize the Reality. The disciple, who has a throb in his heart, does not need a thought to trample down the question pertaining to the Guru, the moment it is heard. Therefore even the thought of oneness with the Guru is unimaginable to a true disciple, even from an academic standpoint.

rajiv ajñānād bhāti rajjau yathā 'hiḥ
svātmā-jñānād ātmanō jīva-bhāvaḥ .
dīpēnai 'tad bhrānti-nāśē sa rajjur
jīvō nā 'ham dēśikō 'ktyā śivō 'ham ..

[By misperception of a rope
a seeming snake gets to appear
upon the rope that's wrongly seen.
So too, by wrongly seeing self,
a seeming person there appears –
created by imagining,
from what is self and self alone.

When the illusion is destroyed –
by light that shows what's truly seen –
there is no snake, but just the rope.
So too, by what my teacher says,
I am no seeming person here.
I am just consciousness alone –
found absolute, all by itself.]

Shrī Shankara, Advaita-pancaratnam, 1.2

The higher śāstras [texts] endorse this view. So far as the disciple is concerned, the Guru is the light that firsts lights up even the Reality.

1210. HOW DOES ADVAITA EXPRESS ITSELF EVEN IN OUR WORLDLY ACTIVITIES?

You see a picture and enjoy its beauty. What does this mean? It means that, for the time being, you change your stand from the gross externals to the subtle idea, and that you forget your personal self or ego. It is only in such a state that you experience Peace as beauty or Happiness.

At such moments you are standing in Advaita. The original painter had first within himself an experience of advaitic beauty or Peace. This gradually condensed into an idea, which still further condensed into the gross picture. The onlookers are also taken, in the reverse order, to the same experience of advaitic beauty or Peace experienced by the painter.

It is true you experience sublime beauty or Happiness on witnessing objects like a mountain, the sea or a waterfall. This is because you forget your lower self for the time being and stand as one with the object, in the advaitic sense.

1165. HOW TO DISTINGUISH MONISM FROM ADVAITA?

There is a fundamental difference between the two.

Monism, meaning 'unity', is only a concept, with a definite trace of the mind in it. Its purpose is to destroy diversity, and not to find out the ultimate Truth.

Advaita or Non-duality negates even the mind as unreal, and remains over as its background. This principle is therefore beyond the mind; and it is self-luminous, there being nothing else to light it up.

1357. WHAT IS MONISM?

It is only a mental position, being the opposite of dualism. It is often mistaken to be non-dualism. Non-dualism is pure *Advaita*, which is a clear negation of both dualism and monism and stands beyond both. *Advaita* is what remains over, after rejecting all that stands as 'this' or 'that'.

1227. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TERM 'ADVAITA'

'*Advaita*' is the most significant term to denote the ultimate Truth. The ignorant man knows only the world, and everything beyond it is unknown to him. In this sense, Truth is unknown.

Still, he strives to attain that Truth. The world as known is the impediment to the attainment of Truth. Therefore the *prakriyā* [method] adopted for this purpose is the scrupulous rejection (*neti*) of everything known.

At last, the principle which rejected everything else remains over as incapable of being rejected, and without a second. Looking from the known world, that principle can only be characterized as the 'not-known', in the negative. It is unknown, and not unknowable. If it is considered positive, it becomes known and then the knower comes in and duality is set up. Therefore, the most significant term to denote the characteristic of Truth is *Advaita* (Non-duality). The ultimate knower can never be known.

Aphorisms

560. THE CHIEF ADVAITIC APHORISMS

The chief *advaitic* aphorisms, according to the traditional path, are four in number. They are:

1. '*Ayam ātmā brahma.*' ['This self is all there is.'], being a statement of the ultimate Truth.
2. '*Tat tvam asi.*' ['You are that.'] This is the instruction given by the Guru to the disciple, regarding the identity of the backgrounds of the *jīva* [person] and the world.
3. '*Ahaṁ brahmā 'smi.*' ['I am all there is.'] This is the form in which the disciple contemplates the essence of the instruction imparted through the second aphorism. By contemplating this aphorism for a considerable period, the disciple transcends

the littleness of the jīva and establishes his identity with the all-comprehensive brahman, which is the background of the universe. This conception of brahman is distinguished by its all-comprehensiveness or bigness. This is as much a limitation as the smallness of the jīva, and it has to be transcended to reach the Ultimate. For this purpose, another aphorism is given.

4. '*Prajñānam brahma.*' ['Consciousness is all there is.'] With the help of this last aphorism, the disciple transcends also the sense of bigness and reaches pure Consciousness, the Ultimate.

'*I am conscious of something*', and '*I am consciousness*' are two significant statements.

The first statement is mental, fitful and personal. But it does the invaluable service of making you understand the nature of Consciousness.

The second statement is impersonal. There, Consciousness stands in its own right, as the only self-luminous principle.

Having understood the nature of Consciousness from the first statement, it is possible to direct attention to the impersonal nature of pure Consciousness, and thus to establish oneself in it.

548. TAT TVAM ASI ['YOU ARE THAT.']

'Tat tvam asi' is established by those who followed the cosmological path, by proving the identity between the changeless principles behind the apparent 'I' (*tvam*) and the objective world (*tat*). But they still have to transcend the sense of bigness of *tat* (as brahman), which is also relative, attached to that experience.

According to our method, the *tvam* is first examined dispassionately and reduced to its ultimate source, Ātmā. Thus you immediately transcend the basic error. Looking from the stand of Ātmā, which you have experienced to be the only Reality, you find that no world exists at all. Therefore, the question of any serious examination of the *tat* does not arise, so far as you are concerned.

According to Gurunāthan, the significance of the aphorism 'Tat tvam asi' is also different. The aspirant is seeking the Truth. So he is told: 'You are that Truth.' Here, you are shown the Reality in the apparent 'I'-principle itself, discarding all the appendages.

1207. A NEW APPROACH TO EXPLAIN THE APHORISM 'THOU ART THAT.'

'Thou art that' consists of two parts, 'thou' and 'that', the meanings of which have to be clearly understood.

Explaining the meaning of 'thou', you are first told that you are not the body, senses or the mind. Leaving it there, the 'that' is taken up. You know you are there in deep sleep, without a body, senses or mind. That which you are in deep sleep is shown to you to be the meaning and goal of 'that'.

Thus you are quite naturally made to visualize – not merely to understand – what you really are. This is how the aphorism 'Thou art that' is to be understood. The following verses amply illustrate this Truth.

śraddhasva tāta śraddhasva nā 'tra mōham kuruṣva bhōḥ .
jñāna-svarupō bhagavān ātmā tvam prakṛtēḥ paraḥ ..

[Be sure of it, be deeply sure
that you make no confusion here.
You are what knowledge truly is,
just that from which all guidance comes.
That is the self, just what you are,
beyond all nature's functioning.]

Aṣṭāvakra-samhitā, 15.8

1003. HOW TO VIEW 'I AM ALL'?

The all should merge in the 'I' and disappear, leaving the 'I' absolute. But if you begin to expand the 'I' into the 'all', you go wrong and still remain as the object. The objectivity must disappear completely.

If you say that 'Nothing *is*', it does not mean that non-existence is the end of all; but, rather, that existence is the end of all, because the 'is' at the end of the statement stands for being or existence alone.

1092. 'SHIVŌHAM' ['I AM SHIVA.']

It is an aphorism usually utilized by jnyāna sādhakas, after visualization of the Truth, to be established in that background. Its purpose is only to turn your attention to the inner Self. Its meaning should not be taken literally. If you do so, you objectify it, and then it does not represent the Self, which is always the ultimate subject.

The goal of all spiritual exercise is to change your identification from the personal (body, senses and mind) to the impersonal (Self). The impersonal Self or Ātmā is ever-present and Self-luminous. Nothing has to be done to manifest it. All you have to do is to turn your attention to it whole-heartedly, by withdrawing your attention from the body, senses and mind. This withdrawal is possible only with the help of Consciousness, which is your real nature. When the body, senses and mind are thus completely eliminated, the consciousness – which is the background – remains over, shining in all its glory.

The mantra 'Shivōham' does not represent anything objective. It just reminds you of your real nature. Therefore, the mantra 'Shivōham' helps you considerably to get away from everything objective, and you are thrown into that state when you had the first visualization of the Truth in the presence of the Guru. This is only a means to throw you into that state again and again, till at last you are established in it, the 'Ātmā', rising above all obstacles.

Apparent 'I' (personal ego)

512. EGO

Every object is a pointer to the Ultimate. Even the much despised ego is a great help to the realization of the Truth. The presence of the ego in man, though in a distorted form, is infinitely better than the absence of it, as for example in a tree.

Through the ego, you perceive only objects at first. But the objects ultimately point to Consciousness. Therefore the, first perception – though wrong – subsequently leads you on to the Reality; and the perception itself is made possible only by the presence of the ego.

Hence the ego is, in one sense, primarily responsible for the realization of ultimate Truth.

1268. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE EGO?

The ego is a spurious entity which does not exist and can never exist. It does not stand the slightest scrutiny. What is the difference between the ego and the other things which you have accepted to be illusions? Such things have at least a momentary appearance, in the mental level. But the ego has not even that. It is never experienced by anybody at any time.

You stray away from knowledge, down to the object known; and that is the ego.

118. JĪVA

A jīva [personal ego] comes into being as a result of the false identification of the Ātmā [Self] with body, senses and mind; or as a result of the superimpositions of doership or enjoyership upon the Ātmā (Ātmā + doership = jīva).

‘Who superimposes doership upon Ātmā?’ is the question usually asked at this stage. Is not he who superimposes himself a doer? The question is absurd on the face of it. The question arises upon the false presupposition that a doership exists even before doership comes into being.

1004. WHAT IS AHANKĀRA AND HOW TO RISE ABOVE IT?

Ahankāra [ego or acting ‘I’] is the sense of one’s separateness from everything else. You can rise above it only by reaching the background Truth, where all sense of separateness vanishes. One of the tests of having annihilated the ego is a genuine sense of humility, expressing itself by never trying to exploit or even recognize your position of vantage and perfection.

1079. WHAT IS MEANT BY ‘SELFISH’?

It is selfish to do, think or feel anything in the interests of the apparent ‘I’.

79. HOW CAN THE APPARENT ‘I’ PROGRESS TO PURE CONSCIOUSNESS?

To the ordinary man, the apparent ‘I’ is a compound of Consciousness and body – gross or subtle. Conceding for the time being the existence of the lower self, let us proceed to examine its composition, to eliminate from the ‘I’-principle all the rest.

We see that the body acts, the senses perceive, and the mind thinks and feels. But the ‘I’ is found to be present in all these activities, knowing every one of them. So the first stage is that *I am the knower* of the body, senses and mind. I am standing separate from them: as the functioning witness or functioning Consciousness, in all activities.

Examining this witness, we find that, occasionally, we experience a state where all objects disappear. There, Consciousness alone remains. That is to say, the functioning part has vanished and the second stage, *functionless Consciousness*, alone remains.

When the sun shines, the ordinary man takes it to be a function. But, so far as the sun is concerned, that is never a function but its very nature. For it can never remain, not even for a moment, without shining. A function should necessarily have a beginning and an end.

Thus, taking our position in functionless Consciousness, the world as such disappears altogether, being transformed into Consciousness itself. It's proved thereby that even the manifested is Consciousness alone. Thus, the third stage is that knowing is not a function, but the nature of Consciousness.

Therefore, it is clear that the 'I'-principle has never been the perceiving Consciousness, but is pure Consciousness.

tanne maṛannōraṛivu tōnnīṭilō
pinne maṛaviyōru kālavuṁ varā .

Eruttacchan, Bhāgavatam, Tīrtha-yātra

Means: Knowledge that dawns on the subsidence of the ego can never cease to be.

126. 'WHO TAKES THE THOUGHT THAT HE IS CONSCIOUSNESS?'

It is the ego that takes this thought. The ego is a crude mixture of Consciousness and the material part. When this ego takes this particular thought that it is Consciousness, the material part drops away and Consciousness shines alone, in its own glory.

Thus the ego itself gets transformed into pure Consciousness, in course of time.

157. HOW DO I GET ENTANGLED?

When I rest in myself alone, in my own glory, there is no manifestation and no question either. I am the only Reality, and this Reality is my own birthright.

Very often, I slip down to the mind and begin to perceive thoughts and feelings. Immediately, I begin to attribute my own Reality to the mind; and even to its objects, namely, thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes, I slip further down to the body and perceive gross objects. Here again I attribute my own Reality to these, the body and objects. Thus I apparently entangle myself in the web of this universe.

It may further be explained as follows.

In the waking and dream experiences, all perceptions are understood only in relation to their opposites. For example, talk is understood in relation to silence, running in relation to stillness, and so on. This practice has created in man a very strong tendency to superimpose the imaginary opposite of any perception whenever that particular perception vanishes.

It is as a result of this tendency that he ordinarily superimposes ignorance in deep sleep when all activities cease. This vicious practice must be given up.

You must understand that all perceptions arise in Consciousness, abide in Consciousness and merge into consciousness. So, whenever a perception vanishes, it is Consciousness or Myself alone that remains over, as the background of it all.

You must steadily cultivate this habit of perceiving the Reality as the background of all activity.

264. WHAT IS THE COMPOSITION OF THE EGO?

It is the ego, which is a crude mixture of body and Consciousness, that takes both the thoughts:

1. I am the body (objectively), and
2. I am Consciousness (subjectively).

In the first thought, the Consciousness part of the ego is ignored, and the body part alone emphasized. In the second thought, the body part is ignored, and the Consciousness part alone is emphasized.

696. HOW TO ANNIHILATE THE EGO?

If you work against the ego, the ego most skilfully shifts its place to a higher ground.

Therefore direct your thought to your real nature, Consciousness, where the ego cannot reach. Then the limitations of thought disappear, and thought remains as Consciousness, pure. So you see that even as thought, it was not thought, but Consciousness in content.

This is the best way to annihilate the ego.

887. IS IT RIGHT TO HATE THE EGO?

Yes. Because the ego is something which does not exist. So you hate the non-existent because you want to be the existent Reality.

The best way to annihilate the ego is not to think frequently of annihilating it. This will thereby only strengthen the ego. You need only to ignore the ego at every turn, and the ego will die a natural death.

957. THE EGO IS LIKE A GHOST. HOW?

The ghost, having no form of its own, takes possession of somebody else's form. When exorcized from there, he takes possession of the form of still another.

Similarly, the ego has no form of its own. It claims the form of doer, perceiver or enjoyer after the activity. The best way to kill the ego is to refuse to give it any of these forms. The ego will then be starved to death.

Directing attention to your real nature is the only sure means of killing the ego.

1029. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JĪVA-HOOD AND THE REAL NATURE

The jīva [living person] has a nine-fold samsāra [order of expression], namely:

The doer	The doing	The deed
The enjoyer or perceiver	The enjoyment or perception	The enjoyed or perceived
The knower	The knowing	The known

One's jīva-hood and one's real nature can never be perceived by each other. But standing in the jīva itself, and accepting a small taint which is neither detrimental nor instrumental to the Truth, you can visualize the Reality; and this method is the method of the witness.

1038. WHAT DOES THE JĪVA WANT?

The jīva [ego] is experience which is limited, and it also wants limited experience. But it wants this for all time. That is, it wants it to be limited and unlimited simultaneously. Or, in other words, it wants its mere limited experience to be unlimited. This is self-contradictory and impossible, as long as you remain a jīva (a limited being).

Therefore, what the jīva really wants is to become experience itself, which is unlimited and your real nature.

894. WHAT DOES THE EGO WANT?

It is wrong to say the ego always wants enjoyment of objective pleasure alone. If so, why does he desire deep sleep where there is no thought or feeling? So it proves that he wants to be alone in his real nature.

The ego's activities are:

You perceive it.	All three take place in the
Then you know it.	realm of the mind alone.
Then you enjoy it.	
Then you <i>become</i> it.	On the borderline
	between mind and self.
Then you <i>be</i> it.	In the Reality or Self.

1219. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND THE EGO?

Even that which is supposed to be the enjoyment of happiness in the waking state occurs only when the ego or the lower self is forgotten or disappears. Whenever the ego disappears, it is the background – Peace – that shines in its own glory.

This is later on usurped by the ego and interpreted as enjoyment of happiness experienced by him. But in fact, the ego was nowhere on the scene at the time referred to.

802. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EGO AND LIBERATION?

It is the whole ego that seeks liberation and strives for it. When it is directed towards the ultimate Reality, the material part automatically drops away and the Consciousness part alone remains over as the real 'I'-principle. This is liberation.

945. HOW IS THE EGO TRANSFORMED?

It is your thought, that every object is distinct and separate from you, that constitutes the waking state with the ego full-blown. If you stand separate from any object, that separateness will also exist between objects.

Gradually, you discover that your body is also an object like any other, and you begin to look upon it as something separate from you. Then you become a mental being. This is the first stage of progress when the ego loses its grossness.

The mental stand is next given up and then your stand is in the 'I'-principle. Then the whole of the objective world appears as a single mass and that whole mass stands transformed into pure Consciousness. Grossness vanishes first and subtleness vanishes next.

Then you stand as pure Consciousness. This experience may happen either in the dream state or in the waking state; but the result is the same. Sometimes in your dream you feel it is a dream. Then, in a few seconds, without any further effort, the whole thing dissolves into pure Consciousness.

1301. HOW IS THOUGHT EGOLESS?

During the occurrence of a thought, you do not have the thought that you are thinking. You stand identified with the thought itself, and so there is no duality or ego. It is after the event that the ego comes in and claims that he thought. This is a lie. Therefore, every mentation is egoless, at the moment it occurs.

You know every mentation just as you know Happiness in deep sleep. By being it.

Appearance

1439. WHAT IS APPEARANCE?

The ordinary statements 'I knew the object', 'I thought the idea', 'I felt the pleasure' etc. are all redundant and wrong, in the strict sense of the terms.

Because an object is nothing but perception, idea is nothing but thought-form, and pleasure is nothing but feeling. As such, one and the same thing cannot remain as subject and object simultaneously.

Therefore, all appearance is nothing but an illusion.

304. APPEARANCE IS ALWAYS DECEPTIVE.

It is our daily experience that we hear the thunder long after the lightning. But the fact is that both occurred simultaneously. Therefore, just at the moment when we hear a sound, there is no corresponding sound actually in existence. It has already undergone change and disappeared.

So even in the gross world, we see that no perception is true, as and when it appears.

1258. WHAT IS APPEARANCE AND WHAT IS IT THAT APPEARS?

Appearance certainly is not Truth. Because Truth can never appear or be subject to time and space. What else then can it be that appears? Can it be appearance itself? *No*. Because appearance is appearance only on appearance. Hence appearance can never appear. Therefore appearance is *not*. It is only an illusion. Truth alone is.

1225. WHAT IS THE END OF AN APPEARANCE?

Appearance can never merge in anything else. The non-existent snake can never be said to merge in the rope.

Shrī Gauḍapāda

301. THE ORDER AND EFFECT OF MANIFESTATION

The Reality is manifest as Consciousness first, and Consciousness manifests the object next. If one thing is said to manifest another object, the first thing is really manifesting itself, as the background of the second. The rock manifests itself as the background of the image.

Thus, Consciousness manifesting perceptions means that Consciousness remains as background and perceptions appear and disappear in it.

When you see a chair, it is admitted without saying that the space all round is lighted up by the gross light. But this light, by itself, is not perceptible to the naked eye except in relation to some object; and so it is not usually noted or emphasized.

Similarly, the presence of Consciousness is most essential to make any perception possible. Therefore, the manifestation of any perception *first* proves the existence of Consciousness, and only *next* proves the object lit up.

Unless you are self-conscious it is never possible for you to be conscious of objects. But the self-consciousness part is usually ignored. It is *that* Consciousness which has to be emphasized.

dēhābhimānē galitē vijñātē paramātmani
yatra yatra manō yāti tatra tatra samādhayaḥ

[When bodily conceit has passed
and truth of Self is realized,
whatever states the mind may reach,
all mind is there absorbed back in.]

Shrī Shankara tradition, Dr̥g-dr̥shya-viveka, 30

1267. APPEARANCE AND DISAPPEARANCE

It is appearance that goes into the make of disappearance. So there is only appearance and no disappearance. Disappearance appears. That is all.

Appearance is 'seeing' itself, and 'seeing' is Consciousness itself. So all is Consciousness, the real Self.

Arguments

1176. LIMITATION OF ARGUMENTS TO GET AT THE TRUTH

Of course the Guru makes use of certain arguments to extricate the attention of the disciple from the obstacles, and to direct it to the Truth behind. Here, the arguments do not work by themselves. They are supported by a mysterious something which emanates from the Guru and thus accompanies them. That is *love*. That is *light*. In its

presence, the arguments penetrate so deep that they do not leave a trace of the obstacles behind.

Immediately, you visualize the Truth; and you are asked to cling on to that Truth already visualized. You are expected to cling on to the Truth spontaneously, without the help of any argument, if possible.

In that attempt, if you find the obstacles still getting the better of you, of course you have to seek the help of arguments. In that case, it is always better to take recourse to fresh arguments of your own, so that you may avoid the possibility of ever becoming subservient to them. If fresh arguments do not come up, the only alternative is to adduce the old arguments themselves, keeping in mind that the arguments are there only for the purpose of removing stubborn obstacles which block the way to Truth.

When one is thus established in Truth, arguments are of no more service. Still you may see a Sage, well-established in the Truth, sometimes expatiating upon such arguments. It is a sweet recreation and a delight for him.

vidyayumāyi vinōdicciripporu vidyōtamānamātmānam

Eruttacchan, Addhyātma-rāmāyaṇam

838. WHAT IS THE USE OF ARGUMENTS IN SPIRITUAL DISCOURSE?

Only to expel the samskāras [habit-driven tendencies], which are the only impediments to understanding the Self aright. Otherwise the samskāras will stay lurking behind and create havoc afterwards.

Art

1399. WHAT IS THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF ART?

Art is only that which tends to merge the other into yourself.

Mundane is that which separates the other from you.

Therefore real art takes you to the unity of the subject, and so it is really a preparation of the ground for initiation into the ultimate Truth.

866. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND A GENIUS?

Art is an attempt to express the inner harmony of the ultimate Reality, through the outer harmony created by the senses and the mind. As for example in music, beauty, poetry or painting. Everything can be made into an art, provided the ultimate goal is the inner harmony of the Absolute.

Beauty in nature is the ultimate Reality. But it has to be understood that it is not outside; but within you, as the real 'I'-principle. What you call a *genius* is a personality in whom a limited expression of the Ultimate is evident. It may express itself through one of the arts or in some other manner.

396. ART

Every kind of art is conceived and designed to take you, in regular stages, from the phenomenal to the Absolute.

Take for example music. It is the art of taking you to the Absolute through sound. Music, in its gross form, is composed of distinct sounds, harmoniously blended on an apparently changeless background called ‘shruti’ [literally ‘heard’ – with the implication of a direct listening to authentic, unmediated experience].

This shruti again is audible and gross, but transcends the changes of rising and falling. Leaving the diverse sounds of the music, one has to get absorbed in the unity of the shruti. The purpose of shruti is to show an audible background to represent the inaudible.

Up to this state, the music functions in *āhata*, the audible. From the unity of the shruti, you have to go further still, to the inaudible or *anāhata*, which is the abode of Ātmā [Self]. This is achieved by the mind following the shruti and continuing to do so even after the shruti has ceased to be audible. Here, the mind, already divorced of its objects, rids itself of all limitations and merges into the anāhata or Ātmā. Thus you experience the right Absolute through the medium of music.

Ātmā expresses itself first in *anāhata*,
which again expresses itself in *āhata*.

Nāda is the generic name for all sounds. It literally pervades all sounds. Through the medium of any art, when you are taken from the āhata to the anāhata, you enjoy eternal bliss. Real art should achieve this without doing the slightest violence to the inner harmony which is the absolute Reality itself. Of course there is diversity in āhata. But in music, it is so skilfully set that it does not do any violence to the anāhata behind it. This is why music so readily appeals to you.

Through the form, direct your attention to the formless light – the Ultimate – called ‘*oḷi*’. And through audible sound, direct your attention to the soundless *nāda*. These *oḷi* and *nāda* are the two terminating points, when you approach the Absolute through the two distinct paths of form and sound.

arūpamākumolīyuni
śabdamiḷḷāta nādavuni
hṛdayākāśamaddhyatīl
onnāyñnilkkunnitanvahaṃ .

[Right at the centre of the heart,
there is an inmost background where
light shines unformed, always at one
with an unspoken resonance.]

Shrī Ātmānanda, Ātmārāmam, 2.9

thayabbalgitamiva nādaprayōgamuṭan-
ēkaśrutīñkaloru minnalkkaṇakkeyumit-
ekaksarattilorumikkunnapoleyumit-
ākāśasūkṣmatanu nārāyaṇāya namaḥ .

[This subtle background that pervades,
throughout all changing space and time,

is like a changeless harmony
where differences are joined in one.
And it is like a light that flashes
timelessly – in that one single
background drone, which is heard used
in song and music and such arts
that work through resonating sound.]

Eruttacchan, Harināma-kīrtanam, 41

1001. CAN IT BE SAID THAT ART COMES OUT OF SUFFERING?

Many artists suffer intensely. Still, profound works of art come out of them. Of course art is the expression of Truth. So can it be said that art comes out of suffering?

Let us first examine the question itself. From what level does the question arise? Certainly from the level of duality. Art is the expression of harmony. Where there is harmony, there are no words or any other kind of duality. So through the harmony of words, get to the harmony beyond, which is your real nature. Art is the expression of that harmony.

Or in other words, look at the question subjectively, find out your relationship with that question, and try to solve it from that level. Then you will find that at your own level, the question does not arise at all. This alone is the ultimate solution of all such questions. Approach every question in this manner.

Discord and harmony are both related only to you and not to each other. If you go to either and remain there alone, it ceases to be what it is called and becomes the Truth itself.

Ātmā (Self)

1448. WHY CAN'T THERE BE A SUBJECT BEYOND THE 'I' OR THE 'ĀTMĀ'?

The 'I' or Ātmā – as the ultimate subject – does not know that it knows, or that it is the subject. This 'I' or 'Ātmā' refuses to be objectified under all conditions, and therefore there cannot be another subject knowing this.

921. WHY DO I NOT VISUALIZE ĀTMĀ?

Who asks the question? If it is the ego, he can never visualize Ātmā. If it is the 'I' in you that asks the question, that 'I' is Ātmā itself and shall neither want nor be able to visualize Ātmā. Because you cannot be the subject and object simultaneously.

150. ĀTMĀ IS BEYOND BOTH THE PRESENCE AND THE ABSENCE OF OBJECTS.

Thoughts, feelings etc. are like pictures on the wall of Ātmā. Their presence and absence must both vanish, if you want to see the background Ātmā in its Reality.

There is no container in you to hold a series of past thoughts or subtle objects, in readiness for any future remembrance. Thought can have neither a gross object nor a subtle object. So it is objectless, and hence pure Consciousness itself.

1352. ĀTMĀ IS ANYHOW UNAFFECTED. THEN WHY CAN'T I LIVE AS I CHOOSE?

What does it matter to you if Ātmā is unaffected? You are miserable only when you are affected, and it is only then that you seek a remedy. Or in other words, it is only then that you earnestly want to be unaffected. For this, there is absolutely no other means except to be the Ātmā itself. Know that you are *that*, and be free.

Attachment and non-attachment

206. AT THE SAME LEVEL IN WHICH YOU GET ATTACHED, YOU CAN NEVER GET DETACHED.

Detachment is to be gained not by being detached from a few of the objects perceived, but from the whole world of objects which manifests itself in that level, as an integral whole.

In other words, you are to become detached from that level itself. This can never be achieved by confining yourself to that level alone. Nor is it possible to become detached from all objects separately, one by one.

Therefore, the only means to gain complete detachment is for the subject to take his stand in a higher plane or level, and from there view the world. Then you will see that the former world – with all its questions arising in its own level – altogether disappears.

This is how attachment in the dream world is transcended, by the subject changing over to the waking state.

146. HOW TO GET OVER ATTACHMENT?

Even when you say you are attached, you are really detached. From the height of happiness or misery in one state, you pass into its opposite in another state in the course of a few moments; and vice versa. And soon after, you pass into deep sleep, divorced of all ideas of body, senses and mind.

This shows beyond doubt that you are really unattached to anything, in any state. If you are really attached to anything, that attachment should continue with you, in all the states in which you happen to be. But that is not the case. Therefore, that proves that in your real nature, you are not attached.

Know it and take note of it. That is all that is needed. Take that line of thinking, and you will find that this mistaken notion of attachment will leave you very soon.

678. WHAT IS DISINTERESTED ACTION? HAS IT ANY TEST?

Disinterested action is not possible to the ego. An action becomes disinterested only when you stand as the witness beyond the doership and enjoyership. The renunciation

of enjoyership (the fruits of action) takes you only half way to the Truth. The other half, namely doership, has next to be renounced, if the action is to be made strictly disinterested.

There is no definite standard or test by which the disinterestedness of an action can be ascertained; because all standards and tests are mental, and disinterestedness concerns only the witness which is beyond the mind. The activity of a jīvan-mukta, which is disinterested action, cannot on the surface be distinguished from that of an ignorant man. Something vague can be said about disinterested action, but all that will only be a mere caricature of the Truth. There are, however, several tests and characteristics by which actions that are not disinterested can be distinguished.

Disinterested actions do not create a habit. At the same time they are performed with the greatest care and attention to detail. If you cannot exploit a particular action for subsequent pleasure or pain, that action may also be considered disinterested. The mere memory of such actions does not awaken any spirit of interest in you.

Interested actions have exactly the opposite effect. They bring other thoughts or feelings in their train, and they create all sorts of habits. If an action lacks in perfection in any way, or if its memory tends to create any kind of interest in you, you may be sure that such actions are also interested. If the action was prompted by the ego in the form of saṃskāras [habit-driven tendencies], or if the action was done to the satisfaction of the ego, such action is also interested.

Aum (Om)

1321. SIGNIFICANCE OF ‘AUM’

‘Aum’ has three distinct parts – ‘a’, ‘u’ and ‘m’ – representing the waking, dream and deep sleep state experiences. Examining each part separately, you find that each part is a twisted manifestation of pure sound which represents Ātmā: the ultimate Reality. It is the sound itself that appears twisted as ‘a’, ‘u’ and ‘m’. This sound is thus in the manifestation, between the three parts and beyond them.

Knowing that this pure sound represents Ātmā, the real ‘I’-principle, if you repeat or listen to the repetition of ‘aum’, you will get more and more firmly established in the Reality.

‘I shine in my real nature between mentations, as mentations, and beyond mentations.’

1195. PRAṆAVA-YŌGA

Of all paths of yōga, the Praṇava-yōga exercises [of meditation on the mantra ‘aum’] take one nearer to the ultimate Truth. But still one has to listen to the Truth, direct from the lips of the Guru, in order to visualize it.

Background

993. BACKGROUND

The apparent variety must prove the existence of something changeless as its background. Analysing the variety and reaching the so called background, its backgroundness also vanishes and you stand Absolute in your real nature, which was merely called the background in relation to the appearance.

291. WHAT IS IT THAT MANIFESTS?

Every perception, quality or attribute wants a permanent background for its existence. This background is the Reality itself. To denote the Reality, we give it a name. But still this background remains as that which transcends the senses and mind.

It cannot be called unknown. I say it is even more than known, not by the senses or mind but by Consciousness or the 'I'-principle. Thus the background of everything is the one Reality itself.

When you say that the unknown exists, it means that you have known it.

When the mind says that there is something transcending the mind, the mind itself transcends its realm and, standing as pure Consciousness, knows that something as Real.

143. FROM QUALITIES TO THE ABSOLUTE

Qualities cannot subsist independent of a permanent background. In the subjective realm, there is such a changeless, deathless, permanent principle as the background; and that is the 'I'-principle.

It is the presence of this permanent subjective background that prompts you to search for a corresponding permanent background behind the objects as well. Examining the objective world from the standpoint of this 'I'-principle, you come to such a permanent background behind objects also.

These two backgrounds meet, and are one in Reality.

604. BE UNQUALIFIED AND YOU ARE FREE.

What we call an object is the real background, which is unknown, and a heap of qualities superimposed upon that background, those qualities alone being known. The qualities themselves come and go, and do not go into the make of the object. So the object is in fact only that unknown and unqualified background. Thus, every object is only that unknown background.

There cannot be two unknowns either. Because, even in order to distinguish between the 'two', we must know them. So there is only one unknown, and that is yourself, and it is the background of yourself as well.

That is the only Reality, the *Ātmā*, the ever free. Know that, and be free.

1072. ANALOGY OF THE SELF TO THE CINEMA SCREEN

A changeless screen is needed for the manifestation of forms and their movements upon it. Likewise, a changeless background is needed for the manifestation of the changing universe upon it. This background is the real 'I'-principle. If you attempt to seize a person on the screen, it is really the screen alone that is seized and not the person. Likewise when any part of the universe is seized (perceived), it is the background Reality that is seized (i.e. it is Reality that shines).

A thought-form (or a subtle object) can never be of a gross object, and knowledge can never be of a thought-form; because they are all in three distinct and separate planes, where one plane can never transgress into another without losing its identity. Perception is always in terms of the instrument used and the object of perception is always in the perception itself. Similarly the object of knowledge is always in knowledge, and knowledge is not affected by the thing known. So there is knowledge and knowledge alone, without reference to the thing known. This is the ultimate Truth or *Ātmā*, your real nature.

Objects cannot exist independently of the senses, nor the sense perceptions independently of the mind, nor mentations independently of Consciousness. Therefore all is Consciousness or *Ātmā*. When a perception vanishes, the object perceived also vanishes and ceases to exist in any form whatsoever: like the objects of the dream that has passed. Therefore that object can never be connected with any subsequent thought-form.

A gross object is limited by both space and time.

A subtle object is limited by time alone.

Whenever you take a thought, the corresponding gross object can never come in, because of its space limitation. If it gives up its space limitation, it ceases to be a gross object and vice-versa. Therefore a gross object can never be thought of, and a thought-form can never become gross.

Strictly speaking, you cannot say that an object exists in space, nor can you say that a thought-form exists in time. Because space is itself an object and time is itself a thought-form. You can never perceive two objects or two thought-forms simultaneously; and unless two or more objects are simultaneously perceived, you can never say one thing exists in another.

Beauty

471. BEAUTY

Beauty is Truth itself and that is yourself. Every object as object is uncouth and ugly, being opposed to and separate from yourself, the *Ātmā*. But sometimes you project your own self upon some particular object and call it beautiful, however uncouth it otherwise is.

959. WHAT IS BEAUTY AND ITS RELATION TO OBJECTS?

Some see beauty in the mountain. A mountain is a concrete object of perception and beauty is the experience. You cannot separate the two. So you make the mountain the possessor of beauty and call it beautiful.

But the Truth is just the opposite. Beauty possesses the mountain – because beauty exists beyond the body, senses and mind and so can exist even without the mountain or any other object. That which transcends body, senses and mind is only the ‘I’-principle or Truth. So beauty is yourself.

686. HOW TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN BEAUTY AND THE BEAUTIFUL?

Beauty is in you, always as yourself the source of all; and the beautiful is now and here. Beauty is impersonal, and the beautiful is personal.

When you are attracted by the beauty in any object, you assume there is a background for that beauty. But, on examination, you find that no such support exists. So you see that there is only beauty and not the beautiful, and that beauty is your own Self. When you become unconscious of the beautiful, you come into contact with the beauty which is your own nature, and you say you enjoy it.

Non-ātmā is never an object for your consideration. All your attention should be directed to the Truth alone, and you will slowly get established there.

527. EXPERIENCE OF BEAUTY IN AND THROUGH A PAINTING

Beauty is something by which you are attracted without a cause. You are most attracted to your own self. Or in other words, your own nature is the only thing that can attract you.

So beauty is only an experience of one’s own nature, at the instance of an external object. It is then that you find beauty in that object.

The painter has had an experience of his own nature, as beauty which he has attempted to express in the painting. It is only such a work of art that usually arouses the sense of beauty in you, by touching your own real nature; because the real nature of the painter and yourself, both being beyond the mind, can only be the one Reality – Ātmā. As soon as you see the picture, your attention is turned to your own real nature. Then you experience your own nature, and call it ‘beauty’.

When you enjoy the beauty, you do not perceive the painting. The painting is perceived only once and immediately discarded, yielding to beauty.

724. WHAT IS BEAUTY, AND ITS RELATION TO THE BEAUTIFUL?

Beauty is inside, and is impersonal. But inside there is only the real Self, which is also impersonal. There cannot be two impersonals inside, because the impersonal is beyond duality; and therefore Beauty is the real Self.

When an object is anointed with the gild of your own Self, you like it and call it beautiful. Thus a child, however ugly by common consent, appears beautiful to its mother. You consider something beautiful, and others consider other things beautiful. But when the object is removed, the beauty stands alone and permanent. Therefore, if the beauty and the beautiful are separated by some means, beauty is left alone and

supreme. Everything beautiful is only a symbol directing you to the Self, as beauty in you.

528. HOW TO FACE BEAUTY

Whenever you experience beauty, harmony, higher logic etc. beyond the realm of the mind, try always to merge into it. Do not try to stand as its witness. It is absurd. The witness stand is below the realm of experience.

960. HOW DO THE JNYĀNIN AND THE IGNORANT MAN PERCEIVE BEAUTY?

1. The Jnyānin [Sage] sees the mountain as beauty, keeping beauty as beauty, sublime to the core.
2. The ignorant man sees beauty in the mountain, keeping the mountain as the mountain gross and inert.

The Sage sees the body as *Ātmā* and the ignorant man sees *body* as *Ātmā*, each emphasizing the part italicized, and ignoring the other part.

In the first case, beauty appears as the mountain, mountain-ness vanishes, and beauty alone remains.

In the second case, the mountain appears beautiful, mountain-ness is emphasized, and beauty comes and goes.

1103. BEAUTY, POETRY AND LOVE ARE THE SAME REALITY.

They are all, strictly speaking, synonyms of the Ultimate. If you perceive any of these without reference to the limited clothing in which they appear, you are perceiving the Reality itself. Such expressions of the Absolute are all spontaneous. Let us examine any one of them – e.g. beauty.

Beauty: It is often perceived in objects, such as the mountain, the sea, the sky, the river, the child, etc. But it has to be examined whether beauty is inherent in them. If so, everybody should perceive beauty in each of them, at all times. This is not so. I do not see beauty exactly where another sees it. Therefore beauty does not rest in the object perceived.

The only other party to the perception is one's own Self – divested of body, senses and mind which are also objects. So, beauty must necessarily be somewhere in the Self – the real subject. The objects serve only as mere symbols of or pointers to the subject.

The Self is the centre of beauty and changeless. The symbols are numerous, but the centre is only one, the inmost core of one's being. Beauty is the real nature of the Self and is unlimited. Beauty anoints with its own gild everything with which it comes into contact. When beauty is superimposed upon any object, it appears limited and unreal.

In the world, you see only the beautiful. The beautiful is an incongruous mixture of dead, inert matter and living beauty by its very nature unlimited. On seeing the beautiful, your effort should be to eliminate the material accretion from the beauty part. For this purpose, you may first conceive beauty to be resting inside yourself, and matter outside. Thus, when you discard gross matter along with the sense of the 'outside' and reach the so called 'inside', you find that the inside – being relative and the opposite

of outside – has also vanished with the outside. This leaves you alone as beauty – the Ultimate – beyond both outside and inside.

Poetry: When you come to real poetry, it transcends imagination and all ideation. That is the Reality.

Love: Love for a desired object is pleasure-giving. When you understand that it is not the object itself that is loved, but the happiness you suppose you derived from it, the love itself is the happiness, both being intrinsic in you. That is the Reality.

The ‘Reality’ is the ‘Absolute’, or what is ‘expressed’ and beyond all opposites.

Sat [existence], *cit* [consciousness] and *ānanda* [happiness] are the characteristics of the ultimate Reality. They are positive in form, but negative in sense. Life, thoughts and feelings are the first expressions of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* in the relative level. When you expand life you come to *sat*, when you expand thoughts you come to *cit*, and when you expand feelings you come to *ānanda*.

After listening to the Truth from the Guru, if you get beyond the body, senses and mind, you reach the background as *sat*, *cit* or *ānanda*. But you do not rest there. You are then taken on to the ultimate Truth still beyond, which is *Ātmā*, the real ‘I’.

Being

1277. WHAT IS BEING?

‘Being’ is being and is independent of its opposite, non-being. Non-being can exist only on being. But being can exist all alone.

299. BEING AND BECOMING

Being and becoming cannot go together. When you are striving to become the Truth, you are admittedly away from Truth; and when you are in the being or Truth, there is no need for any striving at all to become the Truth.

1069. WHAT IS KNOWING THE TRUTH WITH ONE’S WHOLE BEING?

To forget oneself completely in knowing the Truth is to know it with one’s whole being. Or in other words, it is knowing with the head and the heart combined in complete unison. When the heart is full, the tongue refuses to speak.

700. IT IS SAID THAT I AM A LOVING AND CONSCIOUS BEING. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Being: It is the generic form of all one’s experience, divorced of all qualities and distinctions. Then one comes to existence pure, which has no parts. This most expanded form comprehends all narrower denominations.

You admit that you are a loving being. Then the love goes into the being. It means that you are love itself, or that ‘being’ is love.

Body

627. ALL BODIES ARE MINE, OR NO BODY IS MINE.

When I am identifying myself with a body I call mine, all other bodies become alien to me as objects, the two together – my body and all other bodies – comprising the world. But when what I call ‘my body’ is seen as my object, distinct and separate from me, naturally I have no other option left except to extend the same perspective to the whole world and group my body also along with the world of objects.

Then all bodies become mine, or no body is mine at all. In either case, I stand as the real background of the whole world.

980. THE BODY

The body is the cell in which both the Sage and the ignorant man seem to sleep. The one feels free and the other bound.

svayamē tanne lākkappil sukhamāy~ viśramicciṭum
inspekṭar ennapōl dēha-pañjarē vārka saukhyamāy~

[As in a cell in his own lock-up,
an inspector of police
may rest content and be refreshed;
so also in this cage of body,
one who is in charge of it
may live refreshed, at one with that
which is contentment in itself.]

Shrī Ātmānanda [see also note 920]

34. IS THERE CONSCIOUSNESS IN DEAD MATTER?

The question is absurd. Dead matter or body does not exist in its own right, but exists only as the object of the perceiver. It is the perceiver who lights up the object with his consciousness. In other words, his consciousness appears limited in the form of the body, or the body is his consciousness itself. But Consciousness cannot be divided. So it is the whole Consciousness itself. Therefore the question is absurd, on the face of it.

When you know any object, you stand as Consciousness; and the object also cannot help appearing as Consciousness, since Consciousness cannot perceive anything but Consciousness. Or, in other words, when you rise to the level of Consciousness to examine the object, it is also transformed into Consciousness and its objectivity disappears.

So objects cannot exist as such, when you stand as Consciousness. While everything shines by the light of Consciousness, Consciousness does not require any other light, because it is self-luminous.

But at a lower level, it can be said that bodies abide in mind and mind in Consciousness. Nothing can limit Consciousness. A beginner in the spiritual path can, as a preliminary course, conceive that Consciousness is in him first. But when he becomes centred in Consciousness, the inside and outside vanish, so far as he is concerned; and he is lifted up to Consciousness pure.

It is in *me* that thoughts arise, and in thoughts that bodies arise. So, compared to the 'I'-principle, the gross world is evidently very, very small; and can never exist as such, along with the 'I'.

It is wrong to say that the world exists in thoughts, or that thoughts exist in the 'I'; because gross forms as such vanish when thoughts appear, and thoughts become Consciousness when they touch it. Nothing is inert or jaḍa; but all is Consciousness appearing as limited, and even that apparent limitation is Consciousness itself.

Thus Reality is seen existing here and now – in you, in and beyond all states. It only *appears* as if it is tagged on to something else like body, senses or mind. Eliminate that 'tagged-on' part and you remain in your self, the real centre. But when you try to eliminate the apparently unreal parts from Consciousness, you find that each of them is mysteriously transformed into that Consciousness itself, leaving nothing to be eliminated. This method takes you direct to the natural state [see page 199].

Bondage and liberation

1344. BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

Bondage is identification with body, senses and mind.

Liberation is the giving up of that identification, by visualizing what you are, in the regular order.

645. WHAT ARE BONDAGE AND LIBERATION?

When personality comes into the impersonal, it is *bondage*.

When personality merges in the impersonal, it is *liberation*.

But when it is established – so far as you are concerned – that there can be nothing other than the impersonal, it is immaterial whether you stand as the personal or as the impersonal.

699. WHAT ARE SLAVERY AND FREEDOM?

The ordinary man is a slave to the body, senses and mind. This slavery is dissolved only in the alchemy of your love for the free (the Guru or freedom).

'*Freedom*' is the surrender of slavery at the feet of the Guru (the Absolute).

Usually it is slavery or bondage that craves for freedom, but often it is found unwilling to shake off bondage itself when freedom comes.

Incessant thought of bondage is not the way to transcend it. So turn your attention to real freedom or the Absolute and the bondage dies.

391. WHAT IS THE TEST OF THE 'FREE' AND THE 'BOUND'?

If, when you think of Consciousness, the 'I'-thought comes in spontaneously and vice versa, then you are free.

And if, when you think of the body, the 'I'-thought comes in spontaneously and vice versa, then you are bound.

1032. WHAT BINDS ME?

The world of forms is never the cause of bondage. It is the world of names alone that binds you.

A perception, left to itself, dies out naturally; but if you give a name to it, the perception becomes an idea. Then it becomes capable of being remembered, and only then does it begin to bind you.

347. WHAT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT BONDAGE?

It is not objects, but only your own thoughts and feelings that appear to bind you. But thoughts and feelings can never bind you unless the ego is present to claim them as its own.

At the moment when thoughts and feelings occur, the ego is not present. The ego comes only after thoughts and feelings have disappeared. Then the ego alone is present, and no thoughts or feelings.

Therefore, thoughts or feelings and the ego can never exist simultaneously; and so you transcend bondage. Hence, there never has been any bondage, at any time.

395. HOW IS THE MIND THE CAUSE OF BOTH BONDAGE AND LIBERATION?

mana ēva manuṣyāṇāṁ kāraṇaṁ bandha-mōkṣayōḥ
bandhāya viṣayāsaktam, muktyai nirviṣayaṁ smṛtam

[It is just mind that is the cause
of bondage, and of liberation
also, in our human lives.
In bondage, mind is tied to objects.
But, in freedom, mind recalls
that it is truly objectless.]

Maitrāyaṇi (Maitrī) Upaniṣhad, 6.34.11

The mind has two kinds of activities. One, being extroverted, perceives objects. And the other, being introverted, perceives the real Self or Ātmā.

When the mind is introverted, it comes into touch with the absolute Self, and becomes surcharged with the aroma of Ātmā. In that state, whatever comes out of that apparent mind will be perfect in all its aspects. It comes spontaneously and without a stop. There is no apparent ego to claim any right over any of those statements. Every word or sentence written or spoken by a Sage is of this nature, each being a mantra in itself. It helps to bring you nearer the Truth.

The rest is for you to experience.

742. THE MYTH OF BONDAGE AND LIBERATION

I know myself (I know I am). This is the only fact that does not want a proof.

Everything has to be reduced to knowledge before I can know it, or absorb it into me as knowledge. Because I am knowledge myself. Therefore, I can know nothing other than myself.

Bondage comes in when I do not know myself. This position is absurd. Therefore there is no bondage, and no liberation either. Knowing this, be free, and be at Peace.

920. WHAT IS IT THAT REALLY BINDS ME?

It is not the outside that binds you, but it is something inside. It is only your ignorance of what you are and your identification with the wrong thing (body, senses and mind) that really binds you.

svayame tanne lākkappil sukhamāỹ viśramicciṭum
inspekṭaṛ ennapōl dēha-pañjarē vārka saukhyamāỹ

Shrī Ātmānanda [see also note 980]

The Inspector of police and the thief may be sleeping or resting in similar and adjacent cells in the police lockup. The Inspector does not feel bound, but the thief does. Thus the liberated, though in apparent bondage, is free beyond doubt.

977. WHAT IS BONDAGE AND HOW TO BE LIBERATED?

Diversity is bondage and Non-duality is liberation.

When you, yourself, stand as the many, you cannot help seeing many outside. But when you stand as the only *one*, you can never see the many. The many in you are body, senses and mind. Stand as the one subject in yourself, and the world will also stand reduced to the one Reality. This is liberation.

1283. THE COURSE OF LIBERATION IN SHORT

The course of liberation, or the solution of the world, consists of only three simple steps.

1. Malady: *The wrong identification* with body, senses and mind, by which man appears to be bound and becomes miserable.
2. Remedy: *Separation*. Body, senses and mind are shown to be distinct and separate from the real Self, which stands as the perpetual knower or witness.
3. Recovery: *Right identification*. Standing as that witness, you stand identified with the being, and the witnessed disappears. Then the witness ceases to be witness, but stands as the ultimate Reality – Consciousness.

640. THE REAL BONDAGE

Sense objects tie you down to the world. But when you come into contact with a Sage, you get tied down to the Ultimate.

You can be relieved from the former bondage no doubt. But there is no escape from the latter.

Books

1204. AUTHORSHIP AND ADVERTISEMENT

Ancient Indian works of merit, particularly spiritual ones, were all *apauruṣhēya* (of undisclosed authorship), for example many of the Upaniṣhads.

Pauruṣhēya, the habit of advertizing the authorship in order to enhance the sale of the book, is a degenerate modern tendency of the inflated ego.

1016. Dr. H. and his wife asked: 'WHAT BOOKS ON PHILOSOPHY SHALL WE READ'?

Books will not help you much to understand the Truth. Sometimes they may even do you much harm. Suppose you read the *Bhagavad-gītā*, which is recognized as one of a basic tripod of Hindu scriptures. Your only help is the existing commentaries. You do not know whether a particular commentator was a man who had realized the Truth or not. If he had not, he will misguide you. You can read only your own sense in a book, be it the original or a commentary.

A Sage alone can show you the Truth. But after understanding the Truth from the Sage, you may read only the few books he suggests, to keep you in the groove he has chalked out. After some time, when you are established in the Truth yourself, you may read any book, good or bad.

Every book has some nuggets of Truth in it. You will yourself be able to pick these out and throw away the dross. If nothing in the book attracts you, accept it for its existence value and thus find it an expression of the Ultimate.

982. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LISTENING TO THE WORDS OF THE SAGE AND READING THE SAGE'S WRITINGS?

When you read the works of a Sage you read your own sense into his words. You try to illumine the writings of the Sage with the distorting light of your puny intellect, and you fail miserably. But, on listening to the Sage, because the Sage himself gives the full blaze of his light of pure Consciousness to the talk, his words are understood by you in the *correctest* manner, in spite of all your resistance.

1293. HOW FAR CAN THE BOOK OF A SAGE HELP AN ASPIRANT?

There is as much difference between a Sage and his book as between yourself and your image in a mirror. The image is devoid of the life principle which is the very substance of the original. The image is a reflection of the exterior alone and has no interior.

Similarly, the book or language can convey only the mere exterior of Truth. But Truth has no distinctions such as exterior and interior. Therefore nobody can get at the essence of Truth through books or through language alone. A book, as such, is dead and inert, and cannot answer a new question arising from the one dealt with in the book. Whenever you read a book, you read something of your own sense in it. This, however, you cannot do when you read the books of your Guru.

Language is limited, but the Guru is unlimited. If anybody considers the Guru to be limited, by a particular body or mind, he is wrong and that conception is not the real Guru. But if body and mind cease to have their character as such, they are also the Guru.

1341. WHY CAN'T ONE OBTAIN TRUTH FROM THE BOOKS OF A SAGE?

This can be answered in many ways:

1. Who asks the question? Of course the ego-mind. The mind can understand only in terms of the mind. The Truth transcends the mind and so cannot be understood in terms of the mind. You read books and understand them only at the mental level. Therefore Truth cannot be understood from books.
2. Truth cannot be understood from anything other than the Truth. Because everything other than the Truth is untruth. Thus book, as such, is also an untruth; and anything understood from it, by the mind, is also untruth.
3. The question itself is the product of ignorance. The question presupposes that Truth can be obtained from somewhere else, as an object of the mind. But the fact about Truth is that it is the Self. You are that always, and the question of obtaining it is wrong and does not legitimately arise. It is the activities of the body, senses and mind that obstruct your visualizing the Truth, your real nature.

Then you might ask how does the Guru help you. Truth being your real nature, it has not to be obtained from elsewhere, but the obstacles on the path have to be removed; and then the Truth, being self-luminous, shines in its own glory. This is actually what the Guru does.

If a child asks where its body is, no book can teach it where it is. The nurse has only to remove the child's clothes and nothing else has to be done to show the child its own body. Similarly, the Guru creates the conditions wherein your real nature of Truth shines in all its glory, and the mind with all its questions disappears for ever.

Causal ignorance

338. WHERE DID THIS MISUNDERSTANDING START?

The principle involved in the question is causality. Causality is only a synonym for diversity.

The fundamental misunderstanding – from which every other misunderstanding originates – is the thought that 'I am the body.' This misunderstanding, which is merely a thought form, can never exist in the physical plane. It exists only in the mental plane. In that plane the body cannot exist. Therefore the cause and effect can neither co-exist nor exist in different planes.

Beyond the mind there is no diversity at all. But you are searching for the cause of the misunderstanding in the plane beyond. Or in other words you are trying to establish diversity in the plane beyond, where there is no diversity. Thus if you continue to enquire into the cause of 'avidyā' [false knowledge], you would still be entangled within the boundaries of 'avidyā' itself.

923. WHY WAS THE ARTIFICIAL STATE OF NIRVIKALPA SAMĀDHI INVENTED?

The pioneers of the traditional (cosmological) jnyāna path understood and interpreted the spontaneous state of deep sleep as the seat of causal ignorance. It was with a view to avoid or remove this ignorance by human effort that the *nirvikalpa samādhi* was invented. They succeeded in their goal only partially; because when they came out of the samādhi state, the shroud of ignorance engrossed them once again. So a permanent solution had to be sought again.

[See glossary at end, under ‘nirvikalpa’ and ‘samādhi’.]

564. THE CAUSAL BODY OF IGNORANCE

The causal body of ignorance [the unmanifested potentiality of the ‘unconscious’] cannot exist. Ignorance is the absence of everything.

When you say there is the absence of a cow here, it only means that it is not present here to the fleshy organ, but is present only to the subtle organ of the mind. The absence of anything is dependent directly upon the presence of that thing.

Thus the negative of anything cannot exist by itself, without at least an unconscious reference to the positive. So the causal body of ignorance is a misnomer.

susūptya-ēka-siddhaḥ ... śivaḥ kēvalō ’ham

[I am that unmixed absolute,
just that one perfect happiness,
attained in depth of dreamless sleep.]

Shrī Shankara, Dasha-shlokī, 1

259. HOW TO PROVE THAT THERE IS NO IGNORANCE IN DEEP SLEEP?

After waking from deep sleep, we make two spontaneous assertions:

1. ‘I was at peace’; and
2. ‘I did not know anything.’

These two statements refer to the very same experience, one positively and the other negatively; and therefore they cannot be different. The second is, in fact, only a paraphrase of the first. The second statement means only that ‘I did not know anything other than the positive experience of deep peace in deep sleep.’ So, there was no causal body present there at all. [There was no body of unconscious potentiality, implying an unmanifest world.] This proves not the existence of ajnyāna [unconsciousness], but rather its non-existence, in deep sleep.

Another approach: That which precedes is said to be the cause, and that which succeeds the effect. Here, the time element is essential to make this distinction possible, and to establish causality. But standards of time differ fundamentally in the waking state and in the dream state; and in deep sleep, time does not exist at all. Where there is no conception of time, neither causality nor a causal body can exist. For this reason also, there is no ignorance in deep sleep but only deep peace, undisturbed by any other experience.

Understanding deep sleep correctly in this way, you find the ‘I’-principle there, in its real nature. This ‘I’-principle shines incessantly, through all states. So when you

say you wake up from deep sleep, it is wrong; for your deep sleep, as your real nature, continues without a break. That is to say, you never come out of the 'I'-principle.

All the worlds created by you in the waking and dream states are withdrawn into you in deep sleep. The world as such does not exist in deep sleep, but only as the pure 'I'-principle.

153. WHAT IS IGNORANCE?

It is said to be the source of the world. The usual example taken to illustrate this is the illusion of the serpent in the rope. Here, the ignorance of the rope, coming just between the rope and the serpent, is said to be the cause of the serpent. So, when the serpent disappears, it is the ignorance that should naturally remain over.

But when you bring in a light and examine the serpent, it disappears altogether; and in its place, instead of the ignorance supposed to be its cause, you see only the rope in its nakedness, beyond all doubt.

So this ignorance, which never had any existence independently of the serpent, is also non-existent. Hence the ignorance is the object perceived itself, or ignorance means only *wrong notion*. The world is only a distorted vision: 'of the Self, by the self'.

We should accept only that which agrees with our higher reason and reject all the rest. In the illustration, we do not first see the rope in its entirety, but only its existence. That is to say the 'this' alone of the rope is seen. So in the two experiences – 'This is a rope' and 'This is a serpent' – it is upon the 'this' that the serpent is superimposed. So when the serpent disappears, naturally the 'this' alone, which is the real part of the perception, remains over.

Assuming that the 'this' remains, you must not leave the 'this' vague, as it is likely to give rise to other superimpositions. It should be made clear, beyond any possibility of a mistake, and seen as Consciousness itself.

The serpent of superimposition is not likely to be removed until you get a clear perception of the rope. When the serpent is removed, the rope alone shines.

Causality

777. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF THE WORLD, IF ANY?

A cause implies that without which the result cannot appear at all. For example, the serpent cannot appear if the rope is not there already. But we know that the rope never undergoes any change. Similarly, the world can never appear if Ātmā is not behind it, without undergoing any change. Therefore, if any cause is to be posited for the world, the most correct answer would be '*Atma it self*'.

Thus, in fact, there is no creation; and if creation is taken for granted, Ātmā is the only cause of it. But causality can never exist in Ātmā.

1149. CAUSALITY IS A MISNOMER.

The thief comes in surreptitiously, whenever you ask a question applying the principle of causal relationship.

Causality is the product of the waking state. Nay, it is the waking state itself. It can never be successfully answered from the waking state, where alone the law of causality obtains. To answer the question, one must get beyond the waking state, to the dream or mental state. Then causality and the question both disappear, as mere illusion. One who raises such a question is pinned to the waking state.

It may pertinently be asked, is there not causality in the dream state? *No*. Certainly not. Because, what we call the dream state is a full-fledged waking state when it is experienced, and it is called a dream state only when it is past. Then causality, which appeared quite reasonable when the so called dream was in progress, becomes unreal. This amounts to admitting that causality is not real in the dream state.

There is no connection between objects themselves in the waking state. Causality is only an object, just like any other object; and the senses also are only objects, just like others. Therefore you cannot establish causal relationship, between any two objects of the waking state.

1416. CAN CAUSALITY FUNCTION UNDER ANY CONDITION?

No. Not even in the same order of time, much less when the order of time also changes. For example, the sun sets and darkness comes. Can the preceding sunshine be said to be the cause of darkness, or vice versa? No. Both are absurd. Therefore, causal relationship cannot be established between such changing states, which have no connection whatsoever between them.

1433. HOW DOES CAUSALITY FUNCTION?

Answer: Causality is a misnomer, and it never functions. This is said from the highest level.

Viewing it from a lower plane: When one object is supposed to produce another, the former is said to be the cause and the latter the effect. But the relationship between cause and effect has to be examined more closely, though from the standpoint of the waking state. There can be only two possible positions, if we adopt this approach.

1. That the cause and effect are entirely different one from the other.
2. That they are not different.

If we accept the first position, causality cannot function, because a cause cannot produce an entirely different effect. And if they are not different, as in the second position, then causality has no meaning. Therefore, in either case, causality is a misnomer.

1215. CAUSALITY AND ITS ULTIMATE GOAL

The urge to search for a cause shows that you are dissatisfied with the effect and that you consider the cause to be more real. Therefore everything that comes under the category of effect is considered to be relatively unreal, and the ultimate cause or

source is alone considered real. So you negate the effect and seek the real source, in the name of causality. Therefore, the enquiry into cause is also an indirect search for the ultimate Truth.

Change and changelessness

408. WHAT IS THE MOST CONCRETE OF ALL THINGS?

Concrete literally means real or changeless. Name and form are constantly changing; and their background Ātmā alone is real. Body, senses and mind are changing; and the 'I'-principle alone is changeless or real, through all states and times.

In that sense, the 'I'-principle is the only concrete thing, and all else is but illusion.

492. WHAT IS THE WITNESS?

The witness is that which is changeless – the 'I' – amongst changes.

Changes cannot appear without the changeless. But the changeless exists independent of all changes.

Changes can take place only in the changeless. But changes when examined are found to be nothing but the changeless.

All changes are in the changeless. But the changeless itself never changes.

692. I AM NOT CHANGELESS. WHY?

I perceive changes. To make this possible, I must have been the changeless background perceiving the changes.

But changelessness only means the absence of change. They are opposites. A taint of the change lingers in the very conception of changelessness. So I must transcend changelessness also, in order to be in my real nature.

Therefore, the path to the Ultimate lies from the changing, through the changeless, to the beyond.

Child in knowledge

277. WHAT IS SECOND CHILDHOOD?

You are first born into this world as a child in ignorance. Subsequently, on reaching maturity, you hear the Truth from your Guru and are liberated. Then you become a *child in knowledge*, never to change.

So only a Sage can really be said to have a second childhood.

434. WHO IS THE REAL CHILD?

The worldly child, who is a child in ignorance, and the Sage, who is a child in knowledge, are both unattached to objects. The child has not acquired the capacity to think, and the Sage has gone beyond the capacity to think. But the child leaves a slight samskāra [habituation] behind after every activity, while the Sage leaves nothing behind.

Therefore, the Sage alone is the real child.

Connection

1328. THERE IS CONNECTION EVEN IN SEPARATENESS.

Even concerning the so called phenomenal knowledge, it is knowledge in identity. We say A and B are there, without any apparent relationship between them, except the recognition of the existence of each other. So there is this connection established between consciousness and existence. Thus, knowledge bridges the gulf of separateness.

1444. HOW IS LIFE A CONNECTED WHOLE?

Life consists of independent and disconnected appearances: of actions, perceptions and mentations upon Ātmā [Self], the changeless background. Thus, it is 'Ātmā' that keeps the continuity of phenomenal life.

Consciousness

1164. WHAT IS THE PROOF OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

That very question is the proof. That question is lit up by Consciousness.

The outer light (lighting up objects outside) and the inner light of Consciousness have something in common in their characteristics. Both are imperceptible to the sense organ or the mind. The existence of the outer light is affirmed by the fact that objects are manifested in its presence. Similarly, the light of Consciousness is proved by the fact that objects are lit up (or known) in its presence.

849. WHAT ARE THE FUNCTIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

Like fire, it has two functions:

1. It illumines objects at a distance.
2. It destroys them on contact.

744. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU THINK OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

All thought of Consciousness annihilates thought, like a moth in the fire.

621. CONSCIOUSNESS RECOMMENDED AS THE BEST OF THE THREE MEDIUMS FOR VISUALIZING THE ULTIMATE. WHY?

Consciousness alone tells you that Existence and Happiness are both implied in Consciousness; and so the Truth, visualized through Consciousness, comprehends the Existence and Happiness aspects as well.

But it could be said that Existence and Happiness also might say the same about the other two. In that case, Existence and Happiness are indenting upon the services of Consciousness even to say so. They themselves are established only by the help of Consciousness. Otherwise, Existence and Happiness would never have been noted at all.

644. FALLACY OF SUB-CONSCIOUS AND SUPER-CONSCIOUS STATES

The sub-conscious state: When the mind involuntarily and without any effort goes into a state where the mind dies, it is called a sub-conscious state – e.g. deep sleep.

Super-conscious state: When, as a result of an active effort of the mind, the objects gross as well as subtle vanish and you are thrown into a state where the mind becomes still, it is called the super-conscious state or samādhi.

But when you direct your attention to the Consciousness aspect of any activity, in any state, you transcend the mind and reach the Ultimate.

The taint of the ‘sub-’ and ‘super-’ consciousnesses lies in the samskāra [habituated feeling] that they are the cause of some other results, as ignorance is supposed to be the cause of the world.

Even when Consciousness appears limited to any object, know for certain that it is not limited. This knowledge takes you to the natural state [see page 199].

Consciousness can never be ‘sub’ or ‘super’. It is always Absolute.

751. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE SUBDIVIDING OR GRADING OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

Usually, Consciousness is divided into the sub-conscious, conscious and super-conscious – all being based upon Consciousness. Pure Consciousness is equally present in all these three states. It is from the standpoint of Consciousness itself, and not from the standpoint of him who is conscious, that these different states are to be considered.

The services of pure Consciousness have to be indented upon, to connect the three states; and in that light there is no difference between these states. You can compare the states only by standing outside them, as their perceiver. The perceiver can never be the perceived. The perceiver is pure, impersonal Consciousness alone. It is *Consciousness* and not ‘conscious’.

All the three are expressions of Consciousness, and all the three are ‘sub’ or inferior from the position of Consciousness. What you call ‘super’ from the mental level in

the waking state is 'sub' from the level of pure Consciousness. So they are only empty words.

387. HOW TO PROVE 'ALL IS CONSCIOUSNESS'?

From 'seeing a form', if either seeing or form is separated, then both vanish simultaneously, because neither can exist independently of the other. Therefore both are one, but not as either. Then what is it? When form and seeing disappear, Consciousness alone remains over; and that is the only reality behind it.

Thus everything is permanent as the background, and not as the expression.

1008. ARE MIND AND SENSES PRESENT IN CONSCIOUSNESS?

'Some people say that mind and senses are not present in Consciousness. That position is wrong. They are present in Consciousness. Are you not aware of the existence of mind and senses?'

'Yes, of course.'

'So are they not in your awareness which is pure Consciousness?'

'Yes.'

1159. CONSCIOUSNESS ALONE, PERCEIVED OBJECTIVELY AS WELL AS SUBJECTIVELY

1. Light by itself is not perceptible to the naked eye. You perceive light only when it is temporarily obstructed by an object. This perception of light you wrongly call the object. This is a phenomenon usually misunderstood; and the fallacy is, on the face of it, obvious.

Similarly, pure Consciousness is not perceivable, as is evident in deep sleep. But when it is confined or limited to a particular object, it seems to become perceptible. Even then, it is not the object but it is Consciousness alone that is perceived. Therefore, nobody has ever seen or perceived an object, but only light or Consciousness.

2. Take hold of an object. You find the object cannot appear without the help of Consciousness. Take hold of Consciousness that is in the object. This is possible only with the help of a Guru. Then you reach pure Consciousness objectively. Take hold of Consciousness in the senses or mind in the same manner and you reach pure Consciousness, your real nature, subjectively. Both being one, you stand in *Advaita* [Non-duality].

If you achieve that degree of identification with the light of knowledge as you had with body in the waking state, there is nothing more to be achieved. Then the impersonal becomes stronger than the personal. The *sādhaka* [aspirant] who stands as the personal does the *sādhana* [spiritual work] of acting the part of the impersonal.

'*I know I am.*' In this, the 'am'-ness does not belong either to the senses or to the mind. This is intrinsic. This is the nature of self-luminosity.

1394. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF EMPHASIZING CONSCIOUSNESS IN IDEAS OR OBJECTS?

Consciousness is absolute and is only one.

Consciousness + something = idea.

Emphasizing Consciousness means looking at the idea from the standpoint of Consciousness.

When Consciousness begins to look at the idea, Consciousness being only one and that being already in the idea as its essence, that Consciousness has to stand *out* of the idea. Then, the idea being divested of its essence ‘Consciousness’, the idea becomes extinct.

Consciousness is the essence of both the idea and the object. If Consciousness stands as the idea, the object disappears. If Consciousness stands as Consciousness itself, the idea also disappears. Consider the illustration of the figure in the rock.

It can well be said from one standpoint that *Consciousness by itself never illumines ideas or objects, but only kills them*. Let us apply this process in our daily life. You say in the waking state that you remember your past dream. But what exactly is it that you remember? You remember only the ‘seeing’ of objects in the dream. What else was there in the dream? Nothing. All that appeared as gross object in dream was nothing other than the ‘seeing’ itself. This fact needs no further proof, when you wake up. This is typical of every so called ‘waking’ experience also.

Therefore, it is only ‘seeing’ that appears as object; and similarly, it is Consciousness that appears as ‘seeing’ in both the states.

1445. WE GENERALLY SAY ‘I AM HAPPY’ AND ‘I AM CONSCIOUS.’ IS IT ULTIMATELY TRUE?

No. It is only at the moment when you are happy that you are aware of the fact that you are happy. That knowledge is in identity, where ‘knowing it’ is ‘being it’.

But when you say that the happiness is past, the subject-object relationship sets in. It is this kind of knowledge that people want. Because the ordinary man stands as the empirical subject and is incapable of thinking of anything beyond. Thus, when you say you are happy, you are really *not* happy.

Similarly, when you know *Ātmā* [Self], you stand as *Ātmā* or you *are* *Ātmā*. But when you say so, your stand changes and you cease to identify yourself with *Ātmā*. Still, *Ātmā*, as self-awareness, stands as the background of even the saying of this.

Thus, self-awareness is the ground of awareness of objects. Even when objects vanish, Awareness continues. In all the three states, Awareness is the only principle that does not change or die out. And Awareness is indivisible. Therefore, it is this self-awareness itself that appears as – or is the ground of – awareness of objects.

840. WHY IS CONSCIOUSNESS INVISIBLE?

The nature of Consciousness is ‘experience’ itself. The ‘I’-principle is the only experience. The tests of experience are permanence and self-luminosity. Experience can never be experienced. It is ‘*anubhava-mātrā-’tmā*’ [‘that Self which is experience alone’].

To become visible, it must stand as an object of perception, which Consciousness can never do. To know, to enjoy, and to become it are all functions of the ego. But 'to be it' is alone yours. *You were and are that always.*

Consciousness and Peace

1101. CONSCIOUSNESS AND PEACE ARE ONE AND THE SAME.

You hope to achieve happiness by the attainment of a particular object. Suppose somebody drops that object into your room when you are asleep. You do not get the desired happiness. But you get it immediately you know that you have attained the object desired. So it is the knowledge – though apparently limited by the object – that gives you limited happiness.

In the knowledge, the object known is absent. Therefore, the known must disappear, even before limited peace can be attained.

It is only the reference to the object that limits the experience of Peace. The same result arrived at without a reference to any object (that is by rising above body, senses and mind) is the ultimate Peace. The known, as known, must disappear for the ultimate Peace to dawn. When the known – as known – disappears, it is knowledge pure or Consciousness that remains over. Thus Consciousness and Peace are one and the same, being intrinsic in you.

837. WHAT IS THE MINIMUM THAT AN ORDINARY MAN HAS TO DO TO ATTAIN PEACE?

Shrī Aṣṭāvakra answers this question in the verse:

yadi dēhaṁ pṛthak-kṛtya citi viśrāmya tiṣṭhasi .
adhunai 'va sukhī śāntō bandha-muktō bhaviṣyasi ..

Aṣṭāvakra-samhitā, 1.4

This means: 'Throw away your body first in idea and take rest in pure Consciousness. You shall at once be free and at Peace.'

When you stand as body, you are a *jīva*. When you stand as mind, you are *God*.

When you stand as Truth, beyond both body and mind, you are the *Absolute*.

How to throw away the body? By simply becoming aware of it.

1042. WHERE IS CONSCIOUSNESS IN GREATER EVIDENCE?

Consciousness is in greater evidence in the absence of the object than in the presence of the same.

Suppose an empty space is shown to you for you to sit down. At once you recognize the absence of a seat there and refuse to sit. But in the case of the actual chair pointed out, no active thought is called for and you safely ignore the part played by Consciousness. Relatively speaking, the play of Consciousness is more evident in the former than in the latter.

1335. WHAT DO I WANT AND HOW TO SECURE IT?

You want to know only something which is existing. If you want satisfaction in the mental level from something which leans towards virtue, you become religious-minded and get momentary satisfaction. But if you want to know that which really exists, by the knowing alone you get something called 'Peace', which is the source of all happiness. It is of the nature of knowledge and existence. If you seek it, you limit it and miss it. If you want to know without any purpose, you spontaneously get Peace.

If you lose yourself in any knowledge, be it apparently limited, you get to Peace. Therefore, 'Lose yourself, lose yourself' in any kind of knowledge. That is all that you have to accomplish, and you get to Peace instantaneously.

Satisfaction is personal or private, and creates the many.

Truth is impersonal or public, and destroys diversity.

178. CONSCIOUSNESS INDISPENSABLE TO ANY FORM OF APPROACH TO THE REALITY

The Absolute can be attained through the happiness aspect of Reality – or love. But in order to analyse love and to prove its identity with Peace, the service of consciousness is indispensable. Thus, by following the path of Consciousness alone can you be established in Peace.

Creation

160. CREATION

Creation is described in the shāstras [texts] in two ways: (1) Creation in a regular order (krama-sṛiṣṭi), and (2) Simultaneous creation (yugapat-sṛiṣṭi).

1. The *creation happening in a regular order* (krama-sṛiṣṭi) represents the cosmological view through ajnyāna, māyā, the five subtle elements (panca-mahābhūtas) etc., down to the gross world.

This is intended for all aspirants who are not uttamādhikāris (ripe souls).

2. By *simultaneous creation* (yugapat-sṛiṣṭi) is meant the creation of the perceiver, perception and perceived at the same instant the perception takes place. And they also cease simultaneously, all being transformed into pure Knowledge.

Therefore it is said that objects do not exist except when known (viṣayaññakṛt~ ajñāta sattayilla). This method is intended for higher adhikāris alone. Here, no faith of any kind is called for, and you rely on your direct experiences alone.

The 'form' is disposed of as nothing different from 'seeing'. Thus I transcend the form as seen by me, and my 'seeing' immediately becomes pure seeing without a personal see-er. Thus I become one with Consciousness or the Reality.

274. HOW DOES THE WORLD COME INTO EXISTENCE?

In the creation of the world, it is ideas that get solidified into the gross world. Immediately, it assumes independent reality and begins to react upon the mind itself.

537. MIND AND CREATION

The creation of the world is not a fiat of the will, but is an unconscious creation. The will is only a function of the generic mind, functioning in the created world. If it were created by the fiat of the will, the many things which give you so much pain would never have been created at all.

651. PLANES, CREATION AND THE TRUTH

The gross and subtle planes are distinct and separate, the one from the other. The gross cannot be perceived from the plane of the subtle, nor the subtle from the plane of the gross. We see both from beyond both. Both of them are the expressions of their real background.

There is a lot of confusion about creation itself. The subject and objects of a state are not created individually. They come to light simultaneously and also vanish simultaneously. Look at the dreamer and the dream. When the dreamer disappears, nothing of the dream remains over. Similarly, the mind and the world are also simultaneous creations, if creation is conceded in any sense.

The real solution lies in adopting the right perspective, by examining the content of any one activity as representative of the whole universe. Such an examination proves that the content of every activity and therefore of the world is nothing but pure Consciousness.

But this is possible only when one has visualized one's own real nature to be that pure Consciousness and Peace (under instructions from a Kāraṇa-guru). When one's own centre is thus established in the 'I', the illusion of the world appears simply frivolous. You continue to see the mirage, knowing that it is a mirage.

Consciousness appears limited only because we look through the mind, which is itself limited.

859. CREATION AND DISSOLUTION OF THE WORLD

Creation:

1. Consciousness objectified is thought, and
2. Thought objectified is the gross world.

The reverse process is *dissolution*:

1. Gross world subjectified is thought, and
2. Thought subjectified is Consciousness.

Death

1427. DEATH – WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE?

Death is a misnomer. Death may be examined from the standpoint of life. Life, as such, knows no death. Therefore, from life's own standpoint, death is a misnomer.

To know that there is no death, you have only to refer to the so called dream state, in which you see your own death or that of a relative. But on waking up, you know

that the dream persons and their death were both illusions. It is in the same way that we should view death in the waking state.

340. WHO DIES?

The body and the life principle are the only two fundamental entities involved in the change called death.

Of these two, the 'body' has always been dead and inert matter, and as such cannot die again. The life principle is always changeless, and so it can also never die.

793. HOW AM I DEATHLESS?

Death takes place in time. Time is made up of the past, present and future. These do not affect the 'I'-principle in any way. Therefore, from one standpoint, it may be said to be an eternal present for the 'I'-principle.

Strictly speaking, even this is wrong. Because time exists only in connection with the apparent 'I'. The activities of the apparent 'I' may be divided into five classes: actions, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and knowing. Which of these five functions do you prefer to be?

If you choose any one of the first four, you will automatically die after every such function. But, experience is that you do not so die. Therefore you must be the last one – the knower – which alone continues through all activities and never dies.

You know even death. Therefore you transcend death as well.

659. HOW A BOY OF FIVE WAS ENLIGHTENED ABOUT DEATH. AND ABOUT GOD.

Ānanda, a boy of five, was incessantly tormented by thoughts and nightmares about death, which is supposed to be inevitable.

Gurunāthan: Were you not a small baby some years ago?

Boy: Yes. Yes.

G: Where is it now?

B: It is gone.

G: Where? Can you bring it back?

B: No. No. It is impossible.

G: So it is dead. Is it not?

B: No. But I am here.

G: I mean the baby you were once. It is gone for ever and will never be able to come back. That is what I mean by death. Did you cry when the baby was gone?

B: No. But till now I did not know it.

G: Similarly this boy will also die and you will be a youth. Then the youth also will die and you will become an old man. All these deaths one after the other you take pleasantly, don't you?

B: Yes, of course.

G: Then why do you cry and make noise when the old man dies? Is it also not like the many deaths you already had?

B: Yes. If this is the meaning of death, I shall not cry or be afraid of it any longer.

G: Why were you not sorry when the baby in you died? Because you knew that the baby alone dies and that you do not die. Similarly, it is only the old man in you that will die. You know that you will never die. You know your many deaths from your babyhood onwards. Similarly, you are the knower of the death of your old age also.

B: Yes! Yes! (With a luminous face.) Now I understand. I shall never more be afraid of death.

G: Now you are deathless, the Eternal. That is God. Do you follow me?

B: Yes, Gurunāthan. And the boy prostrated with tears dripping down on Gurunāthan's feet.

737. WHAT ARE BIRTH AND DEATH?

'Nothing' can never be the source of 'something' – 'I'. If 'I' am born out of 'something', that 'something' is still with me. So I was never born, and so there is no death for me or for anybody.

You can cease to fear death only by the strength of your conviction of a solid and permanent something within you.

530. DEATH

Death is separation of the gross body from the subtle body, or of the mind from the body. Therefore 'you', as a *jīva*, are dying every moment.

820. IS DEATH LIBERATION?

Not always. Death is liberation if it is ultimate death, that is the death of everything objective including even *samskāras* [habit-driven inclinations]. But ordinary death is only partial, being the death of the gross body alone. It is no more than a change and does not deserve the name of death.

Real death is a shift of your centre from the ego to the witness.

753. CAN I DIE GLADLY?

Of course you can! What is the object of your life? Happiness. If you can get it even now and here, would you not die gladly? Not by ending this life, but by knowing death. That is how all *Jnyānins* [Sages] die. Therefore, know yourself and transcend death.

Deep sleep

1221. I AM MYSELF ALONE AS PURE CONSCIOUSNESS, IN DEEP SLEEP.

I, by my mere presence, illuminate all objects. When the objects are removed, what can I be but light itself?

When I am myself the sun, how can darkness approach me? I am myself alone, as Consciousness and Peace, in deep sleep. As such, how can I address deep sleep except as 'I'?

Since there is no time in deep sleep, both questions, when did one go to sleep and when did one come out of it, are irrelevant.

1428. CAN DEATH BE COMPARED TO DEEP SLEEP?

No. It is fallacious to do so. The experiences of death and of deep sleep are both unknown to the waking mind, and so they are wrongly supposed to be identical by the ignorant man. But in fact, they are poles asunder.

Deep sleep is the unique and the independent experience of a whole state. It is the experience of Non-duality in identity. But death is only an incident in the waking state. Therefore they occur in two entirely different planes, and can never be compared one with the other.

946. WHY DOES NOT THE EXPERIENCE OF DEEP SLEEP HELP ONE SPIRITUALLY?

Because the ordinary man looks upon deep sleep objectively. If deep sleep loses its sense of objectivity and becomes subjective, you are free.

721. WHAT IS THE CLUE TO ONE'S OWN REAL NATURE?

The only clue given to us by the unseen, to understand one's own real nature, is the 'deep sleep state'. That alone is ours in fact.

9. HOW IS DEEP SLEEP THE TOUCHSTONE OF ONE'S REAL NATURE?

The knowledge of one object implies the ignorance of all objects other than that particular object. The ignorance of all objects in deep sleep means really the positive knowledge of the self, which shines as happiness there. Consequently, the ignorance of the ordinary man in deep sleep is really the knowledge of his own self, which is happiness and Consciousness.

Our deep sleep experience, according to the lower *shāstras* [texts], is ignorance coupled with the sense of subjective happiness. We have already proved that the so called ignorance of the world in deep sleep is nothing but the knowledge of the self, which is happiness itself. Thus the experience in deep sleep, if properly understood, is only *one*; and that is our own self, which is *Happiness* and *Peace*. The rest of the statement is but a commentary upon this.

There is only *one* there; and hence the ignorance of the many is no experience at all.

296. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN DEEP SLEEP AND THE WAKING STATE?

It is often stated that a man wakes up from deep sleep on hearing a sound, meaning thereby that hearing the sound was the cause of his waking up.

No one makes use of senses or mind in deep sleep, because they are not there. So the sound could not have been heard in deep sleep. And when it was heard, he must certainly have been in the waking state. An experience definitely belonging to the waking state can never be said to be the cause of the waking state. So the statement is wrong, and it is not the sound that woke him up.

Usually you wake up from the deep sleep state and you cannot find a cause for it. Why can you not assume that you likewise came to the waking state, and heard a sound? Why do you want a cause for the waking up?

1196. HOW CAN DEEP SLEEP ALLEVIATE MY PAINS OF THE WAKING STATE?

You get cured of your pain and disease immediately you get into deep sleep; and you begin to suffer again when you come back to the waking state. But if you can bring something from deep sleep to bear upon the waking state, certainly the pain will be relieved in the waking state also.

1286. THE DEEP SLEEP STATE IS ALWAYS IN THE PAST.

When you experience deep sleep, you stand identified with pure Consciousness or Peace beyond time. It can never be called the present in deep sleep. But when you refer to it from the waking state, you call the preceding state the 'deep sleep state' and then it is only an idea.

Similarly, every thought or perception is nothing but the ultimate Reality or knowledge, at the moment when you know it. But when you refer to it subsequently, you make an idea of it, which is not the thing referred to at all. This is the truth of the whole world, which – though a heap of thoughts, feelings and perceptions – is nothing but pure Consciousness.

270. IS THERE TIME IN DEEP SLEEP?

In deep sleep there is no conception of time.

But on waking, you take your concept of time from the waking state and try to apply it to the deep sleep state, and hope thereby to bind deep sleep. This is impossible.

So deep sleep is in fact not bound by time at all.

69. WHY IS NOT DEEP SLEEP A CAUSE OF THE OTHER TWO STATES?

In the waking state, you can decide whether there is any connection between three objects A, B and C, *if* they are things perceived in the waking state itself. In the same state, these three objects are governed by the same order of time and the same law of causality.

Take the deep sleep state, dream state and waking state as three objects between which you want to know whether there is any connection or not. To do so, you have to see whether these three states are governed by the same order of time and by the

same law of causality. But we find that it is not so. The time which exists in the waking state is different from the time which exists in the dream state. In deep sleep, there is no time. Therefore, there is no common order of time governing the three states. Time is the parent of the law of causality, and therefore there can never be a causal relationship existing between the three states.

Therefore, the deep sleep state can never be a cause of the other two states.

1381. EXPERIENCES OF DEEP SLEEP AND OF SAMĀDHI BY THE IGNORANT MAN

Question: What is the difference between the experiences of deep sleep and of samādhi [meditative absorption], by one who does not know the nature of the content of either?

Answer: The experience in ‘deep sleep’, being spontaneous and uncaused, is purely vastu-tantra (creation of Truth itself), and leaves no trace of samskāra [driven conditioning] behind it.

But ‘samādhi’ is the product of severe effort, and leaves a strong samskāra behind which binds one to the object, viz. samādhi. This is called karṭri-tantra (caused by effort).

Therefore, of the two experiences, the experience of deep sleep is infinitely superior to that of samādhi.

1172. WHAT IS SLEEP?

According to grammar, the verb ‘is’ and its variants are considered verbs of incomplete predication and so do not denote any particular action. All other verbs always denote action. We usually say, ‘I sleep.’ What does it really mean? Sleep is used as a verb and must denote some action. But do I sleep? Is there any action in sleeping? *No*. Sleep is neither an action nor non-action. There is no ego in sleeping, and there can never be a sleeper. Therefore nobody sleeps, and sleep is *not*.

382. EXPERIENCE OF HAPPINESS IN DEEP SLEEP – AN ANALOGY

Suppose a bucket is lost in a deep well, and you dive down to the bottom to make a search. You touch the bucket there at the bottom, and come up to the surface. Coming out of the water, you say you found the bucket. But the bucket was really found while you were under the water, where there was no medium to express that experience.

Similarly, Happiness was experienced in deep sleep, but you get hold of a medium to express that experience only after coming to the waking state.

Experience is always beyond the mind. The personal ‘I’ knows it only when the ‘I’ comes to that realm of the mind. Still others come to know it when you give it a gross form by putting it into words. But the experience was clearly beyond the mind.

1102. YOU ARE ALWAYS IN DEEP SLEEP. HOW?

Just think what you are in deep sleep. You will find that you are the ‘I’-principle alone, divested of body, senses and mind. You see you can live quite well without any of these.

Now just see if you ever get out of that 'I'-principle in your dream or waking states. No, never. Thus you see how you are always in deep sleep. That is the real Self.

334. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN DEEP SLEEP AND THE INTERVAL BETWEEN TWO MENTAL ACTIVITIES?

These are really one and the same. They appear different because deep sleep comes in the disguise of a state during which emphasis is placed on its limitation, and its content is ignored. This prejudice or disguise is purely a product of the waking state. If it is realized as such and thus given up to the waking state itself, what remains over is identical with the interval between thoughts. That is your own real nature.

64. THE CONTENT OF DEEP SLEEP

Are you not annoyed when you are suddenly woken up from deep sleep? That is because you love deep sleep more than you love activity. Deep sleep is complete rest.

Egoism is the wrong identification of one's self with the body, senses and mind. To get to the Truth, one has to get the body, senses and mind separated from the 'I'-principle. This elimination, coupled with finding your real centre, and establishing yourself there, is called 'realization'.

Consciousness never parts with you, in any of the three states. In deep sleep, you are conscious of deep rest or peace. Inference is possible only of those things which have not been experienced. The fact that you had a deep sleep or profound rest is your direct experience, and you only remember it when you come to the waking state. It can never be an inference. Experience alone can be remembered. The fact that you were present throughout the deep sleep can also never be denied.

The only three factors thus found present in deep sleep are Consciousness, peace and yourself. All these are objectless, and can never be objectified. In other words they are all subjective. But there can be only one subject; and that is the 'I'-principle. So none of these three can be the result of inference; since they are all experience itself.

754. HOW TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF DEEP SLEEP?

If you merely direct attention to the deep sleep state, you are thrown into that state. But, under the instructions of a Kāraṇa-guru, if you direct your attention to the Happiness aspect of the deep sleep state, you are thrown into the Happiness aspect, which is your own real nature. Then all nescience drops away, as the material parts of the ego do when you emphasize the consciousness aspect, and you remain in all your glory.

Deep sleep and ignorance

1006. WHY DON'T 'I' KNOW MYSELF IN DEEP SLEEP?

In deep sleep you are all alone. In that state, you can never split yourself into two – one part knowing the other. You had no knowledge even of yourself there. Hence you can never know that, when you *are* that.

806. HOW TO EXORCIZE THE PHANTOM OF IGNORANCE FROM DEEP SLEEP?

See that either end of your sleep is saturated with the thought of your real nature, your native home.

8. IS THERE AJNYĀNA [IGNORANCE] IN DEEP SLEEP?

No. The absence of any objective perception, thought or feeling – which is wrongly called ‘nothingness’ – is the svarūpa [true nature] of real, unconditioned happiness. Here, happiness alone is the positive experience in deep sleep, and the sense of nothingness is a relative inference when out of it.

Thus, there is in fact no ajnyāna in deep sleep. The ajnyāna of Truth is the jnyāna [knowledge] of objects, gross or subtle. To know any object means not to know the Truth. From the knowledge of an object, if the object part is discarded, what remains is pure knowledge alone, which is the essence and the background of all objects as well as of myself.

The jnyāna of any one object may also be said to be the ajnyāna of all other objects. In that sense, the jnyāna of Truth and Happiness in deep sleep can also be said to be the ajnyāna of all objects. Thus happiness alone is the experience in deep sleep.

Definitions

109. WILL, EGO, SVARŪPA ETC. DEFINED

A disciple asked: ‘What is will?’

Answer: ‘Will’ is that volition appearing just before every activity. It is in essence desire itself. It is one of the manifested forms of the mind itself, forming the lowest link between the subtle and the gross spheres. It is thinking in terms of the needs of the lower self.

The different manifestations of mind, according to the western system, are called mind, reason, will and egoism. But according to the eastern system, they are manas [mind], buddhi [intellect], citta [will] and ahankāra [ego]. [See page 142, note 152.]

Ego is a spurious entity apparently personating the ‘I’-principle, always after the activity.

Svarūpa [the true nature] of anything is the highest generalization of that thing and is the Reality itself.

Svarūpa of a thing (looked at from a relatively high plane):

1. Svarūpa is that which maintains or keeps the identity of the thing.
2. It is that upon which the identity of a thing essentially depends.
3. It is the essence of a thing or the thing in itself, which underlies all phenomenal attributes.

That general background is one and indivisible, and so it cannot have parts. It is that which remains, even after the removal of all the attributes heaped upon it by your mind and senses. This is pure Consciousness.

Relatively, it can also be said that the svarūpa of a thing is the same as its immediate material cause. For example, the svarūpa of the table may be said to be wood, and that of wood may be said to be panca-bhūta: the five elements. Thus tracing it to its irreducible source, we reach the same ultimate svarūpa of man, viz. Consciousness pure.

So body does not go into the svarūpa of a man, senses do not go into the svarūpa of man. Therefore, when all that do not go into his svarūpa are taken away, what still remains is the svarūpa of man. Thus man is svarūpa [true nature], tree is svarūpa...; and that is pure Consciousness.

168. RELATIVITY

Relativity, according to science and in ordinary parlance as well, is only between objects themselves.

But according to Vēdānta, relativity is only between the subject and the object. Without the subject's perception, there can never be any object.

Happiness is something that transcends the mind. It expresses itself in pleasure. If the mind part is taken away from pleasure, it becomes Happiness itself.

Pleasure is something that pertains to the realm of the mind.

Personality rests with body, senses and mind. If you think you are impersonal, if you feel you are impersonal and if you act knowing that you are impersonal, you *are* impersonal.

323. SOME DEFINITIONS:

Space is the generic form of objects; and

Time is the generic form of thoughts.

What is 'beauty'? 'Beauty' is personalized when you perceive it. But in itself, 'beauty' is an expression of the Absolute. It is harmony itself and is not perceivable. Knowing 'beauty' as purely impersonal, it can never tempt you, even when personalized. Truth and beauty are one.

When the ego tries to see beauty in the beautiful, both get transformed into the beyond and become beauty itself. By seeing that something is beautiful, you see really that you are beauty itself. For example, you say: 'The boat is beautiful.' But do you see anything other than wood? *No*. Then where is the beauty? Certainly in the seeing, which is illumined by Consciousness. Consciousness is beauty itself.

You say that you *know* and that you *love* another.

Knowledge (in the relative sphere) is becoming one with another with one's intellect.

Love is becoming one with another with one's whole being. So love is relatively deeper. Deeper Knowledge is love.

Direct perception is silent knowing.

357. SOME [MORE] DEFINITIONS

Language is the art of concealing thought.

Thought is the art of concealing Truth.

Transcending or giving up language and thought together with their samskāras [habit-driven inclinations], you reach the Truth direct.

Bondage is the conviction that the object remains over, after every experience of knowledge or peace.

Liberation is the conviction that not even a trace of the object remains over, after every such experience.

381. WHAT IS THE INFINITE AND HOW TO UNDERSTAND IT?

The 'infinite' is a conception invented only for the purpose of lifting you from the conception of the finite.

Thus reaching the infinite, you find yourself even beyond it. When one thing is explained and disposed of, the opposite also is automatically explained and disposed of.

453. WHAT IS RASA?

Rasa is that something which descends into the heart and is experienced by the heart.

[‘Rasa’ means ‘sap’ or ‘juice’ and hence it indicates the essence or the essential savour of a feeling or an experience.]

526. DEFINITIONS

Conviction comes in when what is said has been grasped.

Satisfaction comes in when what is desired has been gained.

Pleasure exists only in relation to its opposite, pain, and they are both enjoyed by the mind. But Happiness is beyond the mind.

Intuition comes in when your mind is expanded in time and you consequently become an expanded jīva [personality]. But you should remember that your misery also is equally expanded. Intuition is the highest expansion of the lower reason – still remaining within the realm of the mind.

Higher reason is the essence of the lower reason. It is connected always with the impersonal, and the lower reason is connected always with the personal alone.

Logic, beauty and harmony are all the ‘svarūpa [true nature] of Ātmā’ [Self], viewed from different angles of vision.

Real renunciation is the employment of the Consciousness part in every perception knowingly. By this practice, the material part gradually gives way and the Consciousness part gains. This alone is real renunciation.

Causality comes in to establish relationship between objects. But it has been proved that every object is related only to its background Consciousness. Therefore two objects cannot exist simultaneously, and so causality is not.

The hold of *time, space* and *causality* upon the ordinary man is so strong that he is not prepared to spare even the ultimate Reality from the dictates of time, space and causality.

The *phenomenal* means that which is changing. All change is in time, space and causality.

What do you *perceive*? You can perceive only the Reality. Unreality can never be perceived. Reality is in the senses and beyond the senses as well.

Life: You have three kinds of life, each distinct and separate from the rest. A *physical life*, confined to activities of body and perceptions of the senses. A *mental life*, confined to thoughts and feelings. A *self life* (or a life of the Self), being experience alone.

The first two lives are known to all. But you do not often know or note that you have a self life (or life of the Self).

Desire

166. DESIRE

Desire always shows want, and this again shows your imperfection. So, until you become perfect, desire is sure to torment you. Then examine more clearly what desire points to.

It always points to Happiness; and it has been proved to you that when a desired object is gained, there is desirelessness for the time being. The mind comes to rest and Happiness dawns.

So, strictly speaking, desire is directed to desirelessness; because it is that desirelessness which brings in Happiness.

202. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF ALL DESIRES? 'DESIRELESSNESS.'

Though desire is a prelude to worldly pleasure, yet you enjoy pleasure only when that desire ceases – that is, when you reach the stage of desirelessness.

Your desire for the object causes your body and mind to be incessantly active in order to get the object, and the activity continues until you achieve your object. But when once the desired object is achieved, the activity – having no other object – naturally ceases. The body and senses get relaxed, and the mind refuses to function.

At this stage, you are absolutely desireless. It is then that your real nature of Happiness shines by itself. Soon after, when your mind begins to function again, you connect the happiness experienced with the preceding object.

Happiness dawned only when desire changed into desirelessness. The goal of all desire is Happiness. Since Happiness is achieved only by desirelessness, desirelessness is the goal of all desires.

1091. FALLACY OF THE DESIRE TO KNOW OR FEEL THE TRUTH

It is admitted that on listening to the Truth from the lips of the Guru, you realize your real nature at once. But you will not know it or feel it.

The desire to know that you have so realized, or the desire to feel it, is the highest imaginable illusion. Because, in order to know anything, the knower has to stand higher than the known. Therefore, if you presume that you know or feel that you have realized the ‘Truth’ you are still in duality, and what you presume to know is imperfect. As such, it can never be the Truth.

You are ever that Truth – before, during and after the realization claimed. As far as the Truth – which is your real nature – is concerned, there had been no change whatsoever, in all time. It may be said that a Jnyānin knows that he has visualized the Truth. Yes of course. But not in the sense of knowing at the mental level, as you might desire. He knows that it is unknowable by the mind; but he knows it in an intenser light where there is no subject-object relationship. *To know in that light is to be.*

The ego in the mental realm is innocent and ignorant of all that has happened above his head. But he too feels that something sublime has happened, and naturally he wishes to have a taste of it in his own realm. Hence the ego’s desire to know that experience; and his subsequent, unwarranted claim to have had that experience in his own limited terms. That has to be guarded against.

In *one* sense, it may be said that a Jnyānin [Sage] alone knows a Jnyānin. This does not mean any recognition on the mental level as understood by the ordinary man. From *another* point of view, it is also true to say that even a Jnyānin can never know another Jnyānin. Because Jnyānin is Jnyāna [Knowledge] itself; and Jnyāna, which is indivisible, can never be divided into subject and object, as knower and the known.

1372. A REFLECTION OF OUR OWN STANDARD

Any desire or effort to know the Truth will certainly taint your visualization of Truth, to that extent. An effort amounts to desire. Both of them posit their own standards. The result will only be judged by such limited standards of satisfaction as are directed by the preceding effort or desire.

1418. WHAT CAN I DESIRE?

Nothing. Desire shows want and that shows your own imperfection. But you are Consciousness which is by nature perfect; and you cannot desire to know anything else, there being nothing else beside Consciousness.

Again, you are Peace or Happiness which is also perfect; and you cannot desire to have any other happiness, there being nothing else beside Happiness – your own real nature.

774. WHAT IS ĀTMIC URGE?

Unconditional freedom, deathlessness, Knowledge, Happiness etc. are your very nature. These surge up as the desire in the embodied man to become free, to defy death, to know everything, and above all to be happy etc. But no embodied being can possess any of these qualities in full.

860. IS EVERY DESIRE AN OBSTACLE TO TRUTH?

Every desire rises in duality and so is generally considered an obstacle to Truth. But there are some exceptions.

Desire for freedom, desire for *mukti* [liberation] etc. are not obstacles. Freedom is the characteristic of the real 'I'-principle. So by desiring freedom, the desire together with the ego merges into the 'I'-principle and you rest in Peace.

Mukti is selflessness. So, to desire *mukti* is also to desire selflessness. That can never be selfish either.

1450. HOW TO VIEW DESIRES, SO AS TO MAKE THEM A HELP TO SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT?

Desire is always for an object, and its goal is happiness. Thus an object is only the means, and happiness is the goal. The ignorant man perceives and emphasizes only the means, namely objects, and awaits happiness as a necessary corollary. One does not get enriched by this sort of enjoyment of happiness.

But the spiritual aspirant takes an entirely different approach. First, he understands from the Guru that Happiness – the goal of all desires – is one's own real nature; and he directs his attention to the goal, even in the case of happiness which appears limited by objects.

He notes with satisfaction that the limited happiness expresses itself not when the desired object is gained, but only after it is lost (or forgotten). Therefore he is not disappointed like a layman, even when the desired object is sometimes not obtained. This practice – of emphasizing the disappearance of the object as the necessary prelude to the expression of happiness – gradually helps him to cling to the goal which is objectless Happiness, his own real nature.

Therefore desire, if viewed in the right perspective, is a great help to one's spiritual advancement. All the trouble creeps in only when the ultimate goal is forgotten and the means itself considered as the goal.

'Desire you may, but only don't forget the goal.'

Destruction

569. CREATION AND DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD

Self-forgetfulness is the cause of the creation of the world, and self-remembrance or withdrawal to the Self is the destruction of the world.

393. HOW IS SHIVA CALLED THE 'DESTROYER'?

The function of the faculty called 'higher reason' is only to destroy all that the lower reason or mind has created. Therefore this higher reason or vidyā-ṛitti is verily the destroyer, Shiva himself.

1274. WHAT IS REAL DESTRUCTION?

The destruction of an object really means the disappearance of the object, without its leaving any trace, even as an idea. This is never possible in the physical or mental realms. But in the worldly sense, destruction only means disintegration in any manner.

Yōga and devotion accept the latter interpretation of the term; and they strive to destroy the mind by purifying or expanding it, keeping on the separateness once and for all. You can never destroy a thing by anything like cleaning, correcting or mending it in the same level. This is why yōga and devotion fail to destroy the mind, and lead one only to a state of peace limited by time and called 'samādhi'.

Real destruction is achieved only by jnyāna [knowledge] or Vēdānta – not objectively but subjectively – by eliminating the sense of duality once and for all, and thus seeing the object as nothing but your own Self.

Devotion (bhakti)

312. BHAKTI AND JNYĀNA PATHS

Bhakti cripples your ego and makes you feel equal to the most insignificant blade of grass; and you conceive your God as the conceivable Absolute. Thus, when your ego is at last lost, you automatically reach the position of the Godhead.

But *jnyāna* [knowledge] takes you up, step by step, by the use of discrimination or higher reason; attenuating the ego little by little each time, until the ego is dead at last. By this process, you transcend mind and duality, and reach the ultimate Reality.

966. WHAT IS REAL BHAKTI?

It is not merely the adoration of the form of the personal god. It is the resulting mobility or melting of the heart that is the real goal. You have to get that melting of the heart even in *tattva* [truth] as it comes from the lips of the Guru. This melting should happen, not in any of the lower levels, but in a higher level and by something pertaining to the right Absolute.

995. WHY DO BHAKTAS NOT LIKE ADVAITA?

Strictly speaking they are also seeking Advaita [Non-duality]. But they do not know what they are doing. They want enjoyment and do not want to give it up. They are afraid that they will lose their enjoyment in actual Advaita. But when they are made to understand that the happiness, which they assume they enjoy, is but an expression of the real 'I'-principle (Advaita), the bhakta becomes an advaitin and realizes the

Truth. So the real ‘I’-principle is the expressed, and the happiness aspect a mere expression.

690. DEVOTION TO THE GURU

The disciple who takes the Guru to be the formless Ultimate, is taken to the right Absolute.

However, the disciple whose sense of discrimination is less developed, but who has a deep devotion to the person of the Guru, may well take the Guru to be the form. His love and devotion compensate abundantly for the lack of discrimination; and he is easily taken through the form to the formless, and thence to the Absolute even without his knowing it. Revered Vaṭivīshvarattamma – an illiterate woman devotee near Cape Commorin, who became a renowned Sage by her sincere and earnest devotion to her Guru (*Amma-svāmi*, who was a great yōgin Sage) – is a standing testimony to this class of Sages. [See glossary entry ‘Vaṭivīshvarattamma’.]

Though the disciple directs his love to the person of the Guru, the reciprocation comes from the impersonal which is the abode of love. When your limited love is directed to the Guru, who is love unlimited, the limitation of your love vanishes automatically.

The result can be perfect only if the Perfect is engaged in it.

1310. DEVOTION

Bhakti or devotion is a mental attitude directed to an object, generally an *iṣṭa-dēva* [a chosen form of God]. This by itself does not give the ultimate result, mōkṣha.

Mōkṣha [liberation] is impersonal. To attain mōkṣha, the goal of bhakti has to be gradually changed to the impersonal, by understanding the nature of God. But the truth about God is that it is the highest concept of the human mind. Therefore, a subjective examination of the mind has to be gone through and its background, the Self, visualized. This can never be done by the mind alone, unaided.

Hence the truth of one’s own real nature has to be heard from the lips of a Sage (Guru). By that, one’s own svarūpa [true nature] is immediately visualized. It is then that incessant devotion has to be directed to that goal. That is real bhakti, and it enables one to get established in Ātmā [Self]. That is mukti (liberation).

1410. WHAT IS BHAKTI?

Answer: You cannot have bhakti [devotion] for something non-existent, nor can you have it towards anything you do not know. Every object of bhakti has two aspects:

1. The impermanent or non-existent form, and
2. The permanent or the real consciousness.

Bhakti should be directed to the latter aspect, and the former can be blissfully ignored when it has fulfilled its legitimate purpose. The purpose of the ‘form’ is only to arrest your attention and to enable you to direct it to Consciousness, which is its background. The Consciousness can never be objectified. That is always the ultimate subject (viṣhayan). It is in the devotee himself and indivisible.

Therefore, a real devotee can only and need only direct his attention to the Consciousness in him. This is real bhakti; and it immediately yields Peace or *Ānanda* [Happiness], which is Consciousness itself. This is vastu-tantra, the outcome of Truth. Shrī Shankara defines real bhakti of the highest order as follows:

mōkṣa-sādhana-sāmagryām bhaktir ēva garīyasī
sva-svarūpā-’nusandhānam bhaktir ity abhidhīyatē

[Among all ways of seeking to be free,
it’s love that is the best, one must agree.
To question one’s own truth, to ask what’s there,
that is the love of those who ask with care.]

Shrī Shankara, Vivēka-cūḍāmaṇī, 31

‘Incessantly clinging onto one’s own real nature is verily termed bhakti.’

Bhakti for anything other than this is really unworthy of the name. It may, at the most, be called a fascination as unreal as the object itself.

Direct and indirect

568. PRATYAKṢHA AND PARŌKṢHA

Pratyakṣha literally means ‘perceivable by the sense organs’. It is opposed to *parōkṣha* meaning ‘indirect’ or *aupacārika* meaning ‘formal’.

According to Gurunāthan, there is only one pratyakṣha. It can be experienced only in the ‘I’, without being connected with anything else. All else is indirect or formal. According to this, an object perceived is parōkṣha. When that is subsequently known, it merges into the ‘I’ and becomes pratyakṣha and the object vanishes.

Every one has a deep sense of the Self in him which stands clearly transcending the body, senses and mind. Its form is ‘I know I am.’ This is direct knowledge that is known without the help of any instrument.

1237. WHAT IS PRATYAKṢHA?

Pratyakṣha (irrefutable perception) is of three kinds: *sensual* pratyakṣha, *mental* pratyakṣha and *conscious* or *bōdha* pratyakṣha. You will lose your hold on the Truth if you cling on to any of the former two pratyakṣhas, but if you cling on to the bōdha pratyakṣha alone, you will never do so.

‘*Sva-sthiti*’ is a more significant term than the ‘*sahaja state*’ to denote the natural state [see page 199]. The knowledge one happens to have about one’s own Self can never be indirect. The knowledge that obtains as a result of adopting any of the prakriyās [methods], like examination of the three states, is decidedly direct Self-experience itself. This is made possible only by listening to the Truth from the lips of the Kāraṇa-guru, with a deep sense of earnestness and sincerity on the part of the aspirant.

‘*Shravaṇa*’, or listening to the Guru, is alone said to be the ‘*sākṣhāt-kāraṇa*’: the ‘genuine cause’ of liberation (if any cause could be attributed to liberation).

Disciple

1177. GURU DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

The disciples, from their own standpoint, have a Guru. But the Guru, from his own standpoint, has no disciples. He is beyond duality and unity.

1061. WHAT PRINCIPLE IN THE DISCIPLE IS THE GURU ADDRESSING?

The Guru is addressing the Guru in the disciple. But you should never contemplate oneness with your Guru, in any manner. The Guru teaches you to be one with everything. Attain that first, by bringing it into your experience. Then the question will not arise; because then you will see that the Guru still stands beyond even that knowledge of oneness with everything.

Truth, feeling that it is not the Truth (the disciple), is taught by the Truth which knows that it is the Truth (the Guru).

97. HOW CAN I BE WORTHY OF MY GURU?

Immediately came the answer: 'Only by your death' – meaning thereby the death of the ego.

As long as there is that sense of separateness of Guru and disciple in one's mind, one's worthiness is not complete. It can only become complete when that sense of separateness vanishes. Either by the annihilation of the ego completely, or by the disciple merging in the Guru and becoming inseparably one for ever.

That is when the disciple is established in his natural state [see page 199].

697. HOW CAN I BECOME A TRUE DISCIPLE?

You can become a disciple only in three regular stages.

1. You set apart some part of the day to pray to your Guru to learn to love him.
2. You feel without feeling that the Guru is the background of all your actions, perceptions, thoughts and feelings.
3. You become a true disciple only at the highest level, when your personality vanishes and you stand as the impersonal Truth. Then there is no duality of any kind, like the Guru or disciple or relationship.

When you say, see or think you are a disciple, you are a witness to the discipleship and not a disciple.

749. WHEN CAN ONE SEE THAT ONE IS A TRUE DISCIPLE?

Never. Because, in order to see that, one must stand separate from the disciple.

The crucial point is, what is it that one wants? Is it to see that worldly life proceeds successfully, or get established in the Ultimate? If it is the former, it is impossible. If it is the latter, the former question does not arise.

1415. I KNOW I AM NOT AN IDEAL DISCIPLE. BUT SHOULD I NOT SEE THAT MY ACTIONS DO NOT BRING DISCREDIT TO MY GURU?

No. You may think that you are not yet an ideal disciple, and even pray to the Guru to help you to reach that goal. But what exactly that goal is, you do not know. It has no test, either mental or ethical. That goal shall always remain unknown, in the sense in which knowledge is used ordinarily. Therefore it is futile to try to verify your progress towards that goal. But what you can do and must do, is to continue to keep incessant contact with the Guru, in whatever manner convenient to you – in the gross, in the subtle or beyond.

Dispassion

32. HOW TO BECOME DISPASSIONATE?

Dispassion is not only possible, but is present in all your states. You can see it, if you direct your attention that way.

You say you are attached to objects in the waking state. But what happens to that attachment, when you go into the dream state? Likewise, what happens to the objects of the dream state, when you come back to the waking state? Leaving these two states, you go into the deep sleep state, where there are no objects at all.

So there is dispassion throughout; and there is no necessity to cultivate it. Even in the waking state, when you are thinking of one object, are you not dispassionate as far as the rest of the world is concerned?

290. HOW CAN I BE DISPASSIONATE?

You *are* dispassionate, even now.

1. When you are desiring any one particular object, you have practically renounced everything else, except that one object.

Now, examining that particular desire more closely, we find that in the moment of the desire, you renounce even that particular gross object, in favour of its thought-form. Because the gross object has no access into the mind's realm, where alone the desire exists. Therefore, you desire only your own thought-form, which is nothing other than your own Self.

So you desire only yourself, and are always in perfect dispassion. Know this, and you shall be free.

2. It is a fact that [by dreaming] you gladly renounce everything you profess to own or desire, with a whole world of [waking] objects including even your much loved body. Thus, without even a moment's notice, you go into another state, where you readily accept a new body in a new world, to be later renounced likewise.

This shows beyond doubt that you are not attached in the least, to [either waking or dream] objects. Therefore, you are always in complete dispassion. Know this, and you shall be happy.

Doer, enjoyer and knower

140. WHY IS THE KNOWER NOT THE DOER OR THE ENJOYER?

Because you never cease to be the knower. Doership and enjoyership come and go. Knowing takes place in a different plane.

The doing, perceiving and thinking take place either in the realm of the body or of the mind. When these activities are taking place, they are simultaneously perceived by the 'I'-principle, from a higher plane.

The doer and the enjoyer always change. The knower is beyond all changes. It is evidently Knowledge or Consciousness itself. And it is no function, since it is changeless.

Education

758. IS THE SPIRITUAL EDUCATION OF THE MASSES POSSIBLE?

No. Not by extending amenities or adjusting external objects. Spirituality is directed from diversity to Non-duality. But by your question, you want to keep on the diversity – by calling it 'masses' – and turn your back on true spirituality.

It is a change of heart and a change of perspective that are sought by spirituality. Education [through academic institutions] cannot provide these. It can only give information to the mind and multiply diversity. There is no such thing as spiritual education. What ordinarily passes for 'spiritual' is only ethical or religious education. This has nothing to do with real spirituality, which pertains only to absolute Truth.

Absolute Peace is the goal of spirituality. This goal, at any rate, is not outside. Spirituality helps you to find permanent peace and live in it. Your conduct and contact thereafter will improve all those who come near you.

Enjoyment

125. WHO REALLY ENJOYS THE PICTURE EXHIBITED FOR SALE?

The witness alone enjoys it. Neither the vendor, nor the vendee enjoys it really. The shopkeeper always wants to exact the maximum price for it, and the purchaser wants to get it for the minimum. So, both of them do not really enjoy the picture. But the stray onlooker or witness – who does not want either to buy it or sell it – really enjoys the picture, since he has no other motive.

So also, you would be able to enjoy the world disinterestedly, only if you stand as the witness of it all.

423. WHAT IS THE SECRET OF ENJOYMENT?

To say you enjoyed anything, for example music, is wrong.

It is true you started by listening to music. At first, you forgot your personal identity and were absorbed in the harmony expressed in the music. But you did not stop there. Through the expressed harmony, you were carried on to the unexpressed inner harmony of the Self and experienced your own Self there.

Coming back, you passed through the very same stages, in the reverse order, and reached the music again. Then you wantonly superimposed the bliss experienced upon the music outside.

The mistake is not in enjoying the expressed harmony, but is only in superimposing the happiness upon some external object – here music. When you say you enjoy any sense object, like music, that object is not present at the time of enjoyment. Nor is the personal ‘I’, the enjoyer, present. There is only your real Self, in its real nature of Peace.

You utilize music only as an instrument, and abandon it just before enjoyment or experience.

18. THE ENJOYMENT OF PLEASURE BY AN ORDINARY MAN AND THE SAGE?

To the ordinary man, pleasure is an end in itself and he attributes it all to objects. But to the Sage, who apparently enjoys the same pleasure, it is all the expression of the happiness aspect of the Absolute or the Self, *purely uncaused*.

During the sādhana period of a disciple, experiences of pleasure sometimes occur, as a result of particular states of mind attained through discipline and practice. Because of their great similarity to the experiences of intense pleasure he may have had in worldly life, the disciple is likely to desire a repetition of these, as an end in itself. This worldly interpretation of spiritual experiences is likely to entangle him there, impeding his spiritual progress.

But, under the guidance of a Kāraṇa-guru, the disciple understands such experiences to be expressions of the Absolute in him; and he is enabled to proceed further in order to reach ‘what is expressed’, regardless of the pleasure experienced on the way.

To the Sage, every experience of happiness is only an expression – in the realm of the mind – of the happiness aspect of the absolute ‘Self’; and as such he never attributes it to external objects. To the Sage, all the activities of the mind and body are but expressions of the Absolute, and as such *purposeless* in themselves.

But the worldly man takes to activities with a definite purpose, as a means of enjoyment.

680. IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ENJOYMENT OF HAPPINESS BY A LAYMAN AND A SAGE?

Yes, of course. The layman’s enjoyment is broken, because he takes it to be the product of objects. But the Sage’s enjoyment is continuous; because he knows it to be the expression of his own Self, which never disappears.

Examination

1270. HOW TO EXAMINE AN OBJECT?

The examination of an object must be conducted from all three states, with equal completeness. You are doing this, though unknowingly, all the time. You have only to note it and understand it correctly, as follows:

1. When the percept appears, the waking state sense organs function.
2. When the concepts (as ideas) are added on, the dream state is brought in.
3. At last, when knowledge dawns, the deep sleep state beyond the mind comes in.

Therefore, you confirm every object only after systematically examining it from all the three states.

1147. EXAMINATION OF AN OBJECT BY THE SCIENTIST AND THE VĒDĀNTIN

A scientist examines an object to find out its material composition alone, and that too only in the waking state. His process is objective and involves a purely physical or mental effort.

But the vĕdāntin examines an object to find out its svarūpa [true nature]: which does not change throughout all the three states that constitute the totality of man's experience. Here, dream has to be conceived in a sense more comprehensive than usual. Whatever is purely mental, or everything that is past, may be said to belong to the dream state. Evidently, the states are created in order to enable man to examine a thing subjectively or objectively, in the right perspective, and to discover the Truth behind it. The states are thus the key to the Reality, as expounded by Vĕdānta.

A so called gross object is constituted of Consciousness, thought-form and grossness. Of these, the grossness disappears when the enquirer gives up the waking state; the thought-form disappears when he gives up the dream state (mental state); and in the deep sleep state, Consciousness alone remains over.

But Consciousness was present in the other two states as well. Therefore, viewed from that standpoint, Consciousness is the substance of every object.

1349. WHAT IS MEANT BY EXAMINING A PERCEPT?

A percept, at the outset, is distinct and separate from you. The process of examination is to bring it nearer and nearer the Self, and at last to merge it in the Self.

You examine the percept, identifying yourself with the perception; and then the percept vanishes, getting merged in the perception. Then the perception is examined in its turn, yourself standing as pure Consciousness. Then the perception also vanishes, as such, getting merged in Consciousness, ultimately leaving Consciousness alone.

parāg-artha pramēyēṣu yā phalatvēna sammatā
saṁvit sai 'vē 'ha mēyō 'rthō vĕdāntō 'kti pramāṇataḥ

[Where any object is admitted
among others to be known,
what there results is consciousness

and that alone. Just that needs to be known. That's what Vēdānta demonstrates, in everything it says.]

Pancadashī, Kūṭastha-dīpa, 11

1152. (Miss T. asked) FROM WHAT STANDPOINT AND HOW AM I TO EXAMINE AN OBJECT?

For the time being, take it that you do it from the waking state. But you have heard the Truth from the Guru and know that you are not the body, senses or mind.

Examining gross objects from the waking state, you find, first of all, that objects are nothing but percepts. You can only compare the qualities of one object with those of another in the same state, or at the most refer to causality which is only another object obtaining in the waking state. This sort of comparison does not give you any satisfactory solution, about the Truth of percepts.

Thus puzzled by your vain efforts, you begin to think deeply about it. Immediately, but unknowingly, you change your own stand and become a psychological being (in the dream state). Sensual objects vanish; and so you find that gross objects, as such, are unreal. But instead, you find that the thought-forms or ideas are the Truth of all that you perceive.

This also does not satisfy you for long; because ideas also seem impermanent, as they keep on appearing and disappearing. Therefore you begin to examine ideas, in their turn. The moment you take to this, you again unknowingly change your stand; but now to the deep sleep state, represented by awareness as the higher reason. Examining ideas accordingly, you find that they cannot exist without Consciousness and so are Consciousness itself, which is your real nature. Therefore every object is nothing but consciousness.

Causality as a law has the advantage of taking you from diversity to unity, but not beyond. Even that unity still remains only as an expanded object, and so it does not take you beyond the waking state. Causality depends upon precedence and succession, for its very existence. In other words, time is the parent of causality. But on closer examination, we find that time depends upon thought for its existence and thought depends upon time for its existence. Therefore they cancel out each other, and so time is not. Therefore causality is also not.

An honest examination of the Truth of any object is possible only when you take that object as representative of the state to which it belongs; and then you stand as the witness of that state.

The mind is the witness of gross objects. Therefore, you have to examine every gross object from the mental (dream) state. Then the grossness of the object (space-element) vanishes; and it appears as nothing more than an idea (thought-form), having existence only when the idea appears. It is a generalization of this experience that is expressed as the law that '*Objects do not exist when not known.*' This fact is the beginning of the vēdāntic perspective (*viṣayaṅgaḥkṛ ajñāta sattayilla*).

This is only a partial Truth. The idea has again to be examined from the still higher plane of Consciousness (deep sleep). Then you find that the object or the idea does not exist as such, even when known; but it is only pure Consciousness, through all the three states. This is the ultimate Truth, according to Advaita.

1408. HOW CAN AN OBJECT BE EXAMINED, TO FIND OUT ITS TRUTH?

It can be done in two distinct and separate ways, from two different standpoints. They are:

1. The standpoint of the ego
 2. The standpoint of the real 'I'-principle
1. The ego, in trying to examine an object, first splits the object into its two component parts, the permanent and the impermanent. Then it tries to separate the impermanent parts from the permanent. But in so doing, an unconscious transformation comes over the ego itself. Simultaneously with the shedding of the impermanent parts from the object, the accretions or the impermanent parts of the ego itself drop away.
Finally, the changeless in the object alone remains over, and that is the *sat* aspect of the Reality. Then the ego also stands as that Reality, divorced of all its accretions. Therefore the object is nothing but the Reality – the Self. This argument applies equally to the body also, which can be reduced to the real 'I'-principle. Thus the world stands revealed as the ultimate Reality.
But this examination can never be conducted successfully and in its entirety until you have listened to the Truth from the lips of a Kāraṇa-guru. Because, without visualizing the truth of the Self and without being able to cling on to it, the ego can never shed all its accretions. This is why, at the end of all their enquiries, the yōgins, scientists and philosophers all knock against a blank wall of ignorance.
 2. The second examination, from the standpoint of the real 'I'-principle, is easy. Because, if you examine the object or the world, neither will appear as such, but each stands as one with the Reality – the 'I'-principle. Thus also, the object world is *not*.

1407. HOW TO EXAMINE A THING? AND WHY?

A thing is not independent in itself. It is inextricably connected with the rest of the world. Therefore, in order to understand the entire truth about the thing, either the whole world has to be examined, or the thing has to be examined independent of the rest of the world.

The former is literally impossible. Therefore, the only possible course is to examine the thing as representing the whole world. This cannot be done in terms of time, space and causality, which are but the most generic standards accepted by the world. They are but parts of the world itself, and go into the make of the thing. Such an examination could never yield true results.

The examination therefore has to be conducted, not from the level of the world, but from a level beyond. Such a level can only be that of Consciousness. Taking your stand there and looking at a thing, the thing along with the world no longer appears as such, but stands transformed as Consciousness itself. Therefore, the thing and the world are nothing but Consciousness.

A thing has to be examined, not to find out its composition or potentialities, but to find out its truth value or the changeless in it. The absence of this perspective is the cause of the failure of science, yōga, arts, philosophy etc. to reach the ultimate Truth.

Another approach: The world is a world of perceptions alone. The unit of each perception is composed of perceiving, the perceiver and the percept, all three constituting the so called 'tripuṭī' [triad].

This tripuṭī is supposed to appear simultaneously and also to disappear likewise. This viewpoint is rather vague, and not intended for the uttamādhikāris [higher aspirants]. Examining the tripuṭī more closely, we find that it is perceiving that produces the perceiver and the perceived. So perceiving is more important than, and even the source of, the other two.

But when perceiving itself is examined more closely, from the standpoint of Consciousness, the perceiving disappears and stands transformed as pure Consciousness. Thus perception is nothing but Consciousness, and so is the world.

Existence

567. EXISTENCE

‘The non-existence of the non-existent is existence itself.’

‘Existence of the non-existent disproves non-existence.’

1234. WHAT IS MEANT BY SAYING THAT A THING ‘EXISTS’?

An inert thing has to depend upon something else, in order even to exist.

That something is self-luminous Awareness. Therefore an object is Awareness itself. If a thing cannot exist in its own right, the existence part must come from elsewhere, i.e. from Awareness.

403. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *SAT* AND LIFE?

Sat [existence] is the greatest generalization of objects, gross as well as subtle; and is the principle of Existence itself. It comprehends both animate and inanimate objects. Life, which is but the first emanation from *sat*, comprehends only animate objects. In this light, *sat* may very well be called a broader view of life.

130. EXISTENCE AND NON-EXISTENCE

Existence can never be destroyed; nor non-existence made to exist.

The usual way of expressing the relationship between pure existence, which is permanent, and the object, which is fitful or changing, is itself unnatural and misleading. This method of approach emphasizes the fitful part of the object more than the permanent part of it.

For example, we say: ‘This chair exists’; as if existence comes in and goes out of the chair. It would be more correct to say existence objectifies itself or manifests itself – meaning thereby that existence remains over, even when not objectified or manifested.

Existence is the possessor, ‘dharmi’; and objects are the possessed, ‘dharma’.

38. WHO EXISTS? I ALONE.

Actions, perceptions, thoughts and feelings cannot be independent. The 'I'-principle alone stands independent of everything else; and present in all these, unattached.

It is the mind that is said to be the knower or witness of gross objects. But the mind cannot come down to the gross to bear witness to it or to know it. The gross has to be transformed into the subtle, if it has to be witnessed by the mind. Or in other words, the mind can never witness the gross, but only the subtle. That is, the gross exists only in mere words, because the mind's knowledge is the only evidence of its existence as gross. Therefore the gross, as gross, has no existence at all.

Similarly, the 'I'-principle is said to be the witness of thoughts. The 'I' cannot come down to the mind's plane to witness the thoughts. But thoughts get transformed into pure Consciousness in order to be witnessed by the 'I'-principle; and Consciousness is the real nature of the 'I'-principle. Therefore it means: 'I know myself.' If one applies the same argument here also, it is evident that thought is nothing but Consciousness or the 'I'.

Therefore, all that appears – gross or subtle – is nothing but myself alone. Or in other words, in all activity or inactivity, it is 'I' alone that shine.

48. BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ, 2.16

nā 'satō vidyatē bhāvō nā 'bhāvō vidyatē sataḥ ...

The existent can never go out of existence, and the non-existent can never come into existence. This is the meaning of the verse. The test of the Reality is whether it disappears or not. According to this test, the only thing that never disappears is the 'I'-principle or 'Consciousness'.

Perceptions can exist only if there are external objects. But it has been proved already that objects as such have no existence. The Reality can never be an object. So it follows that even perceptions are not perceptions at all.

Similarly examining the subject, we find that the body, senses and mind are also mere empty words, having no independent existence. Each in turn gets reduced into the ultimate 'I'-principle or 'Consciousness', which alone is real.

Therefore, I alone am shining in my own glory at all times, without change.

191. SAT AND CIT ESSENTIAL FOR PERCEPTION

Perception is possible only through *sat* [existence] and *cit* [consciousness]. Because you can perceive only something existing. This brings in *sat*. Perception has necessarily to be illumined by knowledge, to enable it to function. This brings in *cit* also.

Sat is no *sat* until it shines, and Consciousness has necessarily to be there for *sat* to shine. Therefore, both aspects of *sat* and *cit* are essential for perception. The *sat* aspect of the Self or the Reality is not generally taken by itself and elaborated upon, because the elaboration of the Consciousness aspect brings in the *sat* aspect also.

Shrī Vidyāranya defines the *sat* aspect thus in the *Pancadashī*:

palatīl cērnnu nilkunna sattu tān dharmmiyāyvarum .
onnil tanneyirikkunna vyōmamō dharmmamātramām .

[Existence in itself is 'dharmi'
(the 'support'), which stands united
in the many things of world.
On that same unity sits all
extended space, which is just 'dharma'
(the 'supported' world of change).]

Bhāṣha Pancadashi, Mahābhūta-vivēka, 79
(Malayalam translation)

The meaning is that *sat* – 'dharmi' or the 'qualified' – is the background of all objects. Dharmi exists in many 'dharmas' or 'qualities'. It is that which is limited to itself. Dharma can never exist in anything other than that dharmi. Dharmi is subject and dharma is object.

For example, man may be said to be dharmi in relation to body, senses and mind, which are dharmas. Separated from the dharmas, the dharmi is only one – impersonal and ultimate. Thus man, tree, animal etc. as dharmi are the same – Reality itself.

We generally say '*its* existence'. This is not correct. For, this would mean that the 'it' would remain over, even after existence has disappeared. This could never be. Really, even after the disappearance of the 'it', existence pure would still continue. Therefore, we should really say '*existence's* it'. Here, existence would remain over, even after the 'it' has disappeared.

Existence never comes and goes. When all objects vanish, *sat* alone remains over. That which is incapable of being even thought of as non-existent can alone be existent. There is only one such thing that cannot be thought of as non-existent, and that is the real 'I'-principle.

If you make the attempt to think that you are non-existent, the principle that makes the attempt jumps over from the category of objects, and becomes the subject (principle) who attempts to think.

219. A THING DOES NOT EXIST. HOW?

Question: It is said the wall has no length, height or thickness. Similarly, body has no weight, height, etc. How is this proved?

Answer: When you stand as wall, no thoughts regarding its height, length and thickness occur to you. It occurs only to that one who objectifies or sees the wall. Or in other words, these qualities come into existence only when one thinks of them. The wall, standing as wall, can never objectify itself or think about itself. If it tries to do so, it ceases to be the wall for that period of time.

Similarly, when you stand as body, you have no conception of any height or weight of that body. They do not exist then, so far as you are concerned, and you do not feel that they exist either. Therefore you are pure, unqualified Existence – both when you stand as anything, and when you do not stand as anything.

The body has no right to speak of itself. It is only he who sees the body that can and has a right to speak about it. So anything standing by itself can have no quality distinct and separate from it.

Without seeing length, you cannot know it or speak about it; and to see it you have to stand separate from it. When you separate yourself from length, it ceases to exist. Therefore objects and their qualities cannot exist together; since they are but separate

objects from the standpoint of yourself, the only subject. All qualities are but superimpositions on the subject. You are the only subject or perceiver, and all else are but objects.

No object can exist independently of the subject, and two objects cannot exist simultaneously. Life consists in your perceiving objects in quick succession, but you perceive them only one at a time. This incessant change alone makes life possible. And the change itself is made possible only by the illusion of memory, which makes the non-existent appear as existent.

The body does not exist, either when you stand separate from the body, or when you think about the body.

414. TO THE ULTIMATE THROUGH DHARMA AND DHARMI

Every perception has two aspects: the *dharmi* [the holder or supporting ground] and *dharma* [the held or supported attributes]. The *dharmi* is the changeless background or existence upon which the *dharma*s come and go. For example we say 'the book is'. 'The book' is *dharma* and 'is' is the *dharmi*. Because the 'is' is everywhere; but 'the book' is only in the book. But it is misunderstood by an ordinary man. He takes 'book' as *dharmi* and the 'is' as *dharma* (attribute).

The 'is' can never be an attribute, because it is everywhere. It alone can be *dharmi*. If therefore you approach the Truth by way of the 'dharmi', understanding it in the right manner, you get to the ultimate Truth without any difficulty. There the 'is' and consciousness will be found to be one and the same.

Here also, the correct order is reversed, by putting the changeless after the changing. Immediately after every perception, the changeless part 'is' is conveniently forgotten, and the changing part 'book' alone is emphasized. Correctly, it ought to be said that existence (*dravya*) expresses itself as book (*guṇa*). Or in other words, 'Existence books', 'book' being used as a verb. Thus, every existing noun should be considered a verbal noun and its expression a regular verb or attribute. The Sanskrit language emphasizes this usage literally.

Existence is the only *dravya* (noun). All else is verb or attribute. *Sat* is *dharmi* and exists in all *dharma*. But one *dharma* cannot exist in another *dharma*. Get to the 'is' in every perception or find the *dharmi* in you, and you are free.

Experience

42. WHAT IS AN EXPERIENCE?

An experience is composed of two parts:

1. the background, which is the Reality itself; and
2. the expression, which is only a superimposition of the mind and senses upon the background Reality.

In examining any experience to see what it is, we must give up the expression part of it as belonging entirely to the mind and senses, and take only the background which

alone is permanent and real. Thus examined, every experience reduces itself to the ultimate Reality.

In any experience, the expression is the objective part and the background is the subjective part or the Reality behind it.

The test of every experience is to see whether it is strictly *subjective* or *objective*. The subjective alone is real and the objective all illusion.

Ākāsha [the space-time continuum], though not perceptible to the senses, is certainly conceivable by the mind. So it is really objective in nature. If we take out of ākāsha this last taint of objectivity, it ceases to be dead and inert, becomes self-luminous, and it immediately shines as its background – the Reality.

40. WHAT IS THE TEST OF EXPERIENCE?

Examine your experience always, and ask yourself whether it changes in time or space. If it is found to change, advance further till you come to that experience from which you can never change, even for a moment, even if you try. That is then no experience either, but your real nature itself.

74. WHAT IS ANUBHAVA OR EXPERIENCE?

Experience is the Absolute. Everybody has anubhava every moment of his daily life. At the end of every action, perception, thought or feeling, there is experience. But as it is beyond even the mind, we do not usually note it or understand it as it really is.

We wrongly attribute experience to the lower field of expression, namely feeling, which is the highest standard of worldly experience in our traffic with relative things. One has only to understand it correctly, and see it as the only Reality in this world.

Experience is that state (which is no state at all) where even feeling expires. In all experiences, there is nothing other than yourself, the real 'I'-principle. The ignorant man takes his feeling alone to be his anubhava or highest experience; since it is the highest in the scale of his relative experiences, in which alone he moves.

123. SOME SAY THEY ARE ABLE TO GRASP THE TRUTH INTELLECTUALLY, BUT ARE NOT ABLE TO FEEL IT.

This only means they have been attempting the impossible and have naturally failed. Because Truth transcends the senses, mind and intellect. It can never be brought down to the level of the mind, to be thought, felt or grasped by the intellect. If it were grasped at all, it would never be by the intellect, but by the higher reason alone.

218. MENTAL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Mental knowledge is of the surface. But the heart is deep. When knowledge goes deep, it becomes one with the heart and is experience.

221. WHAT IS REAL EXPERIENCE?

Consciousness stands as pure experience, without an experiencer. When I come to know a chair, I realize the existence of a something called Consciousness, distinct and

separate from the chair. The chair becomes only instrumental towards directing my attention to the Consciousness.

That is the 'I'-principle, pure Consciousness.

142. 'HOW TO EXPERIENCE THE TRUTH?'

This is the question usually asked from the relative plane. Truth is uncaused, and can never be experienced by effort of any kind. All efforts to that end amount only to thinking and feeling. This is clearly within the mind's realm, and Truth is well beyond it. So no amount of effort can ever take you to the Truth.

325. WHAT IS REAL EXPERIENCE?

Every so-called experience ends or merges in the ultimate 'I'-principle. Or in other words, the 'I'-principle is the only experience.

Feeling is nothing but intense thought. Some say that feeling is beyond knowledge. Yes, beyond superficial knowledge it might be. But who is it that decides? Certainly not feeling, but a knowledge which knows the feeling. Therefore, there is a deeper knowledge beyond the feeling.

But the Truth is different still. You are, beyond head and heart, true Knowledge. Your real nature is the background of both thoughts and feelings. The head and the heart are only different functions of the mind. You know both. In the statement, 'I know I am', it is absolute experience – beyond the head and the heart – that speaks. So real experience may be said to be a harmonious blending of the head and the heart.

246. EXPERIENCE – WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND GOAL?

The fact that *you experience* needs no proof. But the mistake is made only in specifying the objects of experience. What is it that you experience?

The progress from the illusion of the world to pure objectless experience is usually made in three distinct stages.

1. The first and the lowest is that you experience the world or objects. But this is easily disproved since no object can be experienced as such.
2. The next stage is that you experience the knowledge of the object. This also becomes impossible, since there cannot be any knowledge of an object whose existence cannot be proved by experience.
3. The last and the real stage is that you experience only pure, objectless knowledge, or Ātmā [true Self], or experience itself.

So in every experience, objective or otherwise, it is only this pure knowledge or the 'I'-principle that is really experienced. This experience is my real nature. It expresses itself in all the activities of the mind, senses and body.

But the word 'experience' is indiscriminately and wrongly used in connection with all the activities of the *non-ātmā* [non-self], and called 'experiences' of the mind, senses and body. This makes one forget the real nature of experience or Self. And out of this forgetfulness of the Reality springs up the world of objects.

If you forget the real nature of experience and then view the realm of the mind and body as such, everything there will appear independent and real. But if you look at

everything without forgetting the real nature of your experience, everything will appear to be nothing other than Experience itself.

468. KNOWLEDGE KNOWS ONLY KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE EXPERIENCES ONLY EXPERIENCE. HOW?

Your experience alone is accepted as a proof for the existence of anything.

Suppose you see an object. What is your immediate experience? You see and you *can* see only form. But form and seeing can never be outside. They are in the mind itself. Here, a subtle sense organ and a subtle form are created in the mind, and a subtle perception takes place.

This again is not independent. It is established by the knowledge beyond the mind. Beyond the mind, there being neither object nor activity, you can only say knowledge knows knowledge. Similarly, experience experiences experience. Both these statements mean that you are all alone, shining in your own glory, even during so-called perceptions, thoughts and feelings.

I allow myself to be conditioned by time and space, and then perceive the object with the gross instrument of some sense organ. The next moment, I give up the space element, allow myself to be conditioned by time alone, and I perceive only subtle forms with subtle sense organs in the mind. The next moment, I give up the time limitation also and stand alone; and then I am experience or knowledge itself.

This experience or knowledge alone was present in the previous, apparently limited perceptions as well.

482. WHERE IS THE WORLD FROM THE STANDPOINT OF EXPERIENCE?

Experience alone is the proof of the existence of everything. Therefore, what is present in experience alone can be real.

Experience, which is apparently inside, has nothing in it but knowledge and Happiness. The world is nowhere in the experience and so the world is non-existent.

Therefore, the experience is neither *of* the world nor *as* the world, since the world is non-existent.

812. HOW TO CLASSIFY EXPERIENCES?

They are generally of two types – *relative* and *in identity*. Relative experiences are again divided into:

1. *Objective* – physical and outward going
2. *Subjective* – psychic or mental and inward going

But, from the stand of Consciousness, all relative experiences are objective. The only experience *in identity* is the experience of the Self, as in deep sleep.

1250. EXPERIENCE AND DISTORTION

The real experience of the Self is knowledge in identity. When the experience is expressed in words (as ‘I enjoyed...’, ‘I perceived...’ etc.) in the form of subject-

object relationship, it is a clear distortion of the experience itself. This distortion distances the ego far from the centre.

912. WHAT IS REAL EXPERIENCE?

You say that you have understood the Truth. It means you stood one with the Truth.

(The very word ‘understood’ is significant. It means you stood under. Under what? Under the phenomenal. Under body, senses and mind: as their background. Whether the godfathers of the language meant the word to mean this, is a different question. It easily yields itself to this interpretation, and it is also the perfect truth. Then why not accept it?)

That was real experience. It was not experienced by anybody. Experience is the very nature of Reality. You stood as that Reality; but you do not often take note of it. Sometimes that deep conviction of the Truth expresses itself in the realm of the mind. Ignorantly, you call that expression an experience.

Real experience you first have on hearing the whole Truth direct from the Guru. Immediately you endorse it with your whole being. To say that you experienced it, is wrong. It is the language of duality, and experience is non-dual. Experience itself is the ultimate Reality, Truth, Background, ‘I’-principle, Consciousness, Love, Peace, Beauty, Harmony and whatever else you may call it.

1241. HOW TO UNDERSTAND EXPERIENCE?

Experience is of two kinds: vastu-tantra and karṭri-tantra.

1. *Vastu-tantra* is begotten of Ātmā [Self].
2. *Karṭri-tantra* is begotten of doership.

All Experiences of duality, including even the yōgin’s nirvikalpa samādhi, are karṭri-tantra. The experience which takes me straight to my real nature, of Peace and Consciousness, is alone vastu-tantra.

vastutan vaśamāṁ jñānaṁ; karṭtradhīnam upāsanam

[It’s only on reality
that knowledge rightfully depends.
But meditation must depend
upon a doer of some kind.]

Bhāṣha Pancadashi, Dhyāna-dīpam, 73
(Malayalam translation)

Vēdānta alone adopts vastu-tantra; and that too, to destroy karṭri-tantra and its creations that obscure the Reality. All other systems or practices or beliefs – karma, yōga, devotion, mysticism, religions... – all adopt karṭri-tantra. Satisfaction is the goal of all these.

Vastu-tantra, being ātmic, is beyond feeling. Karṭri-tantra, being mental, is capable of being felt, but is fleeting. Mental satisfaction can be derived both from Truth as well as from untruth. Vastu-tantra is not the result of any activity or inactivity. But karṭri-tantra is always the result of activity, which takes the form of desire and effort for its fulfilment.

When the disciple – who is a waking subject – is told by the Guru that even his phenomenal satisfaction is not derived from objects, but that it is his own real nature shining in its own glory, his doership (which is the centre of kartṛi-tantra) crumbles for ever. Desires torment him no more, and satisfaction is transformed into permanent Peace.

When this sublime Peace, vastu-tantra, is sought to be brought down to respond to kartṛi-tantra, guided by varying tastes and tendencies, a host of new concepts in the form of religions, heavens, objects of pleasure and so on begin to appear. Therefore, give up your tastes, tendencies and desires – not violently, but by knowing, and by knowing more and more deeply, that all satisfaction is the expression of your own real nature of Peace – and you shall be for ever free.

The state of Peace in deep sleep is the most familiar experience of vastu-tantra in daily life. The annihilation of all kartṛi-tantra is the ultimate goal of Vēdānta. This establishes vastu-tantra without any positive effort whatever. Look at deep sleep. You have only to give up your attachment to body, senses and mind, in the waking and dream states. Immediately, Peace – vastu-tantra – dawns, permanent and self-luminous.

Deep sleep comes involuntarily, and without the help of discrimination. Therefore it disappears, after a while. Establish the same state voluntarily and with discrimination. When once you visualize it this way, it will never disappear.

1388. THE HELPLESS FALLACY IN EXPRESSING IN WORDS A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

‘Spiritual experience’ is only one. It is visualizing or knowing the real Self. It is knowing the self in identity, without the least trace of subject-object relationship.

Subsequently, the ego attempts to express that experience in words, without itself ever having been present in the realm of experience at all. In this attempt, the ego miserably caricatures the spiritual experience, in terms of the only standard available to it – the subject-object relationship. Here, name and form must come in. The ego poses itself as the subject, and tries to make the impersonal Self its object, by calling it ‘happiness’. Thus the ego says it ‘enjoyed happiness’. This statement is nothing short of a veritable lie, since the experience was unique and indivisible.

The ego is a spurious mixture of Reality (the Self) and unreality (body and mind). The presence of Reality, in the ego itself, enables the ego to remember something of the real experience. But the memory gets blurred; by the identification of the real with the unreal, in the ego. It is further distorted in the attempt to express it through the narrow media of mind and language.

Thus the experience, when expressed in words, appears to be what it was not.

1083. KNOWLEDGE IS ALWAYS APARŌKṢHA OR EXPERIENCE PURE.

I am not one who knows, but Knowledge itself.

I am not one who exists, but Existence itself.

I am not in peace, but Peace itself.

With my contact even the unknown becomes known.

With my contact even the non-existent appears existent.

Non-existent body + Existence = Existent body

Objects of knowledge may be *parōkṣha* (indirect) or *aparōkṣha* (direct), as the case may be. But knowledge is always *aparōkṣha* or experience pure.

Expressions

994. WHAT IS EXPRESSION?

The real 'I'-principle is not the expression. It is the Reality itself (the expressed). But when you consider it in terms of its characteristics as happiness or knowledge, with a beginning and an end, that is what is called an 'expression'.

413. THROUGH SOUND TO THE ULTIMATE

The four stages of progression to the Ultimate explained in relation to the path of sound can be applied to any sphere of life. For example:

1. *Vaikharī* ['elaborated'] can very well be represented by every perceivable expression as body.
2. *Madhyamā* ['mediating'] can very well be represented by every expression as mind (inaudible) still with language.
3. *Pashyantī* ['seeing'] can very well be represented by the languageless, apparently limited 'I' or witness.
4. *Parā* ['beyond'] can very well be represented by the real Self or $\bar{A}tmā$ beyond even the limitation of oneness or beyond even the apparently limited 'I'.

$\bar{A}tmā$ expresses itself in two realms, namely the mind and the body. The Sage rests at the right end, $\bar{A}tmā$, and sees the other two as mere illusions upon the $\bar{A}tmā$ itself.

But the ordinary man remains at the wrong end, the body, attributing complete reality to its form and name, and considering the mind and $\bar{A}tmā$ as relatively subtle (less real).

Thus, the right perspective assumed by the Sage is reversed completely by the ordinary man. To get to perfection the layman has therefore to reverse his perspective likewise.

Sage's perspective	$\bar{A}tmā$ alone real	Mind and body unreal
Ordinary man's perspective	Body and mind both real	$\bar{A}tmā$ unreal

Feeling

232. HOW CAN AN OBJECT BE THE CAUSE OF AN EMOTION?

An object cannot become manifest by itself. How then can it stir up any emotion in you? If an object is known to be non-existent, even the idea cannot reasonably occur afterwards. Therefore no object can create an emotion in you. Understanding this in that manner establishes you in your real nature.

314. HOW TO FACE EMOTIONS?

You may face your emotions successfully in two ways:

1. By trying to see that you are the silent witness of the emotion, without doing any violence to the system.
2. By trying to see that emotion rises in you, abides in you and vanishes into you; and so is made of your real nature itself.

In either case, emotion fails to do you any harm.

581. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SAY 'I AM ANGRY'?

1. Since you perceive all the three states and all your activities from birth till death, you are evidently a changeless being. But when you say you are angry, you actually become anger itself. This is, of course, a clear change from your centre and that cannot be. Therefore anger, or any other feeling, is only an appearance.
2. You can remember your anger afterwards. So you must have perceived the anger yourself. As perceiver, you can never be affected by the anger. So you were never angry.

368. IS THERE DIVERSITY IN EMOTIONS?

It is experience that must prove emotion. When you say you were angry some time ago, you direct attention to that period of time in which you suppose you were angry. Examine the experience you had then. Was anger present there then? *No*. There was no anger. Because you cannot separate what you call anger from the 'I'-principle. So during that period you were all alone, and that is what your experience points to. Anger becomes evident as a separate entity only when the function of memory begins its mischievous operation.

Memory misrepresents real experience as something that is opposed to Truth. Therefore, it is memory that misrepresents permanent Peace, as transient emotions.

If memory did not interfere, every experience now called 'emotion' would really stand transformed into your real nature – the only experience. It is the wonder of wonders to find that the real nature of even this memory is Consciousness or Peace.

Looking from this stand, we find no means to distinguish between 'emotions', as we call them now. All of them stand reduced to that one Reality or Ātmā, the true nature of them all.

Thus there is no diversity in feelings and thoughts. It is only memory that posits all difference.

693. WHERE IS FEELING?

‘Feeling’ is the generic of all feelings. The generic feeling is the oneness in the diversity. It is not in the heart. It is the right Absolute.

586. FEAR

... dviṭīyād vai bhayaṁ bhavati .

[It’s only from a second thing that fear arises.]

Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣhad, 1.4.2

Fear arises out of the consciousness of the existence of one other than yourself.

613. EXPRESSIONS LIKE ANGER AND THE SAGE

Anger can exist only where there is love behind it, supporting even that anger. Or, in other words, anger is only distorted love. Look through the expression and see the background; or look through the anger and see the love behind it.

Love, as it is, is imperceptible. But anger has more visible symptoms. Therefore, if ever a Sage appears angry, take it only as a blessing in disguise; and try to see the love behind, through the visible anger.

614. HATE AND HOW TO DESTROY IT

It is a usual occurrence in worldly life that you love someone when he loves you and that you hate him when he hates you. Looking at it more closely, you see that your response was dictated purely by the other’s feelings alone. Therefore, you should also direct your feelings not to him, but only to his feelings. So you should hate the hate in him; or hate hating, wherever it be.

Therefore, naturally, you should hate the hate in you first. When that is done you will cease to hate anybody.

723. HOW TO FIGHT DISLIKE TOWARDS ANOTHER?

There is no doubt that the man and dislike of him are entirely distinct and separate, one from the other. It is the dislike alone and not the man that really troubles one. That dislike is purely mental. To get over that dislike, you must necessarily transcend the mental level. That is the only possible way.

Or, if you dislike another, you can rationally analyse the dislike and prove it to be none other than yourself, and the dislike is immediately transformed into love.

341. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN FEELING, DEEP SLEEP AND THE EXPERIENCE OF 'I AM'?

Can I think of any feeling, for example hate? *No*. Hate as such can never be an object of thought. Hate cannot stand divorced from the objects with which it is connected. You cannot conceive of hatred. It can never appear by itself. Thoughts have to be indented upon to lead you on to it; and they themselves suddenly expire, plunging you into the experience called feeling, which is beyond all thought.

It is in the same manner that you think of deep sleep. You think of all things connected with deep sleep, other than deep sleep itself. At last all thoughts expire, and you are left alone in the state called deep sleep.

Similarly, in the thought about yourself, you think about your body, senses and mind – all distinct and separate from you – and dismiss them. When all those thoughts expire, you are left alone in yourself. You are that principle which remains over, even after everything perceivable has been eliminated from you.

636. 'FEELING WITHOUT FEELING'

You say it was all Peace or Happiness in deep sleep. But neither the heart nor the mind was there to enjoy it. That experience is a typical instance of 'Feeling without feeling'.

Happiness or Peace alone is the subject, and all feelings or emotions are objects.

776. WHAT ARE FEELINGS OR EMOTIONS?

Every feeling is said to be a wave in the ocean of Peace. The analogy is not strictly correct. Here, we must understand that there is wave only in the ocean and that there is no wave in Peace. In Peace, there is neither ocean nor wave, as there is neither ocean nor wave in water. Similarly, there are no thoughts or feelings in me, the real 'I'-principle. Understanding feelings in this manner, we can enjoy even the feeling of misery, by emphasizing the real content of that misery and dismissing the illusory name and form.

Thus every emotion is a clear pointer to that permanent background Peace. So you can very well lose your apparent self at the upsurge of any emotion; not in the emotion itself, but in its permanent background.

We have all had the occasion of witnessing tragic dramas brimming over with pathos and cold cruelty towards the righteous, at which we have wept from start to finish. But the next day again we are prepared to pay in order to witness the same drama, so that we may continue to weep. What is the secret of this? Is this not the enjoyment of misery? This shows you that there is something inherent in the so-called misery that tempts you to court it again. It is nothing but the background, Peace, which is behind all emotions.

Therefore, see through every emotion and perceive that Peace alone is there. This is what every Jnyānin does. So he enjoys every feeling which you so carefully separate from Peace and thereby suffer.

891. HOW TO USE FEELINGS AS A MEANS TO REACH THE ULTIMATE?

Love for objects is a feeling. It consists of love and the object, which are distinct and separate. In that feeling, if you turn your attention to the love part ignoring the object part, you are free.

Every feeling is obstructed love. So, see every feeling as obstructed love and fix your attention on the love part, and you are free.

1412. WHAT IS THE SOURCE AND REMEDY OF PASSIONS?

Love is pure, and by nature objectless. It is one with *Ānanda* or Peace.

But when mental desires are brought to bear upon love, that love becomes degenerate and objectified as *rāga* [passion] or *kāma* [desire]. Out of *rāga* arise the manifold passions of enmity, anger, avarice etc.; and you groan under their weight. The only way of escape from this malady is to trace back the course to love, by relinquishing desires and their objects. Then *rāga* gets sublimated, passions disappear, pure love shines in all its glory, and you stand as one with it in identity.

Flattery

1005. WHY ARE PEOPLE (AND EVEN GODS) FOND OF FLATTERY?

All flattery is directed to the Reality behind the ego. Even though you do not know it, you are that Reality. The false identification of the ego with the 'I'-principle enables you to be pleased, and the ego wrongly claims for himself all praise.

Form and seeing

755. WHAT IS THE SECRET OF FORM AND SEEING?

Form exists alone (let us suppose).

Seeing = Form + Consciousness

So, when form merges in seeing, form disappears and Consciousness alone remains over. That was the real part of seeing.

You do not actually see form. It is *form forming form*. The fleshy eye is nothing but form. It is this fleshy eye that *forms form, as if it was outside*.

386. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SEE A FORM?

We usually say: 'I see a form.' What does it really mean? It has been proved that form can never exist independent of seeing, and that 'form' and 'seeing' are only synonyms.

Therefore, the expression 'I see a form' is meaningless. It would be more appropriate to recast it as 'I form a form' ('ñān oru rūpaṁ rūpikkunnu'), thereby showing that there is nothing other than myself in the form in question.

1351. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 'FORM', 'SEEING' AND 'CONSCIOUSNESS'?

'Seeing' is the verb-form of 'form', because seeing goes into the make of form.

'Consciousness' or Awareness is the noun-form of 'seeing'; because, without Consciousness, seeing cannot be seeing.

716. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SEE?

When you see, the seeing alone is there and not knowledge. But of course, there is knowledge in the seeing.

So far as seeing is concerned, that knowledge part is not taken into account at all. When the seeing is completed, form vanishes and knowledge dawns. Not knowledge of the form, but knowledge pure.

Thus every object ties you down not to unreality, but to the Reality itself. Therefore every activity, in fact, destroys its object by making it vanish into the Reality.

When 'I see' is examined closely, seeing vanishes and you will be forced to say 'I do not see'. But ordinarily, you do not push far enough, in order to examine the latter statement. When examined, the 'I do not see' vanishes likewise and there is only 'I am.' Thus the Truth is beyond both 'I see' and 'I do not see.'

So regarding any object, you come to the conclusion that there is 'nothing'. Here, '*nothing*' is the name of the *Reality*. Therefore in order to understand the significance of any activity, one has to transcend the opposites.

842. HOW DO I SEE?

Seeing is an expression of Consciousness. Consciousness first expresses itself inwardly. It is only afterwards that it expresses itself outwardly. Unless you see yourself inwardly, you cannot see yourself outwardly either. The latter is only a corollary of the former.

988. FORM AND SEEING

You say that all forms you see are seeing alone, because form and seeing are one. Why can't you assert for the same reason that all is form?

The basic method employed in all examination is the verification of distant things by instruments nearer and better known to you. Therefore you cannot take your stand in form and examine seeing, since seeing is nearer to you than form. So form merges in seeing, and not the other way round. In examining the world, the object first reduces itself into the known. In the next step the known is found to be nothing but knowledge itself. So the world is nothing but knowledge.

Generic

295. WHAT IS THE APPARENT VARIETY IN FORMS?

There is no variety in forms. You say there are many forms and you use the word 'form' to denote all forms – this form, that form, etc. What is that 'form' which is common to all forms? It is changeless and therefore beyond the realm of the mind.

So you simply use the word 'form' and drag it down to the realm of the mind and make it stand for what it is not. Things extraneous to form are brought in, to create variety in forms. Form is one and the same. It is changeless, and hence beyond the realm of the mind.

Therefore form, when rightly examined, is the ultimate Reality itself. Hence there is no variety in forms. Likewise, there is no variety in other sense objects as well. Thus man is the ultimate Reality, tree is the ultimate Reality, flower is the ultimate Reality.

The sound which is common to all sounds knows no variety, just as form which is common to all forms knows no variety. So you can never speak of various forms or various sounds. Without going into the generic sound, you cannot invent a name. *The generic in all cases is the ultimate Reality.*

The generic in you naturally refuses to be limited in any way, and so you always bring in generic names. The generic subject sees the generic object, and the particular subject sees the particular object only. It is the generic that always manifests itself. But the mind has a peculiar self-deception, and it somehow chooses only the particular. That is how the world appears.

The general rule by which the enquiry into the Truth of this world proceeds is '*from the particular to the general*'. So, in order to explain the variety in objects and perceptions, we have to get to the background and then look at the apparent variety. Then we see that the variety vanishes altogether.

Viewed from another angle of vision, we see that objects first sensed by the senses are immediately transformed into knowledge when known. Then all objectivity and variety vanish and Consciousness alone remains.

God and worship

154. VISION OF A PERSONAL GOD

Vision of a personal God is quite possible. It would seem even more real than any experience in the waking state, because that vision takes place in an intenser light.

767. IS GOD THE SAME TO ALL?

No. It changes according to what one identifies oneself with, in life. To the man who identifies himself with his body, God is also embodied. To one who identifies himself with the mind, God is also possessed of the best of all attributes.

To him who transcends even the mind, God is the right Absolute.

964. WHAT IS IDOL WORSHIP?

You cannot worship anything but a form. Concepts and percepts are all forms. Brahman [the all-comprehending] and the infinite are also forms. An idol is only something known particularly. It is the symbol of the Absolute. But in fact nobody worships the idol; because, in practice, after looking at the idol for a few moments, you invariably close your eyes and contemplate that of which the idol is only a symbol. Nobody worships the idol, and nobody can worship without an idol.

1386. IṢṬĀ-MŪRTI – ITS SCOPE, LIMITATION AND PERFECTION?

God is logically defined as the highest manifestation of the human mind. Similarly, the *iṣṭā-mūrti* [the form of God chosen for worship] is also the creation of one's own mind. You give to it the form and qualities you like most, and therefore it is called 'iṣṭā-mūrti' [literally 'embodiment of liking']. It has exactly the same characteristics as an ordinary object, but with this difference – that it is highly magnified.

Let us examine an object. It is not an intrinsic, indivisible whole. It is constituted of three distinct and separate elements, namely:

1. Form (percept) which is the immediate creation of the sense organ concerned;
2. A fund of ideas (concepts) thrown out by the mind to supplement the former percept; and
3. A sense of existence (Reality or permanency) which forms the background upon which the former two can appear.

This last one – permanence or existence – can never be the contribution of either the changing senses or of the changing mind. It is the contribution of Consciousness, beyond even the mind. In order to get at the truth of any object, it has to be analysed till its generic form is reached, eliminating the changing parts in the process. Then the object gets reduced to its essence or substance.

Neither the individual nor the 'iṣṭā-mūrti' is an exception to this rule. But the 'iṣṭā-mūrti' has one particular advantage over all other objects, in that it has no sensual or perceptual form to begin with. It has only a form of ideas or concepts – with universal qualities like all-knowingness, all-pervasiveness, almightiness etc. attributed to it. In order to understand the iṣṭā-mūrti correctly, one has to eliminate the form made up of ideas and qualities from the background 'existence'.

But this existence which is left over is, for the time-being, recognized by the aspirant only as nothingness or blankness. The meaning and the essence of this blank wall of ignorance still remains a mystery to the mind. The mind can never unravel it, by its own unaided efforts.

This same state [of mind-transcending mystery] is attained by following very many other paths; and by exercises like meditation, devotion, chanting of mantras, and yōgas of different types. The aspirant is invariably stranded in this apparently pleasurable state, taking it for the highest or being unable to get beyond or being attracted by the sense of pleasurableness in the state.

In all these instances, the enquiry is made purely objectively, ignoring the subject altogether. It is true that the object is reduced to its most generic form. But the subject still remains as a subject. As long as the least trace of subjectivity remains, objectivity cannot disappear. And until objectivity disappears completely, the real nature of the

object can never be visualized. This is the fundamental error committed by science as well as philosophy, both in India and outside, in trying to approach the Truth through the medium of the mind.

Remedy: It is only the Kāraṇa-guru, who is established in the ultimate Truth and who is prepared to lead another to it, that can help one out of this darkness. The aspirant has so far been examining things outside himself, from the self-assumed stronghold of the mind. But the Kāraṇa-guru, if one is fortunate enough to secure one, draws the attention of the aspirant away from the object, to the subject so far ignored. The truth about the real nature of this 'subject' is then expounded to the aspirant in the most unambiguous terms, in the light of the aspirant's own personal experiences.

He is thus enabled to visualize his own real nature, beyond the shadow of a doubt. He is then asked to review his former problems from his own real and permanent stand, just visualized. But to his utter bewilderment and joy, he finds every problem standing self-solved to perfection and himself free from all bondage. What appeared first as an insurmountable blank wall of ignorance, now appears as the most concrete and self-luminous Truth within.

768. HOW TO VISUALIZE THE REAL GOD?

Conceding God as the creator of the universe, God must have existed even before creation – all alone as the impersonal.

God, in his real nature, cannot be seen from or through any created thing. So body and mind are incapable of understanding God. We are forced, therefore, to look out for some principle in man which was not created.

The real 'I'-principle, defying all the three states, is found not to have been created. So, by taking to this 'I'-principle, you may be able to visualize the real God. This is what Vēdānta tells you. Vēdānta does not deny God at all.

Standing as that 'I'-principle, you see that you are all alone in deep sleep. There is no other God there. So, this 'I'-principle is the God they mean.

87. HOW CAN PRAYER TO A PERSONAL GOD LEAD TO FULFILMENT?

Man ordinarily takes himself to be very, very insignificant, compared to the vast universe. He finds his mind, with all its limitations, is unable to explain many things in this vast universe. It is also unable to achieve many of its desires.

He conceives God as the Lord of all the universe, all-powerful. So, naturally, he prays to God to get his desires fulfilled. Though ignorant of the immense powers and potentialities of his own mind, he unconsciously releases in this way all the powers that lie dormant in him, towards the creation of the Godhead he has conceived. Thus the very powers of the devotee himself, in the name and form of the God he has conceived, come back and take effect, in the fulfilment of his own prayers. But the devotee takes it all meekly, attributing it to the grace of the God, taking God as something entirely different from himself.

In getting his prayers thus fulfilled, he attaches more importance to the fulfilment of his desires than to knowing the nature of the Godhead called to his help. He relinquishes thereby all the spiritual values involved in that communion with God.

He who wants to get to the Truth does not crave for the fulfilment of individual desires, for he is concerned with spiritual values alone. Proceeding that way, he ultimately comes back to his own self and realizes God as his own Self.

997. SOME SAY THAT IT IS ONLY AFTER DEATH THAT ONE CAN BECOME ONE WITH GOD. IS IT TRUE?

At the moment of every enjoyment of happiness you are really momentarily dead, and have become one with God (whose real nature, *svarūpa*, is objectless Happiness). Then your body is relaxed, the sense organs refuse to function, the mind ceases to think or feel, and you enjoy happiness as you call it. All the principles that claim to live have, for that moment, died.

Therefore, you are actually dying every moment, to become God. So don't wait for the last death of the body, but know that you are doing it every moment and you become God himself (real Advaita).

Grace

136. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF 'GRACE'?

Really it is a meaningless word. But *śāstras* [traditional texts] endorse it in a certain way, explaining this with the words:

durlabham trayam ēvai 'tad dēvānugraha-hētukam .
manuṣyatvaṁ mumukṣutvaṁ mahāpuruṣa-saṁśrayaḥ ..

Śhrī Shankara, Vivēka-cūḍāmaṇi, 3

It means:

1. To be born as a human being,
2. To have a keen desire for liberation, and
3. To come into contact with a Sage

are the three rare possibilities attained by divine grace alone. Animals exist, and man also exists. But man exists and knows he exists. This differentiates man from animals, and it is this which is meant by the 'man-ness' (*manuṣhyatva*) referred to above. (The word 'manhood' is weak and does not convey the sense implied, so a new word 'man-ness' is coined for the purpose.)

522. ABSORPTION AND GRACE

Absorption is the process by which the subject and the object become one in the 'I'-principle. Absorption of everything created by the mind back into the Self, the Absolute – with the help of 'vidyā-vṛitti' or the functioning consciousness – is the purpose of our lives.

The real *grace* of the Absolute is in having endowed us with the two simple instruments of Consciousness and Happiness, for the specific purpose of absorbing everything into ourselves by knowledge and love.

But often we do not recognize it in our ordinary activities, and yet we go through the whole process of such absorptions unknowingly.

Guru

279. WHO CAN REALIZE THE TRUTH?

Only he who has heard the Truth from a Kāraṇa-guru, with earnestness and sincerity. All the śāstras [texts] say: ‘Thus far alone can we say. The Guru alone can give the rest.’

Ācāryavān puruṣō vēda

Chāndogya Upaniṣhad, 6.14.2

It means: He who has a Guru alone knows.

420. WHAT IS THE NEED OF A GURU?

Knowledge is of two kinds: objective and subjective. Objective knowledge of all kinds, relating to objects gross as well as subtle, can be acquired only through objective instruments of the same nature, from the intellect down to the gross body. For this, we readily seek the help of equally objective Gurus – like persons, books, instruments and other appliances.

But, for the acquisition of subjective knowledge (knowledge regarding the ‘I’-principle), none of the above instruments nor anything objective shall be of any avail. However, the objective instruments, if properly utilized, do the simple service of proving to you that you are not the body, senses or the mind. They can do nothing more, and your intellect also cannot grasp anything beyond the objective.

The subjective experience of the real ‘I’ is exclusively the subject of Vēdānta. This can be gained only by personal contact, in an attitude of complete surrender, with a Jnyānin [Sage] who is established in that subjective Reality. This Jnyānin, though appearing to the ordinary man as embodied, really stands beyond the body, senses and mind – as Ātmā itself. But the disciple, as long as he feels himself embodied, sees the Guru only as a personality. Slowly, the disciple realizes that he is that living principle beyond the body, senses and mind. Then he finds the Guru also correspondingly exalted.

At last, when the disciple, taken thus to the brink of the mind, listens to the words of the Guru explaining the nature of the positive Self, he is suddenly thrown into that supreme experience of the ultimate. It is only then that he realizes the state of the Guru to be that always, whether in apparent activity or inactivity. Thus alone can Truth be ever realized.

638. HOW TO KNOW THE GURU?

You need not and cannot know the Guru. If you know the Guru or if you do not know the Guru, in either case you cannot become a disciple. So you had better accept him when you feel you must.

639. DOES THE GURU ACCEPT ANYONE?

It is not the Guru personally who accepts anyone. The Guru accepts everyone who is sincere and earnest about knowing the Truth.

Therefore, if the aspirant has accepted the Ultimate Truth as his goal, certainly the Guru's acceptance of him is a foregone conclusion. It is the spontaneous corollary to the decision of the aspirant. If the aspirant is only prepared to open the mouth of spiritual earnestness, the nectar of Advaita will come in from the Guru, uninvited.

184. CAN A PERSONAL GOD BE A GURU?

'I say *no.*' Because a personal God is nothing but a concept. Truth is beyond all concepts. Truth by itself can never be your Guru; because, looked at from the standpoint of Truth, there is nothing else existing by its side. Truth knows no duality.

Therefore, only one who has realized the Truth can be a Guru and take you from the relative sphere to the Absolute. Hence the necessity of a *living Guru*.

315. CAN A SAGE WHO HAS LEFT HIS MORTAL COIL BE A GURU TO A NEW ASPIRANT?

No. Never. When a Sage leaves his mortal coil, nothing remains over except pure Ātmā [Self]. But if the relationship has been directly established when the Sage was alive, it is enough to lead the aspirant to the ultimate Truth.

The fact whether such a Guru-disciple relationship has been directly established is known only to the Guru. Nor can any formal tattvōpadēsha [instruction into Truth] be the criterion.

If the disciple has deep love and devotion for the person of the Guru who is a Sage, it is enough. Nothing more is needed for the disciple, by way of sādhanā [discipline] or instruction from the Guru, to reach the Ultimate and stand established there. Shrī Vaṭivīshvarattamma [see glossary] was a living example of this fact.

Even if the disciple is incapable of such deep love and devotion for the Guru at the outset, there is no cause for discouragement. Because the Guru is love incarnate. Even if the aspirant is mentally prepared to make a surrender to the Guru on the body level, and if he has the readiness to listen and act up to the instructions of the Guru at least for the time being, he is provisionally accepted as a disciple. Later on, when the Truth is imparted to him in the regular order, the whole of the Guru goes into the disciple and takes his abode there. It is only then that the aspirant becomes a regular disciple and the relationship is established for ever.

766. HOW TO FIND OUT A REAL GURU?

One who follows the path of devotion to a personal God in a *sāttvic* manner, his ultimate goal being the absolute Truth, invariably places upon his deity the responsibility of finding him a Kāraṇa-guru. The deity within gives the suggestion at the proper time and it never fails; because the suggestion emanates from his own *sāttvic* nature, which is very close to the background Truth.

But if the aspirant is one who follows the path of discrimination alone, the conditions are different.

It is never safe to accept a Guru merely on grounds of appearance and worldly reputation. Both are equally deceptive.

To test another, to see if he is competent to guide you to the Truth, is also impossible; because you will have to be higher than the other, to apply such a test. Therefore a regular test is out of the question.

The only reasonable recourse, left to you, is to put all your doubts and difficulties before the proposed Guru; and to listen to his answers patiently, relying more upon the response of your heart than upon the intellectual satisfaction that you receive from his answers. If he is able to satisfy you both ways, you may without hesitation accept him and follow his advice and instructions.

251. WHAT DOES A GURU DO FOR A DISCIPLE?

It is something which a disciple need never bother herself about, and which the intellect can never grasp.

You need only know that a Guru takes you from the phenomenal to the Absolute. You will be able to get a glimpse of it only when you rise higher and higher. From the level of the mind, you can never conceive how it takes place. Much less understand it.

Your question is purely from the mind's level. So give it up. Do not try to solve it, for the time being. Ultimately, you will come to the position that the question was not necessary at all.

463. WHAT DOES THE GURU GIVE ME?

'The correct perspective.' The world and its objects, when viewed through the perspective bestowed by the Guru, appear transformed into that ultimate Reality, just as the brackish and poisonous waters of the ocean are transformed into pure water when they pass through the heat of the sun above.

303. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE GURU TALKS TO THE DISCIPLE?

'It is the Truth that speaks the Truth to the Truth. That is the Truth about it.' When the Guru talks to the disciple, it creates a deep conviction in him regarding the point at issue; and he becomes more and more attached to the Guru.

691. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE 'GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP'?

From the standpoint of the Guru – who is impersonal – he has no disciple. But he allows the disciple to take him as his Guru. That is all. The impersonal is not connected with the personal; but the personal is connected with the impersonal. The Truth is the world; but the world is not the Truth.

When once you have accepted a Kāraṇa-guru, you must unconditionally and unreservedly surrender your ego to the Guru: who represents the ultimate Truth. Remember the words of Shri Shankara.

... jīvō nā 'ham dēśikō 'ktyā śivō 'ham ..

Shri Shankara, Advaita-pancaratnam, 1.2

I am not the jīva. But I am Peace, because my Guru has said so.

799. TO BE NEAR OR AWAY FROM THE GURU – WHICH IS MORE ADVANTAGEOUS?

Each has its own advantage and disadvantage. When one is near the Guru, the obstacles that come up are transcended immediately, in spite of the retarding influences of the ego. When you are at a distance from the Guru, the progress might be slower but will certainly be steadier, being dependent on ‘yourself’ alone.

1135. WHY DOES THE GURU TEACH AND WHAT?

Because the disciples earnestly and sincerely ask questions. But when the Truth is being imparted, the Guru stands as Truth beyond the talk; and the disciple is also pulled up, in spite of him. The disciple may begin by listening to the talk, but he is soon taken beyond the talk. The talk is not itself the Reality, but the Reality is in the talk and is the goal of the talk.

The personal is taken up by the impersonal for discussion, and the language of the personal acts as the medium. But the personal – including the medium – is given up, when the background is visualized.

The question presupposes that the disciple is imperfect and that the teacher is perfect. The teacher shows the disciple that he too is perfect, and there the teaching ends.

1295. THE GURU THOUGHT

It is taken indiscriminately in more than one way.

One such way is the thought: ‘I am the Guru.’ *This is forbidden*; because, by that thought, the ultimate is crushed and the apparent ‘I’ gains in strength.

But in the next thought, ‘The Guru is in me’, the ultimate will gradually devour the ‘me’ and leave one as the ultimate Truth.

877. WHEN DO I BEGIN TO LOVE MY GURU?

When that which has been given by the Guru is accepted wholly, love for the Guru springs up within you.

536. WHAT IS THE REAL GURU-DAKṢHIṆA (TO THE KĀRAṆA-GURU)?

The disciple’s establishment in the ultimate Truth is the greatest and the only dakṣhiṇa (offering) one can humbly place at the feet of the Guru for the invaluable services rendered by him.

790. HOW TO THINK OF MY GURU?

Think of your Guru only in the dualistic sphere. Don’t apply your intellect to it. It is far beyond your intellect. Apply your heart to it and get lost in the Guru. Then the Ultimate dances like a child before you.

But when you think of the real ‘I’-principle or ‘Consciousness’, think that they are the absolute Reality itself, beyond name and form.

All these are but synonyms of the ultimate Reality. But the Guru alone has the revered place of honour and veneration in all planes. It is an experience that sometimes

when you go deep into pure Consciousness and get lost in it (nirvikalpa samādhi of the Jnyānin), you see the person of your Guru there, and this vision throws you into an ecstatic joy taking you even beyond *sat-cit-ānanda*. Blessed indeed are you then.

Happiness and Peace

148. MAN'S HUNT AFTER HAPPINESS – AN ANALOGY

Man hunting for happiness is just like a beetle with a drop of butter on its head. Getting scent of the butter, the beetle hovers around, knocking about everywhere for the source of the scent, but is ignorant of the fact that the butter is on its own head.

Likewise, man hunts for happiness because it is in himself and he is not able to see it there. But the urge which makes him hunt comes from that happiness itself.

322. HAPPINESS IS PEACE.

Happiness exists only in relation to previous suffering. When that state of happiness continues without being disturbed by unhappiness, it is called deep Peace.

333. PROBLEMS AND PEACE

Some people say they have no problems in life. This is meaningless talk. It only means that they are mere cowards, who stubbornly refuse to think in the light of evident facts.

Happiness and unhappiness can be conceived of as opposites only when they are considered as definitely limited expressions of Peace. They are usually compared to the obverse and the reverse of the same coin, the coin itself being Peace. If either of these expressions happens to continue indefinitely, its expressionship vanishes and it stands transformed into Peace.

628. BLISS SEEMS TO APPEAR AND DISAPPEAR. WHY?

It is not the bliss that comes and goes, but it is you, the ego, that often goes into the bliss which is your very nature, and comes out into the mind. Your ego alone is responsible for it.

1360. HOW ARE HAPPINESS AND CONSCIOUSNESS ONE?

From the experience in deep sleep, we see that Happiness is self-luminous, or that Happiness lights itself up. This 'lighting-ness' of Happiness is what is called 'Consciousness'. Both are intrinsic in the Self. This is how one knows Peace in deep sleep. This is knowledge in identity. Therefore, '*Happiness can never be unintelligent.*'

465. NOBODY DESIRES PURE HAPPINESS. WHY?

Desire is a function of the mind, and pure Happiness is on a level far beyond the mind. Therefore the mind can never conceive or desire pure Happiness. What the mind desires is the one last manifestation just before extinction or merging itself into Happiness.

Take for example the desire for the vision of your 'iṣṭa-dēva' [chosen deity], which usually gives you immense pleasure. Exactly as the vision gives you pleasure, the disappearance of the vision gives you pain; and this is inevitable, as the devotee knows from experience only too well. Thus, the condition just after the vision is dark and dismal, compared to the hopeful, exciting and pleasant condition just preceding it. Therefore, mindful of these two opposite conditions before and after the vision, the devotee naturally longs to prolong the pleasure as much as possible, knowing that the gloom after the vision is inevitable, and that the duration of the vision itself, though pleasant, is not under his control. So his desire for the pleasant feelings, experienced before the culmination of the vision, is greater than his desire for the vision itself, which he takes only as a logical corollary.

Moreover, the mind does not find any glamour in the ultimate Peace, from the standpoint of the mind itself. When you are hungry, what the mind really wants is the disappearance of the hunger, which can only be in Peace. The mind, being incapable of conceiving this Peace, turns to the objective food which is capable of removing the physical hunger. Thus the mind desires always only that preliminary pleasure.

Nobody except the Sage can desire that ultimate Happiness, since all the rest are in the realm of the mind. But the Sage does not desire even that, since he knows he *is* that already.

1396. WHAT IS THE GOOD OF KNOWING 'I AM HAPPINESS', IF I CANNOT ENJOY IT?

It has been proved already that one's real nature is objectless happiness, and that one can experience it. It is experienced not through subject-object relationship as in the waking and dream states, but in identity as in deep sleep. In deep sleep, the mind is dead.

The questioner evidently wants to know the happiness, herself standing separate as the knower and to feel the joy of it as the enjoyer. This is possible only in duality, as in the waking or dream states.

Even there, a deeper examination will show that the so called enjoyment of happiness is being one with it. Happiness is never enjoyed. To know that 'I am Happiness' is a spiritual experience. Spiritual experience is only one. It is Non-duality. Its real nature is pure Happiness itself, and you know it there in identity.

On coming to the waking state, you seem to know it objectively. Immediately, happiness is separated from you as your object – a mere idea. You have actually lost the happiness, by trying to know it or feel it. Therefore, never objectify happiness by trying to separate it from you, in any manner.

740. HOW TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND PEACE?

Happiness is momentary.

Peace is happiness continued.

Happiness, as seen by the disciple, is apparent and time-limited.

Happiness, in the eyes of the Guru, is nothing other than absolute Peace itself (Happiness unlimited). It transcends even happiness. It is *sat-cit-ānanda* [existence-consciousness-happiness]. Or better still, *sat-cit-shānta* [existence-consciousness-peace].

Harmony

924. HOW DO YOU EXPERIENCE BEAUTY IN AN OBJECT?

Beauty, as the world conceives it, is nothing but the harmony of discordant things. The discordant notes in the object first attract you. Slowly, the notes die away and you become aware of an external harmony; which in its turn leads you to the inner harmony in which you yourself are lost. This inner harmony is itself beauty – your real nature.

925. DOES THIS NOT TAKE AWAY THE RELISH OF LIFE?

No. Never. It only enhances the relish. At first you enjoy beauty. But then you desire to be that enjoyment which is beyond joy, and thus you are taken to that harmony itself. You put that question because you have not experienced beauty or harmony in its fullness.

926. HOW DO THE SAGE AND THE IGNORANT MAN SEE BEAUTIFUL THINGS?

The Sage sees first pure degreeless harmony and then he sees the object. So he may be said to see the object in the beauty. But the ordinary man, who stands only at the body level, sees the object first; and only then does he see something of the beauty or harmony expressed in the object. This helps him to have a peep into the beyond and nothing more.

584. WHERE IS HARMONY?

We see harmony in this world only on rare occasions. But the Sage sees the same harmony always and everywhere, nay even in apparent misery and discord.

986. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF MUSIC?

Harmony outside takes you to harmony inside, and harmony inside is the 'I'-principle itself. Thus music takes you to the harmony behind it, and that takes you to the harmony inside which is Truth itself.

Heart

900. HOW DO THE HEAD AND THE HEART FUNCTION?

In spiritual matters alone, the head and the heart work harmoniously together. But in the phenomenal sphere, they often work each divorced of the other.

282. WHAT MAKES ONE A TRUE ASPIRANT?

It is one's earnest desire to get to the Truth that prompts one to search for it. This desire is nothing but the direct function of the heart. All your conscious efforts, even though actuated by reason, follow only the course chalked out by this heart.

Therefore, every seeker of the Truth expresses his heart sufficiently well. At last, when the seeker following the path of reason reaches the citadel of Truth, he finds the heart also there in full and as one with reason and himself.

So Truth is visualized by the harmonious blending of the head and the heart, in Peace.

374. WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR EVIL TENDENCIES?

If we take to evil unknowingly, an intellectual corrective might be of some avail in dissuading us from it afterwards. Most often, we take to such evil activities knowing full well the scope of their consequences, but being unable to resist the stronger cravings of the heart. When the heart and the head are thus opposed to each other, the head is helpless and meekly surrenders to the heart. In such cases no amount of intellectual correction will be of any avail.

It is here that we really need a potent remedy. The heart itself being in trouble, the remedy has naturally to come from the beyond. But beyond the heart, there is nothing but the 'I'-principle: the Truth. Adhering to this 'I'-principle, either by analysis or by elimination, your samskāras [habituated inclinations] drop away, for want of support.

If you have heard the Truth from a Sage, the problem is easy enough. Whenever you find your heart straying away to anything undesirable, just think of the Guru, who is the ultimate Truth, and the heart recoils with a shudder. It will think twice before daring to launch into similar mischief once again.

This is the only law that relates the phenomenal to the Absolute. The heart is always at Happiness which is one's own nature. The heart always takes you to the source and controls even the intellect.

401. HEART AND PRĒMA [LOVE]

Heart + I am = I am the heart.

Love is the expression of the Self through the heart, and the heart is always wet. It takes you straight to the Self or Ātmā and drowns you in it. Language is dry and is the expression of the Self through the head or reason. It takes you only to the brink of Ātmā; and leaves you there, till the heart rises up to wet reason and ultimately to drown you in love.

1179. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE HEAD AND THE HEART

The head and the heart are not water-tight compartments. They complement each other. It may be said that 'It is a harmonious blending of the head and the heart in the ultimate Truth that is called realization.' It may generally be said that one gets enlightened through the head, and gets established in the Truth through the heart. A thought, when it is deep, becomes feeling or in other words descends into the heart.

Deep knowledge or objectless knowledge is 'Love'. Love always gives and never takes.

Only if the giving is spontaneous and prompted by the heart alone, is it efficacious and divine. The slightest taint of the ego in the giving pollutes it to that extent. If you follow the path of love, until love is its own fulfilment, you reach the highest. But an ignorant aspirant can never complete it unaided, without the help of a Kāraṇa-guru.

'I'-ness and 'this'-ness

350. HOW ARE THE 'I'-NESS (AHANTA) AND THE 'THIS'-NESS (IDANTA) RELATED?

The 'I'-ness is the *ego*, which develops into body, senses and mind.

The 'this'-ness is the *non-ego*, which develops into the world. But the 'this'-ness can never stand by itself. Therefore, neither reason nor experience allows us to state that objects appear in the 'this'-ness alone.

Both of them appear and disappear on Ātmā [Self], the only Reality.

1045. WHAT IS 'I'-NESS?

It is used in two senses:

1. In the phenomenal plane, 'I'-ness distinguishes you from others. It contains the *samskāras* [habit-driven inclinations] of body, senses and mind and is intended only for worldly purposes.
2. In the spiritual sense, it is the impersonal and changeless background of the apparent 'I'. It takes you to the ultimate Reality.

1373. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE 'I'-NESS AND THE 'THIS'-NESS?

Life is a complex mixture of the 'I'-ness and the 'this'-ness. The 'I'-ness being the real subject is first explained by the Guru to the true aspirant, as the impersonal 'I' or real 'I'-principle or pure Consciousness or the ultimate Truth. Immediately he visualizes it.

The 'this' is something appearing distinct and separate from the 'I'. While the 'I' can exist independently in its own right, the 'this' cannot have a separate existence even for a moment. Therefore, in order to know the content of 'this', you have only to separate the 'this'-ness from the 'this'. It can be done with effort and sometimes without effort. Then the pure 'I' remains over, proving thereby that the 'this' is in essence nothing other than the 'I'. Therefore the world is nothing but the real 'I'.

'I'-principle

139. WHAT AM I?

I can perceive and know my body, sense-organs and mind. Therefore I am evidently the subject, distinct and separate from all of them.

20. HOW ARE OBJECTS RELATED TO ME?

All this world is my object, and I am the changeless subject. Each one of my objects serves only to point to me and to prove me. I need only make my stand there firmer and establish myself at the real centre, as the ultimate subject 'I'.

1128. WHAT AM I?

Am I the body, senses or mind? No. If I claim to be anything, that must be with me wherever I go. Doing, perceiving, thinking and feeling do not go with me wherever I go.

'Knowing' alone is always with me. So I am knowingness or Consciousness alone. I am that always, and I am free. I can only be that which remains over, when the object or active part is separated from the perceiver, perception or percept.

21. HOW TO RETREAT INTO THE REAL 'I'-PRINCIPLE?

What do you mean when you say 'I'? It does not at all mean the body, senses or mind. It is pure experience itself – in other words, the end of all knowledge or feeling.

First of all, see that the body, senses and mind are your objects and that you are always the changeless subject, distinct and separate from the objects. The objects are present only when they are perceived. But I exist, always changeless, whether perceptions occur or not, extending through and beyond all states. Thus you see that you are never the body, senses or mind. Make this thought as deep and intense as possible, until you are doubly sure that the wrong identification will never recur.

Next, examine if there is anything else that does not part with the 'I'-principle, even for a moment. *Yes*. There is Consciousness. It never parts with the 'I'-principle, and can never be an object either. So both must mean one and the same thing. Or, in other words, 'I' is Consciousness itself. Similarly, wherever there is the 'I'-principle left alone, there is also the idea of deep peace or happiness, existing along with it.

It is universally admitted that one loves only that which gives one happiness, or that a thing is loved only for its happiness value. Evidently, happiness itself is loved more than that which is supposed to give happiness. It is also admitted that one loves one's self more than anything else. So it is clear that you must be one with happiness or that you are happiness itself. All your activities are only attempts to experience that happiness or self in every experience.

The ordinary man fixes a certain standard for all his worldly activities and tries to attain it to his satisfaction. Thereby, he is only trying to experience the self in the form of happiness, as a result of the satisfaction obtained on reaching the standard already accepted by him.

For every perception, thought or feeling, you require the services of an instrument suited to each activity. But, to love your own self, you require no instrument at all. Since you experience happiness by retreating into that 'I'-principle, that 'I' must be either an object to give you happiness, which is impossible; or it must be happiness itself. So the 'I'-principle, Peace and Consciousness are all one and the same. It is in Peace that thoughts and feelings rise and set. This peace is very clearly expressed in deep sleep, when the mind is not there and you are one with Consciousness and Peace.

Pure consciousness and deep peace are your real nature. Having understood this in the right manner, you can well give up the use of the words 'Consciousness' and 'Happiness' and invariably use 'I' to denote the Reality.

Don't be satisfied with only reducing objects into Consciousness. Don't stop there. Reduce them further into the 'I'-principle. So also, reduce all feelings into pure Happiness and then reduce them into the 'I'-principle. When you are sure that you will not return to identification with the body any longer, you can very well leave off the intermediaries of Consciousness and Happiness, and directly take the thought 'I, I, I, ...' subjectively.

Diversity is only in objects. Consciousness, which perceives them all, is one and the same.

22. WHAT IS MY REAL GOAL? THE 'I'-PRINCIPLE.

The word 'I' has the advantage of taking you direct to the core of your self. But you must be doubly sure that you will no longer return to identification with the body.

By reducing objects into Consciousness or happiness, you come only to the brink of experience. Reduce them further into the 'I'-principle; and then 'it', the object, and 'you', the subject, both merge into experience itself. Thus, when you find that what you see is only yourself, the 'seeing' and 'objects' become mere empty words.

When you say the object cannot be the subject, you should take your stand not in any of the lower planes, but in the ultimate subject 'I' itself.

In making the gross world mental, the advaitin is an idealist. But he does not stop there. He goes further, examining the 'idea' also and proves it to be nothing but Consciousness. Thus he goes beyond even the idealist's stand.

The realist holds that matter is real and mind is unreal, but the idealist says that mind is real and matter is unreal. Of the two, the idealist's position is better; for when the mind is taken away from the world, the world is not. Therefore, it can easily be seen that the world is a thought form. It is difficult to prove the truth of the realist's stand; for dead matter cannot decide anything.

The advaitin [non-dualist] goes even further. Though he takes up the stand of the idealist when examining the world, he goes beyond the idealist's position and proves that the world and the mind, as such, are nothing but appearances and the Reality is Consciousness.

Perception proves only the existence of knowledge and not the existence of the object. Thus the gross object is proved to be non-existent. Therefore, it is meaningless to explain subtle perceptions as a reflection of gross perceptions. Thus all perceptions are reduced to the ultimate 'I'-principle, through knowledge.

6. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF 'I'?

The same word, used in similar contexts, cannot carry different meanings with different persons. When I say 'I' meaning 'my body', another understands it in the same sense, meaning 'my body'. But when the other person uses the same word 'I', he means '*his* body', which is entirely different from '*my* body'.

Thus, in the case of everyone, the bodies meant are different; but the word used is the same 'I', always. So the 'I' must mean: *either* the individual bodies of all men – which is ludicrous – *or* it must evidently mean no body at all.

The latter being the only possible alternative, the 'I' must necessarily mean that changeless principle in which every body appears and disappears. This is the real meaning of 'I', even in our daily traffic with the world.

1224. WHEN DOES MY REAL NATURE SHINE AS IT IS?

Whenever the ego-mind subsides or disappears, the background Awareness shines as Happiness. Whenever objects of Awareness disappear, pure Awareness shines by itself, as pure Consciousness.

3. WHERE, WHEN AND HOW DO I SEE ME?

1. I see Me where the 'where' is not.
2. I see Me when the 'when' is not.
3. I see Me when 'I see me not.'

Explanation:

1. I shall see Me only when I transcend the gross body idea, which is governed by space as well as by time.
2. I shall see Me only when I transcend the subtle body or the mind, which is governed by time alone.
3. I shall see Me only on leaving both the gross and the subtle bodies – when I stop my objective search and turn inward to find myself as one with that which I was searching for; in other words only when the subject-object relationship vanishes.

24. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'SVABHĀVA'?

'Svabhāva' means one's own real nature. All activities, like perceiving, doing etc., are 'asvabhāva' – the opposite of one's real nature.

Svabhāva is knowledge without object, or happiness without object. For you are knowledge itself, or happiness itself, and cannot know anything else.

81. I AS EXPERIENCE CAN HAVE NO OBJECT.

You are the background of all your emotions and passions. Feeling is the one word to denote all these. It means that feeling is their general background; and so it must be the Absolute, called '*rasa*' [see page 54, note 453]. Likewise, knowing is the background of all thoughts.

A man's thirst to know and to be happy proceeds from his real nature. He is happiness and knowledge. Knowing and feeling in their secondary senses may have an object; but in their correct sense, they can have no object at all.

Because that which goes into the make of all feelings, and always remains as their background, is what is called 'rasa'. We use the word 'feeling' to denote particular feelings such as anger, pride, etc. We use the one word 'feeling' to denote all feelings. So, feeling is the common background of all feelings. This pure feeling is called 'rasa'. It is the right Absolute.

Likewise, thoughts and perceptions are one when viewed as knowing, because knowing has to be present in all thoughts and perceptions. That again is the 'I'-principle, and that is pure Consciousness.

Similarly, all objects are one when viewed as existence.

149. 'I AM' TO THE IGNORANT MAN AND THE SAGE

We all say 'I am clever', 'I am happy', and so on. In this, the layman ignores the vital part 'I am', and emphasizes the rest. But the 'I am' alone is important for the Sage, and he ignores the rest.

245. HOW TO SHOW THAT THE 'I'-PRINCIPLE IN ME AND IN ALL IS ONE AND THE SAME?

You say the 'I'-principle in 'me'. What is this 'me'? Is it the body, senses, or mind? No. Because these are not there in deep sleep, and still the 'I'-principle is there all alone.

So the 'me' means the 'I'-principle itself; and it comes to this. The 'I'-principle is indivisible and is only one. Duality is only in manifestation – namely body, senses or mind. Beyond this, there cannot be any duality, since there is nothing there to be distinguished from another.

Therefore, the 'I'-principle is unique, and the objects alone are different.

255. WHY DO I FEEL THAT I DO NOT KNOW MY REAL NATURE?

The 'I'-principle does not ever feel and does not make a complaint either. It is always the mind that feels. The mind is incapable of knowing my real nature. Even when the mind turns its attention to my real nature, the mind loses its own form and gets merged in Consciousness – my real nature.

Before you can say you feel, you must necessarily perceive that feeling. That perceiver then must certainly be beyond that feeling function. You are that, the 'I'-principle.

250. HOW DO I KNOW THAT I HAVE STRAYED AWAY FROM MY REAL NATURE?

Answer: You have not strayed away.

Question: Then who wants to know the Truth?

Answer: The mind or the ego.

All illustrations used in the course of spiritual talks have to be immediately applied to the subjective sphere and their significance realized.

The 'I'-thought is not the real 'I'.

Eliminate the thought aspect completely from the 'I'-thought, and what remains alone is the real 'I'-principle.

260. HOW CAN I BE ONE WITH CONSCIOUSNESS?

1. They cannot be separated, even for a moment, even in idea.
2. Both stand as the ultimate perceiver or subject; and can never be objectified, not even in idea.

The doer or enjoyer is consciousness, appearing limited by 'buddhi' or 'generic mind'.

In the presence of Consciousness, the mind, senses and body – which are really dead matter – function as though they are not dead matter, just like iron filings getting enlivened in the proximity of a magnet.

When the mind is proved to be Consciousness itself, samskāras [habituations] die out, and the mind no longer continues as mind.

366. EFFICACY OF THE REAL 'I'-THOUGHT

If you take to the deep thought, 'I am pure Consciousness', with the emphasis rightly placed on 'I' and not upon Consciousness, it amounts to a regular process of relaxation, and the brain cells do not move in the least. On the contrary, even casual ailments, like a head-ache caused by mental or physical strain, begin to disappear after such relaxation.

It has already been proved that 'I am knowledge or Consciousness.' If the meaning of this statement is rightly understood, your stand must have undergone a thorough change. You should be able to apply boldly all the activities of the one with equal emphasis to the other.

Taking 'knowing or shining' as the only expression of Consciousness, when you say 'I am shining', you must be able to take it as equivalent to 'I am I-ing'. And when you say 'I know the object', it must mean 'I am I-ing the object.' It will also prove that the object is nothing but yourself.

712. WHAT IS THE ACTIVITY OF THE 'I'?

No. The 'I' has no activity whatsoever.

I am the Reality. To be active, 'I' must get out of the Reality, for the time being. Because activity is only in duality. But can you ever get out of the Reality? *No.* Then all search for Truth becomes meaningless. Has the rope ever become the snake? *No.* Then where is the problem? Nothing you have understood in a drunken mood can ever take you out of drunkenness. Such is the question 'Why?' Get rid of the poison, and the question disappears.

933. WHY HAS THE 'I'-PRINCIPLE NO ACTIVITY?

Because the 'I'-principle has neither organs nor mind. But it is not dead. It is ever-present and it is from it that everything else gets light.

499. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'I AM I-ING'?

The ignorant man sees only changes in this world, and is ignorant of the changeless background behind all changes.

So the Ācārya [Guru] first tries to show the changeless 'I' as distinct and separate from the changing body, senses and mind.

Then the disciple is asked to take his stand in that 'I'-principle, and to look from there at the changing world. Immediately, the changes appear an illusion; and he understands that the changes are nothing but expressions of the changeless 'I'. And that is the changeless itself.

So, when I say the world is shining, it is nothing but myself expressing or shining. Or in other words, 'I am I-ing.' Because shining is not a function, but my real nature.

390. BODY, MIND AND THE 'I'-PRINCIPLE. WHAT IS THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND ESSENCE?

During the period of preliminary investigations in the study of Vēdānta, you are asked to try to separate body and mind from the 'I'-principle. It is only to make you understand the relative values of the terms. Such a separation is not really possible; because, separated from the 'I'-principle, the other two do not exist at all. Therefore they are really nothing but the 'I'-principle. Vēdānta asks you only to recognize this Truth.

From the position of Consciousness, one can say that everything else is not. But from no position can you say that Consciousness is not. Because one has to be conscious of the Truth of that very statement before making it. Therefore Consciousness stands as the background of even that statement. Hence, even the statement that 'Consciousness is *not*' only proves that Consciousness *is*. That Consciousness must be self-luminous and permanent.

436. HOW ARE THE REAL FLOWER AND THE REAL 'I' ONE AND THE SAME?

The 'flower' is that permanent something upon which all its adjuncts or qualities appear and disappear. So also, I am that permanent something upon which the expressions – like body, senses and mind – come and go.

Everything pertaining to the flower corresponds to the things pertaining to the 'I'. But, giving up all adjuncts from the subject as well as from the object, we find that what remains over is neither known nor unknown, but real; and therefore is nothing but the ultimate Reality.

Therefore, the real 'flower' and the real 'I' are in essence one and the same.

1085. AS LONG AS I AM A HUMAN BEING, IS IT POSSIBLE FOR ME TO KNOW THE TRUTH BEYOND?

The question presupposes that you are a human being. I question that statement first. Are you a human being? Define a human being. A human being is an incongruous mixture of body, senses and mind with the 'I'-principle. All except the 'I'-principle are changing every moment.

But you will admit that you are that 'I'-principle. You, as that 'I'-principle, stand as the permanent background connecting all these changes that come and go. That 'I'-principle is distinct and separate from the changing body, senses and mind. Where is the human being in your deep sleep, when you have no body, senses or mind? Certainly nowhere.

Still 'you' are there, as that 'I'-principle. Therefore you are not a human being but a changeless, permanent principle. As such, you can very well understand that Truth, beyond.

Ideas

1223. OBJECT IS NOTHING BUT IDEA.

Even according to science, an object is only an idea.

Science says that the proof of the existence of an object can only be its perception by the senses. The perception, when it is examined, is found to be this. Certain rays of light passing through the eyeball fall on the retina, producing an inverted image there. The optical nerves take this impression to the brain centre, from where it is transmitted to the mind as a mere idea.

What you experience is only this idea. The idea does not prove the existence of the object at all, but only the idea. Therefore an object is nothing but an idea.

1284. WHO KNOWS MY IDEAS?

Certainly not another idea. Because two ideas cannot exist simultaneously.

It is the transcendental Consciousness alone that can know an idea and know it not through the subject-object relationship, but by being identical with it. It is the non-empirical Consciousness that knows the idea; just as you know happiness in deep sleep, by being identical with it.

The moment an idea is known, the material part of the idea drops away and its essence – pure Consciousness – alone remains over. What you call an idea now is not really idea, as you presume, but only pure Consciousness. Because an idea is known by pure Consciousness, and Consciousness cannot know anything other than Consciousness.

Therefore, the ego's knowledge is also non-empirical. When you emphasize the Consciousness aspect, which is the essence of the ego, the ego gets immediately transformed into non-empirical Consciousness.

The moment you know Happiness, it is non-empirical and one with you. Thus, whenever you know anything, you stand as one with the thing, as Consciousness pure.

286. HOW TO RISE FROM THE GROSS TO THE ABSOLUTE THROUGH ANY SENSE ORGAN? (e.g. the hearing organ)

An ‘idea’ is conveyed to us by one or more words in any language. The same ‘idea’ is also capable of being conveyed to another in another language. Thus, the idea is the same, though its upādhis [expressions] or languages are different.

Therefore, this ‘idea by itself’ has no language of its own, and the language does not go into the make of the idea. It only expresses itself in the gross or the subtle, through any language. Unexpressed as it is, it is languageless.

All ideas are similarly reducible to the languageless idea. As languageless ideas, there is nothing to distinguish between each other, except the samskāra [subtle conditioning] that you started the enquiry each time from a particular idea. Therefore, languageless ideas cannot be many but only one.

Transcending the samskāra regarding the origin of this enquiry, the languageless idea stands as the ultimate Reality. The following are the definite stages [from left to right], in the progress from the gross to the Absolute.

<i>Vaikharī</i>	<i>Madhyamā</i>	<i>Pashyantī</i>	<i>Parā</i>
Gross	Subtle	Witness	Absolute
Gross idea	Subtle idea	Languageless idea	Absolute
Gross mantra	Subtle mantra	Essence of mantra	Absolute
Gross form	Subtle form	Form generic	Absolute
...

The third and the last stages are one and the same, but for the samskāra [subtly felt inclination] that the third has some distant relationship with the preceding two stages.

Identification

144. THE BASIC ERROR

The basic error is the false identification of the ‘I’-principle with the body, senses or mind – each at a different time. This is the pivot round which our worldly life revolves.

284. WHY DOES CONSCIOUSNESS THINK IT IS SOMETHING OTHER THAN ITSELF?

Consciousness and everything other than Consciousness exist in two different planes. When we look from the plane of Consciousness, we find there is nothing other than Consciousness, and there this question cannot arise.

When looked at from the mind’s plane and conceding the existence of both world and Consciousness, it has been proved that Consciousness can be there only as witness. The witness witnesses only perceptions, and not objects. It has also been proved that perception is nothing other than Consciousness itself. For this reason also, the world is an illusion and the question cannot arise.

The question cannot arise in Consciousness, since the world is not there. Nor in the mind’s plane, since you cannot drag down Consciousness to the mind’s level and make it part of the apparent world.

307. FALSE IDENTIFICATION – HOW DOES IT WORK?

The activities of body, senses and mind are not self-dependent. The 'I' alone knows thoughts. But the 'I' does not express itself. Therefore, to correlate two thoughts, the mind is utilized. The mind identifies itself with the 'I' and works in the name of 'memory'.

It may be said, from the sphere of duality, that the individual *jīva* imbibes experiences from the witness of the states. But it may be asked: 'Is this possible?' It is. If the *jīva* can claim the *sat-cit-ānanda* aspect of the Reality, why not this?

On listening to the Guru you realize the Truth, *now* and *here*. You have only to cling on to it, in order to take it to *then* and *there*.

Ignorance

722. NESCIENCE (ALSO CALLED 'IGNORANCE' OR 'MĀYĀ') IS A MISNOMER.

The only phenomenal experience we have is the knowledge of an object, gross or subtle. If the object is removed from the knowledge of the object, what remains over can only be pure Knowledge or Consciousness. Similarly, when all objects are removed from the knowledge of objects in deep sleep, what remains over is nothing but the same Consciousness, pure.

1183. WHAT IS ĀVARAṆA?

That by which you consider deep sleep to be a state of unconsciousness, while Consciousness reigns in all its purity there, is *āvaraṇa* [obscuring].

1447. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE?

Both knowledge and ignorance are supposed to exist as indeterminate, and to manifest themselves as determinate forms in the waking and dream states. The indeterminate being the source of the determinate, the former alone need be considered.

The indeterminate can never be understood through the subject-object relationship, but only in identity. Everything known in identity is the real 'I'-principle, and therefore indeterminate knowledge and indeterminate ignorance are one and the same as the real 'I'.

Moreover, between knowledge and ignorance, knowledge has to be relied upon, even to prove or disprove ignorance. But knowledge never needs the help of anything else to establish itself. It is self-luminous. Thus, knowledge alone is real, and ignorance is unreal.

Ignorance of a thing appears only in retrospect and never in the present. It is posited in the past, only after perception of the object concerned in the present. Therefore ignorance is never experienced by anyone; and something which has never been experienced can never be considered real.

Illusion

247. HOW TO DESTROY THE ILLUSION OF OBJECTS?

Two different approaches:

1. Destroying the immediate object alone, allowing the samskāras [subtly felt inclinations] to linger on. This is a partial solution prescribed only to the lower adhikāris [aspirants].
2. But the higher adhikāris are instructed to examine the objects now and here, and it is shown that they are nothing but the 'I'-principle. This leaves behind no samskāra whatsoever.

339. WHAT IS THE CAUSE OF ILLUSION OR UNREALITY?

Reality can never be the cause of unreality. So unreality or illusion alone must be the cause of illusion. This is meaningless, and hence there can be no cause for illusion or unreality.

It has been proved already that all that is seen is form, all that is heard is sound, and so on. All that is known is knowledge. Therefore ignorance also, when known, becomes knowledge itself. And when it is not known, there is no problem either.

Misunderstanding cannot know understanding. But, on the contrary, understanding alone can know misunderstanding. When understanding begins to know misunderstanding, misunderstanding becomes understanding itself.

816. HOW TO PROVE THAT NOTHING EXISTS EXCEPT WHEN KNOWN?

ajñāta sattayilla

[There is no existence that's not known.]

An examination of the dream experience is the easiest way to prove this. The whole dream world becomes an illusion when the state changes. This is clear when you look at it from the waking state or from the Reality in the relative sphere.

Similarly, there is no evidence to prove that the waking state is not also an illusion. You may ask where does the dream world come from? If there is *something*, it might have come from something. But if it is nothing, where is it to come from? So, if it is an illusion, how could it have come from anything?

Even in the waking state, can you connect two thoughts, perceptions or objects? *No*. Because things appear and disappear one after the other and none of them can be given permanence. No two things can exist simultaneously and nothing can be connected. When this is the case even in the waking state, why do you go so far as the dream state to prove the illusion? You are the One and so you can have connection only with that One.

tiriyunnoravastha mūnnuma-
sthiramanyōnyamavēdyamenkilum
śariyāyavayētusaktīyāl-
afiyāmāsthirasākṣitanne ñān

[Of the three states, each comes and goes
unsteadily; and each can't know

the other states. But by what capability can they be rightly known? The changeless witness that remains. Just that is what I am.]

Shrī Vidyānanda-tīrtha, Bhagavad-darshanam

1735. WHO IS IN ILLUSION?

It is only the man in illusion who thinks that he is in illusion. I have never told you that you will never be reborn. I have only said that you will be rid of the illusion that you were ever born or will die.

185. WHY DOES A JNYĀNIN TALK ABOUT STATES THAT ARE UNREAL?

A Jnyānin [Sage] often talks about the three states or the personality, knowing full well that all of them are, as such, unreal. But it is not without a purpose. It is possible to show the Reality only through the so called ‘unreal’. They are first examined in order to show that they are the known and that you are the knower. Next it is shown that the known is nothing but the knower itself – Pure Consciousness.

Illustration and analogy

592. HOW TO APPLY THE USUAL ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE PHENOMENAL TO THE ABSOLUTE?

The usual illustrations are the snake in the rope, the water in the mirage, etc. Here the snake or the water stands for the whole world – gross or subtle, including the individual perceiver – or in other words the world of objects, senses, thoughts and feelings. Even the error of seeing the snake or the mirage forms part of the perceived world. This includes the entire realm of body and mind. This could be seen only from some position beyond them – that is, from the Truth or the ‘I’-principle. But then there is no world to be seen.

Still you might say you see the world again. Will you please tell me who sees it? Do *You* see it? No. Then why do you worry? Seeing, see-er and the seen all form part of the unreality. Don’t forget that. Let objects of unreality play between them. What does it matter to you – the Reality?

In an enquiry of the Truth, usually the activities of the sense organs and the mind alone are taken into consideration. But the activities of the organs of action by themselves are almost mechanical or unconscious. There, awareness does not necessarily come in. But, for the activities of the senses and mind, the presence of awareness is essential.

1317. HOW TO MAKE USE OF ANALOGY IN A SPIRITUAL CONTEXT?

Every analogy in a spiritual context should immediately be applied to the subject, and the truth revealed thereby.

Take for example the snake in the rope. The snake is symbolic – representing the whole world, including all appearances. The rope is the changeless background ‘I’ or Consciousness. Nothing other than the rope has ever been there. Therefore the snake is *not*, and so also the world is *not*. You are alone the ultimate Truth.

Improving the world

897. TRYING TO IMPROVE THE WORLD IS A SACRILEGE. HOW?

If there is a God who created this world, he knows and has powers to maintain it. For a creature to try to improve the world is to usurp God’s own responsibilities and to correct God himself. Is this anything short of sacrilege to God? It is like the stupid railway passenger who carried his baggage on his own head all through the journey, and alighting claimed that it was he who carried it through. The poor fool forgot that it was the train that was actually carrying himself and his baggage.

770. CAN ANYONE IMPROVE THE WORLD?

No. Who will undertake the work? The individual. He is but a part of the world which has to be improved. From where does he get the ideal or the urge to improve the world? Of course from the inner Self, which is perfect.

Before improving oneself and becoming perfect, any attempt to improve another is meaningless. Therefore, rise to that Self and make yourself perfect first. Then, to your surprise, you will find the world also perfect.

The individual worker being part of the world, he is not in a position to comprehend the world as a whole. To do that, he must necessarily stand out of the world. Then your perspective is changed, and the world also appears entirely different and perfect in itself.

819. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE WORLD?

The world is perfect. But it appears imperfect because you use fallacious instruments of sense organs and mind and a wrong perspective of subject-object relationship. Get rid of them first. Take hold of the changeless principle of awareness in you and then examine the world. Then you will find the world perfect and entirely different from what it appears now.

Individuality

814. WHAT IS INDIVIDUALITY?

The word ‘individuality’ is ordinarily used in a very loose sense, to denote a personality which is purely physical and mental, pertaining to the waking state alone.

To understand the significance of individuality, your own stand in life must first be defined. Where do you stand, in activity or in inactivity? When there is mental activity, you stand as the background, in relation to that activity. But between two such activities and in deep sleep, when the mind is supposed to be inactive, you stand as the absolute Reality – your real nature.

Now let us examine individuality. By this word, we mean the characteristic of the individual. Here, the individual is not the small, insignificant embodied being you may seem to be. This individual is the centre, which projects, through the five senses, the five sense-worlds which we call the universe. Thus the individual is characteristic of the universe as well. Now let us examine this individual. The characteristic of the individual should be the same throughout his three states, throughout his whole life and in both activity and inactivity. The only principle that stands unchanging in this way is the ultimate Reality (one's own real nature). Personality is always changing and individuality is changeless.

1157. INDIVIDUALITY

Individuality is the impersonal principle, standing as the background of the changing body, senses and mind and also lighting them up.

But this word is grossly misunderstood and misapplied. It cannot be denied that individuality is changeless. A changing personality can never be the changeless individuality.

The urge for individuality comes from deep below. It comes from the changeless Ātmā [Self] behind. Ātmā is the only changeless reality; and individuality, if you want to use the term, is Ātmā itself.

1036. HOW IS THE INDIVIDUAL RELATED TO THE COSMOS AND TO THE REALITY?

Strictly speaking, the individual comprehends the cosmos. The cosmos depends upon the individual, for its very existence. The conception of ourselves as embodied beings expands until it reaches the broad generality of ourselves as *living beings*. This is the highest concept of the human mind. Here, you comprehend the whole animate kingdom.

But you can look even beyond, though the mind cannot conceive anything higher. Besides the animate kingdom, there is the inanimate kingdom, which has also to be comprehended in your further expansion. Thus, when you try to be one with the inanimate kingdom as well, you can only say you exist. But this is not conceivable.

Life is the first expression of the *sat* [existence] aspect of the Reality;

Thought is the first expression of the *cit* [consciousness] aspect; and

Feeling is the first expression of the *ānanda* [happiness] aspect of the same Reality.

A strict examination of any expression, through any of these aspects, takes you to the Reality itself.

438. WHAT IS INDIVIDUALITY?

Individuality is not what the ordinary man takes it to be. He takes it to be adherence to one's own body, senses and mind; and at the same time he believes that the individuality is changeless. Such an individuality is never possible.

The advaitin [non-dualist] seeks that individuality or principle in him which continues unchanged, even when the body and the mind change every moment.

That individuality, if it should be changeless, can only be the real 'I'-principle (Ātmā).

932. WHAT DO I SEEK BY LIBERATION?

Your own individuality, which is that changeless principle in you.

Instruments

60. WHAT IS THE FITTEST OF ALL INSTRUMENTS?

Consciousness is the fittest of all your instruments for examining the world – if it may be called an 'instrument'.

The sense organs sense the object and Consciousness knows it, immediately transforming it into Consciousness itself.

You are the perpetual knower; and the known can never tempt the knower, which is yourself. See yourself as such and the whole trouble disappears.

73. HOW IS THE UNKNOWN BEHIND EVERYTHING PROVED TO BE ONLY ONE?

Whatever is perceived can be explained only in terms of the instruments used for the purpose of that perception. So their findings cannot be final. When, however, you withdraw to the 'I'-principle, or Consciousness, and examine the thing through it, the thing is found to be Consciousness or the 'I'-principle.

An instrument as such can never be the Absolute. The 'I'-principle is taken as an instrument only conventionally but is really no instrument at all. It can neither be a functioning principle.

To a Sage, the manifestation of Consciousness with or without form has the same significance, and both are immaterial so far as he is concerned, since he is always at his real centre.

I perceive objects through the senses.

I perceive the senses through the mind
(taking mind and buddhi as one generic mind).

I perceive the mind by myself.

I am therefore the ultimate perceiver in all cases. When I stand as that and look back, the perceived disappears and is transformed into myself or Consciousness. When the perceived disappears, my perceivership also ceases and I remain as pure Consciousness.

Interval (between mentations)

902. IT IS SAID, I AM ALONE, IN THE INTERVAL BETWEEN MENTATIONS. WHEN THE INTERVAL IS MENTIONED, DOES NOT TIME COME IN?

~The interval is visualized by that principle standing beyond. To him there is no time. For he is beyond body, senses and mind. So from his stand, he was perceiving in identity. But to make you conceive it in some manner, time is merely given as a starting point. The interval being really timeless and objectless, when you make the attempt, you are thrown into the beyond – where time disappears.

A means, which is an illusion, is first adopted from the relative sphere, which is all illusion. But reaching the goal, when you look back, you find that the world-illusion has disappeared, and the means-illusion along with it, leaving you all alone in your own glory.

5. WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THE INTERVAL BETWEEN MENTATIONS?

It is this pure 'I' (or Consciousness) which shines through and in between all thoughts, feelings, perceptions and states. During this interval [between mentations], one has no thought of the state in which one happens to be. So here, one is *Peace* itself; and that is the 'I', in its pure state.

Suppose you see a beautiful picture, painted on white paper. On closely examining the picture, you will be able to discover some parts of it where the original colour of the paper appears, unaffected by the shades of the picture. This proves to you the existence of the paper behind the picture, as its background. On further examination, you will see that the picture is nothing but the paper.

So also, if you succeed in discovering yourself *between* two mentations, you easily come to the conclusion that you are *in* the mentations as well.

1086. PROLONGING INTERVAL BETWEEN MENTATIONS

Question: Since I am myself alone between two mentations, and that only for an infinitesimal part of a second, am I to try to prolong that period?

Answer: When you reach that interval, you find yourself divested of body, senses, mind, space and time; and then the so called interval appears no longer an interval but 'timeless'. The idea of prolonging the timeless is absurd. The mistake arises because you stand as an embodied being and look at it from a distance, in the waking state.

All you have to do is to get into that so called interval, discarding all that you possess – namely, body, senses, mind, space and time. In that state, everything is perfect.

1013. INTERVAL BETWEEN TWO MENTATIONS

It is only a *Jnyānin* [Sage] that can draw your attention to the interval between two mentations. In so directing your attention to it, the purpose of the *Jnyānin* is not to show you the limitations of the interval, but its content. The limitation is mere time, and the content of the interval is beyond both time and mind. When you perceive that content which is your own Self, you go beyond mind and time, and the limitations

belonging only to the mental sphere disappear at once. Thus what appeared as interval ceases to be an interval, but stands as the Absolute.

‘It’

981. WHAT IS THE ‘IT’?

The ‘It’ in our transactions is the real part of the world. What is this ‘It’? That alone can be permanent or real which answers equally to your perception, thought, feeling and knowing. That which answers to all these four alike is only the ‘I’ or Consciousness. That is itself the ‘It’.

Jīvan-mukta (one free within while living in the world)

679. SHAKESPEARE’S SPIRITUAL POSITION IN THE LIGHT OF VĒDĀNTA

Shrī Ātmānanda: In my opinion, Shakespeare was a realized soul (in the language of the west) or a jīvan-mukta (in the language of India). Shakespeare was one such. No intellectual standards can ever test the spiritual greatness of a jīvan-mukta. Shakespeare, in his dramas, has created diverse characters of conflicting types, each with a perfection possible to perfection alone. A writer, who has an individuality and character of his own, can successfully depict only characters of a nature akin to his own. It is only one who stands beyond all characters, or in other words as *witness*, that can be capable of such a wonderful performance as Shakespeare has done. Therefore I say Shakespeare must have been a jīvan-mukta.

1251. A JĪVAN-MUKTA AND THE STATES

A jīvan-mukta does not destroy the states. He only illumines the states and understands them to be nothing other than the real Self.

But the onlooker might not perceive this internal change in the jīvan-mukta’s perspective. He may still take him to be the old jīva [personality], a subject of the changing states.

54. WHO IS A JĪVAN-MUKTA?

Every man is a jīvan-mukta [free within, while living as a person in the world]; but he has only to know it. The spontaneous and unaffected conduct of every man proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that he is always a jīvan-mukta. He has only to know it.

And that [knowing] is called realization. His conduct and words show that the ‘I’-principle is not at all affected by actions, perceptions, thoughts and feelings – all of which he is called upon to witness and apparently participate in, from time to time.

Jnyāna path

1392. DEVELOPMENT OF JNYĀNA [KNOWLEDGE]

The path of jnyāna has three distinct and separate stages:

1. *Sṛiṣṭi-dṛiṣṭi-vāda*: Perception of objects already existing.
2. *Dṛiṣṭi-sṛiṣṭi-vāda* holds that the object appears only when perceived, and that the essence of perception is Consciousness alone (the Real). This is visualized only on listening to the Truth from the lips of a Kāraṇa-guru.
3. *Ajāta-vāda* holds that nothing other than the real Self (Consciousness) was ever born, ever is, or ever shall be. This is the highest stand of Advaita, in relation to the apparent world.

1275. HOW DOES JNYĀNA HELP ME?

The jnyāna path does not claim to take you to the Truth or to illumine the Truth. You are always the Truth, and the Truth is self-luminous. So the jnyāna path claims only to remove the obstacles in the way – viz. the sense of separateness and its objects – by applying the correct tests of Reality, such as changelessness and self-luminosity. When all obstacles are thus removed, the self-luminous ‘I’ remains ever shining in all its glory. This is called visualization or realization.

161. JNYĀNA

Jnyāna [knowledge] is attained as a result of relaxation of the mind and the giving up of all that is foreign to the real Self, leaving you as the Absolute, in your own glory.

All sādhanas in the jnyāna path have no purpose other than the elimination of the anātmā [non-self] elements from the Ātmā, and so they are liberating in themselves. When the last trace of anātmā is also eliminated, the effort ceases and you rise to the Absolute.

But, to stand permanently established in the Absolute, the world gross as well as subtle – from which you eliminated yourself – has to be examined again and seen to be nothing but the Reality.

Karma and samskāra

574. WHAT IS KARMA [ACTION]?

The direct answer to the question is that there is no karma. It is the responsibility of the questioner to prove that karma exists. Let us examine ‘karma’ in detail. What is that principle which makes every karma possible?

It is evident at the outset that karma cannot exist without a doer or an agent. The proof of the existence of the doer is that you know it, or that you are the perceiver of the karma as the doer, doing and the deed.

Now take note of the fact that such a witnessing agent is indispensable for the existence of karma. Then turn your attention more closely to that agent and see if he is really an agent. Immediately you see that the so called agent is no agent, but only the perceiver of karma. As perceiver one cannot be bound by the karma.

Thus karma is no karma in the ordinary sense of the word, and all samskāras [habit-driven inclinations] die with it.

Karma consists of three parts, namely:

1. The incentive (being samskāras),
2. The activity (of body or mind), and
3. The results or fruits thereof.

When you reach the perceivership, both the incentive as well as the desire for the fruits of action vanish. Thus divorced from the perceived and the perception, the perceiver also ceases to be a perceiver and becomes the Ultimate.

Therefore, karma is nothing but the ultimate Reality itself, and as such can never bind you.

498. WHAT IS SAMSKĀRA?

It is the impress left in the mind by past thoughts, feelings, perceptions and doings, which are supposed to influence one's subsequent activities.

575. KARMA AND SAMSKĀRAS

Samskāra is the deep impression left behind by that which was done. Karma [action] gives rise to samskāras [habituated inclinations], and samskāras induce karma. Thus karma and samskāras depend upon each other for their very existence. This is impossible. Therefore, karma and samskāras are both a misnomer, and the perceiver or 'I' alone is the Reality.

This is what Lord Kṛiṣṇa has said about karma in general.

... gahanā karmaṇō gatiḥ

[Unfathomable is the way of karma.]

Bhagavad-gītā, 4.17

1110. HOW TO DESTROY SAMSKĀRAS?

Shrī Gauḍapāda in *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* says: 'Exercise of discrimination and reason alone can destroy your samskāras and take you to the ultimate Truth. But the method of using them has to be obtained from a Kāraṇa-guru.'

The exercise of the higher reason alone can destroy one's innate tendencies and lead one to the goal.

1124. HOW TO DISPOSE OF SAMSKĀRAS AFTER VISUALIZATION?

The Truth has been visualized. But by that alone, you are not always cognizant of the Reality. When you are swayed by the former samskāras [habituations] of your life, you forget the Truth. Then you can either look deep and destroy the world as nothing

but consciousness or, conceding the existence of the world, you may know that you are its witness and unaffected by the witnessed. A time will come when the inner eye will be ever clear, showing you in your real nature even while engaged in activities.

Karma-yoga

292. KARMA-YŌGA ACCORDING TO THE *BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ*

Action consists of doership and enjoyership. In karma-yōga, you are first asked to renounce by thought the fruits of your actions. This helps you only to annihilate the enjoyership. The more important aspect, namely doership, has next to be dealt with.

Both these could be transcended only by knowledge of the Truth.

541. DUTY AND INCENTIVE

For the ordinary man, every action needs an incentive, and the desire for the fruits of the action is the usual incentive. This inflates the ego and binds him to the phenomenal. It was for this that Arjuna was asked not to desire for the fruits of his action.

But being suddenly deprived of his usual incentive to action, he found it difficult to take to action without something to take its place. So Lord Kṛiṣṇa shrewdly substituted duty as the incentive and asked Arjuna to fight as in duty bound.

Slowly, this duty also began to react as an object of attachment for Arjuna. Therefore later on, at a higher level, Arjuna was told in plain and unambiguous words not to be a slave to duty either, and thus to be completely free from all bondage.

Thus duty is also only a stepping-stone to the Ultimate.

kartavyatai 'va saṁsārō na tām paśyanti sūrayaḥ .
śūnyākārā nirākārā nirvikārā nirāmayāḥ ..

[The world of change is always caught
in duty that is to be done.

Those who are wise don't see that duty
as their own; for they have realized
themselves as that which shines
where objects don't appear, as that
which has no form, which does not change,
untouched throughout by ill and harm.]

Aṣṭāvakra samhitā, 18.57

Knowledge

26. WHAT IS THE END OF AN IGNORANT MAN'S ACTIVITY OF KNOWING?

The end of all knowing is pure knowing itself, or 'vēdānta' (the end of knowledge), or the 'I'-principle. Knowing proves only knowledge, and not the object as is ordinarily understood.

In every perception, you are there as that and that alone. All the mischief of wrong identification is done only after the event.

384. WHAT DO I KNOW?

No perception ever stops half way, but always ends in knowledge. At the point of knowing, there is neither perception nor the object perceived. Therefore, you know only knowledge.

You say you know a thing because you have seen it many times. It is true, in one sense. Because, every time, you have been brought into direct contact with knowledge and not with the object. Therefore, it only proves that you know pure knowledge.

From that position, you can never be a witness. You witness only yourself. Knowing is not a verbal noun.

411. KNOWLEDGE HAS NOTHING TO KNOW, EXCEPT KNOWLEDGE.

Everything other than knowledge is name or form. The moment you know them they become knowledge itself. So you do not really know anything other than knowledge. Thus the world is not. Then where is bondage?

1082. HOW AM I PEACE AND CONSCIOUSNESS?

Gurunāthan: Well, let me ask you another simple question in return. Have you the faculty of sight?

Disciple: Yes.

G: How can you prove it? Is it as a result of looking at your fleshy eyes that you assert that you have eyesight?

D: No.

G: Then what is your evidence?

D: I see objects and so I am convinced that I have eyesight, without which I know objects would never be seen.

G: So you admit that objective perception of a faculty is not necessary in order to prove its existence?

D: Yes.

G: Here you must remember that when you see objects you are not possessing eyesight, but that you are actually standing as the faculty of eyesight. Do you admit that?

D: Yes.

G: Now apply the same argument to your own self. Don't you know your perceptions, thoughts and feelings?

D: Yes, of course.

G: What is your position when you know them? Examine it carefully and tell me.

D: I stand as that faculty of knowledge, or objectless knowledge, when I know anything.

G: Then, is there any moment in all the three states when you do not stand as that pure Knowledge?

D: No, I am there always.

G: Well, what may be the relationship between that knowledge and yourself?

D: (After a pause.) That knowledge can only be myself or my real nature.

G: Now, do you see how you are Consciousness?

D: Yes. Perfectly.

G: *Be there always.*

Knowledge and functioning

82. KNOWING IS KNOWLEDGE ITSELF.

Take knowing as a function for the time being; and examine it along with the other four functions of doing, perceiving, thinking and feeling. We find that of all these, knowing is comparatively the most natural and effortless function. For the performance of the other four functions, different conditions and degrees of effort are essential.

The natural effortlessness of knowing, and the fact that it is always present, clearly prove it to be really the nature of the self; because this knowingness does not come and go like the other functions and does not part with the 'I'-principle, even for a moment. The 'I'-principle has always to be the knower; and since the same principle cannot be engaged in more than one function simultaneously, it stands as the Knower alone.

175. KNOWLEDGE IS NOT A FUNCTION.

A function should necessarily have a beginning and an end. Knowledge has neither of these, and so it cannot be a function. It serves as the background of all functions, lighting and co-ordinating all of them and their experiences.

462. KNOWLEDGE CANNOT BE A FUNCTION. WHY?

Because nothing can exist by its side to form its object. Therefore, to say that 'I know' or 'I know it' are both wrong. Functioning starts only with the inception of mind and the consequent subject-object relationship.

The sense organs and mind can function only by the consciousness part existing in them.

Knowledge and learning

834. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE?

Learning is darkness, and knowledge is light. Learning pertains to objects of ignorance. Its result is sharpening the intellect and accumulating information. The mind does not get a ray of light or knowledge by all this.

Knowledge takes up higher reason as its instrument, takes up the mind itself for examination and discovers its real nature to be Consciousness, the 'I'-principle. In the light of knowledge, all learning disappears as illusion.

1020. PHENOMENAL KNOWLEDGE

Phenomenal knowledge is the inherent 'knowingness' within you, coming out occasionally through the mind or senses.

756. WHAT IS WISDOM?

It is not increase of knowledge, as some persons take it to be. Knowledge does not increase or decrease, as you know more objects or less. *Knowledge without object is wisdom proper.*

Knowledge and love

80. YOU ARE KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE.

1. You do not know anything but yourself.
2. You do not love anything but yourself.

So both knowledge and love have yourself as their object. Therefore, you are pure Knowledge and Love.

889. WHAT DIFFERENTIATES LOVE FROM KNOWLEDGE?

Knowing with your whole being is Love itself. In thought (which is knowing with the mind alone) you do not lose yourself. But in love you lose yourself. So love entails the sacrifice of the ego.

25. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SAY 'I KNOW' A THING?

You actually transform the thing into knowledge. At the moment of knowing, you realize yourself in fact. Knowing a thing means you absorb it into you.

Similarly, loving a thing also means you absorb it into yourself. Hence, knowing and loving actually destroy all illusion, all separateness.

649. YOUR REAL FACULTIES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Your real nature has two distinct aspects, namely Consciousness and Peace; and they seem to function as though they are two distinct faculties of knowledge and love. They absorb everything into you. When an object comes into direct contact with knowledge or love, the object is spontaneously transformed into knowledge or love and it loses its identity as an object.

892. ELIMINATED FROM OBJECTS, HAS KNOWLEDGE ANY ATTRACTION?

Yes, certainly.

You love objects for enjoyment. So you love enjoyment more than objects. You have more interest in self-love than in love for objects. And you love Love itself or the Self more than self-love. So you love the Self most.

When objects are eliminated from knowledge of objects, what remains over is knowledge, your real nature or Self, and you love that most. What else can have a greater attraction for you?

Knowledge and witnessing

288. HOW TO KNOW CORRECTLY?

Only if your knowledge of your own Self is correct, can you hope to know anything else correctly.

It is our experience that our physical activities do not stand in the way of our thoughts and feelings. Similarly, it is possible for me as witness to be always knowing – even when the body, senses and mind are functioning. Merely note this fact and become deeply convinced of it. Don't attempt to objectify the witness by thought.

437. WHAT IS SILENT KNOWLEDGE?

Ordinary knowledge is knowledge 'of this' (of any object gross or subtle), obtained through a corresponding instrument.

But the silent knowledge or witness has neither a medium, nor is it obtained. Therefore the witness is described as silent knowledge, viewed from the standpoint of the mind or the ego.

The ignorant mind has certain false standards set by itself, and evaluates everything according to those standards. But when the Truth is heard from the Guru, the mind gives up all its previous standards.

Thenceforward the witness, which was so long qualified as silent, ceases to be silent – in the sense that it is the background of both activity and inactivity.

1027. WHAT IS WITNESS KNOWLEDGE?

Witness knowledge is pure Consciousness. But mentation knowledge always appears in the form of subject-object relationship. When you stand as witness, you are in your real nature.

Mentation appears in the light of the witness. *The light in the mentation knowledge is itself the witness.* There is no mentation in the witness.

The state of the witness is the same as that of deep sleep and Consciousness pure.

Knowledge in identity

654. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'I KNOW I AM'?

'I know I am' is a single experience, recognized by all persons. It consists of two parts: 'I know' and 'I am'. The 'I am' can never be an object of 'I know'. Therefore both mean the same thing, and together are an experience in identity. These are the only two statements that require no proof.

1320. KNOWING THE 'I'

When I say 'I', I know what I mean. So also when you say 'I', I also know what you mean, because the 'I' is already familiar to me. This knowledge is obtained by identity alone. Therefore even if the sayer means only his body and mind, still one who knows the Self, knows him also to be that Self.

Knowledge of Self is knowledge *as* Self.

947. WHAT DOES 'I KNOW IT' MEAN?

First the 'it' stands for form or object. Next, 'it' stands for seeing. At last, 'it' stands for knowledge.

Thus the statement means 'I know knowledge', i.e. 'I know I', i.e. 'I. I. I.'

1282. WHAT IS REAL KNOWING?

'To know', in the real sense, is 'to be'.

You were Peace or Happiness in deep sleep. It is a fact and a certainty. How do you know it now? Whatever you think or say about it is wrong. Thought and statement both take place in the sphere of duality and refer only to objects distinct and separate from you. But at the point of knowing in deep sleep, you were in identity with Peace or Happiness. It is not possible for the mind to know it or remember it. It was pure being alone. Real knowing is always being, and answers only to the Truth.

But worldly knowing is always separate from you, and answers only to satisfaction in the mental level. Your goal should always be the 'Peace' of deep sleep, which is 'being' itself and not anything expressed or expressible.

The witness's knowing of a thing is 'being it'. It is the consciousness in the thought or perception of the thing itself that is the witness. The ego knows a thing only as subject and object. The ego is the false identification of the body, senses and mind

with the real Self. The objects of the ego also suffer from the same false identification with the Reality. The purpose of the witness is to reveal this false identification of the object with the Reality.

The witness has been defined as the consciousness in the object itself. Consciousness transcends both time and space. As such it can never see the object as separate from it – either in time or space. So it sees the object as itself. Thus it is the ‘being’ in the object itself that is called the witness, in order to eliminate the objectivity of the object. Then the object ceases to be object, as such, and stands as Consciousness.

1363. HOW DOES KNOWLEDGE FUNCTION?

Knowledge is of two kinds:

1. Of the nature of subject-object relationship.
2. Of the nature of identity.

The former comprehends all phenomenal knowledge, and the latter pertains to spiritual experience alone. In the latter, ‘consciousness of self’ is to be understood as ‘Consciousness *as Self*’.

Peace in deep sleep can exist only if Consciousness is also there. That is, it must be understood as consciousness of Peace. But this is also ‘knowledge in identity’. Therefore the expression ‘consciousness of Peace’ has to be understood to mean ‘Consciousness *as Peace*’. Thus, Consciousness and Peace are one and the same, intrinsic in the Self.

Knowledge of objects

863. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STATEMENT ‘I KNOW IT’?

The statement only means ‘I know.’ The ‘it’ disappears even with the function of the sense organ. When I actually know, there is only myself as knowledge.

1305. KNOWLEDGE OF OBJECTS, IF INTELLIGENTLY PURSUED, TAKES ONE TO TRUE KNOWLEDGE.

You know that there is a knowledge which stands knowing this limited knowledge. Immediately, you turn your attention to it. When you stand as that background knowledge, all the rest disappears and you are left alone in that pure knowledge.

Just as light has to be present before an object is seen, knowledge is there as knowledge or awareness, before it appears as the knowledge of an object. The knowledge of an object is changing; but the knowledge before and after the knowledge of an object is changeless, and therefore real.

Let the knowledge of objects turn your attention to that Reality behind, and you shall soon be established in it.

51. WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF KNOWLEDGE?

Nothing. Because, when the so called object comes into the plane of knowledge, it loses its objectivity and becomes knowledge itself, or one with the knower. Just as, in the plane of the senses, the form which is supposed to have been perceived loses its form and becomes seeing itself. Form is nothing but seeing.

Knowing is always directed to the Reality. The object of knowledge is always the Reality – if the Reality can ever be an object. Therefore, it is only the Reality that is known, in every case.

553. TRANSFORMATION OF A THING

A chair is a ‘chair’ by convention alone. It becomes an object when you perceive it. But when you *know* it, its objectivity vanishes and it becomes knowledge. Thus your role always is to destroy the world, whenever it appears.

The world consists only of perceptions, thoughts and feelings. As soon as any one of these appears, it is absorbed into yourself as knowledge, thereby destroying completely the objectivity of the world.

741. IS IT IN ORDER TO SPEAK OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF AN OBJECT?

No. It is wrong. The statement presupposes the existence of objects even before knowledge. This is impossible. Knowledge of the object is the only proof by which we can establish the existence of the object. Therefore, without establishing the existence of an object by some other means, the statement cannot stand. So objects are not, and knowledge is only pure Knowledge.

1098. PROGRESSION OF KNOWLEDGE FROM OBJECT TO THE ULTIMATE.

1. Consciousness of object.
2. Consciousness of Self.
3. Consciousness as Self.
4. Self all alone.

Known and unknown

47. THE ‘THING IN ITSELF’ IS BEYOND THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN.

When the unknown is sensed, something objective comes in. When you try to objectify the Reality, you first superimpose form upon it; and upon this most general form, innumerable other details are superimposed, by one or more of the sense organs. This is how an object is visualized.

The form never exists independently of the sense organ, and so it can never exist outside the sense organ which perceives it. What we know in a perception is only our own superimposition, including our own samskāras [habituations]; and it is not the

Reality at all, which of course is not perceivable. The thing in itself – the Reality – transcends both the known and the unknown.

All objects, thoughts and feelings are known through the senses or the mind. But I always know that ‘I am’. This knowledge is not obtained through any sensory organ or agent, and so it is called *direct knowledge*.

Looking more closely, we find that even in sensory perception, it is only direct knowledge that is experienced. When I say I know an object, the object is reduced in terms of knowledge to knowledge itself, and can no longer be called an object. As knowledge, it can have no limitation either, there being nothing other than knowledge existing beside it.

So, what actually happens, even in sensory perceptions, is that the self (Consciousness) knows the self (Consciousness). Every sensory perception is in fact direct knowledge. Thus, when you come to knowledge, no object can exist as such. The object is only an object of the sense organs, and never the object of knowing. *Knowledge can know only knowledge*.

When a disciple retreats consciously from his body, senses and mind to his innermost self – pure Consciousness – knowledge dawns; and he is said to have realized. When knowledge dawns, objects and senses vanish. The same process also repeats itself during every sensory perception; and you always know nothing but the Reality.

viṣayaṅṅaḥkṛ̃ aṛiyappetuṅpōṛum sattayilla .

[Objects have no existence, even when known.]

jñāta sattayum illa .

[Even what is known does not as such exist.]

Objects have no existence even when known; since every perception brings only direct knowledge of the Self, proving only the Reality behind all. So you stand self-realized.

49. THE REALITY IS BEYOND THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN.

The unknown is nowhere in existence. At a higher level, it has to be said that nothing is known either. So everything is beyond the known and the unknown and therefore is the Reality.

501. WHAT ARE THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN?

By your merely knowing a thing, the thing does not undergo any change. You admit it was first unknown and that it was known only subsequently. By saying it is known, what you actually do is only this.

Your mind superimposes some attributes upon the original unknown. You know only the attributes thus superimposed. The unknown still remains as the background of the attributes, and remains still unknown. Thus looking objectively, we find that the thing which was the Reality was beyond both the known and the unknown, standing as the changeless background of both of them.

Now looking subjectively, you find that between two thoughts you remain alone in your own glory, and it is that Reality alone that expresses itself in your thoughts, feelings and perceptions.

So, subjectively as well as objectively, you know only the Reality. Or in other words, you can never say you have known it or that you have not known it. The real subject and object were both beyond the known and the unknown.

Thus the subjective and objective Reality is one.

Lakshana (pointer)

487. WHAT IS ARUNDHATI-NYĀYA (POINTER)?

Arundhatī is a very dim and tiny star, not easily noticed, but important in the study of astronomy. Therefore it is the usual practice of teachers in astronomy to show the student first some visible object like a tree or a tower in the direction of that star, next some bright cluster of stars close to the Arundhatī and then the glimmering Arundhatī itself. Thus, the first two targets were only pointers to the actual goal.

Similarly, for those following the spiritual path, everything – from the witness down to the gross body – are all but upādhis [expressions] or pointers to the Ultimate.

619. POINTERS TO THE TRUTH

Everything is a pointer to the ‘I’-principle or Truth. But Consciousness and Happiness are the ultimate pointers to the same.

1170. HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH THROUGH LANGUAGE?

Ultimate Truth is beyond the mind and is imperceptible. Therefore Truth can only be pointed at from the phenomenal, with the help of certain words that have to be understood as *lakṣhaṇas* or pointers to the Truth. These words, however subtle in their concept, are still subject to certain limitations by time and space, imposed upon them by the mind.

Therefore, in understanding the ultimate through *lakṣhaṇas*, you have to relinquish with great care the material vesture imposed upon them by the mind, and then direct your attention to that which still remains over as the background of the *lakṣhaṇas*. That background is nothing but the ‘is’-ness standing as the common background of all objects.

Sat, cit and *ānanda* are such *lakṣhaṇas* and have to be understood to mean nothing but this ultimate ‘is’.

Language

1041. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF LANGUAGE?

It is to show the way to the Reality. This ideal, however, is miserably thwarted in its application. Language is made up of words. Each word has two meanings.

1. The literal meaning (padārtha); and
2. The ultimate meaning (paramārtha).

The literal meaning of every word pertains to name and form alone, and the ultimate meaning pertains to the Reality. If you cling to the former you get lost in the world of illusion; and if you cling to the latter you are taken to the centre of your own being, the Reality.

354. WHAT IS THE PROCESS AND THE LIMIT OF TRANSLATION?

The art of translation is not so simple as it seems on the surface. An idea is first conceived and then expressed in the same language. The structure has to be demolished and reduced to the languageless idea before it is recast in any other language, just like the types in a foundry.

There again, you have first to conceive it afresh, according to the fundamentals of the new language; and then to express it in the words of the new language. Very often, apparently important words and analogies in the original will have to be ignored, and quite new analogies and words accepted to suit the vocabulary and trend of thought in the new language.

But this should come spontaneously and not by effort or choice. So, translate only the idea as an integral whole, and never try to adhere literally to the usages of the original.

435. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF HARMONY?

The inner harmony of the Absolute is first expressed in:

1. *The language of the soul or Reality* – without in the least losing its essence.
2. Next, it is expressed in the *languageless language of ideas*.
3. Next, in the *language of ideas*.
4. Lower down, it expresses itself or it is expressed in the *language of sounds*, every such integral expression being called a mantra.
5. Still further down, it is expressed in the *language of words*, being the grossest form of expression.

In all these different kinds of expression, the ideal to be maintained is that no part of that inner harmony of the language of the soul should be lost. This is possible only for a Sage, well established in the sahaja [natural] state, never slipping out of that inner harmony or real background.

Every thought and word of his is a mantra in its full sense, since the whole of his indivisible Self is in that inner harmony all the time.

37. HOW CAN SOUND BE UTILIZED AS A MEDIUM OF ENQUIRY TO REACH THE ABSOLUTE?

It has four distinct stages:

1. *Vaikhari* or gross sound. Here consciousness appears limited by the audible word. It is practised by repetition of a mantra by word of mouth, audible to one's own ears.
2. *Madhyamā*: Here consciousness appears limited by the inaudible word. It is practised by mental repetition of a mantra, inaudibly, in contemplation of an idea.
3. *Pashyantī* represents that pure idea which is capable of being expressed in different languages, but which remains languageless all along. This limitation is binding only when viewed from the mental plane; and it really takes one to the very brink of the Absolute, or to the Absolute itself when correctly understood.
4. *Parā* is pure Consciousness itself, or myself. Every sound or word, when traced in the above sequence, leads to the Reality, or the 'I'-principle.

Liberation

86. KNOWING THE *SAT* ASPECT ALONE DOES NOT MAKE LIBERATION COMPLETE.

Going subjectively beyond the body and mind, you know you are the unqualified 'I'. But this knowledge of the *sat* [Existence] aspect alone does not make your experience complete. So long as you do not understand the other two positive characteristics, viz. Consciousness and Peace, there is every possibility of your superimposing something else upon this unknown.

For example, if you only know that what you mistook to be a serpent is not a serpent and you do not know what it is exactly, there is every likelihood of your mistaking it the next moment for a stick, or a shadow, or anything else. But if you definitely know – in clear light – that it is only a rope, there is no possibility of your mistaking it any further.

Therefore, to make your liberation complete and unmistakable, you must understand the 'I' to be pure Consciousness, the object being only its expression and both of them being absolute Peace.

234. WHEN AM I FREE?

When the thought that you are 'That' becomes the flesh of your flesh, the blood of your blood, and when that thought courses through your veins quite naturally and effortlessly, you may be said to be free.

666. WHEN AM I REALLY AND COMPLETELY LIBERATED?

On listening to the Truth expounded by the Guru, you visualize the Truth and you know that you are the Truth always.

But if you claim you have become liberated, a taint clings to your claim. You have to remove that taint also, by knowing that you have only become aware of the fact that you were never bound, and so never liberated either. Then, liberation is beyond time.

426. WHAT IS LIBERATION?

You always desire rest. Real rest comes only from your real nature – Peace. From this background, there is always the trumpet call, resounding ‘Go to Peace!’ You respond to it *unknowingly*, every time. Thus you go back to your real nature, Peace, after every activity.

This Peace or rest is already in you. You have only to recognize it, and go to it every time *knowingly*. This is liberation. Thus you see that you were never bound.

804. WHO CAN BE FREE?

Neither the body nor the mind can ever be free. Because they are dependent upon the real ‘I’, even for their very existence. The ‘I’ alone is always free, and real freedom is its monopoly and its alone. The urge for freedom springs from that source and is usurped in vain by the body and mind.

1169. YOU MUST GIVE UP FREEDOM IN ORDER TO BE REALLY FREE.

Freedom is ignorantly attributed to body, senses and mind; though all the three are by nature bound. Most human endeavours are calculated to perform this miracle of freeing the ever-bound, and so they end in failure.

The urge for freedom is real, and comes from beyond the mind. It is wrong to apply it to the mind, or to things lower still. What is needed is freedom from the traditional limiting agencies, namely time and space. Such freedom is the characteristic of Ātmā [Self], the ultimate Reality, alone. This is one’s own real nature, and it is from there that the urge comes.

Body, senses and mind being never-free, and the real ‘I’-principle being ever-free, the only way to attain freedom is to identify oneself with that real Self within. This means surrender of attachment to body, senses and mind. In other words, you must give up the desire for the freedom of body, senses and mind, if you want to attain freedom of the Self.

Life

92. HOW AND WHY DO I LIVE?

‘Do you live at all?’ is my question. It has been proved that the thing that lives from birth till death is the same, changeless ‘I’-principle. The ‘I’ is the centre of life. That alone lives.

The ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of life are sought in the manifestations outside. When you turn to the manifestation, you lose sight of your centre and cease to live really. So the best way, for the best living, is to cling on to the living alone, forgetting the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of it completely.

346. THE CONCEPT OF *SAT-CIT-ĀNANDA*

There are three fundamental human experiences – namely life, thought and feeling. The most generic forms of these experiences are termed *sat* [existence], *cit* [consciousness] and *ānanda* [happiness].

These three names denote only three aspects of the one and the same thing; and that thing is the ultimate Reality.

1414. WHAT IS LIFE?

Life, thought and feeling are but the expressions of the ultimate Reality, through the respective perspectives of existence, knowledge and peace. Life can never be correctly examined from the standpoint of any of the states, which are but parts of the apparent life itself. It can be examined correctly only from the standpoint of that which is permanent or changeless in life (pure Awareness). This may be done in many ways.

1. Taking for granted that the three states are real, let us examine life. The totality of life consists in the experiences of the three states, together with an Awareness which records the appearance and disappearance of each state. The waking state as such is only a fraction of the totality of life. Therefore no enquiry limited to the waking state experiences alone can be fair; nor can it be expected to yield any reasonable result. Of the totality of life's experiences, the experiences of the three states are each independent of the other two and change or disappear completely.

The only permanent or changeless part of life's experiences is the Awareness which stands as the background of the states and even beyond. This is the real 'I'-principle, the ultimate Truth. Therefore, the essence of life is the Reality itself.

2. Existence appearing limited is life. But the appearance is an illusion. So the essence of life is pure existence or 'being' itself, or the real 'I'-principle. The disappearance of the limitation of existence may be called 'death'. Life and death being both appearances, they cannot exist without a real background. That background is existence itself and that is the essence of both life and death.
3. Existence manifests itself in varying degrees of intensity, from the god-man kingdom down to the mineral kingdom. Every kingdom 'is'. The 'is'-ness alone is the changeless part or essence of each kingdom, and all the rest are mere appearances and therefore unreal. This 'is'-ness is the background of life, and that is the Reality which has neither birth nor death. The term 'life' really comprehends both birth and death, and stands transcending both.

1037. A DISCIPLE ASKED: HOW SHOULD ONE LEAD A PROPER LIFE?

Before answering this, life has to be first defined. In order to perceive or define life you have to transcend duality. Life is that unknown something which enables even the *prāṇa* to function. Therefore neither *prāṇa* (the vital energy), nor any principle below that, can perceive life. The only moment I live is when I direct my attention to my real nature, the right Absolute.

So, to visualize the Truth constantly is the only way really to live or to lead a proper life. Hence understand the Truth and try to live it. Then life becomes a synonym of Truth.

Listening

1056. WHAT IS IT THAT HAPPENS WHEN WE ARE LISTENING TO THE TALK OF THE GURU?

Gurunāthan replied: 'I am realizing myself in all of you, when I am talking to you about the Truth; and you are realizing yourself in me, when you are understanding what I say.'

529. 'A STATEMENT MADE BY THE GURU HELPS YOU NOT WHEN YOU TAKE IT, BUT WHEN YOU LEAVE IT.' HOW?

The statement, as it comes, consists of the gross form of words or sounds and the subtle form or idea meant to be conveyed by the words. If you cling to the gross form alone, you do not profit by it. On the contrary you must leave the gross far behind, and rise to its meaning or the idea behind the statement. Then alone will the statement help to raise you up spiritually.

429. WHAT IS REAL LISTENING?

The Upaniṣhads boldly proclaim that listening to the ultimate Truth, over and over again, is the only means to ultimate realization. What is this 'listening'?

Hearing the Truth direct from the lips of the Guru is, of course, the first 'listening'. It is an extremely rare privilege to be in the physical presence of the Guru, repeatedly listening to his words.

But those who are denied this proud privilege of being constantly in his presence can also 'listen'. Thinking deeply over the Truth expounded to you by the Guru, over and over again adducing the arguments advanced by the Guru in detail and every time touching the ultimate experience of the inner Self as you had it the first time, is also virtually listening to the words of the Guru. This is the form of listening adopted by the vast majority of disciples, of course after once having heard the Truth from the Guru in person.

Truth is visualized even on the first listening. Further listening helps you to get established in the Truth.

1015. EFFICACY OF THE SPOKEN WORD OF THE GURU AND THE WRITTEN WORD

When the Guru talks to you about the Truth there is no doubt that it is the words that you hear. But the words disappear at once. Nothing remains for you to refer to or to depend upon, except the Guru himself. So in case of any doubt you approach the Guru again any number of times; and every time he explains it in a different set of words. Each time you understand the same sense, more and more deeply. Therefore it is

evident that it is not from words or their meaning that you understand the sense, because the words used each time are different. From this it is clear that something else also follows the words, from the Guru. It is this something that penetrates into the inmost core of the disciple and works the miraculous transformation called 'experience'.

When you read the written word before listening to the Truth from the lips of the Guru, that something, which follows the spoken word of the Guru, is entirely absent. Thus, you have to depend upon the dead word which is still before you; and its meaning as your ego is inclined to interpret it, in the dark light of its own phenomenal experiences. Naturally, therefore, you miss that divine experience when you only read the written word; though it is so easily and effortlessly obtained in the presence of the Guru, or after even once listening to the Truth from him.

When you listen to the spoken word of the Guru, even on the first occasion your ego takes leave of you and you visualize the Truth at once, being left alone in your real nature. But when you read the same words by yourself, your ego lingers on in the form of the word, its meaning etc. – and you fail to transcend them. To visualize the Truth, the only condition needed is the elimination of the ego. This is never possible by mere reading, before meeting the Guru.

Therefore listen, listen, listen; and never be satisfied with anything else.

After listening to the Truth from the Guru direct and after visualizing the Truth in his presence, you may well take to thinking deeply over what the Guru has told you. This is also another form of listening; and it takes you, without fail, to the same experience you have already had in his presence.

Living and dying

808. WHAT ARE LIFE AND DEATH?

Life is the real 'I'-principle. When you are life itself, how can you die?

1193. WHAT IS THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LOGIC OF REINCARNATION OF SOULS?

People say they have had many lives, before the present one. But the truth is that you die with every thought or feeling. So you live many lives even in a short period of time. This is not noticed or perceived by the ordinary man. It is in order to draw his attention to this Truth that the illustration of the broader, and to him more conceivable, chain of life is brought in.

43. WHO LIVES REALLY?

The real 'I'-principle alone lives. The ignorant man believes that either the body or the mind lives, while in fact each of them dies at the end of every perception or thought. But the 'I'-principle continues unchanged through all thoughts and perceptions, lighting them up as well.

Therefore, the ignorant man who identifies himself with body and mind is dying every moment, along with every perception or thought. And the Jnyānin [Sage], who identifies himself with the changeless 'I'-principle, alone really lives and knows no death.

The body idea or the ego has to die, in order that *you* may really live. In this sense, it is the Jnyānin alone that really lives, and knows he lives. His advice to every man is: 'Die, in order to live.' In other words, annihilate the personal element, or ego, in order that the impersonal element may not appear shrouded. This is realization – establishing oneself in the Reality.

Love

875. WHAT DO I LOVE? AND WHY?

Your love is directed only to the real substratum or Self. You happen to love the qualities in one, simply because they belong to the substratum you love. You love, because love is the real nature of the real Self and you cannot help loving even for a moment.

876. HOW TO LOVE?

Love is the feeling or sense of oneness with another.

If you correctly understand yourself to be beyond body, senses and mind, your love for another will also be for that Self in him. Because there are no two selves, and love is its nature.

If your understanding is incorrect, you love the incorrect self in him; and as a result of that incorrectness, you hate others.

Genuine love absorbs everything into you, and then duality dies. But in conditioned love, or gratitude, duality persists in giving and taking. Even this gratitude, if directed to the Guru, goes deep into you, takes you beyond duality and is transformed into objectless love.

265. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF LOVE IN ITS APPLICATION?

If you love another for his or her gross and external qualities alone, that love is of the lowest type.

But if you love the other knowing that it is the life principle alone in the other that you love, then that love becomes sublime.

And lastly, if you love the other knowing that it is that which transcends the attributes – body, senses and mind – that you love, there the otherness vanishes at once. That love is the most sublime, and is the Absolute itself.

110. THE STAGES OF THE PROGRESS OF ONE'S LOVE

<i>Lower stage</i>	<i>Second stage</i>	<i>Highest stage</i>
Love for objects (kāma).	Love for self (snēha).	Love pure or objectless (prēma).
Ego is pre-dominant.	Ego much attenuated by equal consideration for the object also.	No ego, but selfless love alone.
Consideration only for yourself.	Consideration both for yourself and for the object of your love.	No consideration for yourself at all, but only for what is loved.
Activity of taking only.	Activity of both taking and giving.	Activity of giving only.

All these are expressions of the impersonal 'I', ranging from the gross to the Absolute.

Love has three distinct and separate stages in the course of its progress from the mundane to the Ultimate. They may be classified as follows:

1. In the lowest stage of love, you love another only for your own sake. That is only for something that the other does to make you happy and for nothing else. That other is discarded, if the desired pleasure is not forthcoming. This sort of love is called *kāma*, and the ego is most predominant in this. The only activity here on your part is taking and not giving.
2. The second stage is a little more elevated, less selfish, and demanding mutual consideration. Here you expect something from the other to make you happy, and at the same time you do not like the other to suffer on that account. But in return you are also prepared to do something to make the other happy. This sort of love is called *snēha*. It is not directed to the lower self alone, and therefore the ego by its operation gets much attenuated. Here, the activity is both that of taking and giving.
3. The third stage is the highest, and the ideal of love. Here you do not want any return from your partner in love and you do not love your partner any the less for this. You are prepared to do everything possible to make the other happy; and your partner's happiness is your happiness. Here, the love is selfless. This is called *prēma*, and it is the Ultimate. Here, there is only giving and no taking. The ego is virtually dead.

Thus, it can be seen that it is the same love – which is the right Absolute – that expresses itself as these three and that it is your real nature. If you take away the limitations from the first and the second, the love stands as pure selfless love: as represented in the third stage – *prēma*.

300. WHAT DO I LOVE?

The 'life principle' can easily be proved to be changeless consciousness, which knows no birth or death. Your real nature is changeless Consciousness. Therefore, it is clear that you love only yourself, even in the form of other objects or persons.

Hence the Upaniṣhad says [*Bṛihadāraṇyaka* 4.5.6]: ‘A man does not love the wife for her sake, but only for the Self in her; and the wife does not love the husband for his sake, but only for the Self in him.’ When Happiness comes, the mind dies.

1. The Self is objectless love or Peace. Love for self is degraded, compared to pure love or the Self.
2. It gets more degraded when it becomes self-love.
3. This gets further degraded when it becomes love for objects. But still, love is there. Get back to it in its purity.

So, to reach your real centre, the ‘I’-principle, you have to retrace the whole course from objects to the Self, in the reverse order. If, in your love of objects, you are able to emphasize love, you will easily get to the love aspect or the peace aspect of Reality. Just as, in your consciousness of objects, when you emphasize Consciousness, you get to the consciousness aspect of the Reality.

784. WHAT DO YOU LOVE?

‘You can love only the right Absolute, represented by the life principle in others. You can love nothing else.’

360. LOVE AND HOW TO LOVE?

All worldly love is mere bargaining and has always its opposite attached to it, ready to express itself when the consideration anticipated is in any way obstructed.

But a vēdāntin’s love alone knows no bargain, and naturally knows no opposite. It is perfect and unconditional; and always in the form of giving and not taking. Therefore, even to love one’s own wife or child in the best manner, one has to become a vēdāntin first. All talk of love in this world is nothing but unadulterated fraud.

So know yourself first. Then alone can you love anybody or anything truly and unreservedly.

416. WHAT IS THE TEST OF LOVE?

In your relationship with another, if you can never even dream of any kind of ill-feeling towards that other, that relationship can be said to be bordering on pure love. What is that which you cannot help loving? Ātmā [true Self] alone.

ātmāvīṅkalatilprīti, prītitān viṣayatīlām,
piṛaykkum viṣayaprīti, yātmaprītipiṛicciṭā .

[In Self, what’s found is quite beyond
all mere affection which is felt
for outside objects in the world.
Affection felt for outside things
can be expelled, but not so liking
for the truth of what Self is.
That can’t be given up or changed.]

Bhāṣha Pancadashi, Ātmānanda-prakaraṇam, 26
(Malayalam translation)

460. WHAT DO I LOVE?

When love is directed to personal qualities, that love is worldly. When it is directed to the life principle, it becomes sublime. When that life principle is examined, it will be found to be nothing other than pure Consciousness (the Ātmā). Then love is transformed into the absolute Reality.

Let us examine this a little more closely. You say you love a man. Who is the man you suppose you love? Is it his body? No. Because when he dies, you fear even to go *near* his dead body. Thus you see that your love was really directed to the life principle which was abiding in that body. When that life is examined, it is found to be nothing other than pure Consciousness, which is only one.

Man is incapable of loving anything other than that Consciousness, the Ātmā.

710. IS THERE ANYTHING REDEEMING OR ENRICHING IN DOMESTIC LOVE?

Yes, but not in all types.

The love of father and mother for the child is selfish, because instinct and relationship of the flesh make it selfish to the core. Sentimentality is always connected with objects. If what you call love produces a limited feeling, it is certainly no love.

But the love of husband and wife can be made selfless; because they have no such things in common before marriage, and instinct does not come into play. If you succeed in loving your partner as your Self, it clears the way for the love towards any other individual likewise. Thus your love easily becomes universal, and therefore objectless. This is the Reality. You will need the touch of the Guru at the last stage, and you instantly become a *jīvan-mukta*.

This was the path adopted by the *pati-vratās* (the celestials who are the ideals of chastity and husband-worship) in ancient India, and they attained their goal smoothly and effortlessly.

917. WHERE IS SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONSHIP IN LOVE?

When you say you love yourself, you yourself and love stand as one. So also when you love another, you become one with the other. The subject-object relationship vanishes, and the experience is one of identity. In order to '*love thy neighbour as thyself*' you have to stand as Ātmā itself.

The disappearance of subject-object relationship is a natural corollary of the experience of love. So also of the experience of knowledge. This actually happens in all experiences in the plane of the relative.

Instead of taking note of the sublime Truth, after the event the ego tries to limit, misrepresent and possess it. Whenever any doubt arises, refer to the deep sleep experience. There is no subject-object relationship there.

1168. THERE IS NEITHER GIVING NOR TAKING IN LOVE.

'Love' means becoming one with the object of your love. When both are one, there is no one to give and no one to take. It is only in loose language or in degraded love that such transactions take place, where the personal identities are not lost.

Real love is Advaita [non-dual], and nothing else exists beside it. If love can be said to give anything, it is love alone and that in fullness, leaving no trace of itself behind to claim to have done so. In taking also, you surrender the whole of your personality to the object of your love. In either case the doer dies, leaving behind Love supreme.

672. IS THERE ANY TYPE OF LOVE IN THIS WORLD WHICH MAY BE CONSIDERED IDEAL AND ACCEPTED?

Yes. The love of the Guru for the disciple is the solitary example.

Even the love of a mother for her child is not disinterested, as long as she does not love any other child in the same way. No credit is really due to her on that score. She loves only her own flesh indirectly.

1194. HOW TO LOVE MY MASTER BETTER?

If one feels that he is not able to love his master as he desires, it really means that he still loves his master deeply, but that he is not yet satisfied with the love he gives him. That is all. This dissatisfaction with the depth of one's own love for the master is the nature of true love; and it will never disappear.

Mantra

379. HOW TO HANDLE A MANTRA?

A mantra is a harmonious sound or group of sounds, with or without a superficially intelligible meaning, but capable of creating and applying some definite and potential energy if properly uttered.

When Truth flows out of a Sage spontaneously, whether in prose or in poetry, it is a perfect mantra. All attempts to correct it in accordance with standards of rhyme or reason are nothing short of sacrilege and mutilate the mantra, sometimes producing even adverse results. Therefore, accept it as such or reject it.

1397. MANTRAS AND THEIR EFFICACY

Mantras are designed by the great seers. They are composed of groups of sounds with an active life principle, capable of producing specific forms and effects when pronounced in the proper svara (tune).

Mantras have a double purpose. At the phenomenal level, emphasis is on the audible part of the mantra. The form created by each mantra (called its 'mantra dēvatā') is possessed of certain particular powers. The mantra dēvatā, in exercise of some of its powers, confers upon the devotee certain benefits prayed for. But in the course of this process, one has to guard against innumerable possible slips, of commission and omission.

Mantra, if properly utilized, helps one to approach the ultimate Truth. Just before and after every mantra, there is a visible gap into which the sound merges. In this gap, there is nothing other than one's own Self or Consciousness. Having once visualized

before the Guru this nature of the Self, if you pronounce the mantra emphasizing not the audible part but the content of the apparent gaps, you are easily taken to the centre of your visualization – the real Self – and this helps you gradually to get established there.

Though the mantras, in the great majority of cases, are utilized as instruments of action (pravṛitti), they can also be utilized for the purpose of liberation (nivṛitti) if handled with sufficient discrimination and insight. In the former, the centre of emphasis is the object; and in the latter, it is the background.

1094. PROGRESS THROUGH MANTRA AND DHYĀNA [MEDITATION]

This path is divided into four distinct stages, namely *vaikharī*, *madhyamā*, *pashyantī* and *parā*.

Instructions from a kārya-guru (one whose instructions take you to anything below the Ultimate) may suffice for the first two stages. But, for the last two, the help of a Kāraṇa-guru is absolutely necessary.

Vaikharī [‘articulated’] is chanting of a mantra in audible tone and effecting concentration of the mind there.

Madhyamā [‘mediating’] is doing the same thing mentally and effecting concentration. This is still in the realm of the mind and concentration is on an idea.

Pashyantī [‘seeing’]: Here ideation is transcended. It may be said that here one gets to the languageless idea. Unless one understands its nature from a Kāraṇa-guru, one will be in an unconscious state. I may say something about this languageless idea.

I may convey an idea to you by means of one particular language. The same idea may be conveyed to another by means of a different language. One is certainly not a translation of the other. What is the language of that idea? It has no language, because it has gone beyond expression. If that is correctly understood, it is itself the background of the expressed idea of the first two stages. He, who gets into that state, touches the background and is not in an unconscious state. He understands, further, that the languageless idea can only be one and cannot be many. This is the experience in *pashyantī*.

Parā: [‘beyond’] Even the notion of a background is transcended here, and self-luminosity of the Reality takes possession of the sādḥaka [spiritual aspirant]; and here he is in deep Peace, which is changeless.

Matter and life

412. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN THE LIFE PRINCIPLE AND DEAD MATTER?

Everything perceivable is dead matter. The life principle alone can never be perceived. Therefore the life principle can never be dead matter. Nor can there be any duality or diversity in the life principle. It can only be one. Life transcends perception as well as conception.

Looking from another standpoint, the life principle is the 'is'-ness in everything. From this point of view, there is no such thing as dead matter. Everything perceived is lit up by the Self, and is alive.

417. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'SAKALAM DRŚYAM JAḌAM' – 'EVERYTHING PERCEIVED IS INERT' (Upaniṣhad)?

All that you perceive is dead and inert; because in fact you do not see anything. The object, when you seem to perceive it, is dead as object; but is living in the higher sense, as Consciousness.

That which exists can never be dead. Therefore, the material part, which is changing, alone is dead. The existence part of every object is life or Consciousness itself. This is not perceptible and is never dead.

825. WHAT ARE THE ENDS OF LIFE?

Life has two ends: (1) the body (matter) which is the wrong end, and (2) the real 'I' (Consciousness) which is the right end. Spiritual aspirants alone take hold of the right end, and others take hold of the wrong end of life.

The Sage ignores matter and knows light. The ignorant man ignores light and knows matter.

The Sage sees light and matter both as light. The ignorant man sees matter and light both as matter.

There is ignorance on both sides. The Sage ignores ignorance (what is non-existent), and the ignorant man ignores what is really existent.

Meditation

1309. MEDITATION

It is an activity of the mind and is purely yōgic in character. Its process consists of spatializing the object of its meditation, chiefly outside and in front of the one who meditates. Even if one tries to meditate on the formless, this idea of space and of the outside comes in.

If one who has heard the Truth from the Guru can transcend this tendency of spatialization, meditation can well be used to establish oneself in Truth. For this, the first thing one has to do is to give up the outside, and to draw the meditation within, into one's own inside or the Self. The inside is supposed to be the seat of the subject, and there the subject-object differentiation is not possible. Then spatialization ceases, and one stands as the real Self.

242. HOW TO MEDITATE?

If you want positively to meditate upon something, without losing sight of your real centre, meditate upon the ultimate perceiver. Then the perceived and the perception

both disappear; and the perceiver stands alone without being a perceiver, shining as the Absolute.

This can be done in two ways:

1. Meditating as the witness of thoughts.
2. Meditating as the witness of feelings.

493. WHAT IS THE BEST TIME FOR MEDITATION?

It is at waking, but before becoming fully awake, so that the meditation might be the first activity on coming out of the Reality shining between the two states.

573. THE BEST FORM OF MEDITATION (IF YOU MUST HAVE ONE)

If you obstinately want to practice meditation, the best form for your purpose is 'I am.' It will give the mind nothing objective to cling on to, and in the very effort the mind will cease or die.

This contemplation drives away all intruding thoughts, and you are established in the 'I'. Slowly, it becomes deeper and deeper; and the nature of Consciousness and Happiness begins to be experienced, since these are intrinsic in the 'I'.

During chanting or contemplation, though we begin with the word or sound, we never stop there. We begin to dive slowly into its meaning or goal of the idea; and then the chanting gradually stops, leaving you at the very goal.

Thus when you contemplate 'I am', you stand established in the real 'I'-principle. But this 'I am' can never be replaced by the term 'Guru'. Because the Guru is never an experience to anybody, while 'I am' is a clear experience for all. Therefore, to lead you to the ultimate experience, 'I am' is essential. It is true that after experience the 'I am' also merges into the Guru, who is transcendental, beyond even the background of all this world.

Truth is experienced in three distinct stages.

In the first stage, in which you just touch the ultimate background, you reach the witness.

In the second, as you stand as the witness, the witnesshood disappears and you find yourself the Ultimate, without a second to make you miserable.

Lastly, the sense of absoluteness also vanishes and you stand established in the ultimate 'I'-principle, the only Reality.

The same idea is expressed in *Ātma-darshanam*, 16.3.

dr̥ṣṭāvām bōdhamātram̄ ñān
ennayām̄ dr̥ṣyamepporūm̄
kāṇippatennu sarvvatra
kaṇṭu ñān viharikkayām̄

I am pure Consciousness. Realizing that every object wherever placed is asserting Me, I enjoy Myself everywhere and in everything.

Shrī Ātmānanda

Memory

590. MEMORY

Memory merges the past into the present; and the present, when examined minutely, disappears altogether. Thus, time is really destroyed and you are brought nearer the Reality.

So memory helps you to a certain extent to approach the Reality, though memory itself is part of the unreality.

263. WHAT IS MEMORY? (At the mind's level)

At the mind's level, we have to take it that the witness silently witnesses the events and subsequently transmits the information to the mind. The mind in its turn identifies itself with the witness for the time being, and poses as if it were present during the past act referred to. But when the mind is engaged in a thought, it is never possible for it to witness this very thought simultaneously.

1403. CAN I REMEMBER?

No. But speaking loosely, we say that we remember past incidents. To remember something exactly as it was perceived, the time which has passed and the past sense perceptions must occur once again in the present here. But they are past and gone. Of all that was then and there, Consciousness alone is here and now.

Therefore memory, as ordinarily understood, is a misnomer.

1049. WHAT IS IT THAT YOU REMEMBER?

If you remember anything, the thing remembered must be changeless, at least between the two incidents. All changes occur in time and space. So the thing remembered, being changeless, must be beyond time and space. This means it is eternal and infinite. Only the Ultimate is such. So you remember only the Ultimate.

You can understand memory only if you withdraw into your own being.

70. HOW DOES MEMORY FUNCTION?

Memory is an undeniable experience to the ordinary man. Unless there is a permanent principle equally connected with the past, the present and the future, the functions of memory, recognition and hope are impossible. So memory helps us to prove the existence of such a permanent principle behind our mental activities. Therefore let us discuss memory here, conceding the existence of the world, gross as well as subtle.

Memory functions by way of remembering past thoughts, activities and events. It is clearly a function of the mind. To justify its reality, it must satisfy two conditions. It must first be proved to have been present at the time of the thought referred to and must have known or witnessed it. And secondly, it must also be present at the time of the act of remembrance.

That memory is present when it appears is admitted. Memory, which is itself a thought form, cannot exist along with another thought; since you can never have two thoughts simultaneously. Therefore, memory by itself cannot recall a past thought.

A thought can be recalled only by that principle which perceived it at the time of its occurrence. Therefore, the 'I'-principle alone can recall a thought at any point of time. That principle – because it always knows the mental activities – is the changeless witness. It can never cease to be a witness at any time.

Recalling a past thought is a function different from the act of witnessing. That activity can never be attributed to the 'I'-principle. Then the question arises: how is a past thought remembered?

Well, there is an usurper in the picture. Just as he usurps the existence aspect, consciousness aspect and happiness aspect of the real 'I'-principle, and claims them to himself in his own activities in the relative sphere, he also claims the witnessing function to be his. Does he not say 'I think', 'I feel', 'I perceive', 'I do', and along with these functions does he not also say 'I know'? The usurper is the ego.

Because of the identification of the real 'I'-principle with body, senses and mind, he can very well play the role of the real 'I'-principle in his daily activities. Further, the ego itself is a compound of Consciousness and body – gross or subtle. That makes it possible for the ego to steal the characteristics of the real 'I'-principle to some extent. Thus the ego remembers a past thought. When he so remembers, the real 'I'-principle stands behind, witnessing that mentation of memory also.

217. YOU SAY RELATIVE KNOWLEDGE IS MEMORY ALONE, HOW IS IT?

When do you really know? You say you know a thing only when you are able to remember it. If not, you say you do not know.

Knowing has no connection with the object. It is pure knowledge alone.

So, memory plays a very important part in making you believe what you are not.

2. HOW CAN REMEMBRANCE BE FORGETTING?

Every thought merges into Consciousness and remains not as thought, but as Consciousness, pure. So your searching in that Consciousness for the resurrection of any thought, merged therein, is in vain. It can only result in your first forgetting your real nature of pure Consciousness, and in the subsequent creation of an entirely new thought, as though experienced some time earlier.

707. HOW DOES REMEMBRANCE FUNCTION?

How do you try to remember a pleasurable sensation that you have had? You think of all the details, like the place and circumstances which you suppose were connected with it, till the mind comes to a climax preceding the enjoyment sought. Just then, all the antecedent thoughts vanish, and you are thrown into that pleasurable sensation again.

Similarly, with regard to repeating the experience of Truth you have once had, you have to begin likewise recounting the place, circumstances etc., till at last all your thoughts vanish and you are thrown into that same experience again.

Don't desire the expression, but direct your attention always to that which is expressed. Expressions ultimately die, in order that the expressed may be there as the Absolute.

Mentation

355. HOW IS KNOWING DISTINCT FROM MENTATION?

A gross object can only be a sense object. Without the senses, a sense object can never be said to exist. Therefore, what is called an object is nothing but a sensation. Likewise, it can be said that an object of thought is nothing but thought itself.

In knowledge, however, there is no such instrument as the senses or the mind. Therefore, to say that I know anything is wrong. There can never be a subject-object relationship in knowledge.

An ignorant man does not draw any distinction between knowing on the one hand and perceiving, thinking and feeling on the other. Thus he superimposes an object on knowledge also.

1424. MENTATION (COMPREHENDING INTELLECTION AS WELL) IS AN ACTIVITY OF THE MIND.

623. ALL MENTATIONS TAKE ONE TO THE TRUTH

You can reach the background, the Ultimate, through any feeling; provided you are sincere and consistent to the last.

Take, for example, hate. Here, you must continue to hate the creator as well as the created, including all the objects of your perceptions, thoughts and feelings – particularly your own body and mind and everything you call yours. Ultimately, when everything other than yourself is thus separated from you, you remain alone in your own glory as pure Consciousness and Happiness.

Looking back from that position, you find that all that you hated once was nothing but Consciousness and so you absorb it all into you as Consciousness. Thus hate is ultimately transformed into Love.

Mind and Truth

211. CAN MIND LEAD ME TO REALIZATION?

We speak of 'instinct', 'reason', 'intuition', 'over-mind', 'super-mind', etc. In all these, mind persists and you have not gone beyond it.

For realization, you have to reach the general background of all these: which is pure Consciousness or Peace. From any stage except the first, namely instinct, this background can be attained directly and with the same result.

But evolution by itself, continued to any extent, will never take you to this background – your real nature.

1311. FUTILITY OF USING THE MIND TO KNOW THE TRUTH

The mind functions in a long series of activities in the nature of subject-object relationship. But the last action of the series is an exception to this order. It is an action of perfect identification – as when knowing Happiness in deep sleep, by being it. This last knowledge is non-empirical and so is transcendental.

This knowledge is not opposed to anything else, but is the ground of all empirical knowledge. It is from this transcendental knowledge that the mind can rightly be analysed. You get that stand only on listening to the Truth, from the lips of the Guru. All mental exercises and yōga strengthen the mind and tighten the hold of the ego, while what you need is to transcend the ego-mind.

With the inception of thought or memory, you make the transcendental appear limited and separate it from yourself. This is how the mind makes a mess of the Truth. To use such a mind to understand the Truth is foolish.

When the mind dies a natural death in deep sleep, one stands free: as this transcendental knowledge. Therefore, create the same condition knowingly, by ignoring the mind and its vagaries altogether and going beyond it, in the light of the transcendental Truth as heard from the Guru. There is no other path to true liberation.

All the so called paths only pave the way, and some even obscure and distance the Truth. Therefore beware. Beware of promises, pleasures and powers achieved or anticipated. All these seduce you from the Truth.

210. HOW DOES UNSELFISHNESS HELP YOU TO TRANSCEND THE MIND?

Every time you do an act in strict conformity with ethical laws, you know on the surface that it takes you to the unselfish part. But if you examine the same act carefully, you will find that every such act takes you even further – to the real background, beyond the mind's plane.

This glimpse of your real nature expresses itself as pleasure, when you come back to the mind's level. But this you immediately attribute to the mind's activity just preceding it. Hence you miss the spiritual values of the communion with your real nature.

In every act called good or virtuous, there is a grain of self-sacrifice, however small.

132. VIDYĀ-VṚITTI AND MIND

Vidyā-vṛitti, functioning consciousness, higher reason, higher logic and shuddha-sattva all denote the same faculty (if faculty it may be called).

Even in worldly enjoyment, it is your own real nature of peace that you experience as Happiness. For example, you enjoy Happiness listening to sweet music. Here music helps you only to empty your mind of all thoughts other than music, and finally it is emptied of the thought of music also. Thus the mind ceases to be and you come to Happiness, and that is your real nature.

It is wrong to believe that the happiness came from the hearing of music, because music was not there when the happiness was enjoyed.

637. PURIFICATION OF THE MIND

The purification of the mind is sought only as a help to reach the Truth.

The best way to purify the mind is to think of the Truth which you are and which is purity itself. When you know you are the purest of the pure, all thought of purifying the mind drops away. Your earnestness and sincerity to reach the ultimate Truth is the best means of purifying your mind before realizing the Truth.

881. HOW DOES THE MIND BECOME PURE?

The mind becomes pure by its own death. The attempt to purify the mind by any amount of other effort is futile.

1024. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FRONT AND BACK IN SPIRITUAL CONTEXT?

Question: In *Ātma-nirvṛiti*, chapter 18 (verses 5-7), addressed ‘To the mind’, it is said: ‘You should first look behind and see me there, and then I will draw you into the inmost core of your being.’ What does this mean, and what is the significance of ‘front’ and ‘back’, so far as the mind is concerned?

Answer: The mind moves only in the realm of the body-samskāras. [‘Samskāras’ are ‘habituated conditionings’.] So by ‘front’ the mind means objects, and by ‘back’ it means absence of objects.

The mind is asked to look back, in its own language. Therefore it has to give up objects as a whole, when it gives up the front. But then it does not realize that the back – which is just the reverse of the front – has also simultaneously disappeared with the front.

So when the mind has given up objects and tries to look back, it is really left within itself – which is the inside of the mind, in the mind’s own language. This is how the mind is drawn into the inmost core of one’s being.

Mind’s functioning

152. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MIND AND EGO?

The inner organ loosely called ‘mind’ is divided into four categories, according to its different functions. The ego is one such.

1. *Mind* (particular) is that which gathers impressions from the outside world.
2. *Reason* (intellect) discriminates and selects from the impressions thus gathered.
3. *Will* is that which precedes and directs action. It may be loosely called ‘desire’ (svārthā-’nusandhāna-vaśēna cittam).
4. *Ego* is that which claims all activities of the mind.

[This note and its quotation seem to have come from Shrī Shankara's *Vivēka-cūḍāmaṇi*, 93-4:

nigadyatē 'ntaḥ-karaṇam manō dhīr
aham-kṛtīś cittam iti sva-vṛttibhiḥ .
manas tu samkalpa-vikalpanādibhir
buddhiḥ padārthā-'dhyavasāya-dharmataḥ ..

atrā 'bhimānād aham ity ahamkṛtiḥ .
svārthā-'nusandhāna-vaśēna cittam ..

The inner faculty is spoken
of as 'mind' or 'reason' or
as doing 'ego' or as 'will'.
It gets these names according to
its various modes of functioning.

Mind is the function that conceives
of things together and apart.
Next, *reason* is the function that
determines what is meant thereby.

The *ego* is an acting 'I'
that claims to be this body here.
And *will* is that desire which seeks
out what it wishes for itself.]

702. IMPORTANCE OF INTELLECT

Question: Why is intellect considered all important in the world at large?

Answer: The vast majority of people in the world attribute reality to the apparent sense-world, and they live practically out of themselves. All the philosophies, sciences, arts etc. of the world are trying to explain phenomenal problems in terms of the world itself, utilizing the faculty of intellect as the instrument.

Of course the intellect is the highest faculty endowed upon man for his enquiry and traffic inside the world; and the decisions of intellect are accepted as final beyond question. This is why intellect is considered all important in the phenomenal world.

But to the vēdāntin, intellect, though subtle, is only an object like any other object; to be examined for its content (*svarūpa*) from the standpoint of pure awareness, and disposed of as mere appearance.

134. SPIRITUALITY REPLACES THE OBJECT BY THE SUBJECT.

The worldly way of life is to emphasize the object alone in every activity, ignoring the subject altogether. Spirituality comes in when you begin to bring in and emphasize the subject also, alongside of the object. Ultimately, when spirituality leads you to realization, the object as such vanishes and the real subject, the 'I'-principle alone shines. Then all activity points to you, or all activities vanish.

Mind has usually three stages of expression.

1. *Instinct:* With the body as its instrument.

2. *Reason*: With the particular mind and senses as instruments.
3. *Intuition*: The word ‘intuition’ is used in different senses in different texts. What is taken up here is yōgic intuition. With intuition, time and space are curtailed to a very great extent. But still, they are there, to enable the intuition to function. The mind is much expanded in intuition. Still, it does not cease to be mind.

Complete annihilation of time and space can never be accomplished by the mind. The background is in an entirely different plane.

Morality

1145. EFFICACY OF MORAL LAWS

All codes of ethics and morality, if strictly followed, make you come nearer to the Truth. All such laws demand, to some extent, the sacrifice of lower self. The ultimate goal of all such laws is certainly selflessness. But unfortunately, ethics and morality – being objective in the strict sense – cannot take one to absolute selflessness.

Absolute selflessness is Truth itself, the ultimate subject. It can be visualized only with the help of a Kāraṇa-guru. All thoughts of striving for and recognizing selflessness are in the mental realm. Pure selflessness dawns only when one transcends the mind and stands as Ātmā, the real Self.

844. WHAT ARE GOOD AND BAD SPIRITUALLY?

Association with objects makes one *bad*. Association with the ‘I’-principle makes one *good*.

689. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF MORALITY?

Morality, if followed intelligently and with earnestness, takes one to the egoless state, just like any other path of devotion, yōga etc. The path of *pati-vratya* (service and chastity, one-pointed love and devotion to the husband) adopted by the gems of the womanhood of ancient India was nothing other than this path of morality. Ancient history abounds in stories of arrogant yōgins of great powers and reputation and even the lords of the Trinity begging at the feet of such ladies for their thoughtless misdeeds.

Morality has the touch of the Absolute in it. The outer covering is immaterial. It is the touch of the Absolute alone that matters. That attenuates the ego every time you come into contact with it. So morality has to be observed, but without any eye on its fruits.

335. WHAT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT DOING GOOD TO OTHERS?

It is not the nature of the act alone that constitutes its goodness. The test of every act is to see whether it binds you or releases you.

For example, if after giving charity, the thought that you have done a good deed sticks to you, it certainly binds you, though only with a golden chain. It clearly amounts to an evil, so far as yourself and the Truth are concerned. Your ego gets inflated thereby.

It is the mental attitude that counts, in all such matters. You can be really good only on reaching the ultimate Truth, when even the 'good' loses its 'goodness' and becomes transformed into that ultimate Truth.

91. STANDARD OF MORALITY

Current standards of morality are purely relative and differ vastly with time, place and various other factors. But man being essentially one all the world over, a common and absolute standard of morality is necessary. But this, however, is rarely thought of. Such an absolute standard becomes necessary only for those who are on the path to the absolute Reality. These are incredibly few, and hence the absence of any satisfactory definition of a single standard of morality in the shāstras [texts].

The following can be such an absolute standard of morality.

- *Vice* is that particular act or thought or feeling that tends to inflate the ego.
- *Virtue* is that act, thought or feeling that tends to attenuate the ego.

All acts, thoughts and feelings directed towards the 'I'-principle or to its nature are virtuous. Virtue and vice have a place only in the relative sphere. In the relative sphere, that which tends towards selflessness is virtue and that which tends towards selfishness is vice.

Love itself can be both selfish and selfless, according to its goal or motive. Object-less love is virtue.

When you understand from your Guru 'who you are' and 'what you are', you transcend both virtue and vice.

Name and form

631. NAME AND FORM

Name and form as such are not the Reality.

Name is non-existent without your being present. Form is also non-existent without your being present.

Therefore it is your presence alone that makes name and form real. So name and form are yourself, the Reality.

1043. WHY DO YOU GIVE A THING A NAME?

Because you want the transient to be always associated with a permanent background; since you are, yourself, that permanent changeless principle behind the body, senses and mind.

So, that name denotes the unknown background, the Truth, which is in fact the best known.

102. EVERY NAME POINTS TO THE ABSOLUTE.

Soon after your birth, your parents give you a particular name. You continue to be known by that name alone till your death. So we see that the name is changeless. Changeless means beyond time and space. That which is changeless in you is the real 'I'-principle. Therefore the name can pertain only to that 'I'-principle, and the 'I'-principle is the right Absolute. Therefore, every name is the name of the Absolute.

Now coming to such names as 'man', 'chair', 'water' etc., all these are generic names and we have already proved that there are no objects corresponding to these names. You may then think that they are mere ideas. But there can never be ideas conceiving gross objects, without the gross objects themselves being there. Therefore these names transcend both the physical and mental realms.

That which transcends the mental and physical is the right Absolute. Therefore, all these names denote the right Absolute.

1368. WHAT DOES MY NAME DENOTE?

Every name represents the Ultimate. The name given to me by my parents at my birth is the only one changeless thing that still continues with me, in the midst of the ever-changing body, senses and mind. Therefore, the name pertains to the real Self in me, and not to the body, senses or mind.

996. WHAT IS GETTING BEYOND NAME AND FORM?

Understanding name and form to be but an expression of the impersonal, and then meditating even upon that name and form, takes you beyond name and form. Then, the reaction that comes is from the impersonal, and that spontaneously raises you to the impersonal.

52. WHAT ARE NAME AND FORM? AND HOW TO TRANSCEND THEM?

Being attracted by the existence aspect of the Absolute everywhere, we start to examine what it is and immediately utilize our senses to do the job. The senses at once project their own respective objects, and superimpose their own particular form upon the existence 'sensed', attributing the permanence of the Absolute to the forms thus superimposed. In this way, we are deluded into the thought that the forms thus created are permanent, and we lose sight of the Absolute.

In order to get beyond this delusion, we must go beyond these forms, as well as the mind. Then we will see the Reality as one with our Consciousness.

On the subjective side, there is Consciousness; and on the objective side, there is existence alone. Existence and Consciousness being two aspects of the same Reality, the subject-object relationship vanishes. Existence may be said to be objective, but really is not. Because that which exists is really neither inside nor outside.

Names can be given only to objects. Objects have been proved to be nothing but Consciousness. Therefore the name also vanishes completely; or all names are the names of Consciousness.

Negation and negatives

1338. WHY THE PATH OF NEGATION?

A positive knowledge of Ātmā [Self] is impossible. Therefore the path of negation is adopted. Your position after negation of body, senses and mind is 'being it', though it is generally called 'knowing it'. There 'to know' is 'to be'.

1425. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROCESS OF NEGATION?

Negation of the objective world gives you a disinterested and tranquil stand from which to start the enquiry. Otherwise, there is the danger of the mind coming in uncalled for, in some form or other, to pollute the enquiry.

197. NEGATIVES

Negatives can never subsist independently, by themselves. They want a positive something, as their background.

Some people consider the mind as a container of thoughts and feelings. If so, it should be a permanent container. When permanency is attributed to mind, its material part (which can never be permanent) drops away, and the Consciousness part (which is permanent) continues as the Reality itself.

1089. RESULT OF ELIMINATING FROM ME ALL THAT I AM NOT

Question: Would the process of eliminating from me all that I am not, take me to my real nature and establish me there?

Answer: Certainly it will do both, provided you have heard the ultimate Truth about your real nature from the lips of a Kāraṇa-guru. Otherwise you will get stranded in nothingness, mistaking it for the Ultimate; because the experience of nothingness also gives you a reflected and limited peace or happiness.

After listening to the Truth from the Guru, if you take to any thought – and more so a spiritual thought – it expires not in nothingness but in Consciousness alone. Therefore, when all that you are not – namely the body, senses and mind – have been eliminated from you, you alone remain over as the background – Consciousness and Peace. This is nothing short of Self-realization. Repeat the same vicāra [enquiry] for some time. This will help you to stand established in your Real nature.

Regarding one's own real nature: *'To know is to be.'*

If you enquire into the ultimate goal or meaning (purport) of the term 'I' used by everybody alike, and if you succeed in reaching that goal, there is nothing else to be attained. I am that principle in man permeating all men alike; but at the same time distinct and separate from the body, senses and mind of all. That am I. That is *Ātmā*.

1163. HOW TO NEGATE OBJECTS AND ARRIVE AT THE TRUTH?

The world of body, senses and mind and their corresponding objects may be viewed from two standpoints:

1. As being constituted of the presence and the absence of objects, gross or subtle; and
2. As being constituted of the ultimate subject and a variety of objects.

It has already been proved that one's real nature is pure Consciousness and Peace. Looking at the world from the first standpoint, the presence as well as the absence of objects have to be proved to be non-existent. This has to be done successively from all the three states, reducing the gross object first to a mentation and then the mentation to pure Consciousness. This process does not establish that the world is not; but rather that the world is nothing but your own real nature, Consciousness.

Viewing the world from the second standpoint, when everything objective (whether gross or subtle) is disposed of as unreal, that principle – the real Self – which disposed of everything else, remains over as the sole survivor. Even the mind being already disposed of, this survivor stands above in all its glory as pure Consciousness, the real Self.

Nothingness

965. WHAT IS NOTHINGNESS?

Nothingness can never be perceived by the sense organs nor conceived by the mind.

bhāvāntaram abhāvō 'nyō na kaś cid anirūpañāt

[Source of quotation uncertain]

Nothingness is only the change from one positive thing to another positive thing. You become what you perceive. You are not nothing and therefore can never become nothing. So you cannot perceive nothingness. Nothingness is never perceived but only otherness.

1296. THE VISION EXPERIENCED BY THE YÖGIN

When the world is examined objectively, emptiness is the background of all appearance, because it is there before and after appearance. Examining it subjectively, your Self – Consciousness – is the background.

This emptiness is thus Consciousness itself. This is why the yögins see emptiness when the world disappears; because they look at all things objectively.

If you ask why the world appears, you must ask the world and not me. The world must explain itself to you.

187. HOW TO TRANSCEND THE VOID OR NOTHINGNESS?

In your attempt to reach the Absolute, you transcend the realm of objects and senses, and sometimes get stranded in a state of void or nothingness. This void or nothingness, though highly subtle, is still objective in character; and you remain as that positive principle which perceives that nothingness also.

The real nature of this 'I'-principle is Consciousness, or knowledge itself. Looking from this stand, as Consciousness, you see the void or nothingness transformed into Consciousness; and it becomes one with the 'I'-principle.

So, whenever the concept of nothingness confronts you, take the thought that nothingness is also your object, and that you are its perceiver, the ultimate subject, whose nature is Consciousness itself. Immediately, the shroud of nothingness disappears in the light of Consciousness, and it becomes one with the 'I'-principle.

This void is the last link in the chain which binds you to the objective world. Its appearance in the course of your spiritual sādhana [discipline] is encouraging, since it forebodes the death-knell of the world of objects, of course in the light of knowledge.

(Refer *Ātma-nirvṛiti*, chapter 20, *The Natural State – Svarūpāvasthiti*, verse 5).

Even when you take this last 'I'-thought, people ask you what you are thinking about. They cannot understand that you are not thinking of any object at all, but that you are only trying to stand as that principle which is the background of all thoughts. The thought that you are Consciousness removes all sense of space limitation.

Shrī Buddha first analysed the external objective world in the right yōgic fashion, utilizing mind and intellect as instruments, and at the end reached what may from the phenomenal level be called void or nothingness.

A negative can never subsist by itself. Much less can it be the source of positive things. That which was called void or nothingness has to be understood as Ātmā itself. Buddha must have gone beyond and reached that ātmic principle himself. But Shrī Buddha's followers seem to have stopped short and interpreted the Ultimate to be that void or nothingness.

The following verse, describing the last determination of Shrī Buddha, proves this:

ihāsanē śuṣyatumē śarīraṁ
tvagasthi māṁsaṁ pralayaṅ ca yātu .
aprāpya bōdhaṁ bahu-kalpa durlabhaṁ
nai 'vāsanāt kāyamataścaliṣyate ..

Lalita-vistāra, 19.57

This means: 'Unless I know the ultimate Truth, I am not going to stir from my seat, even if it be for several kalpas (for many thousands and thousands of years).' This proves that Shrī Buddha must have reached the ātmic principle which is the absolute Truth.

Object

93. WHAT IS AN OBJECT?

One perception, as we generally call it, is really the resultant of ever so many distinct and separate perceptions. We see only one point at a time. It is only after this point has disappeared that the next point can be seen. It is only thousands of such points that seem to make up a so called object.

A point that has disappeared does not remain as such. It is foolish to try to collect and join them together, to make up the object or perception in question. Even the point itself, when examined, is reduced to a geometrical point – a mere idea.

So, looked at in the right perspective, an object and its perception are non-existent.

1039. HOW DOES AN OBJECT SERVE ME?

An object is innocent in itself and serves you in accordance with the perspective through which you view it.

1. If you view it as dead and inert and as distinct and separate from you, it takes you from the centre of your being to the world outside.
2. But if you look upon it as something appearing in Consciousness and if you emphasize that Consciousness aspect of it, immediately it points to you – the source of that appearance – Consciousness being your real nature.

113. YOU ALONE LIGHT UP OBJECTS.

If objects are lit up, your real nature alone shines there. When the emphasis is on the objects lit up, Consciousness appears limited. But from the standpoint of Consciousness itself, it is never limited, there being nothing else beside it to limit it.

But the ego wants to continue the illusion; and so says ‘I know it’ – even when the ‘it’ (meaning the object) is nowhere in the knowledge to which every perception is reduced.

617. AN OBJECT POINTS TO CONSCIOUSNESS.

You generally say ‘The form appears.’ This statement has two parts: ‘form’ and ‘appears’.

‘Form’ is objective and ‘appears’ is something subjective. To whom does it appear? Certainly to you. Therefore you light it up by your Consciousness. So every object points to Consciousness.

603. OBJECTS, PERCEPTION AND REALITY

The reality of every object perceived by you is only your own reality; and that object has no independent existence other than yourself.

No perception ceases until the object has been reduced to knowledge or recorded in knowledge. Then the object no longer exists as such.

1402. WHAT IS THE FUNCTION AND THE FATE OF AN OBJECT?

An object is there always pointing to the Consciousness of the perceiver, as ‘You, You, You, ...’, meaning thereby: ‘I am here merely on account of you.’ But the moment you stand as Consciousness and turn back to the object, the object vanishes; in other words, the object commits suicide.

61. WHAT HAPPENS TO OBJECTS WHEN KNOWN?

In order to perceive anything, we must use any one of the five senses. Each sense returns the verdict that the thing is *its* particular object. That is to say that after the

sense organ has sensed it as its own object, Consciousness faces the object and knows it. At the end of every function, knowledge dawns.

Just as each sense organ is capable of sensing only its own particular object, Consciousness also can know only Consciousness. Thus, knowing the object means that the object is transformed into knowledge; and the object is no longer the object as before.

The objective counterpart of knowledge can only be knowledge. After every activity, knowledge dawns. This means that knowledge is the background of activity as well as of inactivity, just as it is in the interval between two perceptions when you stand all alone in your own glory.

When looked at through the eyes, the object appears as form (the counterpart of that sense organ); and when looked at through knowledge, the object appears as knowledge itself, since knowledge can have no other counterpart.

I know it = I know myself = I know the Truth = I am the Truth.

The background of objects and sense organs is the same. Similarly, the background of senses is also the same Consciousness or 'I'. Knowledge has nothing for its object except knowledge. With the seeing, form appears. But when you know the seeing subsequently, it becomes knowledge itself. So everything is transformed in terms of the instrument used.

Thus using Consciousness, everything is reduced or transformed into Consciousness. Even the statement 'I know' is wrong, because 'I' and knowledge are one. In experience or knowledge, both subject and object merge.

94. I AND OBJECT ARE ONE.

1. Objects are nothing but form, sound, touch, taste or smell. It is evident that any one of these can never be separated from its respective sense organ, even in thought. So objects and sense perceptions are one.

Similarly, seeing, hearing etc. can never shine independently of Consciousness. So, by the same logic, they are Consciousness itself.

Thus objects are only Consciousness; and that is the 'I'-principle.

2. One directs attention to *something*. But is it that something that we perceive by the senses? No. We perceive only the superimpositions of the senses upon that something. This vague something remains as the substratum of form, sound etc.; and always remains unknown to the senses or the mind.

But it is that unknown something that we want to know, without any superimposition. So, no agent like the senses or the generic mind can be utilized, for they can only superimpose their own objects. The mind always functions conjointly with the sense organs. In the absence of these agents, neither forms nor thoughts appear. But using Consciousness to know it, we see it as Consciousness alone, that is to say as one with the 'I'-principle.

432. HOW IS CONSCIOUSNESS RELATED TO OBJECTS?

Consciousness has no separate object. So it comes to the realms of the mind and senses, and claims the objects there as objects of consciousness. But when you look deeper, to see how they become objects of consciousness, you have to leave the

realms of senses and mind. Beyond the mind, the objects become Consciousness itself, and there all objectivity vanishes.

Every sense organ has a corresponding sense object, and the object of any one sense organ cannot be cognized by any other organ. Moreover, every sense object is of the same nature as the corresponding sense organ itself. Therefore, if Consciousness were likewise an organ and had an object of its own, it could only be of the nature of Consciousness, quite distinct and separate from any other class of sense objects.

The usual statement, 'I am conscious of a thing', is not correct; since a 'thing' can never be the object of Consciousness. What you mean by that statement is only that you are perceiving the thing through the mind in a subtle manner, or that you are mentally conscious of it, or in other words that you can reproduce it in your mind.

When you search for that 'thing' in Consciousness, it is nowhere to be found. It has merged in Consciousness; and the statement ultimately means 'I am conscious of myself' or that 'Consciousness knows Consciousness.' Therefore, Consciousness cannot have any object other than Consciousness.

ātmānamātmanā kaṇṭu telīka nī

[It's by the self that self is seen.

That's what you need to clarify.]

Eruttacchan

1097. WHAT IS AN OBJECT AND WHAT IS ITS ESSENCE?

That which could be said to exist or to shine is alone called an object. To what do the existence and luminosity found in the object belong? Do they belong to the object itself? Or are they derived from elsewhere? They do not belong to the so called object. Because the object appears and disappears in Consciousness, and existence and luminosity can never cease to exist or shine. So the object derives these qualities from Consciousness.

'I' am the only Principle that never ceases to exist and that never ceases to shine. Therefore, existence and luminosity belong to me. They are my real nature – one and indivisible. Existence and knowledge are one – being intrinsic in oneself, and there being no subject-object relationship with respect to knowledge and existence. My presence as that knowledge – pure – is essential for the manifestation of any object, and it cannot be assumed that an object exists when not known. Therefore the object which appears and disappears is nothing but Consciousness.

But in our traffic with the world, we put the dead and inert cart (object) before the living horse (Consciousness). In this way, we make of life a blind show. The object has been brought into existence only by the grace of Consciousness, lending its liberal presence. Immediately, this object, which is dead and inert, usurps all the living qualities of Consciousness.

If only you succeed in seeing the world as the world of objects alone and yourself as the only subject, you are free. In other words, you have only to reinstate the independent horse of Consciousness in its rightful place in front and place the cart of dependent objects in its legitimate place in the rear, ready to be discarded at any moment without notice.

1285. HOW IS AN OBJECT KNOWN?

An object can remain as an object only if it remains distinct and separate from you, and yet connected with you in subject-object relationship. The object has necessarily to give up its objectivity in order to be one with you, or to be identical with you, when known.

This happens both in the relative level of the ego and also in the absolute level, with identity established in either case. In the level of the ego, the ego loses itself in the object and becomes identical with it, for the time being. But in the absolute level, you make the object lose itself in you, as Consciousness for ever.

1252. HOW IS A THING CONSTITUTED?

A thing may be said to be real only if it continues to be real in all the three states, that is at the sensual, mental and transcendental levels. In the subjective realm, the body is a percept, the mind is an idea and the 'I'-principle is Consciousness – the Reality. The senses, mind and the 'I'-principle each contribute their respective quotas to the make of any object.

The sense organ concerned contributes the one fundamental percept, the mind brings forth its store of former concepts and heaps them upon the first percept in the form of supplementary percepts, making the object a perceptual whole. The 'I'-principle contributes its quota – the sense of reality – to the object, and makes it appear real.

1306. THE BANE OF OBJECTIVITY AND ITS REMEDY

The knowledge that every mentation is nothing but pure, impersonal experience takes one to the height of Vēdānta. Objectivity, in any form, is the only obstacle to Truth. If you transcend it, the subjectivity also naturally disappears, and you stand as the Reality yourself.

Objectivity does not pertain to the object. Consciousness objectified is the object. The object is an object on account of you. The world of objects never affects one, except through one's own thoughts. Therefore the only thing needed, to be free, is to transcend thoughts. This is possible only by examining thoughts and disposing of them, without leaving even a trace behind. The trace is the objectivity attached to the thought. This objectivity can be eliminated only by examining thought subjectively; and finding that it is nothing but awareness, the Self, and that all appearance was illusion.

If the least trace is left behind, it sprouts up in the form of memory, which is but a fresh thought. Memory is the one thing that creates the whole world, and memory is the last link that connects one with the phenomenal world. If memory is understood to be nothing but a thought, which in turn is nothing but pure Consciousness – the Self – then memory, and the whole world with it, is merged into the Self.

1417. IF I AM THE ULTIMATE TRUTH, HOW DOES AN OBJECT APPEAR?

Gurunāthan: Does the object appear at all? Who says so?

Disciple: It is the ego that says so.

G: What is the ego from your own standpoint as the real 'I'-principle? Is it an object or is it the subject?

D: Certainly the ego is only an object.

G: Therefore, including the ego also in the category of objects, does the question arise at all?

D: No. It was a stupid question.

915. HOW DO OBJECTS HELP ME TO KNOW THE TRUTH?

Adṛśyō dṛśyatē rāhur gṛhītēnē 'ndunā yathā,
tathā 'nubhava-mātrā 'tmā dṛśyēnā 'tmā vilōkyatē

[Source of quotation uncertain]

The invisible Rāhu is perceived through the eclipsed moon. In the same way the *Ātmā* who is mere experience is perceived through objects.

Translation by Shrī Ātmānanda, Ātma-darshan, Preface

Objects being known help you to understand first that there is an independent principle in you called 'knowingness'; and then, when under instructions from a Guru you eliminate objects from the knowledge of objects, you stand as pure knowingness or Consciousness itself. This knowledge is the all-pervading Reality, yourself.

So don't look down upon objects, but utilize them intelligently as a means to the Ultimate.

Obstacles and means

56. IS THERE ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WEALTH AND LIBERATION?

Wealth is often supposed to be an obstacle to spiritual progress. But if a wealthy man has the good fortune to take to the spiritual quest earnestly, he is blessed indeed. He easily rises to the very top and becomes a beacon light of spirituality.

When a wealthy man gets to the Truth, he has transcended much of what may possibly tie him down. Though still in possession of all the worldly objects of pleasure, he has found them to be non-existent and meaningless, in the light of the absolute Truth.

Thus, anything that inflates the ego can also be used to attenuate it as well. When a wealthy man finds that what is sought by wealth, namely happiness, is not to be gained by wealth, he turns his attention away from wealth, though he may still continue to possess it. To gain that happiness, he seeks other means; and finds that the obstacle is not just 'wealth', but rather our sense of possessing it.

For a spiritual aspirant, there can never be an obstacle.

500. HOW CAN OBSTACLES BE CONVERTED INTO HELPS TO REACH THE ULTIMATE?

Consciousness goes into the make of sense perceptions, and sense perception goes into the make of objects. Of these, Consciousness alone stands by itself. Therefore, an

object is Consciousness alone. Consciousness is the essence of both perceptions and objects. It has already been proved that thoughts and feelings are nothing but Consciousness or Peace.

The only obstacles usually encountered on the spiritual path are thoughts, feelings, perceptions and objects. They become obstacles only when the emphasis is placed on the object side or material part of it and the subject ignored.

But when you begin to emphasize the subject part, which has been proved to be pure Consciousness, the objects thenceforward become means or helps to direct your attention to the Truth. If these so called obstacles were not there, how could you conceive of the witness and rise to the Ultimate?

When there is an object, Consciousness is there to light it up. This most important part played by Consciousness is very often not noticed at all. Emphasize also that vital part of Consciousness in all your activities, and you will be surprised to find them all turned into means or helps pointing to your real Self, the 'I'-principle.

Thereafter, even the worst pain shows the real 'I'. When you tell a doctor that you have a particular pain anywhere in your body, it is not as the sufferer that you say so; because the sufferer can only suffer and cannot say. It is the knower alone that can say anything about the pain suffered. Thus the pain shows you that you are ultimately the knower, who is the real subject.

Therefore the world only helps you to know yourself. Evidently, the world was created in order to prove you.

918. WHAT ARE OBSTACLES TO SPIRITUALITY AND HOW TO REMOVE THEM?

The thought that some things are obstacles is the first obstacle to you. The best way to remove them is to look straight at them and examine them. What you consider an obstacle consists of the material part and the Consciousness or Reality part. Direct your attention to the Reality part alone and ignore the material part. Then the thing ceases to be an obstacle and becomes a help instead.

1273. OBSTACLE MADE A MEANS

Body, senses and mind are supposed to be the clothing of the real Self within. The clothing is here emphasized, thus losing sight of the Self. But, through a spiritual outlook, the position is reversed; and the very same clothes are made a help to visualize the Self within.

The way to achieve this is to make the clothings of the Self as thin as possible, so as to see through them. Or, in other words, make the body, senses and mind function in such a manner that you can see through them. Then your attention is caught by the Self within; the mind and senses lose their significance as obstacles and become mere pointers to the Self.

Opposites

555. SIGNIFICANCE OF OPPOSITES

In the direct approach, understanding that each object is directly connected only to the background, you easily reach the Absolute by transcending the objectivity of that one thing alone. Here, no opposite comes in to trouble you. That opposite is only another object through which also you can reach the same background.

559. THE CONCEPTION OF OPPOSITES

It does not come in, even in our ordinary statements. We bring in the idea of the opposite only subsequently, by way of interpretation or explanation to establish the first statement.

1371. HOW DO THE OPPOSITES MEET AND WHERE?

The opposites meet in the background. You must transcend both passivity and activity, in order to understand the Truth. Having first understood the Truth from the Guru, you can again visualize it whenever you want, either by extreme passivity or by extreme activity. But without first having that understanding, no kind of activity or inactivity can be of any avail to you.

1131. IF CONSCIOUSNESS IS BEYOND OPPOSITES, HOW CAN IT BE KNOWN?

How do you know the opposites? Certainly not through the opposites themselves. Can that principle which knows opposites have any opposite? *No*. That is Consciousness, pure.

Consciousness or Happiness is that which never ceases to be. Opposites are always limited by time, and so cease to be. Therefore Consciousness or Happiness is beyond all opposites.

The teacher and the disciple both stand depersonalized when the Truth is expounded by the teacher and understood by the disciple.

Paradoxes

46. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'WATER DOES NOT FLOW'?

Water as water, or as the element water, is both in the flowing water as well as in the stagnant water. So the flowing-ness or the stagnancy does not go into the make of water. Therefore, water does not flow, nor does it stagnate.

Similarly, the 'I'-principle is both in activity and in inactivity. Therefore it is neither active nor inactive. The 'I'-principle shines unchanged: before, during and after every activity or inactivity.

This method, of understanding the objective world and the 'I', not only establishes one's self in the right centre, but also destroys the samskāras [driven conditionings] relating to them.

572. WHEN I SAY I WALK, IT REALLY MEANS I AM NOT WALKING.

An activity is a deviation from the normal state. When I say I walk, I mean it as an activity opposed to my normal state of non-walking. Walking is only something which comes and goes, while I am by nature non-walking or changeless. You admit you have not changed by merely walking. Walking refers to my nature which is non-walking. Thus every activity shows I am not that.

Every activity appears and disappears in me. I am changeless, and activity is incessant change. So I cannot be an activity as it is.

This 'I' has to be emphasized in the present tense just before every activity. The 'I' has to be in every activity but it is there only as the silent witness. If I am in everything which is diversity, it can only be by my being that unity itself.

Paths to Truth – the direct method (*vicāra-mārga*)

427. WHAT IS VICĀRA-MĀRGA?

Vicāra-mārga is the method in which the disciple is directly shown the right Absolute, and the only effort the disciple is called upon to make is to establish himself in that Absolute.

1281. WHAT IS 'VICĀRA' – 'DISCRIMINATION'?

It is a peculiar kind of activity, but not 'thought' as it might seem to be. Its purpose is removal of untruth (body, senses and mind) by arguments. What is left over is the real Self (absolute Truth) as the real background.

633. VICĀRA-MĀRGA OR THE DIRECT PERCEPTION METHOD

This is the rationalistic exposition and establishment of Truth, put through the higher reason alone.

Spiritual 'vicāra' creates sātṭvic samskāras [purifying inclinations] which are doubly strong. They destroy the worldly samskāras and at the same time themselves become stronger and stronger. When the worldly samskāras are thus obliterated, the spiritual samskāras also disappear and stand transformed as the background Consciousness.

Examining deep sleep more closely, it is found to be no state at all. The dream and waking states are only appearances on deep sleep.

It is in and through Me that all activities take place. But all the mischief is created by the attempt to objectify that non-doer Self and its experiences, exactly as we do with the activities of the ego.

71. THE DIRECT METHOD EXPLAINED

1. By examination of the subjective element in man, from the body backwards to the 'I'-principle, it is proved to be pure Knowledge or Consciousness itself.
2. Similarly examining the gross objective world, it is found that since the gross object cannot exist even for a moment apart from the perception concerned, the object is clearly the perception itself.

Similarly, taking one's stand in the mind and examining perceptions, it is found that perceptions are nothing but thoughts.

Lastly, examining thoughts and feelings, by the use of vidyā-vṛitti or the 'functioning Consciousness', it is found that they are Consciousness itself, the ultimate subject.

Thus both subjective and objective worlds, when properly analysed, are reduced into the Ultimate – which is neither subject nor object. To know this beyond all doubt, and to establish oneself there, is the direct method.

165. VICĀRA-MĀRGA (THE DIRECT PERCEPTION METHOD)

Of the different Upaniṣhads, dealing with the different paths to attain the Absolute, the *Aitarēya Upaniṣhad* deals with the vicāra-mārga or direct perception method in particular.

This path takes you straight to the Truth. Looking from there, you see the world of mind and senses to be non-existent as such. One who has taken to this path and reached the goal does not stand in need of any independent explanation of ordinary worldly problems like desire, feelings, etc. They are all solved.

But for those who take to other paths, like yōga or devotion, the world of thoughts, feelings and perceptions – as also the gross world – have to be explained.

473. WHY DID SHANKARA NOT EXPOUND ADVAITA IN THE DIRECT METHOD?

The shāstras [traditional texts], in the days of Shankara, had such a strong hold upon the people that no other method of approach, however direct, could attract or captivate their imagination. Therefore Shri Shankara had, by force of circumstances, to adopt the laborious method of expounding the advaitic Truth through the shāstraic or traditional method.

But now, centuries after Shankara, people's blind faith in the shāstras has disappeared and they are obliged to rely upon their reason alone. The present conditions are best suited for the adoption of the direct perception method, and the best use is made of this opportunity here and now.

1081. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF VICĀRA?

Vicāra begins with a course of uncompromising arguments within yourself to prove and affirm that you are not the body, senses or the mind, and that even when all these are changing in the course of the three states, you alone stand changeless as the background, knowing the apparent changes. When the argument goes home, the objects drop away, one by one, until at last you stand alone in your own glory as the background. Then you cannot even say 'I know', because there is nothing else to be

known and you stand as that knowledge, pure. This is, in short, the course of *Ātma-vicāra* [Self-enquiry].

1361. IS ‘VICĀRA’ THINKING ABOUT THE TRUTH?

No. It is entirely different. ‘*Vicāra*’ is a relentless enquiry into the truth of the Self and the world, utilizing only higher reason and right discrimination. It is not thinking at all.

You come to ‘know’ the meaning and the goal of vicāra only on listening to the words of the Guru. But subsequently, you take to that very same knowing, over and over again. That is no thinking at all. This additional effort is necessary in order to destroy samskāras [residual inclinations]. When the possessive identification with samskāras no longer occurs, you may be said to have transcended them.

You cannot think about anything you do not know. Therefore thinking about the Truth is not possible till you visualize it for the first time. Then you understand that Truth can never be made the object of thought, since it is in a different plane. Thus, thinking about the Truth is never possible. The expression only means knowing, over and over again, the Truth already known.

Paths to Truth – traditional

63. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE ACCEPTED PATHS

In our search for Truth, beginning with an examination of the world before us, we use as our instrument the faculty of reason. This reason can well be divided into two. One is lower reason, which is exercised by the mind in examining the mutual relationship of objects, from intellect down to the gross world. The other is higher reason or transcendental reason, which is exercised in examining the mind and its objects – gross or subtle – with a view to discover their real content.

There are usually three accepted paths to the Truth. They are the paths of *devotion*, *yōga* and *jnyāna* [knowledge]. Of these three, devotion and yōga deal only with relative things falling within the sphere of the mind and sense organs, taking into consideration only experiences in the waking state. Their findings, therefore, can only be partial and incomplete.

The jnyāna path looks from a broader perspective and comprehends within its scope both yōga and devotion. It takes into consideration the whole of life’s experiences – comprised in the three states – viewed impartially. It demands a high degree of real devotion, in the sense that the aspirant has to have a high degree of earnestness and sincerity to get to the Truth. This is *real devotion*, to *Truth*; and it is infinitely superior to devotion to anything else, which can only be less than the Truth.

The yōgin controls, sharpens and expands the mind to its maximum possibilities, attaining samādhi and powers (or siddhis) on the way. But in the case of those who follow the jnyāna path, the mind is analysed impartially and minutely; and proved to be nothing other than pure Consciousness itself, beyond which there is no further power or possibility of development.

So it is through jnyāna alone that Truth can be visualized, while yōga and devotion only prepare the ground for it.

474. WHAT ARE THE PATHS TO REALIZATION?

According to the traditional method, they are mainly *bhakti* [devotion], *yōga* [meditation] and *jnyāna* [knowledge]. Each of these paths, though dominated by one particular aspect and approach, happily has something of the other two also in it.

Take for example, the *rāja-yōga* path. Let us analyse its composition. Why does one take to this laborious practice? Evidently for the pleasure and powers one expects out of it. This desire for Happiness is the function of the heart, and is nothing but *bhakti* for your real nature of Happiness. The discriminative faculty and the reasoning aspect, much emphasized in the course of this path, is but the *jnyāna* aspect. And the active contemplation and other exercises form the preponderating *yōgic* element. Thus all the three paths have their proper place in *rāja-yōga*.

It is the same with the other two paths also. Therefore none of these paths is exclusive or watertight.

601. THE PATH OF THE 'I'-THOUGHT

The ordinary man has the deep *samskāra* [inclination] ingrained in him that he is the body and that it is very, very insignificant, compared to the vast universe. Therefore the only possible mistake you are likely to be led into, while taking to the 'I'-thought, is the habitual *samskāra* of the smallness attached to the 'I'.

This mistake is transcended by the contemplation of the aphorism '*Aham brahmāsmi.*' Brahman is the biggest imaginable conception of the human mind. The conception of bigness no doubt removes the idea of smallness. But the idea of bigness, which is also a limitation, remains over.

Ultimately, this idea of bigness has also to be removed by contemplating another aphorism: '*Prajnyānam asmi.*' ('I am Consciousness.') Consciousness can never be considered to be either big or small. So you are automatically lifted beyond all opposites.

Paths to Truth – traditional and direct

1136. WHAT IS THE JNYĀNA [KNOWLEDGE] PATH TO TRUTH?

It consists of both the traditional path and the direct path. According to the traditional path, a *jnyāna sādḥaka* [aspirant], directed by a *Jnyānin* (*Kāraṇa-guru*), has to pass through four definite stages in regular order:

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. 'To know it.' | From the lips of the Guru. |
| 2. 'To enjoy it', | By dint of |
| 3. 'To become it', and | personal |
| 4. 'To be it'. | effort. |

This method is built upon the samskāra [conditioning] of duality, so that the teaching lasts even after ‘being it.’ This trace of duality has yet to be transcended, in order to get to the ultimate Truth.

But according to the direct path to the Truth, Non-duality is emphasized at the very start, proving that there is nothing other than knowledge. The samskāra of duality immediately disappears. Thus, ‘to know it’ is ‘to be it’; and so there is, practically, only one step to the ultimate Truth.

478. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE APPROACHES TO THE TRUTH, UPANIṢHADIC AND DIRECT?

All Upaniṣhadic methods try to eliminate you from the anātmā [non-self], and to establish you in the Ātmā [Self].

But here, according to the direct method, you are shown that you can never get away either from your own shadow or from your reality. You are only asked to look deep into what you call anātmā, and see beyond the shadow of a doubt that it is nothing but Ātmā – the Reality.

266. HOW IS TRUTH EXPERIENCED?

According to the traditional [or cosmological] path, it is believed that the Truth dawns upon the sādḥaka [spiritual aspirant] as a mark of divine grace, after a prolonged practice of manana and nididhyāsana, after first hearing the Truth from the Guru.

But under a Guru who has established himself in the natural state and adopts the direct path to the Truth, it is quite different. He is Truth itself and knows the Truth. He stands in need of no grace from elsewhere to lead his disciple to the Truth. He knows well how to tell the disciple what the Truth is and can safely take him direct to it, here and now.

But the disciple has of course to make some effort after that – to establish himself in the Truth thus realized, and reach the natural state.

arthād arthāntaram yāti cittē madhyē tu yāsthitiḥ
nirastamananā cāsau svarūpa-sthiti rucyatē

Yōga-vāsiṣṭha [unverified]

Means: Between two thoughts I am in my real nature. To be deeply convinced of it is alone needed to establish you in the Absolute.

1019. METHODS OF SELF-REALIZATION – (COSMOLOGICAL AND DIRECT)

The cosmological method consists of three distinct stages:

1. Shravaṇa – listening to the Truth from the lips of the Guru.
2. Manana – thinking over it with concentrated attention over and over again.
3. Nididhyāsana – thinking profoundly about that Truth with the aid of reason.

This last exercise leads you to a state called nirvikalpa samādhi, where the mind remains in a state of stillness, and you stand as witness of everything. By getting accustomed to this state, by dint of the prolonged practice of samādhi, one day the seed of Truth, received from the Guru in the form of the aphorism ‘Prajñānam asmi’

(I am Consciousness), bears fruit and you realize your real nature of Consciousness. This is Self-realization.

Direct method: You listen to the Truth from the lips of the Guru, and you visualize your real nature the ‘Truth’ then and there. Then you are asked to cling on to the Truth so visualized, either by listening to the Guru as often as possible, or by repeating the same or other arguments to prove your real nature, over and over again. This last course is also another form of listening to the Guru; and it takes you, without fail, to that very same experience you had at first. Therefore listen, listen, listen to the Guru. This is the direct method.

1030. METHODS FOR SELF-REALIZATION

The methods usually adopted for Self-realization are of two kinds:

1. The absorption process (the traditional method).
2. The separation process (the direct method).

The yōgically minded jnyānins usually adopt the first method – that of *absorption*. Here you try to purify the mind and make it more and more sātṭvic, until at last you make it fit to be absorbed into your own Self. There is still another application of the process of absorption. The object is at a distance. You bring it nearer by seeing. You bring it still nearer by loving. Lastly, by knowing, you absorb it into you.

The real jnyānins adopt the second method – that of *separation*. The ordinary man’s self is a crude mixture of the real Self with a lot of accretions, viz., body, senses and mind. By proving, with the aid of reason and your own experiences, that you are not the body, senses or mind. Shown thus standing separate from all these, you remain in your real Self. According to this process, everything – from the intellect down to the body and the world – become objects to be separated from you.

1199. THE TRADITIONAL COURSE OF REALIZATION, INTERPRETED IN THE LIGHT OF THE DIRECT METHOD

The traditional course of realization is through *shruti*, *yukti* and *anubhava*. This may cosmologically be termed *shravaṇa* [listening], *manana* [thinking] and *nididhyāsana* [reflecting deeply]. But in the light of the direct method they may be interpreted to mean:

1. *Shruti*: Listening to the words of the Guru, about Truth.
2. *Yukti*: Thinking, with the aid of intellect and reason, over the Truth so expounded.
3. *Anubhava*: Thinking profoundly, in the light of higher reason, about the Truth as one’s own real nature – till the Truth descends deep into one’s own being, as experience.

According to this method, the ultimate test of realization is whether the higher reason endorses your experience as true. If it does, realization is complete.

1359. HOW IS THE COSMOLOGICAL OR TRADITIONAL PATH OF JNYĀNA DIFFERENT FROM THE DIRECT PATH?

In the *direct path* (also called *vicāra-mārga*), if the aspirant is found to be tolerably sincere and earnest to get to the Truth, he is accepted as a disciple by the Kāraṇa-guru. Then the whole Truth is expounded to him; and the aspirant, who listens to the talks of the Guru with rapt attention, is made to visualize the Truth then and there.

Having secured the strongest certitude and affirmation from his own 'Being', regarding the correctness and intensity of his experience of Truth, he is asked to cling on to it in his own way. This clinging on, in due course, makes his own real nature of Truth more and more familiar to himself; and thus he gets gradually established in the Reality. There is nothing that can be an obstacle to him, at any stage.

But the case of the aspirant following the *traditional or cosmological path* to the Truth is quite different. After a long and arduous course of preliminary exercises, the Guru one day explains the meaning of the aphorism '*Tat tvam asi*', and proves that the substance of the individual and of the cosmos is one and the same. But this knowledge remains with the aspirant only as indirect (*parōkṣha*) or objective knowledge. In order to make this knowledge direct and to experience the Truth, he has to continue his efforts for very many years, by way of contemplating on three further aphorisms, one after the other, each for a different purpose.

The main difficulties in the indirect experience of Truth (as '*Tat tvam asi*', meaning *kūṭastha* and *brahman* are one) are:

1. The distance and strangeness of brahman;
2. The smallness of *kūṭastha* or 'I' as usually understood; and
3. The bigness of brahman, which is also a limitation.

Remedies: By deeply contemplating on the aphorism '*Ahaṁ brahmāsmi*', brahman is brought into immediate and intimate contact with the 'I'.

Next, by contemplating on the aphorism '*Brahmaivāhaṁ asmi*', the sense of smallness usually attributed to the 'I' is sought to be removed.

Lastly, by contemplating on the aphorism '*Prajñānam brahma*' the sense of bigness (the natural corollary of the concept of brahman) is also eliminated, leaving the Self as *Ātmā*, the ultimate 'I'-principle.

There is a contrast here with the *direct method*, where it is expounded at the very outset that 'I am Consciousness' (corresponding to the meaning of the last aphorism in the cosmological path). This does not leave any room for any subsidiary problem, and the aspirant visualizes the real nature of the self instantaneously. He has only to cling on to that experience, in order to get established in it.

1208. ALL INDIRECT PATHS TO THE TRUTH ULTIMATELY COME ROUND TO THE DIRECT PATH.

Innumerable paths have been adopted, from time immemorial, for the attainment of Truth; and Sages who came out that way had also been not few. The path adopted by the majority was cosmological.

Whatever *sādhana* [discipline] one might adopt in the beginning, actual visualization is possible only through the direct method represented in the aphorism '*Prajnyānam asmi*' – '*I am consciousness.*'

This aphorism is taken up by the cosmological approaches only at the very last stage, after other aphorisms have been exhausted.

But the direct method is based upon the truth of this vital aphorism, and the aspirant assimilates it even at the initial stage of his sādhana. Therefore, his visualization is complete, the moment he listens to the Truth from the lips of the Guru.

Peace

850. WHY DOES MAN GO TO WAR?

Because there is war already inside him. He has not found subjective Peace and so cannot escape from either war within him or the war without, which is a corollary of the former.

So, try to attenuate your ego and find permanent Peace within you. Then alone will you be able to transcend all war outside.

852. HOW TO DECIDE MY CONDUCT UNDER PERPLEXING SITUATIONS?

Examine first what reigns in you, in the situation. If it is Peace, yield. If it is cowardice, well, stand up and fight. Kill your enemy (subjectively, the desire first; and then the objective enemy next, if needs be). The fight within you is between Peace on one side, and the different feelings, thoughts and emotions on the other side.

10. 'MIND AS MIND KNOWS NO PEACE, AND MIND AT PEACE IS NO MIND AT ALL.'

The most universal of all desires in man is unequivocally expressed in the spontaneous statement made by all alike: 'I want peace of mind'. It means that the activity of the mind is never our ultimate goal. Examining this statement closely and impartially, we find that *Peace* is the real goal of man's desire.

But in his utter inability to extricate himself from the clutches of the mind, he links the mind also to that desire for absolute Peace, and claims himself to be the enjoyer. But alas, when the mind, freed from all its activities, comes into contact with the Peace it desired, it finds itself merged and lost in that peace, thus returning to its real nature.

Therefore, it is one's own real nature that everybody seeks, knowingly or unknowingly.

Perception and percept

571. PERCEPTION AND THE 'I'

Perception is composed of the lighting up by the 'I'-principle plus the objective part of the perception. Take for example 'seeing'. The seeing cannot exist in an unmanifested form, either before or after the activity of seeing.

But the 'I'-principle does exist as unmanifested both before and after the activity, and the very same 'I' is manifested in the seeing as well. Therefore, the object is the manifestation of the 'I' alone, and not of the senses.

4. WHAT IS THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF PERCEPTION?

A Jnyānin [Sage] perceives the Absolute, diversified as objects.

Ignorant men, identifying themselves with gross body, perceive gross objects. Others, standing as mind, perceive only subtle objects. Jnyānins, standing as Consciousness, perceive only Consciousness.

1278. WHAT IS THE TRUTH OF PERCEPTION?

I am Ātmā, the self-luminous Consciousness. It may be said that I first manifest myself as objectless Consciousness, by my own nature or self-luminosity.

It is this objectless Consciousness that expresses itself as an idea or sensual object; and you say you perceive it. But when the so called perception takes place, the apparent object loses its limitations; and its content, Consciousness, stands as the objectless Self.

Therefore, it is nothing but the Self that you perceive.

252. SENSES COMPARED TO COLOURED SPECTACLES

The only thing needed is for you to remove the coloured spectacles of your senses and mind. And then you will see the Reality, in all its nakedness and its full glory.

1269. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU SEE AN OBJECT?

First, you see form. This belongs to the field of percepts, which is the outcome of the senses.

Next, you join it on to innumerable concepts, which belong to the realm of the mind.

Lastly, you attribute a permanence to it which belongs to your own Self and is denoted by the 'It' in relation to all objects.

All these together go to make the so called object. But when you emphasize the 'It' which was always there – all through – the other two naturally disappear; and the 'It', which was so long unknown, now becomes known in the real sense.

100. WHAT DO YOU SEE?

I see the 'seeing' – or 'form', which is only a synonym for seeing. Likewise, sound is only a synonym for hearing. I hear the hearing or sound. But these – seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling – can never become the objects of seeing, hearing etc. Therefore, you do not see anything, you do not hear anything, you do not touch anything, you do not taste anything, you do not smell anything.

Form can never exist independently of seeing – even in thought, for thought is only subtle perception. Form is seeing itself and never outside it. This means not only not

outside the body, but also not outside the seeing or not separate from seeing. When understood as such, perception ceases to have any meaning whatsoever.

The realist philosophy built upon the reality of gross objects and the idealist philosophy built upon the reality of mind (thoughts or ideas) both crumble before this argument. So there is only perception, without its corresponding object. But a perception, thought or feeling without the taint of any object is pure knowledge or the Reality itself. Therefore, even when you see an object, you really see only yourself.

Abstract thinking is impossible without bringing in some concrete object or other, in order to support it. But this rule has two exceptions, when abstract thinking is possible – i.e. when you take the thoughts:

1. 'I am pure Consciousness.'
2. 'I exist.'

If you try to concentrate upon either of these two, you will find that before long your thought itself expires, leaving you at your real centre in Consciousness pure. Even in the case of these two thoughts, you should never allow the thought to become concretized in any form. You should only transcend all limitations by allowing that thought-form to expire. This leads you on to the 'I', which is always *anubhava-sphurana* [self-luminous experience].

1429. WHAT IS A PERCEPT?

First answer: No percept really exists – either in the present, the past or the future. A percept is the result of perception and it cannot exist independent of perception. Therefore there cannot be a percept either before or after perception.

Perception goes into the make of the percept itself. Therefore, if you attempt to perceive the percept, the perception part of the percept has to be withdrawn and placed outside it, in order to perceive it. But when the perception part is thus withdrawn, the percept crumbles and disappears. Thus there is no percept during the perception also. It is the perception itself appearing as the percept, for the time being.

Therefore 'percept' is a misnomer. There is only perception. And perception being dependent upon Consciousness for its very existence, it is nothing but consciousness.

Similarly, Consciousness itself appears as an idea; and when Consciousness tries to perceive the idea, the idea disappears and Consciousness alone remains over. Therefore, all is Consciousness.

A shorter approach: A percept is nothing but the object and is representative of the whole world. Perception goes into the make of the percept, and therefore the percept is perception itself.

Consciousness goes into the make of perception, and therefore perception is Consciousness itself.

Similarly, Consciousness goes into the make of the idea, and therefore idea is Consciousness itself.

Therefore the world, gross as well as subtle, is nothing but Consciousness.

Personal and impersonal

626. PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL

You are the *personal*, when you are conscious of anything.
You are the *impersonal*, when you are Consciousness itself.

671. SPIRITUAL LARCENY

The personal in man usurping what really belongs to the impersonal is called 'ego'. It is a kind of 'spiritual larceny'.

823. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PERCEIVING THE PERSONAL AND THE IMPERSONAL?

In principle, both are the same. You perceive both by becoming that for the time being.

You direct your attention to the impersonal and you stand as that impersonal.

But for perceiving the personal or objects, you also use the instruments of the sense organs and mind. You concentrate your mind (the apparent 'I') upon that object, and as a result you stand as that object for the time being. So much so that when I am there as the object, I am not here in the body.

1161. SEE THE IMPERSONAL IN AND BEHIND THE PERSONAL.

The personal can never know either the impersonal or even the personal. It is the impersonal, standing behind the personal, that enables it to know anything, even in the ordinary sense. Try to see that impersonal, even in the personal, and that will resolve all phenomenal problems. If the ego dies and still the speech continues, what speaks? Certainly the self-luminous Self, not the ego.

When you hear a sentence, what is it that connects the words which are already past? Only the Self. Therefore, see that Self through words, speech, act, etc. This exercise alone will in due course establish you in the ultimate Truth, the real Self.

Perspective

684. CRAZE TO IMPROVE THE WORLD

Question: Looking around, we see individuals, communities and governments making herculean efforts to improve the world. Is this all in vain?

Answer: The question itself is spiritually ill-conceived and illogical. The question admits that you look out through your senses and see a sense world which is imperfect. You want to make it perfect by work which is also outside yourself.

Your sense world is inseparably connected with you through your senses. The apparent imperfection of the world is all the imperfection of the perspective that per-

ceived the world. Apply the remedy at the source and perfect your perspective first. When you become perfect, your perspective also becomes perfect, and simultaneously the world of your perception will also appear perfect.

When you look through the senses, gross objects alone appear; when you look through your mind, thoughts or feelings alone appear; and when you look through Consciousness which is perfect, Consciousness alone appears and that is perfect.

167. SUBJECTIVE TRANSFORMATION AND ADJUSTMENT OF PERSPECTIVE ALONE NEEDED

The worlds appearing in different states are different from one another. As you change, the worlds change also.

Standing limited by the body and mind, if you try to change the world so as to make it beautiful or enjoyable to your mental satisfaction, it will be all in vain. The world will remain only as it is.

But if you change your stand or perspective and identify yourself with the real 'I'-principle, the world also changes; not as beautiful or enjoyable, but as Beauty and Happiness themselves being one with the 'I'-principle.

So correct your inner perspective alone and you shall be free for ever and happy, in whatever world you are. This is possible only by realizing the Truth, in all its aspects.

1198. THE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS THE WORLD

1. The *scientist* identifies himself with the physical body, and so deals with objects and their relationship with each other.
2. The *yōgin* and the *mystic* identify themselves with the mind, as ideas or ideals which are only subtle objects, and visualize them accordingly.
3. The *vēdāntin* identifies himself with Consciousness, which is his own real nature, and sees everything as Consciousness.

1206. PERSPECTIVES CONTRADICTORY

Man moves indiscriminately between the sensuous, mental and conscious planes. An ignorant man holds that he is the body supporting the mind within, and that the mind supports the Ātmā still within. But the spiritual aspirant's position is exactly the opposite. He believes that Ātmā holds the mind and that the mind holds the body. A spiritual aspirant must fix his stand firmly before starting on an enquiry, to make sure that his findings are reasonable and correct.

1329. HOW TO SEE THINGS IN THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE?

Suppose you see this stool. The following activities take place there:

1. The sense organs supply the form.
2. The mind supplies concepts or ideas.
3. The Self supplies the sense of Reality.

Of these three, the first and second items are disconnected and get connection only through the third, the Self. So, to see through the changeless Self is the right perspec-

tive. If you see through either of the first two items, which are changing, you cannot come to any definite conclusion.

The first is in space, the second is in time, and the third is beyond. So through the first two items, you come progressively closer; and in the third, you become one with your own Self – the Truth.

Pleasure and pain

174. PLEASURE AND PAIN, THOUGH MY EXPERIENCES, DO NOT AFFECT ME. HOW?

I feel pleasure at one moment and pain at another. But I am changeless all along. Thus my pleasure and pain do not go into my real nature. So how can they affect me?

1315. HOW TO ROOT OUT PAIN?

Question: Though I have been told that I am not the body, senses or mind, I am not able to escape from or forget suffering when it comes?

Answer: Evidently, you want to replace pain by pleasure. The truth is that both these are illusions, and that you stand as that Truth even when pleasure and pain come and go. It is not removal or forgetting the pain that is sought, but only the right knowledge that pain and pleasure are nothing other than your real nature – Consciousness. Therefore, you are not affected by whatever may come.

229. THERE IS HAPPINESS EVEN IN MISERY, OR ANY OTHER FEELING. HOW CAN THIS BE PROVED?

You have necessarily to discard all objects before experiencing Happiness. The objective world must disappear for Happiness to come into being, and it must appear for misery to do so. When misery is divested of all objects, it gets transformed into Happiness itself.

Similarly, when seeing is divested of form, it gets reduced to pure Knowledge or Consciousness.

131. PAIN AND PLEASURE

Pain and pleasure are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin, and they actually beget each other. The more you suffer, the more you enjoy afterwards; and vice versa. If your hunger or thirst has been very sharp, which is unmixed pain, your subsequent enjoyment of pleasure at a sumptuous meal will also be proportionately intense. You can never accept or reject any one phase of it alone.

But the moment you understand the source of it all to be your own self or real nature, every pleasure or pain you feel becomes yourself, losing the characteristic of pleasure or pain. And then eternal peace prevails.

593. HAPPINESS, MISERY AND THE 'I'-PRINCIPLE

Misery depends upon diversity or objects for its very existence, and very often it bursts out into vociferous violence.

Happiness depends only upon the one Reality, the 'I'-principle. When the jīva [personal ego] is in a state of Happiness (not pleasure) he is touching the background unawares. And when he is in misery, he is in unmistakable duality.

When you say 'I am miserable', it means I am misery, or that misery has come upon me or merged into me, or that I am the svarūpa [true nature] of misery. But misery cannot be my svarūpa.

When you say 'I am happy', it means I am Happiness or that I am the svarūpa of Happiness. But in this case the opposite is also true, that is to say Happiness is my svarūpa.

1401. CAN THERE BE ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MISERY AND HAPPINESS?

Misery as such is purely man-made. It is born and maintained in *dvaita* (duality) alone.

Happiness is *Advaita*, and is natural to man.

Duality is never experienced by anyone, because no two things can be experienced simultaneously. Misery is duality, and is therefore an illusion. But Non-duality is brought in to enjoy misery.

Consciousness itself appears as 'perception'. You think of it as separate from Consciousness and give it the different name 'perception'. But no, it is Consciousness itself. Even this perception – considered independent of the perceiver and the percept – is no perception at all, but Consciousness itself.

This process can be shortened further. The intermediary steps can be dispensed with, and the knower and the object alone taken into consideration. The object can never exist independent of the knower, consciousness; and it is therefore Consciousness itself.

1419. I KNOW I AM HAPPINESS AND CONSCIOUSNESS; STILL I AM SOMETIMES MISERABLE. WHY?

Gurunāthan: Which 'I' is Consciousness or Peace?

Disciple: The real 'I'-principle, Ātmā.

G: Is that 'I' ever miserable?

D: No. Not at all.

G: If somebody else (for example the usurper 'I') is miserable, why should you, the real 'I', be worried?

Now listen. I will explain your confusion. The ego is sometimes miserable, because it desires to enjoy transitory sensual pleasures and at the same time to avoid their opposite, misery, the inseparable counterpart of pleasure. That is impossible.

Pleasure and pain are the obverse and the reverse of the same coin. You cannot choose one side alone. Either you accept both together or reject both together.

190. HAPPINESS AND MISERY COMPARED

Misery is caused and sustained only by the incessant remembrance of the objects connected with it. Happiness also may appear to have a sense object, at the beginning. But the sense object as well as the thought of it will both disappear entirely when happiness dawns; while the continuance of both these are necessary for misery.

Thus, when happiness dawns, you are drawn into your real nature, where sense objects and thoughts have no place. So, if you want misery, you must go out of your nature; and if you want happiness, come back to it.

Practice

1021. WHAT IS PRACTICAL?

The term 'practical' literally means that which is concerned with practice. By practice we mean habitual action. So 'practical', in the ordinary sense, involves body or mind.

But practical and impractical both depend for their very existence upon the fundamental Truth involved in the statement or experience: 'I know I am.' It is an assertion of the fact that I exist. Is there any mind or sense involved in this? No. It is pure experience or direct knowledge. It is more real and so more practical, if by 'practical' you mean real.

1323. THEORY AND PRACTICE

Theory is speculative thought or mere supposition existing only in the realm of the mind, so as to explain something in the phenomenal.

Practice is that which brings thoughts to the body level.

Truth is beyond practice and theory. To bring down the 'I'-principle to the mental level as theory, and still further to the body level is absurd. You learn swimming from theory in books. It is only he to whom body is all important that wants practice and depends upon theories. It is the ignorant man that does so.

If you begin to theorize or practice Truth, it ceases to be the Truth as such. Is 'I am' a theory? What is more immediate and intimate to you than 'I am'? So it is beyond theory and practice. 'I am jīva [a living person]' is theory. 'I am body' is practical to the layman.

To apply theory and practice to 'Truth', upon which they themselves depend for their very existence, is absurd. Don't follow the line of error, by reversing the process of the line of Truth. Body is comprehended by mind and mind is comprehended by Self, in the Jnyānin. In the ignorant man, body holds mind and mind holds Self.

Even thinking or meditation distances the 'I' from you. So you are asked only to repeat what you are, and not to think or meditate. The knowledge of the 'I'-principle is experiential knowledge, and even 'Consciousness' may be called theory.

Prakriyās (methods of enquiry)

1228. PRAKRIYĀS (PROCESSES OR METHODS) AND THEIR USE

Innumerable prakriyās have been prescribed in the shāstras [texts], to help aspirants to the Truth. The indiscriminate use or comparison or mixing up of prakriyās is strictly prohibited. Ācāryas [authentic teachers] declare unequivocally that any *one* prakriyā, which suits the temperament and capacity of the person concerned, is enough to lift him up to the ultimate Truth.

681. WHY IS NOT THE SAME PRAKRIYĀ APPLICABLE TO ALL ASPIRANTS?

Different people attribute different meanings to the word ‘I’. This is because differences of temperament and perspective place them at different levels of understanding.

Some persons take ‘I’ to denote the ego, a psycho-physical organism. The ‘I’ of this way of thinking must be removed in order to reach the Ultimate.

But in the case of some others, the ‘I’ is used only to denote the witness. In their case, the ‘I’ need not be removed at all. For them, it is enough if the witnessed is separated from the witness ‘I’. Then the ‘I’ stands alone as the witness, and the witnessed is no longer in the witness. Therefore even the term ‘witness’ becomes meaningless and the ‘I’ stands as the Ultimate in all its glory.

For these two different types of aspirants, different *prakriyās* are inevitable. There are many other types also, who need still different *prakriyās*.

Problem

1348. WHAT ARE PROBLEMS, THEIR SOURCE AND REMEDY?

It is you (the ego) who create your own problems, and you yourself in turn get entangled in them. The teacher (the Guru) has only to draw your attention to that principle which created the problems, and immediately the creator and the created both vanish. Then you stand by yourself alone – free from all problems, and for ever.

467. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY OF APPROACHING A PROBLEM FOR AN ULTIMATE SOLUTION?

It is best to take your stand, at least in idea, in the deep sleep state and see if the problem arises there. No, the problem does not appear there.

Therefore, all problems are the products of body, senses and mind, and disappear with them. They do not concern you at all.

549. PROBLEMS AND THE PRIORITY OF CONSIDERATION BETWEEN THEM

Problems are of two kinds, fundamental and auxiliary. The ignorant man never concerns himself with the fundamental problem, but is engrossed only with the auxiliary ones and gets lost amongst them.

The fundamental problem is the identity of the jīva [living person] with the body and mind. All other problems hang upon this central problem. None but the advaitin [non-dualist] dares to analyse this jīva principle directly. He successfully eliminates the material part as unreal, from the crude mixture which is the jīva; and he stands identified with the self-luminous life principle in it, which is Ātmā itself.

Others who follow various other paths also progress to some extent, but do not reach the ultimate Truth. This is because their approach is purely objective.

Therefore, he who wants to solve his problems completely and for ever must face this fundamental problem first. When that is solved, you will find that all other problems vanish, like mist before the sun.

665. IS THERE ANY SPIRITUAL VALUE IN FACING A PHENOMENAL PROBLEM?

The world is a bundle of knotty problems and life is an incessant fight to overcome them. The fight against each problem has two distinct aspects.

1. The effort to solve the problem, and
2. The solution itself.

It has to be understood that a sincere and consistent effort at solving the problem helps one much more than the solution itself. This effort successfully develops in one a genuine spirit of self-reliance, which alone helps one to reach the ultimate Truth.

For example, look at the famous ‘Cārvāka’ who is honoured as a *ṛiṣhi* [seer] in Hindu *śāstras* [texts]. He denied God and religion outright. He was sincere and earnest all through his striving, though he erred in his conclusions for other reasons. It was purely out of honest respect for his sincerity that he was honoured as a *ṛiṣhi*.

It is rightly said: ‘A sincere atheist is much nearer the Truth than a superstitious bhakta [devotee].’

706. HOW TO FACE ANY PROBLEM?

The appearance of questions, after one has visualized the Truth, is only the futile attempt of the ego to postpone the imminent date of its own extinction.

Your real nature has been proved to you beyond doubt. See if any problem disturbs your centre, and then alone try to solve it.

When a problem arises, even on the phenomenal level, direct your attention to the ‘*problem*’ and lose yourself in the problem. Then you will find that the result will be not the merging of yourself in the pain or problem as usual, but the merging of the problem in the ‘I’. The ‘I’, as sufferer, becomes the suffering itself, and no pain is experienced as such.

When a question arises in your mind, see if it has any intimate connection with – or bearing upon – your real nature or the ‘I’-principle. If it has not, leave it to itself. If it does bear any connection, answer it and rise by it. If a question serves to establish duality, leave it alone.

If you feel that you would be spiritually enriched by answering a question, accept it, answer it and be enriched by it. If not, leave it alone.

974. ALL PROBLEMS RISE IN THE MENTAL PLANE AND THERE IS NO PROBLEM IN THE PLANE BEYOND. THEN HOW IS ANY SOLUTION POSSIBLE?

Problems exist in the gross, sensual and mental planes. Each is solved not from its own plane, but only from the plane above it. Thus problems in the mental plane can be explained only from the plane beyond. For example, take the palace on the stage curtain. The verdict of the eye is corrected by the intellect behind it. Similarly, the experience of the mind and intellect are corrected by some principle from beyond the intellect.

1254. WHAT IS THE RIGHT APPROACH TO A PROBLEM?

Every problem has two standpoints. One is that of the ego; and the other is that of the 'I'-principle.

Suppose you desire an object. A desire shows your imperfection, at least to that extent. And the urge to become perfect comes from your own being deep below: which is by nature perfect, or one without a second. Therefore, desire points to your real nature, and you can realize it by viewing it in the right perspective. This is from the ego's standpoint.

Looking from the standpoint of the real 'I'-principle, you find that desire shows the pain of separation from the object desired, and a longing to end that separation by obtaining it. It shows an eagerness to establish that oneness or perfection, your real nature, whenever you seem to stray away from it by identification with body, senses or mind.

Proof

521. INFERENCE AND PROOF

Inference depends upon the validity of past experiences of a similar nature. Inference is never finally correct.

Proof of anything. A thing can prove only itself. Seeing proves only seeing. Hearing proves only hearing. And so on.

Similarly, I prove only myself.

Nothing can be proved except oneself; and that needs no proof, being self-luminous.

1106. SUSPECT KNOWLEDGE AND PERMANENT KNOWLEDGE

The knowledge, 'I know I am', is the one indubitable Reality that requires no proof to establish its existence.

The knowledge of a thing which stands in need of any proof for its existence is called 'suspect'. Such suspect knowledge is neither deep nor permanent. It may be sometimes right and sometimes wrong. But the knowledge beyond the triad [of see-er, seeing, seen] is deep and permanent. No proof is needed to establish it, and nothing can refute it.

Even the knowledge obtained in the relative level, when it is eliminated from the object known, is the Reality itself.

1441. HAS PROOF ANY BEARING UPON TRUTH?

No. Proof can exist only in the relative realm.

Everything phenomenal is recognized as a result of proof offered by the senses or mentations. But there is a unique exception to this general rule. There is an experience of self-consciousness just preceding every perception or mentation, without which an activity would never be possible. This self-consciousness never calls for a proof to establish itself; and its existence in its own right can never be denied, even in thought.

Therefore, the need for a proof of an object is itself the proof of the unreality of the object.

Pūja (worship)

224. SIGNIFICANCE OF WAVING THE LIGHT AND BURNING CAMPHOR DURING PŪJA BEFORE THE IMAGE

Waving the light means: ‘Though I take Thee to be a form, Thou art really light and so am I.’ It is this thought that is intended to be inspired by the waving of the light during pūja.

The camphor, with its sweet fragrance, quickly burns out; and leaves no trace behind. This is intended to symbolize the burning of the ego before the Absolute; without leaving any trace behind, even as a samskāra [subtle inclination].

225. CAN PŪJA HELP ONE TO THE ULTIMATE?

No, not completely. But it can take you a long way towards the Ultimate. Pūja to the Absolute is done in four progressive stages.

1. *Gross pūja*: This is the ordinary pūja done by the organs of action to the Absolute.
2. *Oral pūja (japa)* is pūja done by word of mouth to the Absolute.
3. *Mental pūja (meditation)* is pūja done by mind to the Absolute.
4. *Self pūja (Ātma-pūja or samādhi)* is pūja done to the Absolute by one’s own self. Here pūja is done by the self to the self. You are still in mental realm and pūja can take you only so far.

Beyond even this, you are in your real nature, which you can visualize only with the help of a Kāraṇa-guru in person.

476. HOW DO THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR ORGANS CONSTITUTE PŪJA TO THE REAL SELF?

Your organs in their functions seek Happiness alone. It has been clearly shown that your real nature is Happiness. So each organ is really seeking you, the real Happiness; and thus their activities become pūja done to you.

Purity

660. WHAT IS PURITY?

Only the Truth or Ātmā is pure. Everything else is *anātmā* [non-self] or impure. The body, senses and mind are all impure, each in its own way. Mind may be purified by effort to the extent of even getting merged in nirvikalpa samādhi. Still, it is mind and may be highly pure in the relative sense, but it is impure in the sense that it is *anātmā* still, and limited by time.

Doing good to others is no criterion of purity. It is the pleasure you derive from doing good that prompts you to do it. Suppose you are prohibited by law from doing good. Certainly you feel sad. So you have to transcend both pleasure and pain, evil and good.

So you can become ultimately pure only by visualizing the Reality and establishing yourself in it.

Qualities and the qualified

657. WHAT IS THE PRAKṚIYĀ OF QUALITIES AND THE QUALIFIED?

Qualities and the qualified are distinct and separate. Experience is the only proof of the reality of a thing. The qualities alone are experienced everywhere and the qualified is never experienced by anyone. Therefore the qualified as such is non-existent.

The qualities cannot exist by themselves without the presence of the qualified. Therefore, the qualities are only mere appearances.

The qualities of the object alone being perceived and those qualities being proved to be unreal, the object as such is also unreal. The background of the changeless Reality (Consciousness) on which the changes, namely qualities, appear and disappear is alone what *is*.

It is only the expressed in the expression that makes you covet the expression.

Questions and answers

1133. WHEN DOES ONE VISUALIZE THE TRUTH?

When the when is not.

719. IRRELEVANCY OF QUESTIONS ABOUT REALITY

When you ask why, when, where etc., in relation to the Reality, you take it for granted that why, when, where etc. are more real than Reality itself. This position is absurd. Therefore no such question can be asked, relating to the Reality.

609. VARIETY

‘When’, ‘where’ and ‘why’ are the expressions of time, space and causality in the realm of the mind; or each of them constitutes the mind itself. These three questions have *created variety* and have regular traffic with that variety, as though they have nothing to do with it. They also proceed to measure that variety.

534. QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD AS A WHOLE AND HOW TO DISPOSE OF THEM?

All such questions relate only to time, space and causality. These three form parts of the world itself, the solution of which the question is seeking. The world as a whole can never be explained in terms of its own parts. Therefore, every question concerning the whole world is illogical.

Time, space and causality, being parts of the phenomenal, can never affect the Ultimate.

96. IN EVERY QUESTION, YOU FORGET YOUR REAL SELF.

Every question arises only in the relative sphere and is concerned only with the manifestation. When you turn to manifestation, you forget or get away from the ‘I’-principle.

So the correct method of solving every question is to turn to the centre and then look back at the question. Then the question will stand revealed as absurd. Sometimes, you get the correct answer at once. It may also be said that every question brings its own answer with it.

53. WHAT IS THE RIGHT APPROACH TO THE SOLUTION OF ANY SPIRITUAL QUESTION?

The answer can never be found in the same plane as the question itself. When you look from the next higher plane, the question as such disappears altogether.

The mind is incapable of explaining itself in its own plane. So, in order to explain it, you must rise to the background – the plane of Consciousness. Looking from there, you see the mind with all its doubts and difficulties transformed into Consciousness; and nothing ever remains over which needs to be explained.

402. WHAT IS AT THE ROOT OF QUESTION AND ANSWER?

Every question proceeds from the answer – which always stands as experience, far beyond the realm of the mind.

Therefore questions are many, but the ultimate and correct answer to all questions is only one, and that is the changeless Ātmā, the Reality. Every question springs from the striving of the mind to bring down that pure experience to the realm of the mind.

200. HOW TO TEST A QUESTION?

After examining the question and the answer you expect to it, if you find that they are in the objective plane, then reject them. Because that question and its answer cannot take you beyond relativity.

But on the other hand, if the question and its answer lead you to the subject, the Absolute, accept them; because they take you to the source, beyond the relative.

370. WHY DO QUESTIONS SEEM TO RISE EVEN AFTER VISUALIZING THE TRUTH?

The mind has usually two distinct kinds of activities:

- One is outward-going and trafficking with the world of the senses, gross or subtle.
- And the other activity is inward-going, seeking the 'I'-principle.

The latter activity is called the higher reason, vidyā-vṛitti, higher logic etc. Listening to and visualizing the Truth belong to the latter. In its course, objects are no obstacle; and at the goal, there are no objects at all.

All objects belong to the outward-going function of the mind, and naturally all questions also belong to the realm of the mind.

Questions do not belong to him who was listening to and visualizing the Truth. Coming down from there to the world of the senses, you see the senses and other objects all around. Immediately, the mind thoughtlessly thinks that they also are party to the experience you had beyond the mind. This is the secret of all questions.

vismayaika śarīrāyā māyāyāś cōdya-rūpataḥ .
anvēśyaḥ parihārō 'syā buddhimadbhiḥ prayatnataḥ ..

[Only amazement can arise
from this embodied, seeming world
that is itself made up of questioning.
Thus, those who are intelligent
must look with care, to get beyond.]

Pancadashī, Citra-dīpa, 139

1148. WHAT IS THE GOAL OF EVERY QUESTION?

The usual question asked is: 'What is the truth of this object?' What is sought is the 'Truth', which can never be bound by any object. Truth being imperceptible to the senses, the perceptible object is made use of, to find the ultimate Truth.

The process adopted [in the direct method] is an attempt to eliminate the material parts from the particular object. When they are thus separated, the Truth – which was the background of all that was separated – shines by itself, being self-luminous.

Therefore, whether you search for Truth through the individual subject or through a particular object, it is the ultimate Truth that is experienced as the result. It is the right perspective alone that has to be obtained from a Kāraṇa-guru.

533. THE PURPOSE AND RELEVANCY OF QUESTIONS

Questions often arise for those who have already heard the Truth from the Guru. The questions have a definite purpose and they have to be disposed of in the manner they deserve. Most of the questions are in the form of intrusion upon peace by uninvited thoughts. They come in only for quick destruction in the fire of knowledge. It can be done in three ways:

1. By yourself standing as the witness. Then the questions fail to reach you and return unheeded.
2. By understanding that every question points to Me (Consciousness), and on that account welcoming the questions as they come, only to be used as a help to reach my real nature.
3. By analysing the question itself and by finding that it is nothing but Consciousness – my own real nature.

1259. THE UNANSWERABLE QUESTION

The question is often asked: ‘Who is a Guru?’ or ‘What is a Guru?’ But the answer is not so easily understood.

To the intellectual, the Guru is always an enigma. The Guru represents the ultimate Truth, and stands in Non-duality. The question is raised in duality, in the mental level, about the Guru who is standing in Non-duality. There cannot be any answer in either level. The question cannot be understood in the mental level since it pertains to the Guru in Non-duality. And in Non-duality, the question does not ever arise.

The Guru is beyond all questions and all duality. A question is the expression or synonym of duality.

Reality

605. REALITY

What is not conceivable, not knowable and about which you are deeply convinced, that is the Reality. That you are.

158. REALITY INDIVISIBLE?

Reality is only one and cannot be affected by quality or degree in any way. Reality is purely subjective. I am the only subject, and all the rest are objects.

Diversity can be diversity only through me, the ‘One’.

1288. REALITY CANNOT BE OBJECTIFIED.

It is thought and speech alone that obscure the reality. So cease these activities and the Reality will shine in its own glory.

1055. WHAT ARE THE TESTS OF REALITY?

1. Continuity of existence.
2. Existing in one's own right (self-luminosity).

1238. REALITY, HOW TO DEFINE IT?

Reality is beyond existence and non-existence. This is true even in the case of a so called object. How? Let us take an example. We say: 'A chair exists', and 'A chair does not exist.' The 'chair' is present in both these opposites. Therefore the chair is necessarily beyond the opposites. Beyond the opposites, there can be only one thing which is real. That is the real Self. Therefore, an object is that Reality itself.

If you say you have life and death, it means you have neither. Because you are in both. As such, you can only be something distinct and separate from life and death, and so necessarily beyond both. That is the conscious principle – the real 'I'.

962. WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE REALITY?

It is that principle which denies everything else. It cannot refuse existence to itself. You cannot say it is Consciousness. Who says so? The mind cannot. You cannot say it exists; because then it and existence must be different. You cannot say it is existence; because then you must have perceived it. Therefore, you cannot say anything about the Reality.

794. HABIT CHANNELS [SAMSKĀRAS] AND REALITY

The habit channels of the mind distort the Reality, and therefore they have to be destroyed. This can be done only by directing your attention to the ultimate Reality.

The Reality is in the thought itself, as its background. So thought need not go outside itself to realize the Reality.

When you direct your attention to something blank, your mind also becomes blank. Similarly, when you direct your attention to the Reality, your mind becomes the Reality at once.

1184. REALITY IN THE WAKING STATE

Waking is reality to both the ignorant man and the Sage. But their concept of reality is fundamentally different. To the ignorant man, waking means waking to the gross world; but to the Sage, waking is waking to his own real nature.

199. REALITY TO THE SAGE

To the Sage, Reality exists at all times (transcending time). In other words, it exists in its own right.

nā 'satō vidyatē bhāvō nā 'bhāvō vidyatē sataḥ .
ubhayōr api dṛṣṭō 'ntas tv anayōs tattva-darśibhiḥ ..

[That which is unreal cannot come to be.
That which is real cannot cease to be.
Those who know truth, see clearly between these.]

Bhagavad-gītā, 2.16

683. WHY CAN'T THE REALITY BE EXPRESSED?

Can you express your feelings? *No*. If so, can you hope to express the Reality – your real nature – which is far beyond even feelings?

448. HOW IS REALITY IN THE OBJECTIVE WORLD ESTABLISHED?

It is done in two ways:

1. By examining the objective world in an ascending order from the gross to the Absolute. When the gross is examined, it is reduced to mere thought forms, and thoughts in their turn are transformed into pure Consciousness. Thus the world is nothing but the Absolute.
2. By tracing the expression of the Absolute down to the gross world, in the descending order.

In this process, yourself, the one reality, seems to split itself into two – namely generic thought and consciousness, the perceiver of the thought. At this stage there is no bondage; because there is no other thing in existence except yourself and thought, and your experience is only that you know.

You see yourself as thought. It cannot be called a thought either, because from the standpoint of Consciousness, there cannot be anything other than Consciousness, and hence there is no thought.

A thought to be a thought must have an object, and therefore thought can exist only in the mind's realm. In the plane where the generic thought is supposed to exist, consciousness alone obtains to provide an object to thought. But it is called a thought only when looked at from down below.

This generic thought, which is not thought by itself, next begets innumerable other thoughts and thus the world comes into existence, out of this pure Consciousness.

Therefore, looking from the top or from the bottom, the world is found to be nothing but the Reality.

45. HOW IS THE SUBJECT AND THE OBJECT ONE AND THE SAME REALITY?

I act, I perceive, I think, I feel; and I also remain all alone in my own glory. It is this unattached 'I'-principle itself that appears in the acting, perceiving, thinking and feeling – while still remaining unattached and unchanged.

But the ignorant man wrongly attributes all these activities to this 'I'-principle, and at the same time admits without hesitation that the 'I' is never-changing.

I am unaffected by any of these apparent activities. So I appear in my own glory, without a change, even in all apparent activities. This shows that all these activities are unreal. And this unreality can be seen if we look at these apparent activities from a subjective standpoint.

Now, looking at objects, we find that the ordinary man's experience is that the unknown subsequently becomes known. Examining this statement more closely, we find that the 'unknown as unknown' is certainly not the 'known as known'. Because, in what we call the 'known', there is so much of our own superimposition – such as name, form, dimensions and numerous other attributes – heaped upon the 'unknown'. But the 'unknown', on the other hand, has only one general superimposition – namely the characteristic of being unknown – made upon the 'thing in itself'.

So the 'thing in itself', or the Reality, was called unknown when viewed from the sphere of the known object. Or in other words, it was the Reality itself that appeared as the unknown and as the known, without undergoing any change in itself. That is, the Reality is neither the unknown nor the known, but is the background of both.

Thus, the subjective 'I'-principle and the 'objective Reality' are one and the same. In other words, the ultimate subject devoid of its sense of subjectivity and the object devoid of its objectivity are one and the same Reality itself.

Realization

1142. WHAT IS REALIZATION?

Seeing things in the right perspective.

And how to achieve it?

Know yourself first.

1246. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF REALIZATION?

The plainest and simplest way of putting it is this: 'I had mistaken myself to be a thinker, doer, perceiver and enjoyer. That misconception has disappeared.'

Here the question 'how' does not arise. But it has to be understood clearly that realization is no action.

596. THE PROCESS OF REALIZATION

1. You identify yourself with objects (body, senses and mind).
2. Next, you eliminate yourself from the object.
3. Lastly, the object is made to merge in you.

845. WHAT IS REALIZATION?

The ordinary man is alive to the illusion that he is bound. Therefore he has only to become alive to the fact that he is free. Realization is only this.

1117. THE BEST MEANS TO REALIZATION

1. Allow Consciousness to come in at every stage of your perceptions. Recognize Consciousness in all your perceptions, and see that it is the only real part of the

perceptions. Gradually, you realize that the whole world – including your own body, senses and mind – is nothing but Consciousness, and you are free.

2. Examine your statements regarding your own experience. A changeless 'I' is found underlying every such statement. It is the ultimate Reality itself.

189. HOW DOES ONE REALIZE?

One realizes neither as a direct result of renunciation, nor as a direct result of action; but only through the deepest conviction that one is not a doer even when engaged in incessant activity, and that one is not a renouncer or non-doer even when one takes the role of a sannyāsin or in deep sleep.

So realization depends upon the perspective alone, and not upon any external manifestation.

419. WHAT IS REALIZATION?

Realization is nothing but shifting the centre of gravity or emphasis from the object to the subject in every perception. For example, 'I see the chair.' Here 'I' comes first and 'chair' next. But the ordinary man ignores the 'I' and emphasizes only the 'chair'. Correctly speaking, he ought to be emphasizing the subject 'I' and ignoring the object 'chair'.

612. THE SHIFTING OF EMPHASIS

The shifting of emphasis, from the objective to the subjective part of your activities, is alone necessary to establish you in the Reality.

655. WHAT IS THE GUARANTEE THAT REALIZATION WILL NOT LAPSE?

If it is something you get at this moment you may very well lose it later. However, your liberation is not an escape from bondage but an expression of real freedom behind that apparent bondage, knowing that bondage also is but an expression of freedom.

Bondage is ego, and the essence of ego is my real self – Consciousness.

212. SOME SAY THAT REALIZATION IS SELFISH. CAN IT BE SO?

Some people, from their own relative plane, say that realization of Truth is selfish. Here, 'self' evidently means the lower self or the ego. This statement is made without understanding the true significance of realization.

Realization means the annihilation of the ego or the lower self. If any act is to be called selfish, the lower self should remain over, to claim the fruits of the action. But here, it is the death of the lower self that takes place. Nothing remains over to claim the fruit, nor are there any fruits capable of being enjoyed.

To call this 'selfish' is a contradiction in terms. It should really be called 'Real-ish' or 'Truth-ish', not 'selfish'.

78. HOW AM I TO ORDER MY LIFE AFTER REALIZATION?

After realization, you may live exactly as before. The answer is only in terms of how another man sees your activities of life, in both cases.

Subjectively, you have undergone a definite change, from your identification with the unreal to the identification with Reality. So you can no longer lose your equanimity and become desperate; because you know you are perfect and changeless.

After establishing yourself at that centre firmly, you will be able to engage in the usual activities of life even with interest, as an ordinary man does; leaving all interest and activities to the mind, senses and body, but never losing your centre in the least.

55. HOW SHALL ONE ACT AFTER REALIZATION?

The correct answer to the question is that there is no action after realization. Therefore the question does not arise.

But the question can be taken up at a lower level and answered differently. The world and its activities – including that of the body which you call ‘yours’ – may continue in the usual manner, apparently as though nothing has happened.

By being established in the Truth, you are not going to get any definite advice about your future activities. But the light from the centre will so react on your mind that eventually it will run only in the proper groove. The world of your perceptions will henceforward be illuminated by an entirely new light and significance. Your way of life will definitely improve and will shine on a clear and new basis – being absolutely purposeless and goalless – because you have become impersonal, and your activities can be assigned to no criterion whatsoever.

The world and Ātmā are only apparent contradictions. Whatever you assume yourself to be, so you will see outside you.

If you stand as the body, you see only gross objects.

If you stand as the mind, you see only subtle objects.

If you stand as the self, you see only Consciousness.

A bhakta sees all as bhaktas, everywhere outside.

A yōgin sees all as yōgins, everywhere outside.

A jnyānin sees all as jnyānins, everywhere.

90. ONLY HE REALIZES WHOM ĀTMĀ CHOOSES.

Nā ’yam ātmā pravacanēna labhyō
na mēdhayā na bahunā śrutēna .
yam ēvai ’ṣa vṛṇutē tēna labhyas
tasyai ’ṣa ātmā vivṛṇutē tanūm svām ..

Kaṭha Upaniṣhad, 2.23

This is a statement in the Upaniṣhads. It means: ‘He who is chosen by the Ātmā itself is alone eligible for realization of the Truth.’

It is ordinarily said that a thing attracts one. It is not on account of anything done by that particular thing that it is said to attract, but one gets attracted to it of himself. It is in this way that Ātmā’s ‘choosing’ has to be understood. It means that he who is

earnest about getting to Ātmā – the ultimate Truth – gets attracted to it without anything being done by Ātmā itself. That is the ‘choosing’.

Not only is the direct perception path the easiest and the shortest of all the paths to Truth, but it also gives the most satisfactory explanation of all the problems that arise for those who follow other paths.

84. REALIZATION

Realization consists in becoming deeply aware of the fact that you have never been in bondage. Because realization can never happen: it can never occur in time. To the question: ‘When shall one realize?’, the answer can only be: ‘When the “when” dies.’

In your perceptions, you only see form, hear sound, and so on. Form, sound etc. by themselves do not prove or belong to any object. Each only proves and belongs to the particular sense organ concerned.

You can never have more than one perception at a time. Therefore, the projection of an object as a result of one perception – together with the innumerable other concepts which are joined on to it – is indeed a real impossibility.

So every perception, concept etc. proves and belongs to only that thing in itself which is beyond the senses and mind. That is to say it is the only Reality, behind all manifestation.

1111. SĀKṢHĀT-KĀRAṆA

The ultimate cause (if any) of Self-realization is the fact of your having been accepted by a Sage as his disciple. This fact guarantees the disciple’s realizing the corresponding fact that he had never been bound.

The moment the relationship between the Sage and the disciple is so established, the attention of the disciple is irrevocably directed to Ātmā [Self], and the only thing that remains to be done is the removal of the ‘mind’, the one obstacle in the scene. All the attendant formalities of initiation, listening to spiritual discourses etc., are calculated only to give the mind a dignified and decent burial.

The life-story of Sages like Vaṭivīshvarattamma proves this beyond doubt. [See glossary, under ‘Vaṭivīshvarattamma’.]

Reason

249. REASON – LOWER AND HIGHER

Lower reason: Silently makes reference only to your own [personal] experiences.

Higher reason: Makes a silent reference only to the very being in you, and the endorsement comes spontaneously from within.

563. LOWER AND HIGHER REASONS

The lower reason differs in its interpretation and application according to individuals, since it relies only upon the personal experiences of each, which vary according to temperament and environment.

But the higher reason (*vicāraṁ* = *viśēṣēṇa carikkuka* [proceeding through discernment]), moving along a special path directed inward, relies only upon the being in the individual, which is unique. Therefore it can never be different in its application or finding.

1369. WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF REASON?

Reason is generally of two distinct kinds. One is *vēdāntic*, and the other intellectual.

Vēdāntic reason is tri-basic in character, having sway over the experiences of all the three states.

Intellectual reason is only mono-basic in character, being applicable only to the experiences of the waking state.

253. REASON AND HEART – THEIR RELATIONSHIP

They are not watertight compartments at all. Both of them radiate from the common centre, the ‘I’-principle, and you can reach that ‘I’-principle through either.

If you reach it through the heart, you will find the reason also present there; and vice versa.

Reason includes the heart element also. The *śāstras* [texts] bear testimony to this. Reason or *vidyā* is represented in the *śāstras* as the spouse of the Absolute. This feminine aspect, attributed to the personification of reason, amply proves the prominence of the heart element present in it.

216. LOGIC HAS ITS OWN LIMITATIONS. WHAT ARE THEY?

Lower logic is divided into *inductive* and *deductive*. Both of them concern themselves only with objects assumed to be existing, and deal with evidence and facts distinct and separate one from the other.

But when the very existence of the world – gross as well as subtle – is disputed and has to be proved, neither of these approaches helps us. Because here, the ‘I’-principle or subjective Awareness is the only thing admitted to be existing. Here, it is the higher logic alone that can help us in the proper manner. Lower logic can never do it.

To the ordinary man, the only evidence available regarding the existence of the world is the evidence offered by the five sense organs. It is ‘evidence’ that is taken up here, and examined to show that it does not prove the world at all. But it proves only sense perceptions, or the senses themselves. In other words, the evidence proves nothing but the evidence. Therefore, it is no evidence at all, as far as the fact to be proved is concerned.

If you assert that the world exists, it is your burden to prove that it does. The opponent has only to deny it, until the existence is proved beyond doubt. Ultimately, even if you give up all argument and say ‘I know the world and so it must exist’, that also cannot hold good, because you cannot know any object except through one of the

sense organs. When this is so, it proves again that it is that sense perception or sense alone that is known, and not the object nor the world.

Recognizing Truth

714. HOW DO I REALIZE?

You realize not by renouncing the world, nor by allowing the world to be. But you only take note of the fact that you are always standing as that Truth.

715. WHAT DOES 'TAKE NOTE OF' MEAN? IS IT ACTIVE OR PASSIVE?

It is neither active nor passive. It takes place on the borderline of mind and the Reality. You may start it as a simple thought, and allow that thought to expire, leaving you as you are. You have grasped it already. Just make that grasping stronger. Hitherto, you did not recognize this fact. But now recognize it. By such a recognition, the ego is immediately transformed into the Truth.

If it is the *cure* you need, information about the composition and qualities of the medicine is not relevant.

'Taking note', at the mental level, may be taken to mean only remembering; though even remembering immediately vanishes, giving place to the Reality.

872. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'TO TAKE NOTE OF'?

'To take note of' = to recognize.

In trying to recognize the Truth deeply, you happen to be placed there (to stand as that) and the recognition dies. So it takes you to a non-dual experience in identity.

904. WHAT IS RECOGNITION?

Recognition is an acceptance of the fact of Truth. Repetition of it makes the recognition deeper and deeper.

Recognition, remembrance and hope are the three props that maintain the continuity of individual life. Of these three, recognition stands nearer the 'I'-principle than the other two.

930. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'DIRECTING ATTENTION TO'?

You have grown up from a baby to a man. It is a fact in itself. Can you say you remember it? *No*. You can only recognize it deeply. That is directing attention to it. Direct attention to your real nature also in a like manner.

903. WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL THOUGHT?

Thought is an exercise of the mind, in relation to objects of the world. Thought about the Truth is not a thought in the real sense. Because Truth can never be an object of thought.

So, spiritual thought is a misnomer. What is actually called a spiritual thought is only a deep recognition of an established fact regarding the real 'I', beyond all subject-object relationship.

1160. MENTAL RECOGNITION OF TRUTH

The ordinary aspirant naturally desires to visualize and stand established in the ultimate Truth, and also to know and feel that he does so. But when he visualizes the Truth, he understands that it is never possible to know or feel it.

It will take time for the samskāra [habituation] of that desire to leave him completely. Therefore, every time that samskāra comes up, he has only to direct his attention to the Truth visualized and the samskāra will vanish for the time being. When this is repeated, the samskāra will die a natural death.

If you say that you stand established in the Truth, you are wrong. It is also wrong to say that you have not established yourself in Truth. In either case it is mental recognition that is sought. Truth can never be recognized by the mind.

Speaking consists of two distinct parts or components in it: the material part composed of sound, words and meaning; and the other part, Consciousness, which is alive. The former depends upon the latter for its very existence; and so the latter, Consciousness, is the svarūpa [true nature] of speaking. You are therefore directed to emphasize that self-luminous principle in speaking, which alone makes speaking speaking.

Religion

661. RELIGIONS AND THEIR MISSION

Religion = Re + Lega

Re = Background; Lega = Binds

That which binds you to the background. But unfortunately no religion interprets it in this ultimate sense. All religions have the common goal to help man to lead a relatively moral, happy and contented life.

Religion has been the greatest force and sanction in the world to keep man wedded to relative morality and goodness in life. It caters only to the satisfaction value, in response to the desires of man, varied as they are, according to countries, customs, manners and temperaments of people. Religion helps its adherents to prepare the ground, by considerably attenuating their ego. When the ego is thus sufficiently attenuated so as to enable them to imbibe the ultimate Truth, the exceptional few get a Kāraṇa-guru who initiates them into the ultimate Truth.

So far as every religion goes, it is quite good and helpful to the followers. But Vēdānta comes in to supplement what religion had not been able to do. Thus Vēdānta is,

strictly speaking, the fulfilment of all religions. It has no quarrel with any religion. It says to every religion: 'Please do not stop where you do. Come up higher still.'

Religious teachers and their instructions as a rule do not help one to go beyond the relative. Their goal itself is only the maximum of enjoyable happiness in duality. Some of the ancient devotees of Hindu personal Gods had the good fortune to get at the ultimate Truth, in spite of the retarding influences of religion. After establishing themselves in the Truth, they looked back and analysed the stand they had formerly taken in religion. Now they could easily discover the slip they had made in religion. But they could not deny the immense purity of mind obtained through religion. This, of course, gave the devotee a good chance of imbibing the ultimate Truth, if only his attention was earnestly drawn towards Truth.

Therefore the ancient devotee-Sages codified and arranged the experiences they had had along the path of ultimate Truth, and added it on to Hindu religion in the name of '*darshana*' ['seeing'], even though in fact the *darshana* was a complete negation of religion.

Darshana is pure Advaita Vēdānta. The mere fact that it is added on to certain Hindu religious texts does not make it part of Hindu religion. It is the fulfilment of all religions, including the Hindu religion.

1213. RELIGION AND ITS SCOPE

Religion rests upon blind faith in so called revelations, scriptures, and a personal God. Human tastes and tendencies differ, all over the world. Religions respond to the diverse tastes and tendencies, and so inevitably multiply differences.

Religions propose only to help man to lead a good, just and moral life on earth. For that purpose, each religion has invented its own temptations and threats, in the form of heaven and hell. They also recommend a strict code of ethics to guide their followers. Each religion insists upon the adoption of its ethics, just so far as it can serve its own limited, phenomenal purpose.

If pressed beyond these arbitrary limits, the same ethics destroy even the foundations of the religion and its personal God. This is what Vēdānta does. The practice of ethics involves a certain amount of self-sacrifice. When practised to the very end, every ethical law takes one to selflessness. This means the certain death of the ego, which no religion contemplates, but which Vēdānta wishes to achieve.

Therefore a Kāraṇa-guru can even make use of the ethics of religion, to lead its devotees to the ultimate Truth. Religion does not seem to recognize the scope and the potentialities of its own ethics. Though unknowingly, even religion, through ethics, advocates Vēdānta. Vēdānta is therefore the fulfilment of all religions.

Renunciation

955. WHAT IS RENUNCIATION?

Your real nature is renunciation itself. Renunciation of doership and enjoyership from all your activities is real renunciation. Renunciation can never be made. It is the natural effect of directing your attention to your real nature.

29. HOW CAN AN ORDINARY MAN ATTAIN RENUNCIATION?

When you are engaged in any action, thought or other activity, all the world except for that one activity is dead, so far as you are concerned. This can really be called 'vairāgya' or 'detachment'. Therefore, you are always in perfect dispassion, and that again in the most natural and effortless manner.

59. WHAT IS RENUNCIATION [AS ORDINARILY PRACTISED] ?

'Renunciation' or 'sannyāsa' is not likely to annihilate one's samskāras [habit-driven inclinations], even after the attainment of nirvikalpa samādhi in the yōgic fashion.

The tendency for renunciation shows a diffidence, or unwillingness, or fear, to look straight at the apparent world and analyse it to its very source. So the sannyāsin sometimes chooses to get away from the apparently more dangerous parts of the world, relying upon his own mind and intellect which are themselves parts of the world and which he must ultimately renounce.

Thus, as the field of his enquiry is incomplete, his renunciation is also incomplete. The result of such an enquiry can never be satisfying. The enquiry can be complete only when he is able to visualize the Reality of his own self, even in the apparent variety.

To achieve this, the sannyāsin, even after attaining the nirvikalpa [unconditioned] samādhi of the yōgin, has to labour afresh on the path of direct knowledge.

441. WHAT IS THE EFFECT OF RENUNCIATION?

Renunciation is usually considered as a means to Self-realization, but its effect is just the opposite. When you renounce an object, you actually attribute more concreteness and reality to it than when you are indifferent to it.

Thus renunciation, instead of proving the unreality of the world, makes it more real and frightful, though you are temporarily and conveniently kept away from parts of it.

668. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OCHRE COLOUR OF THE SANNYĀSIN'S ROBE?

Ochre is the colour of fire; and it is supposed to represent the fire of pure knowledge, which destroys the stains of the mind – namely *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. The external colour of the robe is expected to remind the *sādhaka sannyāsin* about his ultimate goal of Truth.

But to the householder on the direct path to the Truth, every object, thought, feeling or perception is an ochre coloured robe in effect, all pointing to his real nature.

278. YOU RENOUNCE ONLY FOR SUBSEQUENT ABSORPTION IN FULL. WHY?

True renunciation is renunciation of 'objects' from your 'Consciousness of objects', leaving you as 'Consciousness pure'. Looking from there, you see 'form' to be nothing other than yourself; and so you absorb all objects into yourself and rest in Peace, as you do in deep sleep.

So also, physical renunciation is intended only to take you to the Reality, in the first place. Looking back from there, you see the objects renounced as nothing other than the same Reality. And so you readily absorb them all back into your self. Then alone do you attain real Peace.

452. IS THERE RENUNCIATION IN VICĀRA-MĀRGA?

Renunciation, like everything else, has two aspects: its form and its essence. Paths like those of karma, devotion, sannyāsa, yōga etc. emphasize both these aspects, sometimes the form even more than the essence.

But for those who follow the path of jnyāna [knowledge] or vicāra-mārga, the essence of renunciation alone is emphasized and the form practically ignored. So much so that an acquaintance of a modern Sage who adopted the direct path for instruction once told him that he wished to accept the path chalked out by him, since it called for no kind of renunciation at any stage of one's life. Because to all appearance the Sage was leading an ideal domestic life.

But to this the Sage replied: 'Well my friend, you are sorely mistaken. It is not the physical renunciation that really counts. If it did, every destitute beggar would be a sannyāsin. He can claim to have renounced much and to possess little.

'But it is that preparedness to renounce everything you possess including your own life – if it is necessary for the attainment of the Truth – that really matters. You can never reach that Ultimate if there is any one little thing in the world which you are not prepared to renounce, in order to reach the Ultimate. That preparedness to renounce everything makes one a real sannyāsin.

Any amount of physical renunciation, without that complete preparedness to renounce everything, makes you only a prisoner in your own self-made mental fetters. You are not much better than a prisoner behind iron bars.

Therefore the ideal of life for one who takes to vicāra-mārga should be inwardly to be a perfect sannyāsin and outwardly to live like a 'man of the world'.

The Sage has renounced his life completely, but has kindly permitted life to cling to Truth for the time being, to be dismissed without notice whenever he chooses. The Sage is always *in* the world but not *of* it.

Sacrifice

890. WHAT IS COURAGE?

If love of any kind prompts you to action and sacrifice of any degree, courage comes in. If pure love (objectless love) prompts you to action and sacrifice, that is real courage. But if love of any object prompts you to sacrifice, your courage is not genuine – but secondary and worldly.

98. LOVE AND SACRIFICE

You love your Guru for your true death.

Even ordinary, mundane love involves a certain amount of sacrifice of the lower self or the ego. When love becomes more and more sublime, the degree of sacrifice involved also increases proportionately. Ultimately, when you want to love the Truth, Guru or the Self – the Absolute – the sacrifice required is also not partial. It demands the whole of the lower self or the death of the ego itself. Thus, in all cases of pure love, there is no trace of the lower self to be found. So love is said to be *only giving and never taking*.

Love of objects is really love of the happiness supposed to be derived from objects. Happiness is your real nature. Therefore, you are loving your real nature. You cannot split yourself into two – the subject ‘loving’ and the object ‘loved’. So it is yourself or Happiness that is loved. Therefore love and self are one. It is the Ultimate.

But to reach it, you must begin to cultivate that love even here, by sacrificing the interests of the lower self, little by little. Because the love of objects is limited, the sacrifice of the ego involved is only partial. But the love of Truth is unlimited and the sacrifice involved is also complete. It is the death of the ego.

Sādhana (exercise of discipline)

490. WHAT IS MY SĀDHANA AFTER TATTVĪPADĒSHA?

The only real sādhana for a jnyāna sādhanika is to try not to forget his real nature, whenever he is not occupied with activities which are necessary for his life in the world.

331. WHAT IS THE TEST OF SPIRITUAL SĀDHANA?

When you are engaged in any mental activity, if there is the least taint of objectivity, then that activity is not spiritual. But if there is no such objectification at all, it is purely spiritual or ātmic in nature. This is one of the tests of spiritual sādhana.

494. HOW TO TUNE MY SĀDHANA?

Nature works normally and regularly. Your sādhana should never be pitched against or contrary to the current of nature, but should always be in harmony with its course, and thus ultimately transcend nature. Otherwise, much energy will have to be wasted in counteracting the forces of nature.

1059. WHAT IS THE REAL SĀDHANA? [THE THREE STATES]

That which removes the ills of the waking state alone, is not the complete sādhana. That alone is the real sādhana which removes the ills of all the three states.

1139. WHAT IS THE REAL SĀDHANA? [LISTENING]

The only sādhana that the higher jnyāna śāstras [texts] ask the earnest aspirant to undertake is: ‘Listen, listen, listen, to the words of the Guru; and contemplate noth-

ing.’ This can also be: ‘Say to yourself over and over again what the Guru has told you regarding the Truth, the arguments used, etc.’ It is as good as listening to the Guru himself, over again.

1262. MIXING OF LEVELS

Indiscriminate mixing of levels is always to be discouraged. It leads to confusion of ideas.

But in every sādhana, there is mixing of the two levels [of Truth and untruth], to a certain extent. That mixing is helpful in establishing you in the Truth, since you emphasize the goal of Truth through all right sādhana and strive to eliminate all that is other than the Truth.

Thus even the mixing of levels, when done with discrimination, leads you to the background.

1216. EXPERIENCE AND SPIRITUAL SĀDHANA

Really spiritual experience is only one. Its tests are changelessness and self-luminosity. The only experience that stands these two tests is the real ‘I’-principle or pure awareness. All the rest disappear in time, and so are unreal.

A spiritual aspirant guided by a Kāraṇa-guru is told, in unambiguous terms, always to test his experiences in the light of the question: ‘Have you got the whole of what you really want?’ If your experience – be it nirvikalpa samādhi – fails to answer this question in the bold affirmative, reject it and try again.

At last, you come to that experience which never parts from you and which leaves no part of your want unfulfilled. That is the real ‘I’-principle – pure Awareness.

1443. (A disciple asked) TRUTH IN ITS PURITY IS UNTHINKABLE. THEN WHAT CAN I DO TO GET ESTABLISHED IN IT?

Gurunāthan: After visualizing the Truth, it is true you are told that you need not think about it. Because you cannot. But it only means that you should not forget it at any time. Can’t you undertake that much?

Disciple: Yes, of course.

G: That is the last sādhana you have to do. Do it and be at Peace.

Sage (Jnyānin)

914. THE IGNORANT MAN AND THE SAGE

The ignorant man does not experience anything other than the body, and is blissfully ignorant of the ‘I’-principle.

The Sage does not experience anything other than the ‘I’-principle, and knows the body to be only an illusion.

898. WHO HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF?

He who has deeply known Consciousness (though it is ridiculous to say so) has established himself in Consciousness. He is a *jīvan-mukta* (free within, while living in the world).

899. IS THERE ANYTHING HIGHER STILL?

Yes. Not in content, but in the naturalness of control. Though born, as a child in ignorance, it is the highest goal to become a '*child in knowledge*'. All *jīvan-muktas* do not rise to that state and it is not necessary for their own purpose either.

516. TALKING ABOUT A SAGE

Whenever anything is said about a Sage or a Jnyānin, it is the *personal* that is described, but with the accent always on the *impersonal*.

598. THE SAGE AND LOVE

The Sage is impersonal, and as such can never act, think or feel as a person. As he really transcends the limits of love, he cannot limit it to an individual, society or country. His love can never be mutilated in that manner.

922. WHAT ARE RULES TO A SAGE?

The Sage does not follow any rules. I do not mean rules like those of the road or society, but rules of spirituality. Rules are really meant to take one to the Sage or Truth. Therefore rules humbly follow the Sage and do not dare to overtake him. Because the Sage does not need their services and they are dissolved or become meaningless in his presence.

227. HOW ARE ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE SAGE?

The Sage has both worldly and spiritual activities. To him, both are recreations, each in relation to the other (on an equal footing).

771. WHAT WORK CAN A JNYĀNIN UNDERTAKE?

A Jnyānin can take to any vocation in life he chooses, in accordance with his former habits and samskāras [inclinations]; because he knows that the activities of life have no bearing upon his real nature. He does not act for individual pleasure or happiness, but purely out of a spontaneous urge coming from deep below.

269. THE NATURE OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SAGE AND OF THE ORDINARY MAN

If you say that you do a thing, the Truth is that you do not do it. It really means that you stand beyond both doing and not doing.

We first go beyond the three states to discover the 'I'-principle; and then looking from that stand, we see that the 'I'-principle expresses itself in all the three states and even beyond them. Thus the *jīvan-mukta* expresses himself in all the activities of the body, senses and mind.

But to the ordinary man, a *jīvan-mukta* appears only as another ordinary man, exactly as the Absolute appears to the layman as objects perceived by the senses.

457. WHY DOES A JNYĀNIN SOMETIMES TRY TO HELP OTHERS IN DISTRESS?

The *Jnyānin* knows well that the source of all their distress is the fear of death, and he knows that death is a misnomer. So he tries to help them to continue to live in the illusion for a time, only long enough to make them understand that they can never die.

705. HOW TO MAKE ONE UNDERSTAND THE SAGE?

It is so easy. Just direct your mind to your deep sleep. The Sage is there in deep sleep. The Sage is exactly as you are in your deep sleep. If any question is put about the Sage, just ask the questioner the same question regarding his role in the deep sleep state.

Even when you are engaged in all your daily activities, does the man in you ever get disturbed? No. Similarly, the Sage is undisturbed by any of his apparent activities. When correctly examined, of course you will see there are no activities either.

Diversity can never stand scrutiny. Then why bother about activities? There is only one activity. And if activity is only one, it cannot remain as activity. It is the Reality itself.

970. HOW DOES THE SAGE TALK?

The Sage always talks through *your* instruments. But there is something of the Sage even in those statements. Take note of that part with advantage, and benefit yourself. The statements by themselves leave no mark behind.

727. THE SAGE SOMETIMES SEEMS TO COME DOWN TO A LOWER LEVEL IN ANSWERING QUESTIONS. IS IT A COMPROMISE?

No. Never. Though the level of the answer might appear lower when looked at from lower down, it is not so; because the Sage is all along emphasizing that Reality which the questioner has never noted. So the answer, unknowingly, takes the listener to the goal; and therefore the result is not a compromise at all.

725. IS A SAGE'S LIFE BENEFICIAL TO ALL?

By 'life' we mean the activities of life. They fall into three categories: physical, mental, and conscious or *Ātmic*.

Mental activities are accepted to be much more strong and effective than the physical.

But the last, though extremely rare, is the one pertaining to the Sage. They are self-effulgent activities of light and love, and their effect is imperceptible to the naked eye,

unlike those of the preceding ones. They come from the Sage spontaneously, unasked. It is such activities alone that keep the moral balance of the world, even in the midst of all chaos.

746. HOW IS THE SAGE BENEFICENT TO SOCIETY?

Is the Sage beneficent to himself? Yes. If so, he is beneficent to the world which is in essence himself.

Is he beneficent to humanity? Yes. He is beneficent to man as man. He proves to man that he is one with animals, vegetables and minerals. What higher form can love take than feeling one with another? This is the highest service, and this the Sage does in full.

You say one must love his neighbour as himself. When the Sage does it in full, you find fault with him. When one loves his neighbour as himself, he cannot stand separate to do service to him. So, to do service, from the standpoint of a Sage, is impossible.

You can never become one with another with the body or with the mind. Beyond mind, there is no duality of any kind. One has only to rise to that level and all problems vanish. The Sage stands there in Peace.

835. WHY DOES A JNYĀNIN WEEP?

Why should he not weep? Why should he laugh? What prohibits him from weeping alone? He does everything else: acting, perceiving, thinking and feeling, apparently like an ordinary man. But there is a world of difference between the activities of the two. The ignorant man acts as a slave to his passions; the Jnyānin as a master, the passions being his slaves. Therefore the Jnyānin can weep or not weep as he chooses.

But there is happiness even in weeping. The mere thought of the departed gives happiness. But that thought cannot be ordinarily separated from the allied aspects. So both together are helplessly accepted by the ordinary man. He begins to think of the agreeable aspects of the departed and gradually gets lost in the less happy aspects and weeps profusely.

But the Jnyānin knows perfectly well that his real nature Peace (objectless Happiness) is the background of all emotions, and welcomes grief and weeps like anybody else. But, not for a moment does he lose sight of the background Peace.

865. THE LIGHT BEFORE THE EGO AND THE SAGE

The ego never sees the light, though he always uses light. The Sage sees that light alone (the most vital part) in every perception. He is great who sees the light alone in all perceptions.

The 'I' is the first part of every perception. This is the light which manifests the object. But this part is usually ignored. You can speak of anything only as dead matter. I alone possess Consciousness. Even God is to be taken only as dead matter. No human being has ever reached the Ultimate, though sages may seem to live. The human being is transformed into the Ultimate itself, just before reaching it.

72. WHAT IS A SAGE?

A *Sage* is one who has experienced that the 'I'-principle, or Consciousness, is the only subjective and objective reality. In all apparent activities, he is concerned with Consciousness alone.

When one's attention is directed to Consciousness, the material part of perception drops away as unreal. It is *after* every perception that we are to emphasize the consciousness aspect of our activities. I know my actions, perceptions, thoughts, feelings; and I know myself also. So I am the ultimate knower always. But when I look from my own level of the 'I'-principle, the known disappears altogether and the knower-ship also ceases.

When the Sage takes to any activity, that activity is seldom preceded by a volition of the will; all his real interest being in Consciousness alone, which is involved in it. His deep conviction that Consciousness has not undergone any change by all these apparent manifestations keeps him at his centre and never disturbs him, as it does a *sādhaka*.

To a Sage, it might sometimes happen that from the first formless manifestation of Consciousness, he might go back to the unmanifested Consciousness itself, without coming to object-perception at all.

Manifestation (or being known) implies Consciousness. When you say 'Consciousness manifests itself', immediately your attention is drawn to the Consciousness part of it. So also in the manifestation of objects. All manifestation proves the Consciousness aspect beyond doubt.

271. WHY DOES A SAGE NOT SERVE HUMANITY?

Why don't you serve the humanity you found existing in your dream? The Sage gives the waking world and its humanity only the same degree of reality as the dream world itself.

The question arises out of utter ignorance of what liberation is. Service, as you say, is motivated always by love (of course conditioned) for your brother. The Sage sees his brother not as an object to be loved as you do, but as one with himself in essence; because the Sage stands always as the absolute Reality which is also the background of the whole world. Therefore, the Sage loves his brother as himself.

What greater service and sacrifice can you conceive of, than this one of becoming one with the entire world?

The Sage is already established at the centre which you aspire to reach by all your laborious service and sacrifice, but which you invariably fall short of, somewhere on the way.

704. HAS THE WAY OF LIFE ANY BEARING UPON TRUTH?

The ways of life of Shrī Kṛiṣṇa, Shrī Shuka, Shrī Rāma and Shrī Vasīṣṭha were all different. But they were all equal as *jīvan-muktas*.

kṛṣṇō bhōgī śukas tyāgī nṛpau janaka-rāghavau
vasīṣṭhaḥ karma-kartā ca tēṣāṃ mukti-sthitis samā

[Kṛiṣṇa enjoyed the fruits of life.

Shuka renounced what others sought.

Rāma and Janaka were kings.
Vasishṭha practiced formal rites.
But in that freedom each attained,
they are the same. Each is that one.]

[Source of quotation uncertain]

As individuals, they were all different. They were not Sages as such. The Sage was Kṛishṇa, the Sage was Shuka, the Sage was Janaka, the Sage was Rāma, and the Sage was Vasishṭha. The Sage is only one, and that is the Truth. But, as living entities, they were all different.

510. THE SAGE OR A JĪVAN-MUKTA

The Sage or a jīvan-mukta is nothing but the ultimate Reality itself, and can never be described by words.

Still, to enable the layman to get a glimpse of it, something could be said vaguely pointing to it. To the ordinary man, the Sage appears to be a *jīva* [person] like himself. But from the standpoint of the Sage (assuming that there is such an imaginary standpoint), he is nothing but Ātmā, the Reality – and so a *mukta* [one who is free]. Thus the term ‘*jīvan-mukta*’ is a misnomer, being the imaginary product of two opposing perspectives which can never be reconciled.

It can be further clarified. To the aspirant, who is a *jīva*, the world alone is real and all else, including even Ātmā, is unreal. But to the Sage, Ātmā alone is real and the world is unreal. Therefore, there is nothing in common between the two.

So, left to himself the aspirant is helpless, since it is impossible for him to contact the Sage and thus rise to the Absolute. There is no bridge between the world and the Reality. Therefore, out of divine grace – if you may say so – the Sage comes down as the Guru, to bridge this gulf and to lift the disciple from the deep abyss.

Now let us examine the apparent activities of the ordinary man and the Sage. Both have three different perspectives, according to which they function in their lives.

1. The first and the lowest is the *perspective extroverted* (bāhya-dṛiṣṭi), attributing reality to the world of objects. This is usually found in little children and in quite ignorant people.
2. The *inner perspective* (antar-dṛiṣṭi), emphasizes the subtle activities of the mind. Here information is gained without the help of the sense organs. Everything gross becomes subtle here.
3. *Perspective introverted* (antar-mukha-dṛiṣṭi): Here all that is gross and subtle cease to exist, ending in knowledge.

The Sage and the ignorant man have all these three perspectives. But the Sage has them all knowingly, and knows that the last one alone is real. The worldly man knows only the first two perspectives consciously. Occasionally, he is thrown unknowingly into the third perspective, but he neither notes it nor emphasizes it. The Sage, from his own standpoint, has only one perspective; and that is the third one.

In the case of the intelligent adult who has both the first and the second, he is able to function when he wants through the first perspective also, without giving up his emphasis in the second. For example, on meeting a stranger, though he first notes only the qualities and subtle attributes of the man such as his profession, qualifica-

tions, purpose of visit etc., he can also on second thought (if he wants) note his form, complexion and other physical details which form the object of the first perspective.

Similarly the Sage, though established in the third perspective, can (if he is so inclined) come down to any of the other two perspectives and function through them, without losing his stand in the third.

This is how a Guru works, apparently coming down to the level of the disciple in the gross plane; and lifting him slowly from there, through the subtle plane, to the Ultimate. But the Guru himself always remains in the Absolute, allowing his body and mind to come down and lift the disciple from the phenomenal.

Sahaja or natural state

882. THE SAHAJA STATE

The sahaja state is the state where you maintain that certainty or deep-rooted conviction that you never leave your real nature of Consciousness and Peace.

576. A TEST OF THE NATURAL STATE

When you are asked what you are, if the answer comes to your mind spontaneously 'I am pure Consciousness', you may be said to have reached the natural state.

795. CAN THE SAHAJA STATE BE CALLED A CONTINUOUS SAMĀDHI?

No. If you are so particular about using the word 'samādhi', you may say you are then in a permanent samādhi.

But be where you are and know what you are.

23. WHAT IS MEANT BY 'NATURAL STATE'?

Without a thought or a feeling, the ordinary man knows himself to be the body and claims all its activities. In the same way, a Jnyānin, without a thought or a feeling, knows that he is the Reality: expressing itself in all perceptions, thoughts and feelings, without a change.

What you call *experience* is the real 'I'-principle, shining in its own glory, beyond the realm of the mind. The use of the word 'realization' as an action is wrong, since it brings with it a sense of limitation by time.

You can never become conscious of an object unless you are 'self-conscious', beyond the realm of the mind. So even when you say you are conscious of an object, you mean you are conscious of the knowledge of the object, further reduced into knowledge alone, and again reduced into the subjective 'I'-principle or Experience itself.

This means that you are always in your real centre.

243. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SAHAJA STATE?

You are established in what is really meant or what really happens when you say that you know or that you love. By knowing or loving, an object is actually brought nearer and nearer to your own self, until at last it merges in you as Consciousness or Peace. Love and Consciousness pure always annihilate the ego.

In statements such as ‘He who sees...’, ‘He who hears...’, ‘He who thinks...’ etc., the unqualified ‘he’ is the absolute Reality itself. He who is able to realize this, is in the sahaja state.

Even after realizing that what you have seen is a rope, it is quite possible to see the snake in the rope with all its details. But you can never be frightened by that snake, because you know full well that it is your own creation. This is how a Jnyānin in the sahaja state sees the world in the Self, but is in no way affected by it.

Shrī Caṭṭampi-svāmi (a Sage contemporary of Shrī Ātmānanda) often used to say: ‘All this is the manyness of the One’.

Shrī Shankara: ‘Perception of an object is but oblation to the fire of knowledge.’

Gurunāthan: ‘One is the Truth. What you call two is not two but ‘one-one’, and three but ‘one-one-one’, and so on. The word ‘two’ makes you forget the one, which is the real background and substance of all numbers. But when you say ‘one-one’ it serves the same purpose as two, but does not make you forget the Reality. ‘Two’ does not really exist at any time.

So also, look at all objects without forgetting their common background, the ‘I’-principle or Consciousness. This is the sahaja state.

677. HOW TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE DEEP SLEEP STATE AND THE SAHAJA (NATURAL) STATE?

Ātmā is the real ‘I’-principle beyond mind, and so beyond time also.

Non-ātmā (also called anātmā) comprehends everything objective, including thoughts, feelings, perceptions and actions.

1. tannēyūṁ tñallennukāṇunnāvayēyūṁ
maḥannirikkunnatū “nidra”

Forgetting oneself and forgetting the non-ātmā is *sleep*.

2. tñallennukāṇunnāvayēyūṁ tannēyūṁ
maḥannirikkunnu ennullatū tñallātta
vayetannilākki, tannēyūṁ maḥannirikkukay-
ākunnu, ennaḥiyunnatū “vastusthiti”

He who knows that the forgetting of non-ātmā is merging the non-ātmā in the Ātmā, is in the Reality.

3. tannēyūṁ tñallennukāṇunnāvayēyūṁ
maḥannirikkunnatū tannilāṇennukāṇunn-
atū “vastusthiti”

He who sees that the forgetting of non-ātmā and the apparent ‘I’ takes place in the Ātmā itself, is in the Reality.

4. tñallennu kāṇunnāvayē tannilākki
tannēyūṁ maḥannirikkunnatū “vastusthiti”

He who deliberately merges the non-ātmā in Ātmā and remains forgetting himself, is in the Reality.

464. WHAT IS THE SAHAJA STATE?

A Jnyānin [Sage], by experiencing the ultimate Happiness, knows that he experiences nothing new and that the limitation he used to put upon Happiness before realization was an illusion. Thus he knows that what one experiences as limited happiness, apparently ensuing from objects, is in fact that unlimited ultimate Happiness itself.

So, even if a Sage appears to be leading a normal life as before, he does not see the world as the onlookers see it. Even when the others think that he is hunting after objects of pleasure, he from his own stand is always enjoying his *svarūpānanda*.

A Sage in the sahaja state does not bother himself – as far as he is concerned – with explaining the objective world or its activities. Death for him has taken place long ago, at the moment of his first realizing the Truth. The subsequent stoppage of prāṇa [vital energy] long after and the consequent paralysis of the body, which we usually call death, does not denote the moment of the death of his ego.

The ultimate ideal is not ‘not to see’ when objects appear, but to be deeply convinced that the Reality is far beyond both seeing and not-seeing by the senses. You only witness these perceptions, and the perceptions in no way affect you.

Though the eye shows the palace on the backdrop (curtain) on the stage most realistically to you, the intellect from behind tells you it is not real, and you readily accept that correction. So also, though sense organs show the objects to be real, the ‘I’-principle – standing behind the sense organs – corrects them and tells you it is all illusion. The Sage readily accepts this position and lets the body and mind continue to function as before; just as he who sees the curtain continues to see the palace on the curtain as before, but does not allow himself to be carried away by the eye’s verdict.

You cannot help seeing if you look through the eyes. The only means of avoiding seeing is to cease looking through the eyes. But the Sage does not want to perform that vain labour. He is content with resting in the ultimate Truth, whatever may be the activity the mind and body are engaged in.

We talk ignorantly of the activities of the Sage. It is a clear contradiction in terms. The Sage is that principle transcending both activity and inactivity. So the Sage cannot take to any activity as the Sage; and that which is engaged in any activity is not the Sage. In short, that which is visible to our sense organs or mind is not the Sage. The Sage is invisible and the background of all perceptions – the ultimate Reality. We can in no way reconcile the Sage and the activity we so ignorantly attribute to him.

You say you went to Shāstāmangalam in the bus. Except boarding and alighting from the bus you did not perform any other activity. All motion belonged to the bus and yet you say you went, attributing the motion of the bus to yourself who was only a silent witness to the activity of the bus. Still, you claim to have gone to Shāstāmangalam. This is the play of ignorance. The Sage does not claim the activity of anything else for himself. He always gives the devil his due and never identifies himself with the body, senses or mind.

Now applying the illustration of the bus subjectively, we find that the bus represents the objective group of the body, senses and generic mind, and ‘you’ in the bus stand for the real ‘I’-principle. Therefore, even when the Sage (the real ‘I’-principle)

has withdrawn all identification from the objective group, that group is left intact to function as accurately and intelligently as before, under the guidance of the very same 'ignorance' which was guiding it before. What you call 'intelligence' is based upon pure ignorance, which is as much dead matter as the body, from the standpoint of the Reality.

Samādhi (absorption)

1337. THE TURĪYA STATE AND HOW TO KNOW IT?

In the turīya state or nirvikalpa samādhi, which results from the yōgin's meditation, the subjectivity merges in the objective ideal – a mere concept – set before him. Thus the subjectivity vanishes for the time being, leaving objectivity all in all. But still you are no nearer the Truth than before. You may even be said to be at a greater disadvantage in that state, because you have lost all power of initiative to help you to transcend the state.

Truth is beyond subjectivity and objectivity. It can be visualized only by the deep discrimination and reason one obtains on listening to the Truth from the lips of the Guru, in the waking state.

The yōgin's artificial states are all great obstacles to the smooth visualization of Truth.

1182. THE ORIGIN OF SAMĀDHI

The ordinary man perceives only objects and attributes reality to them alone. Though he would admit that there is also consciousness, he is incapable of believing that Consciousness can exist by itself. In order to give such persons an opportunity to perceive pure Consciousness without objects, samādhi was indented upon by Ācāryas [teachers] of old. Even that samādhi was coloured, inasmuch as it was considered to be objectless.

But the same result, and much more, can easily be achieved by examining the deep sleep state in the right manner.

927. DEEP SLEEP AND SAMĀDHI – CAN THEY BE COMPARED?

The deep sleep experience, as it is understood by the ordinary man, is a mixture of a positive and a negative experience. Samādhi of the yōgin is a positive experience alone and both take place in the realm of the mind.

1068. SUPPOSE I TAKE THE THOUGHT: 'I AM PURE CONSCIOUSNESS.' WILL IT TAKE ME TO SAMĀDHI?

No. Not always. If you take it only as a thought it will lead you to samādhi. But if you know that Consciousness can never be made an object of thought, you will be thrown into a state where the mind expires, and you will be left in your real nature as in deep sleep. It is no samādhi at all, but far beyond.

941. A SAGE IS IN REAL SAMĀDHI EVEN IN ACTIVITY. HOW?

When you see a thing, actually you become it. The ‘it’ vanishes or merges in you. This is nothing but samādhi [absorption]. This is equally true in respect of other sense organs also. This is the truth regarding the activities of the ordinary man. Much more so is it true of the Sage, who is every moment conscious of it.

14. HOW TO BE ALIVE AND AT HOME ALWAYS?

While thus talking of the Absolute at a high level, Gurunāthan noticed a disciple withdrawing himself into samādhi and asked him suddenly how many months his wife had advanced in her pregnancy. It took the disciple a few minutes to come down even to understand the question. The object of this question was just to show that one should be equally alive in samādhi as well as in worldly activity. To be thus ‘at home’ always, shows one’s stand in the natural state [see page 199].

833. HOW TO OBTAIN ‘JNYĀNA SAMĀDHI’?

It is possible only after listening to the Truth directly from the Guru. First, the mind is taken away from sense objects and not allowed to go after the happiness of passivity either in deep sleep or in samādhi. In this steadiness of the mind (madhyagatāvastha), you experience afresh that the happiness expressed is your real nature. Then the mind is mildly persuaded to take to Ātmā, which alone is real and is your real nature. Slowly the potential desires, which were not killed, all drop away and your real nature shines in all its glory. This is jnyāna samādhi. The mind itself is transformed into Ātmā in course of time.

You desire the happiness of samādhi because you have given up sense objects, not out of your own free will but by behest, without a substitute. Therefore objectless pleasure is welcomed. This tendency for the pleasure of samādhi can be successfully given up only by knowing your real nature from the Guru. Enjoying happiness in samādhi often strengthens your desire for it over again. The enjoyership does not die even in samādhi.

It is only the wrong notion, which prevents one from realizing one’s own real nature as pure Happiness, that has to be corrected.

203. BEWARE OF HAPPINESS IN SAMĀDHI.

A jnyāna-sādhaka who has heard the Truth from his Guru, in the course of his attempt to establish himself in the Truth, may sometimes be casually thrown into a nirvikalpa [unconditioned] state, with its sense of intense happiness. But he should be extremely careful not to get caught or fascinated by the enjoyment part of the experience. Otherwise it might enslave him, and thereby retard his progress.

928. HOW CAN SAMĀDHI EXPERIENCE BE MADE THE ULTIMATE EXPERIENCE?

The samādhi experience is that ‘*I was happy.*’ But when you understand, from a Kāraṇa-guru, that Happiness is your real nature, you come to realize that you are yourself the goal of samādhi. With this understanding, all hankering after samādhi

disappears; though samādhi might still come upon you sometimes merely as a matter of course or samskāra [residual inclination]. But you will never again be attracted by the enjoyment of happiness in samādhi.

If there is a general agreement with regard to anything objective, it is only an expression of the higher reason. If there is any sense of permanence or changelessness appearing anywhere, it can only be that of the ultimate background.

1109. VĒDĀNTIC CONCEPTION OF SAMĀDHI

Samādhi, as a result of the process of absorption, does not by itself take you to the Reality. Śhrī Gauḍapāda says: ‘Take away the mind from its tendency to go to samādhi to enjoy happiness and also from its tendency to enjoy the so called happiness supposed to be derived from sense objects, and it leads you to the goal.’

But how can this be done by the mind itself? It is never possible to reach the goal by any amount of effort on the part of the mind itself. By effort, you can prolong the duration of the samādhi to a certain extent and do nothing more. The complete elimination of the mind is what you have to obtain, somehow.

For this, some principle higher than the mind itself has to be depended upon, namely the higher reason. Its function is discrimination. The higher reason proves to you that it is not from the mind itself that happiness is experienced in samādhi, and that there is no enjoyer there. It is your own real nature of Peace, standing in its own glory, when the mind is temporarily stilled. It proves that the mind in any form only obscures the Reality. When you understand this correctly, your dependence upon the capacity of the mind to take you to that sublime Reality crumbles. This is how the mind is to be eliminated from the scene.

Samādhi is all right if the mind understands that samādhi is complete identity with non-dual Ātmā, where there is neither the enjoyer nor enjoyment. And when the mind knows that, it is itself changed.

1364. HOW IS SAMĀDHI BROUGHT ABOUT AND WHAT IS ITS REACTION UPON THE INDIVIDUAL?

acintyaṁ cintamānō ’pi cintā-rūpaṁ bhajaty asau
tyaktvā tad bhāvanaṁ tasmād ēvam ēvā ’ham āsthitaḥ

[In thinking of what can’t be thought
some form of thought must be involved.
So too that last-remaining mode
of thinking must be given up,
to stand in truth where I abide.]

Aṣṭāvakra-samhitā, 12.7

When you begin to think of the unthinkable, the mind is thrown into a state of nothingness, accompanied by a sensation of peace as pleasurable. This state is called samādhi, which is nothing but a thought form.

Aṣṭāvakra and all other Jnyānins advise you with one voice to ignore it altogether. According to the Jnyānin, one can never get out of one’s own real nature, whether in samādhi or in the waking activities. Therefore, the Jnyānin is indifferent about both. But the yōgin can never claim to be that Reality, since he has not known it in the right

perspective. Therefore, the yōgin is bound as much by samādhi as the ordinary man is by the world.

1134. WHAT HAPPENS IN SAMĀDHI AND HOW TO DIRECT IT TO THE ULTIMATE TRUTH?

In seeking samādhi, you are trying to see the Truth through the absence of all activities, because you do not see the Truth during the activities. But Truth (your *svarūpa*) is not to be found in either the presence or the absence of activities which constitute the mental realm. Therefore, you must go beyond both, to get at the Truth.

The world ties you down by its presence here. The world ties you down by its absence or non-existence in samādhi. You must transcend both, in order to reach the Truth. It is beyond both activity and passivity. It is knowledge knowing everything and knowledge not knowing anything, at the same time. It is simultaneously active and passive; that is, you must transcend both to come to Truth.

You desire samādhi only for the happiness you suppose you derive from it, just as you desire an object for the pleasure you hope to derive from it. *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* advises you to take away the desire from both and you will be in your own centre. But it does not suggest how that desire can be taken away. It can only be done by knowing that the happiness experienced in either case is not the outcome of either the samādhi or the object, but that it is your own real nature and therefore intrinsic in you.

All effort to achieve one's own real nature is meaningless; because it stands already achieved. So the desire for the fruit vanishes, and you stand in the Reality.

1209. HOW TO GET ENLIGHTENMENT THROUGH SAMĀDHI OR THROUGH PHENOMENAL HAPPINESS?

The three states may well be termed sensuous, mental and conscious states.

Even in the waking state when you suppose you enjoy something, you are not standing separate from Happiness, but as that Happiness itself. When you come out of that state, you interpret that non-dual experience in subject-object terms.

So also in nirvikalpa samādhi, there is no duality and there is perfect bliss. But on coming out of it, you express it in dual terms, in terms of subject-object relationship. This is wrong. It is not the experience by itself that really enlightens you, but it is the correct understanding of its significance. It is not possible to obtain the correct meaning of it except from the Guru; and until you obtain it directly from him, nirvikalpa samādhi will only be a source of transient happiness to you.

It is true you were in an egoless state, both during the experience of worldly happiness and in the nirvikalpa samādhi. But your subsequent interpretation posits the ego there retrospectively. That is because you rely more upon the mind's function and its satisfaction.

Therefore, coming out of samādhi, you must humbly and reverently wait upon the Guru, and place before him at his sweet convenience all your experiences. Then the Guru will explain the meaning of it, and you will understand that you were visualizing your own real nature and that you have never been bound. This is how one who is addicted to samādhi has to become liberated.

But he who follows the direct method of jnyāna can come to the same state of liberation by correctly examining any casual worldly experience of happiness, as in-

structed by the Guru, and by finding that it is one's own real nature of Peace that manifests itself as limited happiness in all the three states.

Sat-cit-ānanda

1192. HOW DOES *SAT-CIT-ĀNANDA* EXPRESS ITSELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE?

Every enquiry you make concerns some object that is believed to exist. In other words the enquiry starts with the 'is'-ness or the *sat* [existence] aspect of the Reality. But you don't stop there. Then you want to know it. Here the *cit* [consciousness] aspect comes in. When you know it, you immediately experience a satisfaction or peace which is the *ānanda* [happiness] aspect of the Reality. Thus *sat-cit-ānanda* is experienced in every activity of life.

831. WHAT ARE *SAT*, *CIT* AND *ĀNANDA*, AND HOW ARE THEY THE SAME?

Sat, *cit* and *ānanda* are *lakṣhaṇas* or pointers to the 'I'-principle. They are ignorantly attributed to body, senses and mind; and you say 'I exist', 'I know' and 'I am happy' – just as the aspects of the rope are attributed to the snake you create in illusion.

Existence is permanent and cannot be attributed to the perishable body. Existence is experienced or it shines; and in shining, Consciousness comes in. In the light of pure Existence and Consciousness, no duality can appear. Non-duality is Peace or Happiness. So *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* are the three aspects of the one and the same Reality.

27. I CANNOT BE LIBERATED BY KNOWING MY EXISTENCE ASPECT ALONE. WHY?

Both the *cit* [consciousness] and *ānanda* [happiness] aspects have also to be known. You must also know that all these three are one and the same, and that it is your real self. Thus transcending the three aspects, you reach the Reality beyond.

According to Vēdānta, the Reality can be expressed only by negative imports; because it is nameless and attributeless. But it expresses itself in all names and forms.

1239. *SAT*, *CIT* AND *ĀNANDA* PROVED TO BE ONE AND THE SAME

Ānanda is experienced by man in the name of 'happiness'. It is the knowledge of the existence aspect of the Reality in the form of an object that first attracts the ignorant man. He then begins to desire it, and strives to possess it. The moment he knows that he has obtained the thing he desired, the mind comes to a standstill and his real nature of Peace shines as in deep sleep.

But immediately, when the mind appears again, the memory of the desire and the effort that preceded its achievement colour the mind by contrast, and the pure Peace is therefore called 'happiness' for the time being. If that happy state is allowed to continue indefinitely, the sense of happiness will soon give place to deep Peace, as in deep sleep. Therefore, even the happiness supposed to be derived from objects is nothing other than one's own real nature of Peace.

The *jīvan-mukta* knows this Truth beautifully well and is established in that Peace. Therefore, he does not fall a victim either to desires or to objects. Whatever you experience as a result of effort, prompted by desire, is not Peace in its true nature. It is tainted to that extent. Whatever the heart enjoys is a limited and tainted Peace.

Real Peace is the experience of one's own real nature (*ānanda-bhāva-svarūpa*). *Ānanda* or *peace* is the experience one gets spontaneously on knowing, beyond the mental realm, that one's real nature is pure Consciousness.

Next, let us examine '*cit*' in the same manner. We say that objects of consciousness are diverse. But we are certain that the objects alone are diverse and that the Consciousness which cognizes these objects is changeless. This Consciousness is also uncaused; and it exists, all alone, even in the absence of all objects, e.g. in deep sleep. Therefore, it is Self-luminous and is *vastu-tantra*.

Lastly, let us examine '*sat*'. We say several objects exist. Every object depends upon pure existence for its own individual existence; but pure existence does not depend upon anything else for its existence. Look at deep sleep. The real 'I' exists all alone, without any other object, in deep sleep. And I know I exist. This pure existence is called *sat*. The *sat* is *vastu-tantra* and Self-luminous.

Life's activities are impossible without the help of *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*. But *sat-cit-ānanda* is in no way attached to the objects concerned, which are but appearances upon *sat-cit-ānanda*. It shines all alone in deep sleep, as my real nature. Objects appear manifested in existence and in the light borrowed from my own Self. So they are not other than myself.

Sat, *cit* and *ānanda* are the one and the same. In order to say that *sat* is, *sat* must be known. To do this, Consciousness must come in. Therefore Consciousness and *sat* are one. When that Knowledge of *sat* dawns, a sublime peace filters down from that Consciousness, as the Sage poet sings:

aṛivē, aṛivān adaivamē aṛivilūfum ānanda vāriyē

Tāyumānavar

Neither is this peace different from *cit*. Therefore *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* are the one and the same Reality, viewed from the three different perspectives of life, thought and feeling.

1434. WHAT IS THE BEARING OF THE WORLD UPON TRUTH?

The world is a compromise between opposites; life is impossible without reference to opposites. But Truth is beyond opposites and unlike the world in its characteristics.

The characteristics of the world, when strictly analysed and reduced to the generic standards, are found to be: changeability or impermanence, inertness, and misery (*anṛita-jāḍa-duhkha*). All these terms make unconscious reference to their opposites. But the characteristics of Truth are utterly different; and so they are represented as the opposite of these, viz. Permanence, Consciousness, and Peace or Happiness (*sat-cit-ānanda*).

These by themselves are only *lakṣhaṇas* (pointers) to the Truth, and so have to be transcended, in order to get established in the Absolute. The purpose of the term '*sat-cit-ānanda*' is only to divert your attention away from the phenomenal, to the substance beyond. When the world has disappeared, the characteristics of the Truth – *sat*

[existence], *cit* [consciousness] and *ānanda* [happiness] – also vanish; and you stand in the ultimate Reality, originally pointed to by these terms.

Sattva, rajas and tamas

937. WHAT ARE TRIGUṆAS [THE THREE QUALITIES]?

Tamas [passivity] and *rajas* [activity] are two distinct and separate qualities or attributes – each with a good proportion of the other mixed with it. But *sattva* [clarity, resolution, peace] is not a positive quality like the other two. It is that principle which keeps the balance between the other two.

Let us take an example. If a man walks and walks, without wanting to stop at all, that amounts to *sattva*, though it may appear to be *rajas*. Similarly, if a sleeping man, when he wakes up, is inclined to return to that sleep again despite all kinds of temptations for active life, that is also *sattva*, though seeming on the surface to be *tamas*.

So there is *tamas* in *rajas* and *rajas* in *tamas* – *sattva* balancing the two. If the ego does not come in to interfere, indolence is the Reality itself. It may also be said that there is only *sattva*. When it is divided into two, it appears as *rajas* and *tamas*. *Sattva* is the ultimate Reality itself (*shuddha-sattva*).

170. WHY DID LORD KṚṢHṆA ADVISE ARJUNA TO FIGHT AND KILL, WHICH IS CONSIDERED A SIN AND HIMSA [VIOLENCE]?

Seeing the invincible army of the Kauravas before him, Arjuna became diffident and he was seized by cowardice. But to save his face and vanity, he fell back upon the two common dicta of morality and justice, and thus tried to evade the battle. Lord Kṛṣṇa knew this quite well; and wanted to help Arjuna to transcend this momentary weakness of cowardice, which seemed to have all the characteristics of *shānti* [peace]. This had to be achieved by persuading him to fight and win.

Tamas [reluctance] may often assume the form of *sattva* [resolution]. There is no direct jump from *tamas* to *sattva*. You must go through *rajas* [action]. It was *tamas* that was overpowering Arjuna in the form of cowardice, and he was speaking to Kṛṣṇa as though his problem arose in the plane of *sattva*. Kṛṣṇa saw through it and Arjuna was made to act (fight).

Rajas comes in here. Kṛṣṇa's idea was that he could then take Arjuna to *sattva* through this *rajas*. This accounts for Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna to fight. His advice was that he should fight without caring for the results. So there is something put in to take him to *sattva* also.

538. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ADVICE OF LORD KṚṢHṆA TO ARJUNA, AND ITS APPLICATION IN PRACTICAL LIFE

The real object of the advice was to show Arjuna the path to the ultimate Truth. Human nature is composed of three distinct qualities: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*, in ascending order. And progress consists in ascending from the lowest state of *tamas* to

the next, rajas, thence to sattva, and ultimately to the beyond. There is no short-cut from the tamas to the sattva, except through rajas.

Tamas is dominated by sloth, dullness, despondency, inertia, etc. *Rajas* is dominated by the activity of the body and the mind; and *sattva* by knowledge or peace. Every virtue is supposed to lead one to the sāttvic [clarifying, peaceful, resolute].

In the lower shāstras [texts], tamas is represented by deep sleep, rajas by active wakefulness and sattva by samādhi. Unfortunately, tamas and sattva appear alike on the surface; but are diametrically opposite in nature, like darkness and light. The highest state of sattva or samādhi is attainable only by well-disciplined activity of the mind. This is possible only in the wakeful state and belongs purely to the realm of rajas, but inclined more to the sāttvic.

Rajas, being the middle quality, is connected both with the preceding and the succeeding qualities; and one's progress to the sāttvic is made possible only by taking to activities which tend to the sāttvic.

The first requisite for this is the crippling of the ego which drags you down. The vital part of the ego is desire, usually for the fruits of action. For the ignorant man, this is the only incentive for action.

This incentive was taken away from Arjuna, when Lord Kṛiṣṇa advised him to give up all desire for the fruits of his actions. Thus Arjuna was first made a free agent, by not being bound by the fruits of his actions. Then he was asked to engage himself in battle from a sense of untainted duty, merely because he was placed in a situation demanding it. Finally, he was told also to give up that sense of duty or doership and thus he was shown the way to the right Absolute.

The three stages essential for progress, from the lowest to the highest [left to right]:

Passivity	Activity	Peace
Deep sleep or ignorance or tamas	Wakeful state or rajas	Transcendental state or sattva
Cowardice	Battle against forces of anātmā	Samādhi, pointing to ultimate Peace

539. THE SPIRITUAL VALUES OF THE ADVICES OF LORD CHRIST AND SHRI KṚIṢHṆA TO THE ORDINARY MAN

If you act according to Kṛiṣṇa, you are faced with two possibilities and two alone – either to die in battle, or to win and not desire the fruits of the victory as already advised. In either case, the ego or body idea is considerably crippled and you rise to that extent in the spiritual ladder.

But Christ's advice, as it stands, is ambiguous. It is more likely to be misunderstood by an ordinary, ego-ridden man. He might easily pass into passivity either out of strength or out of fear; and nothing is suggested by which the ego can be crippled, without which spirituality is impossible.

540. IS THERE VIOLENCE IN KṚIṢHṆA'S ADVICE TO FIGHT?

Kṛiṣṇa's advice does not advocate raw violence, as the war maniacs of the present day do. He was advocating only activity or action.

An action can be condemned as violent only because of the motive behind it, and the motive is the expression of the ego. But Kṛiṣṇa had already crippled the ego by removing the desire for the fruits of the action, which alone can act as the incentive to an ordinary man. Thus the spiritual ground was well prepared even before Arjuna was called to action, if necessary even violent action.

Courage was the one essential requisite for the performance of such an action. Courage is the offspring of the sāt̥tvic or the selfless or the egoless.

Science

226. WHAT IS THE FIELD OF SCIENCE?

Science starts upon the basic error of giving independent existence to the world of objects, leaving the subject and the thing nearest to it – the mind – to themselves. Science examines only remoter things.

114. THE SAME WORLD VIEWED BY SCIENCE AND BY VĒDĀNTA

Scientists, depending upon the *lower reason* alone, examined the world and came to the great objective generalization ‘matter’, and enunciated the law of the indestructibility of matter. There they were stranded, finding no means to transcend it; for the instrument utilized was itself only part of the generic mind. Sometime later, science went a step further and admitted that matter was composed of atoms. The nucleus of this atom, scientists admit now, is energy which is the source of matter. But here again they are stuck in the mind’s realm of relativity.

It is at this point that Vēdānta comes to their rescue and takes them higher still. Vēdānta first proves to them that the world and its objects – both gross and subtle, including the instrument they have so far been using, viz. the ‘lower reason’, for examining the world – are all objective, and that they have to be examined again exhaustively. For this they are shown a new organon or faculty in themselves, called *higher reason* or vidyā-vṛitti, which though beyond the mind has sway over the whole world of the mind and the senses.

From this new stand, they are shown that matter and energy cannot be manifested or exist even for a moment without the help of Consciousness, and that Consciousness is the background of both matter and energy. These are only two different states, so far as objects are concerned. They are the manifestations of the same reality: ‘Consciousness’. Thus Vēdānta establishes the Truth that the whole objective world is nothing but Consciousness.

Self-luminosity

786. HOW ARE YOU THE BEST KNOWN AND SELF-LUMINOUS?

It is in and through you that you know anything else. So the 'I' is clearly better known than anything else known, and nothing else is required to make the 'I' known.

So the 'I' is the most concrete (real) of all things, and self-luminous.

The essence of a thing is 'the thing in itself' (self-luminous). It is the ultimate background.

294. WHAT DOES SELF-LUMINOUS MEAN?

Self-luminous means that which does not need the help of another light to manifest itself or prove its existence.

You know you exist. So the 'I'-principle alone is self-luminous. The world is all dead matter. You cannot say it exists until you lend the light of your own Self to manifest it. It can shine only by your light. In other words, the world has only a borrowed existence.

The 'I'-principle alone has an original or independent existence. Whatever is not self-luminous can have only a borrowed existence.

392. CAN THERE BE TWO SELF-LUMINOUS THINGS?

No. The very definition of self-luminous is that which has luminosity as its own nature. There cannot be two such things, because by definition they stand as one. If there are two such things, that principle which knows these two is alone really self-luminous.

Another definition is that self-luminous is that which illumines everything else, including other things which might claim to be self-luminous. If you accept more than one such thing, it would mean that none of them is self-luminous.

On that score also, there can be only one self-luminous thing.

112. SELF-LUMINOSITY

Self-luminosity is the particular prerogative of Consciousness alone. Consciousness is the light of lights, because it does not require any other light for its manifestation. Therefore Consciousness is self-luminous.

Examination of things nearest to you, like 'memory', can easily lead you to the real 'I'; since you have only to advance just a little from there. If memory leaves you, you become an idiot in ignorance. But become an idiot in the beyond, and you are blessed.

'Sleep away the whole world, clinging on to Consciousness,' said the Sage.

The use of the word 'sleep' in the transitive form, though peculiar, is specially meaningful. It means give up name and form, and rest in the background.

To be more exact

Senses perceive objects.

I perceive objects through the senses.

Mind perceives the senses.

I perceive the senses through the mind.

I perceive the mind.

I perceive the mind by myself.

1395. WHAT IS SPHURAṆA?

Sphuraṇa [sparkling, shining], in whatever level it manifests itself, is the Ultimate. Sphuraṇa in the mental level is understood and is interpreted in terms of subject and object. But in the spiritual context it is viewed only in identity. Therefore all phenomenal illustrations can only mislead one, regarding the significance of *sphuraṇa*.

It may be said to be the objectless manifestation of the light of Consciousness.

410. WHAT IS 'SPHURAṆA' AND HOW DOES IT FUNCTION?

The natural state of the 'I'-principle in man is unmanifested. This becomes manifest, in the case of human activities, in three distinct stages.

1. The unmanifested state of luminosity itself.
2. Becoming manifest as 'I know I am', or as self-luminosity.
3. Becoming manifested as objects.

The second of the above three stages is not recognized at all by the ordinary man. But the Jnyānin [Sage] alone recognizes it and perceives it clearly sometimes, before a perception. From the first stage to the second is only a subjective change to 'I am', without losing its identity. This is called '*sphuraṇa*'. It has no object, but it has become self-luminous. That is all. When the 'I'-principle comes to the third stage of perception, it becomes manifested as a jīva.

The statement, 'I am intelligent', is made by the ordinary man and the Sage alike. To the ordinary man, it is nothing short of an integral whole, indivisible and tight. But the Sage splits it up into two distinct parts, the 'I' and 'am intelligent', identifying himself with the 'I' and considering the second part an object or attribute.

The 'I'-principle is pure and attributeless, and is added on to the attribute every time. In other words, the unmanifested 'I'-principle first prepares itself to manifest by adopting the subjective and changeless 'I know I am', then takes on the attribute and becomes clearly manifested.

In place of the three states of luminosity, self-luminosity and illumining the object, love has also its exact parallels in the course of its manifestation.

Pure Consciousness <i>bōdha-mātra</i>	Self-consciousness <i>sva-bōdha</i>	Consciousness of objects <i>viṣhaya-bōdha</i>
Pure love <i>prēma-mātra</i>	Self love <i>sva-prēma</i>	Love of objects <i>viṣhaya-prēma</i>

In all the three aspects, you do not change from your centre. But if you emphasize the seeing or hearing in the third aspect, you become a jīva [personal ego]. And if you emphasize the knowing or witness aspect there, you stick to your centre.

If you identify yourself with feelings, you become a jīva; and if you stand knowing the feelings, you stand in yourself.

Jīva is he who thinks or feels, and

Ātmā is he who knows both these activities (and is no 'he' in fact).

Shankara, Shrī

129. WHY DID SHRĪ SHANKARA EXPOUND THE MĀYĀ THEORY?

The world was first being examined by him only from the level of the generic mind, and brought into line with subtle experiences. He was attempting to prove only the unreality of the gross world. How? He first divided unreality into two classes:

1. Never existing at all, like the horns of a hare or the son of a barren woman.
2. Appearing and disappearing, subject to conditions and depending upon something else even for that apparent existence.

Shrī Shankara classes the world in the second group, since it exists not in its own right, but depending upon the mind and senses for its manifestation, and appearing only in one state and disappearing in the other states. Thus it is said to be not completely unreal like the horns of a hare, but unreal in the sense that it appears sometimes and then disappears. This is called ‘māyā’ [an artfully created show], which is said to be neither fully real nor fully unreal.

This view of Shrī Shankara has not been rightly understood by many. Except in this context, Shrī Shankara does not speak of māyā at all. His way of approach here is peculiar, being concerned only with the gross world which he tries to explain relatively in terms of the subtle, or the mind. This is not intended for the *uttamādhikāris* [higher aspirants], who approach the Absolute directly. This was intended only for the lower *adhikāris*, who could not – even in idea – transcend the mind’s realm.

Examining the objective world from a purely subjective standpoint, one finds that the objective world as such is non-existent, like the horns of a hare. In that examination, one does not require any explanation of the world in the dualistic plane.

But when one comes a step down from the subjective standpoint, some sort of an explanation may be needed for the world that appears there. It is in this way that the māyā theory has come in.

In this approach through māyā, the gross world alone is taken up for examination. But it is never the gross that binds you down. It is only your thoughts and feelings that actually bind you. So you must examine the whole world exhaustively, or at least the vital part of it – namely the subtle, which is comprised of thoughts and feelings – in order to get to a satisfactory solution.

1205. SHRĪ SHANKARA AS HE APPEARED

Shrī Shankara has appeared in his life as a devotee, a yōgin, a mystic, and lastly as a vēdāntin. He appears in his true colours only in the commentary on the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* and in his last and independent prakaraṇa works.

The commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtra*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Dashōpaniṣads* etc. were all theological in approach, intended only to crush the intelligentsia of the land, who were misguiding and polluting the spiritual life of the country. They could be fought and made to surrender only on their own ground of theology and the shāstras [traditional texts]. Therefore Shrī Shankara, in the course of his work of destroying the wild and pernicious growths in the religious and spiritual life of India, made capital use of the existing systems of theology and shāstras.

After removing the weeds and preparing the ground, he sowed the seed of Advaita [Non-duality], in his own independent manner, and without relying on any external aids.

Some of the philosophers of the West as well as of the East did not understand what Shankara really stood for. Many of them took him to stand only for the waking state and the waking world. But his last, independent works clearly show that he stood for that permanent, self-luminous principle which is the background of the waking, dream and deep sleep states and their worlds.

Shāstras (traditional texts)

177. GURU AND SHĀSTRAS

The Upaniṣhads and higher shāstras on Advaita have all without exception made many bold assertions regarding Truth, based upon their authors' experiences alone. Gurunāthan is only explaining and proving these very assertions clearly, to the limit of our understanding, in the light of the higher logic or higher reason, till they sink into our experience.

629. IS READING OF THE SHĀSTRAS ESSENTIAL FOR REALIZING THE TRUTH?

To this question Gurunāthan asked a counter question. Did the shāstras come from jnyāna [knowledge] or jnyāna from shāstras [texts]? Of course, the shāstras came from jnyāna. Then certainly, jnyāna can well be attained without the help of the shāstras, if one is guided by a Kāraṇa-guru.

972. WHO WANTS AND TAKES TO SHĀSTRAS [TEXTS]?

It is only the ignorant man, who had not had the good fortune to be blessed by a living Sage (a Guru), that usually takes to shāstra – somewhat helplessly. Knowledge (Consciousness pure) is the parent of the shāstras. As such, the shāstras can never be the father of knowledge, nor can they awaken knowledge in the aspirant. One who is being guided by a Kāraṇa-guru will never need the service of any shāstra. The ultimate purpose and utility of all shāstras is only to convince the aspirant about the supreme need of a Kāraṇa-guru and to help him to seek one.

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibōdhata .

[Arise! Awake! Find those who are
the best, and realize the Truth.]

Kaṭha Upaniṣhad, 3.14

1244. QUOTING THE SCRIPTURES

The habit of quoting the scriptures and accepting their authority blindly is definitely a slavish mentality. The scriptures are only views of some of the ancients, recorded in books. They had their own particular ways of reasoning and modes of thinking. There

is nothing wrong in your accepting their views, provided you understand them in the light of your own reason and make them your own.

You must yourself be able to establish those views, adducing arguments and illustrations – whether old or new it is immaterial. But you must not rely upon the names of the scriptures, or of their authors, to create conviction.

1302. SPIRITUAL SPHERE AND SHĀSTRAS [TEXTS]

The spiritual realm is covered by three progressive stages, namely:

1. *Ajāta-vāda* [‘There is no creation’ – the final, subjective stage],
2. *Drīṣṭi-sṛīṣṭi-vāda* [‘Perception begets creation’ – the intermediate, mental stage], and
3. *Vyavahāra-pakṣha* or *sṛīṣṭi-drīṣṭi-vāda* [‘Creation is perceived’ – the worldly, objective stage].

Most shāstras abound in the third (the lowest) stage of vyavahāra-pakṣha. Their variety and volume confound the ordinary reader with their innumerable arguments and counter-arguments – all purely academic. In all those arguments, the trace and colour of the waking state is felt and emphasized.

The correct approach is to stand as the awareness that witnesses the states. That alone is the Truth, and that alone has the right to speak of any state. When you know the waking state, you stand separate from the waking state, and then the waking state disappears as such.

‘If you but open your mouth, Advaita is gone.’

Siddhis or powers

943. HOW IS POWER AN OBSTACLE TO TRUTH?

The yōgin takes to Consciousness as power, and thus the way to Consciousness as Truth is blocked. Power is objective and you become enamoured of that power, never wanting to get beyond.

1146. WHY THE SIDDHIS OR POWERS?

They are quite illusory, in relation to the ultimate Truth.

Truth is Truth, at all times and under all conditions and in all states. That which leads you to the Truth should also have some of its characteristics, such as permanence and self-luminosity.

Siddhis, acquired by dint of exercise, do not last for more than a limited number of years (usually twelve years). Even when one professes to possess them, one does so only in the waking state, which is only one third of one’s whole life. One does not possess any of the siddhis in one’s dream and deep sleep states. Therefore siddhis are impermanent, and depend upon the body and mind for their very existence – even during the limited time they seem to exist.

It is the exhibition of such siddhis (called miracles) that are often cited to prove the spiritual greatness of even founders of religions. Such and much greater and deeper siddhis are possessed, and sometimes exhibited, even by the commonplace yōgins of India. But such yōgins and their siddhis are shunned and detested by all Sages and all real aspirants to Truth. All men of real experience and all the higher shāstras [texts], directing attention to the ultimate Truth, have declared unequivocally that siddhis or powers are the greatest obstacle to realization of Truth. Therefore avoid siddhis at all cost, if you aspire to the Truth.

Sages also possess infinite siddhis even without their knowing it – not as a result of exercise, but as a result of the knowledge of the ultimate Truth. But they use these powers with the greatest restraint; nor do their powers ever fade away from them.

Sleep knowingly

669. REAL SLEEP

Strict inactivity is sleep.

In relaxation one should have something to hold on to. If you hold on to the ‘I’ and relax the senses and mind, you get to real sleep.

Let the mind be asleep to the whole world, and wakeful to the ‘I’.

599. HOW TO SLEEP KNOWINGLY?

Know that you are going to sleep. Let that thought be as vague as possible. Then, empty your mind of all intruding thoughts, taking care not to strain the mind in the least. Having understood from the Guru that your real nature alone shines in its own glory in deep sleep, if you relax into deep sleep as already suggested, the deep sleep shall no longer be a state, but your real nature, even beyond ‘nirvikalpa samādhi’.

39. POET TENNYSON ON KNOWLEDGE

The poet Tennyson says: Pursue ‘knowledge, like a sinking star, beyond the utmost bound of human thought’. It will take you a long way if you think deeply about what Tennyson meant by this statement.

‘Sinking star’ may mean this. Sinking implies relaxation. You have only to retreat and retreat into the ‘I’-principle, and rest there. Allow yourself therefore to be led on. Sink, sink, sink... Sink from the body, sink from the senses, and sink from the mind...

1. HOW IS DEEP SLEEP A KEY TO THE ULTIMATE?

Deep mental activity generates heat, which keeps off deep sleep. Cold in its intensity wakes you up. Deep sleep brings on a sense of happiness and peace with it. This experience we get only in the absence of all mental activity. When we direct our mind to this happiness aspect of deep sleep, we feel a sensation of gentle coolness, which wards off all sense of negation in sleep. So we get to our real nature by relaxing our

mind from all forms of activity, and at the same time not losing sight of the happiness and peace experienced in deep sleep.

This positive aspect saves us from the probable shroud of negation and slumber. We should not allow the mind to be active and at the same time we should see that it does not become inactive. In other words: ‘*Sleep knowingly.*’

Thus, deep sleep can be utilized directly for establishing oneself in the real centre.

597. REAL SLEEP

yadi dēham pṛthak-kṛtya citi viśrāmya tiṣṭhasi ...

Aṣṭāvakra-samhitā, 1.4 [see page 43, note 837]

This means: ‘*Sleep in Consciousness.*’ This is the royal road to the natural state [see page 199].

The thought, ‘*I am Consciousness*’, consists of two parts: the ‘I’ and ‘Consciousness’. Of these two, Consciousness can apparently be objectified when attached to objects. But the ‘I’ can never be so objectified. In this thought, Consciousness, being linked on to the ‘I’, cannot also be objectified. Therefore, this particular thought can never draw you outward, but will only allow itself to be drawn inward, ultimately merging in the ‘I’ or ‘Consciousness’.

879. HOW TO BE AWAKE IN DEEP SLEEP?

Not seeing the Reality or forgetting the Self is *sleep*.

Seeing the Reality or visualizing the Self is *waking*.

In this sense, the present waking state is sleep or *a dream*.

To be really awake is not to be awake with sense organs or mind, but with Consciousness. Give up the waking dream and be awake to the real Self.

Social service

1078. WHAT DOES ‘LŌKA-SANGRAHA’ MEAN?

Lōka-sangraha [concern for universal welfare] produces subjective results as well as objective.

The subjective course, according to Hindu tradition, is only a means of attenuating the personal ego, by diverting the goal of your actions from your narrow, cabined and cribbed personal self to the world at large. This practice slowly makes you a universal being. To follow this sādhana [discipline], unaided, is a laborious task. Even if you succeed there, you have not reached the goal, and then you seek a Kāraṇa-guru who takes you beyond it and establishes you in the ultimate Truth. If on the other hand you have the instructions of a Kāraṇa-guru, from the very beginning, you succeed in establishing yourself in the ultimate Reality by the sādhana of service itself.

The objective side is manifest in this sādhana inasmuch as you engage in actions. They produce the result of raising the humanity from level to level and making them contented and happy by degrees. Even after standing established in the ultimate

Reality, you may continue to perform actions of this nature, knowing full well that your real character is not affected, one way or the other, by such actions.

The course of *lōka-sangraha*, when rightly understood and followed as a *sādhana* [discipline] under instructions from a *Kāraṇa-guru*, is not intended to improve the world (or parts of it), as is professed by some faiths. When service of the world becomes your goal, you conceive the world not in the particular but in the generic sense. The generic, in all cases, is nothing but the absolute background, since all agencies of discrimination have been eliminated.

Therefore your service is directed to *Ātmā*, the real background. You are also told that the background of your personal being is the same *Ātmā* [Self]. This means you are serving yourself and you stand visualized as that *Ātmā* itself. Every action of yours in the light of this ideal of service brings you into contact with that common background *Ātmā*, and slowly you get established there. This is how *lōka-sangraha* takes you to the ultimate Truth.

Space and time

1355. WHAT IS SPACE?

The ignorant man thinks of objects as existing in space. But space as ‘this’ or ‘that’ cannot remain over, independent of the objects themselves. Space and objects both being mutually dependent for their very existence, they can both be disposed of as unreal. Then Consciousness alone is left over, as real.

Therefore space is a misnomer, and what appears as space is nothing but Consciousness.

1409. WHAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE ‘HERE’ AND THE ‘THERE’?

Only that which supports the two. That is *sat* [existence] alone. Similarly, pure Consciousness exists between two mentations and supports the mentations as well.

121. TIME AND SPACE

Space begets objects and objects beget space. Space must come in to make objects, and objects must come in to make space. Therefore, they are both non-existent as such. But it has been proved in other ways also that objects are non-existent. Thus space is an illusion.

Time is conceived as past, present and future. These, when closely examined, cease to exist. The past and future have existence only in relation to the present. The present, when analysed, splits up into the past and future; leaving only an imperceptible point of time as the ‘present’. This is but a fancy. The present being a fancy, the past and the future are equally fanciful. Therefore time does not really exist. Here, it is proved objectively.

It can easily be proved subjectively also. Time is only a thought form. Thought arises, abides and subsides in consciousness. Therefore, time as such is non-existent and is in essence pure Consciousness.

469. TIME AND SPACE ARE NOT AND SO THE WORLD IS NOT.

Time: Does it exist inside or outside you?

If it is outside, your thoughts and feelings – which are all inside – cannot be affected or conditioned by time; and further, time must be perceptible to the sense organs. This is not so. Therefore time must necessarily be inside the mind.

Next examining in the same manner if time exists in the mind, it is not perceived by the mind either. So we find it is neither there, but further inside you.

Beyond the mind there is nothing but the 'I'-principle, and time cannot be there. Therefore time as time is not; and if it exists, it is Ātmā itself.

Space: Do you perceive space? If so, with what organ? If you say 'with the eye organ', it can perceive only form. Space is not form.

So space is never perceived outside; but is inside, just like time. Therefore space is also not; and if it exists, it is Ātmā itself.

1002. ORIGIN OF SPACE AND TIME

You yourself are the permanent substratum, and the urge naturally comes from deep within you to give a similar substratum to all changes outside.

The substratum of changing objects is space; but space is as dead and inert as an object itself. Just give Consciousness to space and it becomes the Absolute.

So also, time is the permanent substratum of thoughts and feelings and is dead and inert as well. Give Consciousness to time and it also becomes the Absolute.

By 'give Consciousness to it', I mean either see it subjectively or see it as possessing consciousness.

dvayōr madhya-gataṁ nityam asti-nā 'stī 'ti pakṣayōḥ
prakāśanaṁ prakāśyānām ātmānaṁ samupāsmahē

Yōga-vāsiṣṭha [unverified]

I stand between 'is' and 'is not', explaining or illuminating both. When you understand that light as the being itself, the non-being disappears.

Spiritual name

787. SIGNIFICANCE OF GIVING A SPIRITUAL NAME

The spiritual aspirant, all along, considered himself to be a jīva, possessing a name pertaining to his body. But when he is made to visualize that he is not the body, but Ātmā itself, he is given a spiritual name, which denotes only Ātmā and nothing else.

This name, which is always a synonym of the ultimate Truth, helps him to counteract the old saṁskāras [inclinations] of the jīva [personality], which occasionally raise their shadows to drag him into the basic error. But when he understands that all names point to the Absolute, he gets established in the Ātmā [Self].

909. WHY AM I GIVEN A SPIRITUAL NAME?

This is done in response to an urge from deep below. When everything (body, senses and mind) changes, you have to be shown that you are changeless by clinging on to something at least relatively changeless. So a changeless name is given to you to show that you are changeless.

Spiritual progress

726. WHAT IS THE TEST OF MY PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TRUTH?

Your increased sincerity and earnestness for the Truth, which you alone can know, is the best test possible.

485. WHAT IS SVADHARMA AND WHY?

The life to which you have fitted yourself, by birth and inheritance, is the most natural and effortless one, so far as you are concerned. To continue in the same way of life, you require only a little extra energy. Therefore much energy is left to you which can be utilized for spiritual search, and you reach the goal sooner.

But if you change your own way of life, you will consume a lot of energy in establishing yourself in the new sphere, and your spiritual progress naturally suffers to that extent. Moreover, your activities in the phenomenal walk of life are of no avail in your spiritual progress, since the former is outward-going and the latter inward-going.

Therefore the Ācāryas of old have clearly warned you against any change of svadharma [one's own upbringing], since it entails a huge waste of precious energy and only increases the distance to your spiritual goal. Your station in life and way of life, whatever they be, are best suited for you to rise in life, worldly as well as spiritual.

Hence we see in vēdic lore occasional instances of great Sages continuing their svadharma even as butchers, priests etc. (e.g. Shrī Vyādha and Shrī Vasiṣṭha).

884. WHAT ARE THE STAGES OF PROGRESS TO THE ULTIMATE?

First from bondage to liberation, and from liberation to pure Consciousness. You have only to come to a deep recognition of the fact that you have always been, that you are, and that you shall ever be the witness. That is all that is needed.

First you *know* that you are the Reality.

Then you *become* it.

Then you *be* it.

In the being it, both the knowing it and the becoming it expire. The first two were misunderstandings of the 'being it', at different levels.

The first knowing had an object, the last being is objectless knowledge.

PROGRESS FROM OBJECTS TO CONSCIOUSNESS PURE

1. *Objects*: Not objects in the technical sense, but merely things. Here the Consciousness part is not referred to at all. This is an ignorant man's stand.
2. *Consciousness of objects*: This is also an ignorant man's stand, but a little higher than the first.
3. *Objects of Consciousness*: This is the sādḥaka's stand at the beginning.
Proceeding further, he sees –
4. *Objects in Consciousness*: This is also the sādḥaka's stand, a little later.
5. *Objects as Consciousness*: This is a jīvan-mukta's stand (which may be compared with a detached knowing of the dream state).
Higher still –
6. *Objects vanish and Consciousness reigns*.

Gross forms appear when you perceive with gross sense-instruments. Thought-forms appear when you think (i.e. when you perceive with subtle senses).

Knowledge-form alone shines when you know.
But knowledge cannot be limited by any form.
So the world is pure knowledge alone.

It is this one pure knowledge that appears as gross-form, thought-form and knowledge-form. Thus objects appear in terms of the instrument used.

1162. WHAT IS THE TEST OF PROGRESS?

1. If you feel pleasure in talking, discussing, singing or thinking about the ultimate Truth as often as possible, you may rest assured that you are progressing in the right direction.
2. If, when left alone or when retired to rest, the thought that spontaneously comes to your mind is about the ultimate Reality or your Guru, again you are well on the way of progress.
3. Usually, pleasure is enjoyed at the end of a thought. But if that pleasure begins to appear uncaused, even during the thought about the ultimate Truth, you are indeed fortunate and are in Truth already.

You go wrong when you bring in gender when speaking of the Truth. The words 'jīvan-mukta', 'Jnyānin' etc. are masculine. But you have no gender, as is clear from deep sleep. Not that you are neuter, but that you are beyond gender. Therefore, you are pure Jnyāna or Truth itself.

Spirituality

1420. HOW CAN WE DISTINGUISH THE SPIRITUAL FROM THE PHENOMENAL?

The real 'I'-principle (also called Ātmā, Truth, real Self, Consciousness, Peace, etc.) is alone spiritual. Everything else, including even the much applauded nirvikalpa samādhi, is phenomenal.

In other words, the ultimate subject alone is spiritual, and everything with the least trace of objectivity is phenomenal.

135. SPIRITUALITY REVERSES THE IGNORANT MAN'S OUTLOOK.

To an ignorant man, the objective world is an obstacle to spiritual progress; because objects always draw him away from his real centre, which has not yet been shown to him.

But to one who has heard the Truth from his Guru, the same world serves as a help to his spiritual progress, since each one of its objects points to his real centre.

57. WHAT IS THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN SPIRITUALITY?

It is said that women cannot rise to the Absolute as easily as men. But we find that in ancient times many men reached the highest by following the instructions given by women like Cūḍālā [in the *Yōga-vāsiṣṭha*] or Gārgī [in the Upaniṣhads]. And there are many other such examples.

407. IS PRAKṚITI [NATURE] REALLY AN OBSTACLE TO SPIRITUAL PROGRESS?

In the early stages of sādhana [spiritual discipline], when the aspirant is relying upon the lower reason alone, the world of objects appears as an obstacle to his progress.

Gradually, when he begins to awaken his higher reason (vidyā-vṛitti) and begins to rely upon it, everything that appeared as an obstacle before gets transformed into help to lead him on to the Ultimate.

When he takes his stand in the Truth itself, prakṛiti [nature] also changes its characteristics and appears as Truth.

361. HUMAN FASCINATIONS AND THEIR REACTION UPON SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

The ordinary man of the world is usually carried away by one or more of three fundamental fascinations: physical, psychological and intellectual.

Those who are victims of physical fascination live contented with their sensual enjoyments alone, and do not seek anything higher.

The second class of people are enamoured of all sorts of imaginary mental pleasures and psychic powers, and are lost that way.

The last group of people, who are the incorrigible pandits, profess to be searching for the Truth, and labour hard to bring even the Ultimate within the realm of the intellect. In this vain effort, they fail miserably; but stubbornly refuse to admit their failure, and hoodwink the ignorant man by their superior intellectual powers and shrewd but misapplied logic. From this nefarious practice, they derive a sort of mali-

cious intellectual satisfaction and pleasure, which alienate them from the Truth as long as they persist in this vicious traffic.

These last two types of people, though they start with a faint idea of getting at the Truth, are slowly side-tracked; and deceive both themselves and the ignorant public regarding the ultimate Truth.

363. SCOPE OF EXERCISES CALLED SPIRITUAL

All exercises involving contemplation or meditation in any manner secure only relative purity of the heart.

If you use right discrimination and reason and examine all your experiences disinterestedly, you get to your centre, which is the inmost core of your being.

To set matters right, you are only asked to give equal emphasis to all the three aspects of your activities – namely perceiving, thinking and knowing – and to recognize that knowing is the only aspect among these which really concerns your own self.

If you continue this practice for some time, you will find the first two material aspects slowly drop away as unreal; and you stand established in your real nature, the Truth.

Therefore, don't fail to see that every activity is recorded in knowledge, your real nature, before another activity commences.

1076. SPIRITUAL STRIVING AND ENLIGHTENMENT

The ignorant man feels that he is a sufferer. He finds that suitable objects give him momentary relief, and so he seeks to hoard such objects.

But the earnest man soon discovers that nothing on earth can give him permanent relief, and so he turns to something beyond the world. This is the beginning of spirituality. Of such few, the fortunate one obtains a Kāraṇa-guru.

The Guru tells him first to analyse the 'seeker' in him. According to the aspirant, the seeker is only a vicious group consisting of body, senses and mind. He is shown that each of this triad is impermanent and that, as any one of them, the seeker can never attain permanent happiness. But still the urge to obtain permanent happiness does not leave him. Then he is shown that there is a permanent, changeless principle behind this group (the seeker), and that the source of the desire for permanent happiness is the presence and nature of that background.

Next he is shown that he is himself that permanent principle. He is then told its real characteristics, and he ultimately visualizes it (Ātmā) beyond the shadow of a doubt. This is enlightenment. The attempt is not to remove suffering from the sufferer, but only to make the seeker visualize his real nature of permanent Peace, and thereby to make him understand that he is not the sufferer even when the suffering seems to last. When he realizes that he had all along been Peace, all questions disappear.

If you want to remove the suffering alone and retain the sufferer, it is never possible. Because the suffering and the sufferer always appear and disappear simultaneously.

1093. SPIRITUAL GOAL AND ITS ATTAINMENT

The realization of one's own real nature is undoubtedly the ultimate goal of all spiritual quest. The only impediment to it is the illusion that you are body, senses or mind. For Self-realization, it is the removal of this illusion that is sought.

The methods adopted to attain this end differ with the different paths. The paths of yōga and devotion adopt the method of removing the infinite variety of illusions, by accepting a generic form called 'samādhi' [absorption]. Here the diversity vanishes, no doubt. But still you remain in the realm of illusion, and in the subject-object relationship. The Truth is still as remote as before, and the happiness experienced in samādhi is not a permanent one.

The state of complete identity with non-dual Ātmā, as a result of discrimination and negation of phenomena, is the vēdāntic concept of samādhi. This is distinct from the so called samādhi of yōgins. The Ātmā [Self] is denoted by the word 'samādhi'. The illusion should not reappear ever after, in any other form. This is possible only if you realize the background on which all illusions appear and disappear. This is nothing short of Self-realization.

Therefore, removing the illusion is not a means to attain Self-realization. It is only a natural corollary to it. Taking for example the illusion of the 'serpent in the rope', we find that the illusion can be completely and successfully removed only by seeing clearly, by the help of a bright light, that it is rope and rope alone. Therefore, Self-realization is both the means and the end in itself.

The only means to attain this end is to listen to the Truth (it may be about the truth of illusion itself) from the lips of a Kāraṇa-guru. Then you may yourself examine any illusion in the light of that instruction, and certainly it will take you to the real background. All possibility of illusion taking possession of you is removed by that means.

Subject-object relationship

1327. WHAT IS THE SUBJECT?

The last of a series of acts, without itself being known, is the subject.

757. HOW IS OBJECT RELATED TO SUBJECT?

The object exists only in relation to the subject. But the subject is self-evident. It is wrong to bring in the object to prove the subject.

The subject is Consciousness – the Self – and self-luminous by nature. It is really *Knowledge, objectless*.

Even from the standpoint of the ignorant man, no object can be known and no object is ever known.

1294. RELATION OF THE OBJECTIVE TO THE SUBJECTIVE

The objective world does not include the subject. But the subject includes the objective world. Therefore, you cannot find a correct explanation of the objective world from the objective world itself, but only from and through the subject.

1326. THE SUBJECT IS CONSTITUTIVE OF THE OBJECT.

The object is made an object only by the presence of the subject as such. Therefore, to say that an object exists, when there is no corresponding subject to objectify it, is absurd.

Ignorance is an object only in retrospect, and there is never a subject to support it. This position is anomalous. Therefore ignorance is *not*.

1367. HOW IS THE SUBJECT CONSTITUTIVE OF THE OBJECT?

It means that the subject goes into the constitution of the object. When you examine the object in the right manner, the subject is also unknowingly being examined. Then both disappear, leaving Awareness alone. The same argument applies to the whole world. Thus the whole world stands explained, as Awareness pure.

If the Awareness is directed to anything apparently different, that other thing becomes Awareness at once.

371. IS THERE A SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATIONSHIP AT ANY TIME?

The 'I'-principle is the only one thing whose existence is never questioned. This is never an object of the senses or the mind.

Regarding this 'I'-principle at the time of experience, no subject-object relationship exists.

During the perception of objects also, the experience is exactly the same. The apparent object gets transformed into the 'I'-principle or knowledge, and stands as one with it, beyond all subject-object relationship.

The activity of the Jnyānin [Sage] is also the same, but undertaken knowingly. He realizes that no activity vanishes before being recorded or merged in knowledge or the Self. It means that sound, form etc. are never perceived as such, but all of them merge in knowledge.

Surrender

1090. 'SURRENDER' AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT?

'Surrender' has something of a negative implication. You can never achieve surrender by deliberation. What you want is to surrender your attachment to objects. In other words, you want to forget objects (body, senses and mind).

If you start deliberately to forget them, they become more strongly manifest. Therefore the only means to achieve surrender is to turn your attention to the support or the background.

If the devotee gets more and more attached to his *iṣṭa-dēva* [chosen deity], surrender of all else will follow as a matter of course. You need not do anything special to attain it. An open and empty heart is the first requisite.

Surrender is an end in itself, and never a means. Surrender is something that has to come spontaneously, as a corollary to Self-realization. Surrender is no surrender, in

the strict sense of the term, if you happen even to remember the fact that you have surrendered.

Surrender can never be accomplished objectively. It is only by establishing oneself in one's own Real nature, *Ātmā*, that real surrender obtains. Because you see that there is nothing else to be surrendered; and then, even the word 'surrender' becomes meaningless.

316. WHAT IS SURRENDER?

Surrender, so far as the ignorant man is concerned, is only of *upādhi* to *upādhi* [one personal expression to another], on the body level. But spiritual surrender means surrender of the [personal] ego to the *Ātmā* [impersonal Self] in one, *Ātmā* being represented by the Guru.

This is possible only at an advanced stage, when the disciple is capable of cognizing the impersonal. Therefore, real surrender is possible only after visualization of the Truth; and it can never be insisted upon as a qualification for realization, much less for initiation.

It is said: 'The Guru is immanent in all, as pure *Ātmā*. But he is immanent particularly in the disciple – to a much greater degree, on account of the relationship.'

798. WHAT IS THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF SURRENDER?

To '*surrender*' means strictly to 'disown'. When all untruth is surrendered, you stand as the Truth itself.

Talking about Truth

745. HOW TO TALK ABOUT THE TRUTH?

In talking about the Truth, you (the ego) must cease to talk, and allow it (Truth or the real Self) to talk or express itself in its own language.

857. WHAT IS IT THAT TAKES PLACE HERE, DURING THESE TALKS?

The Truth is that it is the Truth that talks to the Truth, all about the Truth. The Truth goes into you undressed, not through language at all.

911. HOW IS TRUTH TRANSMITTED?

When you are angry, you lose yourself in anger and so you transmit it to another who gets angry with you in return.

Similarly, when the Guru talks about the Truth, the Guru gets lost in Truth and, through the words that he uses, takes you to the Truth.

So it is anger that transmits anger, and Truth that transmits Truth or enlightens one.

870. THE SAGE TRANSCENDS ALL LIMITATIONS OF LANGUAGE.

Language, of course, has its own limitations everywhere. But the luminous presence of the Guru compensates for all limitations of his language, and you are taken straight to the Truth.

To be nearer the Truth, it may even be said that the Self knows the Self, or Ātmā knows Ātmā.

85. DUALITY AND ADVAITIC EXPERIENCE (48)

Question: Is it not in duality that the advaitic Truth is experienced? When the teacher expounds the advaitic Truth to the disciple, and when the disciple understands it, is there not duality? How then can it be said that the advaitic Truth transcends all duality?

Answer: When the teacher is talking with the intention of conveying an idea to you, if you direct attention to the language part – namely the pronunciation, intonation, words used, their arrangement, grammar, the structure of sentences etc. – then the idea meant to be conveyed will certainly be missed. Therefore, in order to understand the idea, you have to direct attention to the idea and not to the language used.

Likewise with other ideas, also. If several ideas go conjointly to prove a central idea, you have to direct attention to the central idea. If you direct attention to the several ideas, the central idea is missed. Whenever the central idea is understood, you stand as the central idea.

When the Truth – which transcends the realm of ideas and mind – is expounded, you have to direct attention to the Truth, leaving aside also the central idea. When you understand the Truth, you stand as the Truth.

Here, you have been following in the footsteps of the teacher, who was rising from the language to ideas, from several ideas to the central idea, and from the central idea to the Truth. The Truth, as is shown above, transcends the realm of ideas and mind. The personal element ceases here, and does not exist in the beyond. So when the teacher was standing as the Truth and the disciple was also standing as the Truth, only the impersonal was there, as Truth is impersonal. There is no duality there.

But when you come out of it, you use the language of the ego and say you understood it. It was not a case of understanding at all, but of being one with it.

Here, possibly, you may raise a question. It was said that when the idea was understood by the disciple, the disciple was standing as idea and the teacher was also standing as idea. Then, is there not Non-duality there? Why should you go beyond, to find the Truth?

This question can never be there. Ideas are many, and there is diversity in the conception of ideas. The word ‘idea’ brings in personalities also. Two personalities can never become one. But beyond the realm of ideas, there is only the impersonal. The impersonal can never be many. Therefore, Non-duality is only in the impersonal, and it is wrong to assume that the advaitic Truth was expounded in duality.

The ordinary man believes that he is the body, senses or mind. By a careful examination of the three states, you can know beyond doubt that the ‘I’ is a permanent, changeless principle. This is the *sat* or existence aspect of the ‘I’.

But this knowledge by itself does not complete your liberation. Take for example the illusion of a serpent in a rope. Here, ‘This is a serpent’ is illusion, and ‘This is a

rope' is the Reality. If nothing of the rope is seen, no superimposition is possible. It is only on a partial knowledge of the rope that the superimposition takes place. It is the 'this'-ness or the existence aspect of the rope that is common to both the Reality and the illusion. It is upon this that the serpent is superimposed.

So, if by some process you understand that it is not a serpent, the serpent illusion vanishes and the 'this'-ness alone remains. But the likelihood of your superimposing other things upon this – like a stick or a crack or a shadow – still remains. If you want to avoid every possibility of any further superimposition you must necessarily bring in clear light and see the rope in its real nature.

Now, applying this analogy to your own subjective self, you see that the 'I' stands for the 'this' and the body, senses and mind for the serpent. Even if you understand that you are not the body, senses or mind and that you are the changeless principle 'I', any other illusion is liable to be superimposed again upon that same 'I', without prejudice to its existence aspect.

To avoid this possibility, you must also understand the other positive characteristics of the 'I', namely Consciousness and Happiness. The knowledge 'I am Consciousness and I am Happiness' stands parallel to the knowledge 'This is a rope' in the illustration.

254. WHY THE TRADITIONAL INJUNCTION OF SECRECY IN TALKING ABOUT THE TRUTH?

Spiritual sādhakas are strictly enjoined by the shāstras [texts] not to speak the naked Truth to purely worldly minded persons. Truth suffers thereby. Such listeners interpret it only in the customary, objective relativity in which alone they live. They find it impossible to reconcile the Truth this way. So they begin to ridicule Truth itself. This naturally drives them to perdition. You must try to avoid such a catastrophe at all cost.

546. HOW IS TRUTH TRANSMITTED (IF INDEED AT ALL)?

Some say it is through language, because the disciple understands the Truth only after listening to it from the lips of the Guru.

But it has been proved already that the talking and listening are incidents on the way; and that, when the disciple ultimately understands the Truth, there is neither talking nor listening, but only Truth and Truth alone – as experience without the experienced. Therefore language can, at the most, be said to have helped to point to that ultimate goal and nothing more. Hence its relationship, if any, to the realization is only indirect.

Others say that Truth is transmitted through silence or samādhi. Here, silence also is only a medium like language and serves the same purpose as language itself, only pointing to the Ultimate, and disappearing at the point of experience. Truth is far beyond even nirvikalpa samādhi (extreme silence).

Theoretical and practical

122. SOME SAY VĒDĀNTA IS NOT PRACTICAL. WHY?

To them 'practical' means subject to the senses or mind. They forget that even the senses and mind shine only in the presence of the 'I', and the 'I' shines all alone as in deep sleep. So the 'I' is more practical than senses or mind. Here, Vēdānta, whose subject matter is this 'I'-principle, is the most practical of all practical things. It is the most concrete of all things.

491. IS THE 'I'-THOUGHT THEORETICAL?

The thought of 'I' some say is theoretical. In that case, it will have to be admitted that you are yourself a theory, which I believe you can never admit. Therefore, the 'I'-thought is more practical than all apparently practical things.

1080. THE 'THEORETICAL' AND THE 'PRACTICAL', COMPARED TO EXPERIENCE

The ignorant man considers the body as being more real than the mind. In ordinary parlance, what is retained in the mental sphere is called 'theoretical', and what is translated into action in the physical sphere is called 'practical'. The advocates of the 'practical' assume that what they believe to be 'practical' has greater reality than the 'theoretical'.

But a close and impartial enquiry proves that body, senses and mind are all changing in the three states, and that the only principle that remains changeless, all through, is the 'I'-principle. This 'I' is neither gross nor subtle, but beyond both. In other words, the 'I' is neither 'practical' nor 'theoretical' in the ordinary sense, but beyond both. It is the only one that does not need any proof of its existence. It is the only absolute Truth or Reality.

If by 'practical' you mean 'real', the 'I' is more real than the changing body, senses or mind. These can exist only in the presence of the 'I', while the 'I' can exist all alone without anything else. Therefore the 'I' is more practical or real than the rest. The 'I' is the innermost principle in man and is the ultimate Truth.

The degrees of reality of a thing, if any, can be measured only in proportion to the proximity of the thing to the 'I'-principle. According to this standard, gross objects (including the body) are the farthest from the 'I' and are therefore the least practical or real. The senses are nearer to the 'I', and so the sensations are more practical or real. The mind is still nearer to the 'I', and so mentations are still more practical or real than the rest.

Strictly speaking, Reality can have no degrees, there being only one Reality – the Ātmā – and that alone can be called experience. Experiences of the body, senses and mind are no experiences at all.

1438. WHAT IS REALLY PRACTICAL?

The 'practical', in the ordinary sense, is opposed to the 'theoretical'. Of the two, the latter is considered to be less real than the former and more liable to change.

These terms are applicable only at the relative level. Applying the tests of relative reality and permanency, the proximity to the Self may be said to be the test of practicality. Thus the senses being nearer you than objects, the senses may be said to be more practical than objects. In the same manner, mind (as thoughts and feelings) is more practical than senses and objects.

But all these are only relative and changing. The ultimate test of practicality is permanency, or unchangeability. In this sense, the real 'I' is the only practical thing, being the only changeless Reality.

Of course, this might be diametrically opposed to the concept of the ignorant man. But truth is no respecter of personalities or majorities. It is the smallest of all minorities, being the one without a second. What is 'experiential' is alone real or practical, and whatever is intellectual is only theoretical.

The world consists of four component parts, viz. the three states and an Awareness that gives light to the three states. Of these four parts, that light-giving principle alone can be real or practical: being alone capable of shining in its own light. The other three depend upon that light for their very existence, and are therefore theoretical.

Thing in itself

176. THE 'THING' AS SEEN BY AN IGNORANT MAN AND A SAGE

The Sage sees the 'thing in itself'. The ignorant man sees only the sense objects superimposed upon the thing in itself.

1432. HOW TO KNOW A THING?

In the phenomenal sense, we do not know the thing at all. But we know only something about the thing, or in other words we know the appearance alone.

To know the thing, we have to go deeper, even beyond the appearance, into the background; and there all appearances disappear, leaving the background alone. That is the real thing; and that is known by identity alone, there being nothing else beside it.

978. HOW TO SEE THE FLOWER AS IT IS?

You see the things possessed by the flower, through the senses and mind possessed by you. But to see the flower as it is, you must stand by yourself, dispossessed of senses and mind. Then you see the flower as yourself, pure Consciousness.

16. WHAT IS THE 'THING IN ITSELF'?

The fundamental worldly experience of man is that something which was unknown subsequently becomes known. This statement clearly shows that the 'thing in itself' was the background of both the unknown and the known, and as such could not exactly be either the one or the other. Looking at the background closely, you find that some sort of a limitation was put upon the 'thing in itself' by the mind, to which

it therefore appeared as the 'known' or the 'unknown'. Take away that mental limitation from the experience, and immediately it becomes the Reality itself; because it goes beyond the known and the unknown.

That which was called unknown is in the known as well, and is still unknown. It is the Reality itself. Take for example the 'I' in I think and I feel. The 'I'-principle can never be the thinking or the feeling principle, but is beyond both, and is present equally in the thinking as well as in the feeling.

Examining this from another angle, the 'unknown' means that which is not grasped by the sense organs or the mind. That which is not comprehended by these two, but which transcends them both, cannot be anything but the Reality. Therefore, what is called the 'unknown' is the Reality. And now coming to the 'known', when correctly examined, a sense object merges into Consciousness. Therefore, what is known is also nothing but Consciousness.

When an ordinary man (who believes himself to be the body) sees an object, he sees and emphasizes the object part of it and ignores completely the most important factor – consciousness. But when a Jnyānin [Sage] sees the same object, he sees it not as object but as consciousness itself. He emphasizes only the consciousness part of it, and feels that it is the Self. Thus every perception doubly reaffirms his knowledge that he is Consciousness. It is experience of the Truth itself, repeated as often as there are thoughts or perceptions.

Thought

615. THOUGHT A MISNOMER

Thought rises up in pure Consciousness beyond time; so thought cannot be anything other than Consciousness. Therefore, the usual conception of thought is wrong, or 'thought' is a misnomer.

267. HOW IS THOUGHT NON-EXISTENT?

Thought is non-existent whether looked at from the lower or the higher plane.

Looked at from the 'I'-principle, thought gets transformed into Consciousness and ceases to exist as thought.

Looked at from the lower plane, the gross objects being proved to be non-existent as such, thought – which is supposed to be their subtle form – becomes a misnomer. And thus also thoughts are non-existent.

610. IS NOT THAT ITSELF A THOUGHT WHICH ARGUES AND ESTABLISHES THAT THOUGHT IS NON-EXISTENT?

No. Thought is that which is concerned with the outside world alone. That faculty which takes even that thought as an object of discussion can never be called a thought in the same sense, though both might superficially appear alike.

The first, thought directed outwards, creates. And the second, called vidyā-vṛitti [higher reason], destroys all that the first has created. That is its only function. When nothing is left to be destroyed, it vanishes and stands as the Reality itself.

313. THOUGHTS

Thoughts may be viewed with equal advantage in three different ways, in relation to yourself. You may choose any one or more of these ways.

1. As pure Consciousness, and so yourself in essence.
2. As shining in your own light, and so pointing to your real nature.
3. As the witnessed, yourself being the disinterested witness.

1173. WHAT IS THOUGHT?

Thought is an attempt at connecting the past and the present, by bringing the past to the present. But the past, being past, can never be brought to the present. Therefore thought is impossible. The past and the future depend upon the present for their very existence; and the present, on strict examination, disappears altogether. Therefore time is *not*.

Whatever is present is only Consciousness. Past was present once and so the same in content, viz. Consciousness. Every point of thinking is only Consciousness. What then are you going to connect, and with what? Therefore thought is a misnomer.

389. IS THOUGHT OF CONSCIOUSNESS AN ABSTRACTION?

It might appear to be an abstraction at the outset, when your stand is in the mind's realm alone. But you cannot continue there for long. The object of your thought eludes the mind's grasp; and in the attempt to comprehend Consciousness, the mind itself loses its limitations. Thus the mind ceases to be mind, and stands transformed into that Consciousness itself.

Therefore, the thought of Consciousness, though starting as an abstraction, takes you immediately to the clearest experience of the Absolute.

791. HOW TO APPROACH AN INTRUDING THOUGHT?

When a thought arises in you, you invariably try to discriminate whether it is good or bad. Thereby you attribute more reality to the thought and make it abide and bind you more.

But instead, if you examine the content of the thought irrespective of the object concerned, and see that it is nothing other than your own real nature, the thought vanishes as such, leaving you in your real nature.

So adopt the latter course and be happy.

‘You have only to take the non-existent from the non-existent and be ever free.’

913. WHAT IS THE TEST OF THE RIGHT LINE OF THINKING?

It is to see whether it takes you to the witness. If so, you are on the right line. That which expresses itself in the witnessed as well as in the witness is alone the Truth.

801. WHAT IS INTENSE THOUGHT?

No thought which does not merge in the background, the Reality, can be intense. It is only the one that has visualized the Reality behind all appearance who can take an intense thought. Its process is to repeat the arguments to prove one's real nature.

504. HOW TO TAKE A DEEP THOUGHT?

We are often asked to take a deep thought about certain spiritual ideas. For this, a one-pointed attention is the first requisite. To gain such attention, a deep craving of the heart is necessary towards that end. This craving is created by incessantly taking that very thought. When this craving thus created descends deep into the realm of the heart, your thought is said to have gone deep.

1047. HOW ARE THOUGHTS, RECORDED IN THE MIND, REMEMBERED?

First of all, the question does not arise. Because no question of why, where, when and how can ever arise in relation to the Absolute. Between objects themselves the question is quite relevant; but this question refers to some principle beyond the mind, which is nothing but the Absolute. Any question which has the slightest reference to the Absolute cannot be answered in the relative and the question does not arise in the Absolute.

The mind or memory is nothing but a thought. One thought cannot record another thought. Therefore it is wrong to assume that past thoughts are recorded in the mind.

smṛti-rūpaḥ paratra-pūrva dr̥ṣṭāvabhāsaḥ

[Where memory appears, it forms a show of something
seen before – a distant something not now here.]

Shrī Shankara, Adhyāsa-bhāṣhya (Intro to Sūtra-bhāṣhya), 3.1

Seeing an object for the first time and taking it to be something you perceived some time ago is what is called *memory*. Look at your dream experience, if you feel any doubt. Therefore memory does not prove anything in the past.

Thought is illuminated by a ray of light. It cannot be recorded by dead matter. It can be recorded only by Consciousness. If you take the mind to be the container of all thoughts, it must be infinite and eternal. But there cannot be two infinities or eternals. Therefore that mind is Consciousness itself and changeless. As Consciousness, it can never record anything else. Therefore memory is *not*.

Another approach: When you think that thought is recorded, you attribute an independent reality to thought. Thinking is nothing but subtle perception. It has been proved that there is no form without seeing. So, in the subtle perception called thought, the same process goes on. When the sense organs – gross and subtle – are shut, the mind can no longer function. (Can you think about Truth without indenting

upon the services of sense objects? Thinking in an abstract manner is impossible.) When seeing is withdrawn, the form is no longer present.

Therefore it is wrong to suppose that you are recalling the same thing, once again, by memory. The same is true about recording and recollecting thoughts.

Still another approach: You stand out as the witness of your mental activities. What is witnessed by the witness cannot be said to be past; because the witness is beyond time. But, as a result of its closeness to the witness, the ego takes up the information from the witness and claims it as a past experience of the ego. The ego twists every information which it has usurped from the witness and gives it an objective expression.

Consciousness can never be witness to anything other than Consciousness. The sense organs can never be witness to anything other than sense objects. Everything recorded in knowledge becomes knowledge itself.

1334. THOUGHT AND ITS APPLICATION

Thought is applied usually in two ways, with opposite results.

1. It is applied *objectively*, in order to know something that is not already known.

The mind's natural tendency is to project the object of its thought into space, in terms of its own stock of former concepts. Therefore, when thought is applied with effort in this manner, to know any phenomenal object, gross or subtle, the object you consequently arrive at is pre-eminently an object of your own mind's creation. It is changing and so an untruth.

2. Thought is applied for the purpose of *recognizing the Self*, which you have already visualized on listening to the words of the Guru.

But when you direct your thought to the Self you have already visualized, it is a sudden switch-over to the real subject, which can never be objectified. The mind, in that attempt, loses its own sense of objectivity. Thus deprived of its own dross, the mind stands revealed in identity with the real 'I'-principle. Here, thought ceases to be thought, and helps you to get established in the Truth you have already visualized.

1180. JNYĀNA SĀDHAKAS SOMETIMES THINK ALOUD. WHY?

When you follow the path of Advaita, you may, at an advanced stage, experience a spontaneous exuberance of knowledge or love overflowing from you freely. On such occasions, you may be found talking, even unasked, to those around you about the advaitic Truth. This may be said from your own standpoint to be simply 'thinking aloud', because you are not doing it with any intention to convince others or to convert them. Really, there is no doer or ego behind it. It is only your own real nature of Advaita, not being able to contain itself within you, bubbling out through your mind and the vocal organ. This only shows that you are getting established, more and more firmly, in the advaitic Truth.

1333. THINKING AND KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge unites, in being or in identity. Thinking separates, in subject-object relationship.

Knowing has no place in the ordinary thought process. Thinking about something which has to be known is wrong, since it moves in a vicious circle. You cannot think of anything you have not known. Such thinking can never take you to the Truth.

But when you direct your thought to something (say yourself) which you have otherwise visualized, the thought loses its own characteristics and limits, and stands revealed as that Self (Consciousness) itself. Thought is thus reduced into its essence.

Thoughts and feelings

375. WHAT ARE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

It is admitted that thoughts and feelings are in myself. It is also admitted that in me, there cannot be anything other than myself.

I cannot go out of myself to know or feel anything, and things from outside cannot come into me. The moment they touch me, they get transformed into myself; and thus I know only myself, always.

Here, thoughts and feelings become objectless. So they are myself alone.

885. WHAT IS THE RELATION BETWEEN THOUGHT AND FEELING? DOES THOUGHT MERGE IN FEELING?

No. Nor the other way round. Both merge directly in Consciousness. The question is not of much spiritual significance. Both being sensations, they may be disposed of together. But I answer it only out of academic interest.

From another perspective, it may be said that feeling is nothing but a *deep* thought. Here 'deep' signifies the heart element. When you take a particular thought over and over again, the heart begins to function and craves for that thought. Thus thought begets feeling and descends into the heart.

285. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

Thought rises in Consciousness, rests in Consciousness and sets in Consciousness. Therefore, it is nothing other than Consciousness. It consists of the content and the boundary.

Now, examining thought with the mind itself, the mind perceives only the boundary, and calls it thought. Examining it closer, the mind crosses the boundary and enters the content of thought. But, to its amazement, the mind finds itself lost and merged in the content of thought, which is nothing but pure Consciousness.

Thus, the thought endeavouring to examine the content of thought is no thought at all, in the strict sense of the term. Because its object is Consciousness itself, which can never be objectified; and in the attempt the mind dies and gets transformed into Consciousness itself.

Similarly examining feelings, the mind gets merged in Peace itself. Thus thoughts and feelings are nothing other than my own real nature – Consciousness and Peace.

1190. WHAT IS MY RELATION TO THOUGHT OR FEELING?

1. You are thought or feeling, devoid of the characteristics of thought or feeling.
2. You are the knower of thought or feeling, when thought or feeling is there.
3. You are pure knowledge or Peace, when there is neither thought nor feeling.

104. WHAT ARE THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS?

In order to understand this, the mind must first be defined. The mind is not a substance in itself. It is nothing but the name of a function. So the mind is thought or feeling itself. When these are absent, the mind cannot be said to exist. Beyond the mind, there is only Consciousness or the 'I'-principle.

If a thought occurs, to whom does it occur? Is it to the body? No. Because body is by itself dead and inert matter. Then, is it to the mind? No. Because the mind is itself a thought, and one thought cannot occur to another thought. Therefore, it must be to 'Me', who am beyond the mind as Consciousness, that every thought occurs.

Thought rises in Consciousness, exists in Consciousness and vanishes into Consciousness. So, of what stuff can thought be made? Of pure Consciousness alone, just as waves are made of water. When Consciousness is limited or objectified, it is called thought.

So, the content of thought is only Consciousness.

Similarly, examining all feelings – like anger, fear, lust etc. – we find that they all manifest themselves upon a common background or factor called feeling, which is divested of all difference. This feeling by itself is pure Peace or Happiness. Thus, all these so-called different forms of feeling rise in Peace, exist in Peace and vanish into Peace – which is my real nature.

Time

556. TIME

o'ttattōnnalanēkamennu karutuṃ vyāmōhamē kālamāṃ .

[Considering one thought as many:
that's the delusion of time.]

Shrī Ātmānanda

'The one thought' ('o'ttattōnnal') which is the permanent background of all thoughts is 'I am.' Usually, this background thought is forgotten and immediately a plurality of thoughts come up.

This illusion of plurality is what is called 'time'.

931. WHAT IS THE MISCHIEF OF TIME?

Time is only an idea. World is built upon the plurality of ideas, depending upon time which is but an idea. Therefore time is not. Idea is not. Both are nothing but the ultimate Reality. This time is the arch-deceiver of all. You rely upon him to establish the world and its religions.

What you recognize is here already. But what you remember has to be created by a thought depending upon the illusion of time.

You are the changeless principle. So you need only recognize that fact.

362. WHAT IS TIME?

Time consists of its three component parts – the past, present and future. The past and future cannot manifest themselves without appearing first in the present. When they appear in the present, they are also the present and nothing else. Thus, the past and future depend upon the present for their very existence, and vice versa. So all are non-existent, and time is not.

‘I am’ or ‘anubhava-mātrātmā’ [‘I am experience alone’] is the source and the end of all experiences, devoid of the experiencer and the experienced.

Tripuṭī (triad)

425. WHO IS REALLY DOING A DEED?

In the doing, there is only doing and no who (doer) nor deed. In the doer, there is only doer and no doing or deed. And in the deed, there is only deed and no doer or doing. So, the question does not arise.

446. FROM TRIPUṬĪ TO THE ABSOLUTE

1. Knower, knowing and known
– reduced to –
2. Knowing or witness and known
– reduced further to –
3. Witness alone, without the witnessed.

642. THE DREAM STATE

If the percept is proved to be non-existent as percept, the perceiver and perception both die at once. This is true equally of both the dream and waking states. Remove any one of the triad, and the other two also disappear immediately.

From the apparent perceiver, remove all that is perceivable or see-able and what remains is pure Consciousness.

968. HOW TO EXAMINE THE TRIPUṬĪ (TRIAD)?

Tripuṭī is constituted of the doer, doing and the deed. Of these three, the doing and the deed alone are perceived. But the doer comes in only after the function, and the doer is never perceived at all. So there is no separate doer. This so called 'doer' is the witness itself, but apparently limited or misunderstood.

draṣṭra-darśana-dṛśyēṣu pratyēkaṁ bōdha-mātratā ...

[The see-er, seeing and the seen –
of these, each is pure consciousness....]

Shrī Shankara

Truth

1332. EXPERIENCES OF TRUTH

Truth is experienced in three ways:

1. Truth is before you, as objects of perception.
2. Truth is in you, as knowledge of objects.
3. Truth is yourself, as objectless knowledge, as Self.

975. THE KEY TO THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

Can there be a key to the ultimate Truth? Yes, of course. The interval between two mentations and deep sleep, if rightly understood, are keys to the absolute Truth.

345. HOW IS TRUTH THE BACKGROUND OF SAT-CIT-ĀNANDA?

Existence [sat] is the only thing that does not go out of existence. So existence is the Truth itself.

Existence cannot be existence without Consciousness [cit]. Therefore Truth is Consciousness.

Truth, being objectless, is incapable of being felt. So it is peace that is the background of all feelings.

Therefore Truth is the background of 'sat', 'cit', and 'ānanda' [happiness] or Peace.

1331. WHY IS IT MORE DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE WITH TRUTH THAN WITH UNTRUTH?

Question: You reconcile yourself in a moment without any effort with the world which is a lie. But you find it very hard and take long to reconcile yourself with the Truth, even after visualizing it. Why is this?

Answer: Because you are yourself a lie and look upon Truth as something alien to you. Hence the delay in reconciling yourself with Truth.

1186. G. asked: CAN IT BE SAID THAT THE ULTIMATE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL ERRORS?

If there is error ...

Error always has Truth as its background; and so error is strictly no error. Could there be an opposite of error?

779. TRUTH AND MIND

Truth transcends both reality and unreality. But the mind can conceive only these two opposites. So the real nature of Truth is not understandable to the mind. The real 'I' down to nature is covered by both the reality and the unreality. Your memory, intelligence etc. are all in the plurality and never *one*.

1257. HAS TRUTH NO OPPOSITE?

No. The only possible opposite to Truth is untruth. But when you strictly examine untruth, you find it to be nothing but an appearance on Truth. Therefore Truth has no opposite.

936. HOW TO SEARCH FOR THE TRUTH?

It is usually undertaken in two ways. One way is by following an ascending order as in the traditional method, and the other by a descending order as in the direct method.

The former process is adopted by scientists, slowly ascending from the world, always attributing reality to the objective. Proceeding this way, they knock against a blank wall of ignorance, because they find no way to transcend duality.

The latter is a process of descent from the Ātmā down to the world of objects. Here you retain your perspective of Non-duality, which is the characteristic of Ātmā, and from that stand you find it easy to discover the Truth – even behind the diversity of the world.

If you want to see the world in the correct perspective, you must first see yourself correctly. And then the world will automatically shine, in its true nature.

Understanding

1217. RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

Ordinary understanding is supposed to be a function of the personality or the ego. But even science has of late come to admit that depersonalization is necessary for right understanding. In other words, science admits that understanding is the faculty or nature of the transcendental Awareness.

450. WHAT IS THE EASIEST APPROACH TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH?

In order that the understanding may be natural and abiding, it has to be based upon your fundamental experiences. For this, you have to begin by examining your ordi-

nary experiences as a layman, gradually eliminating from them all extraneous elements, leaving only Truth behind.

This method alone takes you to the Truth, without any effort or doubt.

For example, examine what happens during your most ordinary perceptions, thoughts or feelings; and prove that in every case it is your own Ātmā, the Self, that is experienced as Consciousness or Peace.

847. CAN I UNDERSTAND ANYTHING TILL THE EGO DIES?

No. In the question, you are putting the cart before the horse. You are emphasizing the ego more than the understanding.

However much you may try to kill the ego, it will only become stronger. So you have to approach it from the other end. Everybody understands in spite of the ego. The truth is that the ego automatically dies when you understand anything.

You will never succeed in bringing in light, if you insist upon removing all the darkness from your room before you do so. Therefore simply ignore the ego and try to understand, and the understanding itself will remove the ego.

1188. Madam G: HOW TO GIVE UP BODY, SENSES AND MIND?

It is called 'renunciation'. Renunciation is of two kinds. The yōgin's and the jnyānin's.

1. The yōgin's renunciation consists of taking the mind away from body and senses. This takes one only to a blank state and not further.
2. The jnyānin's renunciation is *understanding* that he is the light or Consciousness on which the body, senses and mind appear, and that even that appearance does not exist when that light is withdrawn. Knowing this Truth, the jnyānin [knower] permits the innocent appearance to exist; and he literally *stands under*, in all his glory, as its background.

607. DEEP CONVICTION

Deep conviction is direct knowing. Conviction is the last word of the worldly man or the mind regarding any search. If you are convinced, you have attained the object of your search; it is a signal to stop all further enquiries regarding it.

Gurunāthan only uses the same word for want of a better one, to denote spiritual understanding also. But he improves upon that word by qualifying it as *deep* conviction. Your spiritual understanding becomes deep when you become established in it, by experiencing it again and again. And then it becomes experience pure.

1391. SEEING AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Question: How do the ignorant man and the Sage see this world?

Answer: The ignorant man and the Sage both face the world, apparently in the same manner, but with one fundamental and subtle difference.

The ignorant man understands everything – including knowledge – in terms of the object, and experiences objects alone.

But the Sage understands everything in terms of knowledge, his own real nature.

1009. WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY OF UNDERSTANDING?

Through the expression to the expressed is the right way of understanding. When you are listening to his teaching, you are accepting the teacher as your ‘self’. The expressed is always the teacher.

You are never asked to look out – through the senses or mind. Looking in, you are yourself alone as the ‘I’-principle, which is another vision of the teacher. The teaching is only a means to make you look in. The teaching takes you beyond body and mind where you get a vision of the teacher himself. There you see the teacher in the whole. No part of him is left behind.

teḷivāỵ̃ oḷivāỵ̃ nilkkum oḷiyāṁ poruḷ aśramam
mama kāṇicca mal svāmi caraṇam śaraṇam mama .

Shrī Ātmānanda, Ātmārāmam, 1.19

(It means: ‘My Lord has most graciously and effortlessly revealed to me the self-effulgent Truth which though ever shining was unnoticed so long. His holy feet alone are my eternal solace.’)

Here the teacher, the teaching and the taught are one. The understanding is also the real ‘I’-principle. To teach anything, the teacher must stand above the teaching. So the teacher, standing beyond the mind, is helping the disciple to come to that level, through the medium of teaching which takes him beyond body and mind.

You can never remember what *you* do understand. You can remember only that which the mind has understood. Here understanding the truth means becoming the Truth. If you want to repeat the same experience, think of the teacher along with the teaching and you will easily be led on to the same experience (the expressed). You cannot express yourself as you wish. So never desire that. But if the expressed (the Truth) ever chooses to express itself at any moment in any manner, enjoy it. That is all.

In all phenomenal teaching it is only ‘*his*’ that is transmitted, often in parts, through the teaching. But in spiritual teaching it is ‘*he*’ that is taught or transmitted and that not in part but in *full*. The Guru’s form is the only object in the universe which, if contemplated upon, takes you directly to the real subject – the Reality.

Unity and diversity

76. WHAT ARE UNITY AND DIVERSITY?

Unity is the cause of diversity and not the other way about. The ‘thing in itself’, the Reality, is beyond both diversity and unity:

1. Unity (of the subject) is the connecting link between everything in diversity.
2. It is only by standing in this unity that diversity is perceived. This means that it is the unity that lights up the diversity.

3. Unity is the deciding principle regarding the existence, qualities, properties etc. of any object in the diversity.
4. From a higher level, it is the background of all.

In this sense, the unity stands as the Reality. But when the unity is taken to be the opposite of diversity, as it is usually understood, the Reality must be said to be beyond both diversity and unity.

1022. WHY IS THERE DIVERSITY?

Really there is no diversity. This is the correct answer. But it can also be answered in other ways.

1. Because the 'why' is there. The 'why' is diversity itself. One thing is divided into two by mere words and kept separate. Here begins diversity. Take for example, the earth and the pot. There is the earth in the pot, and there is earth and earth alone. 'Pot' is only another name for the particular form temporarily assumed by the earth.
2. Because you stand as diversity yourself. See what you are in your phenomenal life. You are the body, senses, mind or anything else you please. But please tell me, which 'you' in this medley am I to address? Each of these has its corresponding objects outside. So it is only when you stand as diversity yourself that you perceive diversity outside. When you stand as the indivisible beyond the mind, as the real 'I'-principle, there is no diversity at all, anywhere.

Vidyā-vritti – higher reason

1017. WHEN DOES THE HIGHER REASON COME INTO PLAY?

When you want to know something beyond the experiences of the body, senses or the mind, then the higher reason comes into play.

330. WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE OF THE HIGHER REASON?

The mind is only an expanded form of the ego. Even in our daily life, there is something in us which stubbornly refuses to accept blindly all that the mind brings in. This is a clear expression of the higher reason in us.

856. HOW TO WAKE UP THE HIGHER REASON?

If the outward going tendency of the intellect is curbed and the inward going tendency is encouraged, the lower reason itself is transformed into the higher reason.

1120. HIGHER REASON

Higher reason is that supra-intellectual organon present in all human beings, which begins to function only when the aspirant tries to understand something beyond the

body, senses and mind. It may also be called functioning Consciousness. When the function ceases, it is pure Consciousness itself.

111. THE CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE

Every perception by itself is invariably governed and corrected by the relatively higher faculty called 'buddhi' ('lower reason'). This buddhi is in its turn controlled and corrected by another faculty called higher reason (or vidyā-vṛitti), which is well beyond the mind. This is Consciousness itself, appearing to be functioning.

We are usually slow to accept the existence of this faculty, as it is usually confounded with the lower reason itself, their workings being apparently similar.

1125. WHAT IS REASON AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Reason is of two kinds: the lower and the higher.

Lower reason (mind) is a negative instrument. Its findings are sometimes negative and sometimes positive. The negative findings may be helpful in disproving the reality of the apparent world, and in bringing one nearer the Truth. But the positive discoveries of the lower reason emphasize duality and have always been an impediment in the progress towards Truth. It is too objective and speculative.

Higher reason is a positive instrument and its positive discoveries, being based upon the one real being within, are always true and changeless. When we say the higher reason 'destroys', it only means that it clearly exposes the falsity of appearance. Our samskāras [inclinations] themselves, when they become more sāttvic [balanced, pure], begin to notice and question the vagaries of the lower reason.

It is then that the presence of a higher faculty becomes necessary, in order to enquire and come to an ultimate decision. The higher reason comes in to answer this urge. But at last, this higher reason turns out to be the Truth itself, which stands established as the permanent background.

867. WHEN AND HOW DOES HIGHER REASON FUNCTION?

Higher reason is always ready to help you, provided you want earnestly to know the Truth. It is on hearing the Truth from the Guru that the higher reason is equipped and set in motion, and it does not stop till the goal of Truth is reached. The function of the higher reason is to dissolve the mind, and then the higher reason stands transformed into Ātmā itself.

The higher reason is the fire (the Guru) that has gone into you, through the words of the Guru. It consumes the creations of your mind and vanishes at last, becoming Ātmā itself.

1201. THE HIGHER REASON AND ITS FUNCTION

The principle that impartially examines all the three states is called 'higher reason' or 'vēdāntic reason', and during that period it appears to be dynamic. When the examination is over, that principle seems to remain static.

But the truth is that it is changeless. Even when it seemed to be dynamic, it was also static. In other words, it is beyond ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’; although appearing as either, even simultaneously. The function of this higher reason is either to annihilate the three states as such or to prove them to be nothing but Consciousness.

1107. HIGHER REASON OR VIDYĀ-VRITTI

This is a supra-intellectual organon to be found in everyone. In the presence of the Guru, this organon is aroused, and is made use of, in order to understand the Truth. It corrects and supplements the findings of the lower reason. It destroys all that is objective and unreal, created by the mind; and when nothing else remains to be destroyed, it stands revealed in its own glory as the Reality – just as the fire that consumes the forest extinguishes itself when nothing else remains to be consumed, and Peace prevails.

1449. HOW DOES DISCRIMINATION FUNCTION?

Discrimination functions in two ways: through the head, where it is called ‘*buddhi-vivēka*’ [intellectual discernment]; and through the heart, where it is called ‘*hṛidaya-vivēka*’ [discernment of the heart].

Buddhi-vivēka functions through the medium of the intellect, in the realm of the phenomenal mind. As this function takes place in duality, it is liable to all kinds of uncertainties and interpretations.

Hṛidaya-vivēka functions through the medium of the heart. The heart being nearer the inner being and duality in that realm being indistinguishable, it is capable of overriding *buddhi-vivēka*. It points straight to the beyond; and if one had already had the direct experience of non-duality before the Guru, he gets the same experience over again by this. Frequent repetition of the same helps him to establish himself in the real background.

Visualization and establishment

30. HOW TO ATTAIN ĀTMA-TATTVA?

Ātma-tattva [the truth of self] is not something to be imported or acquired; but it already *is*, as the real ‘I’-principle. If you once recognize it and turn to it earnestly, it begins to enlighten you and does not stop till you are led on to the very core of your being and are established there.

1065. WHY SHOULD I TRY TO VISUALIZE MY REAL NATURE AGAIN AND AGAIN?

In order to add momentum to the knowledge you have already obtained about your real nature. It is not to obtain liberation. Liberation was obtained even at the first listening to the Truth from the Guru. The light of knowledge dawned that day and ever since it is at your disposal. You have only to sense the Absolute through that eye of knowledge as often as possible until you are securely established in the Ultimate.

208. VISUALIZATION

Visualization is there when the effect that is produced in seeing is produced by the depth of understanding.

1122. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE EGO AFTER VISUALIZATION?

Even on the first visualizing of the Truth, one is liberated. But the ego seems to function even after that. Yes, Truth was visualized in spite of all adverse samskāras [inclinations]. Therefore, now, with the additional strength and light of the Truth, you have to face the samskāras and subdue them.

This is done easily by clinging on to the Truth and repeating the experience of visualization, as often as possible. The mind, having relinquished all adherence to the ego, turns to Ātmā [Self] as its only support. The ego also, like a slave or a shadow, follows the foot-steps of the mind and continues to function as a mere pointer to the Ātmā.

15. IS ANY EFFORT NEEDED AFTER REALIZATION?

Yes. You realize the moment you hear the Truth direct from the Guru. All subsequent effort is only to remove every obstacle that might come in the way of establishing oneself in the Truth.

36. REALIZATION IS ONLY HERE AND NOW.

Only know it and hold on to it, till it becomes your natural state.

298. REALIZATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

You hear Truth from the lips of your Guru. Following the words, their sense and their goal – which is the Ultimate – you rise from level to level, from body to mind and from there to Consciousness. On thus hearing the Truth from one's Guru, the understanding of the Truth is *immediate, instantaneous and complete*.

Soon after, you come back to the body-idea. The Truth that is heard from the lips of the Guru takes the disciple from level to level to the ultimate Reality. In order to get established there, the disciple has to remove innumerable obstacles. The knowledge of the Truth that he has acquired from the Guru helps him to overcome all obstacles. When this is done, realization is complete.

319. ACTIVITY AS A SĀDHANA [DISCIPLINE] TO GET ESTABLISHED IN TRUTH

After visualizing the Truth beyond all doubt, throw yourself heart and soul into any activity and lose yourself in it. It is a sādhanā in itself which takes you right to the Reality each time. Thus, when you are engrossed in work, you have at the same time renounced the work.

If you can see the entire world – including your own body – as only dṛishya (the see-able), you are free; and you have accomplished what has to be accomplished.

For the ignorant man, 'ignorance of Consciousness' covers up the object; but, for the Sage, 'Knowledge' covers it up. When you know the chair, you do not think of seeing. It is only when you are questioned that you say 'I saw'. But Consciousness stands behind the perception of a Jnyānin, always Knowing without knowing.

It is said: 'The world or the mind carries on its head the instrument for its own destruction.' So also, if properly examined, it can be found that every question carries with it its own answer.

On listening to the Truth from the lips of the Guru for the first time, you unknowingly rise to the highest level in understanding, and visualize the Truth. All that you have to do after that is to go knowingly to the same height and visualize the Truth, as often as possible; until that Truth becomes your natural state.

562. THOUGHT AND ITS WORKING

A thought, when it is taken over and over again with increasing interest, goes deeper and deeper into one and becomes more and more intense, until at last its sense creates in us what is called a 'deep conviction'.

But if the thought is directed to the Reality which has already been visualized through the words of the Guru, it has no limited knowledge as its goal. Then, it is not a thought in the strict sense of the term, because it aspires to know nothing as a result thereof. What has to be known has already been known. Every time you repeat that thought you are brought into direct contact with the impersonal background, and once again you visualize or experience the same Truth exactly as before.

Thought or remembrance are not what they are when directed to the Ultimate. Thought, when it is directed outwards, usually results in knowing. Thought is always taken with the object of coming to that knowledge.

Visualization by mere thought is possible only with regard to Ātmā, the Reality. With regard to nothing else is it possible. It is experiencing the same Truth in the same manner, again and again. Gradually, you get established in that Reality. Therefore, that thought takes you beyond all thoughts.

618. HOW TO INTENSIFY THE THOUGHT OF THE ULTIMATE?

Not like a yōgin, by applying your mind intensely to that thought.

But like a Jnyānin [Sage], relaxing all activity of the mind and merging even that last thought in the Truth itself. You have visualized the Truth in a particular state transcending the three usual states.

To think of that Truth means to repeat that visualization once again, by going back to that same transcendental state. By going into that state again and again, you gradually become convinced of the Truth that that transcendental state really extends through all the usual states. Thus, you become established in the Reality.

934. HOW DOES A TATTVĪPADĒSHA HELP ME AFTERWARDS?

You first listen to the Truth direct from the lips of the Guru. Your mind, turned perfectly sāt̄tvic [pure] by the luminous presence of the Guru, has become so sensitive and sharp that the whole thing is impressed upon it as if it were a sensitive film. You visualize your real nature then and there.

But the moment you come out, the check of the presence of the Guru being removed, other samskāras [inclinations] rush in and you are unable to recapitulate what was said or heard.

But later on, whenever you think of that glorious incident, the whole picture comes back to your mind – including the form, words and arguments of the Guru – and you are thrown afresh into the same state of visualization you had experienced on the first day. Thus you constantly hear the same Truth from within.

This is how a spiritual *tattvōpadēsha* [instruction] helps you all through life, till you are established in your own real nature.

990. HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF AFTER VISUALIZING THE TRUTH?

You may conduct yourself in everyday life exactly as you have always done. But there will be a world of difference between your activities before and after visualization of Truth. Formerly you lost yourself in the objects, but now it is their turn to lose themselves in you.

711. WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF TACKLING QUESTIONS, EVEN AFTER VISUALIZATION?

If, after visualizing the Truth beyond all doubt, any question arises, you are asked to look back to the source and level of the question. You are immediately referred back to the background. Thus it takes you to the Ultimate, every time questions are answered this way. It establishes you in the background more easily than in any other way.

1175. REALIZATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

When you listen to the Truth from the lips of the Guru you *realize* that very moment. When you allow that conviction to go deep into your very being and when you make it your own, you stand established in it.

1232. AFTER VISUALIZATION OF TRUTH, HOW CAN I MAKE THE EXPERIENCE PERMANENT?

Answer: Get acquainted with yourself, more and more.

Disciple: This is so simple, so intimate, so natural and so wonderful. But what shall I do to accomplish it in practice?

Answer: Say to yourself what you are, as often as convenient, adducing arguments and throwing yourself into that same state of visualization as you had on the first occasion. This will establish you there, in course of time.

1050. WHY SHOULD ONE TRY TO ESTABLISH ONESELF IN TRUTH, AFTER VISUALIZING IT?

On listening to the Truth from the Guru, you were thrown into a particular state where you visualized the Truth. Even then, you have to be reassured by your Guru and

proved through logic that you were there. Left to yourself, you slip down and find it difficult to visualize the Truth once again.

By trying to get established in the Truth, you are only trying to create the same state as the one in which you realized yourself in the presence of the Guru. You have to do this till you are able to visualize the Truth without any effort. This is what is called the *sahaja state*, where you feel without feeling that you are there always. The habit channels of thought have to be counteracted by new channels in the direction of the Absolute.

The first visualization was time limited. That time limitation must go. That means *āvaraṇa* [the obscuring of Truth behind appearances] must go. Thus you get established in the Truth.

1075. WHY IS IT THAT EVEN AFTER VISUALIZING THE TRUTH ABOUT MY REAL NATURE I DO NOT FEEL FULL CONFIDENCE OR CERTITUDE?

It can be answered in many ways:

1. Who asks the question? Certainly, the mind. Because *Ātmā* cannot complain. The mind that is complaining never visualized the Truth. It died in that sacred attempt. Then how can it raise any question regarding an experience which occurred when the mind was dead? Both visualizing Truth and the certitude thereafter are in the non-dual realm, beyond the mind. The mind is no part to it and not competent to put forward any question relating to that matter.
2. The first part of the question asserts the visualization of Truth. By ‘visualization’ is meant knowing and being. Strictly speaking there is no object to knowing, because knowing and being are one in realization. If it had been visualized it cannot leave room for any further question. If any question sprouts in the realm of the mind, one has only to refer to one’s own stand during the visualization and the question vanishes at once.
3. The answer is in the question itself. The mind has to cease to be mind for visualization (i.e. realization of Truth). It is the mind that wants ‘feelings’ (confidence and certitude). The mind expects the Truth to shine in the realm of the mind. That is impossible.

1153. WHAT IS LIBERATION AND BONDAGE?

The certitude that you are that changeless, self-luminous principle is *liberation*; and the conviction that you are bound is *bondage*. It comes in accordance with the general saying that you become what you deeply think yourself to be.

bhaviccapōlē bhaviccīṭum nirṇayam

[It’s as one thinks that one becomes, essentially.]

Eruttacchan.

The moment you hear the Truth from the lips of the Guru, you transcend your body, senses and mind, and visualize the ultimate Truth, your real nature. Nevertheless, you find yourself again at the feet of the physical Guru, the embodiment of ultimate Truth. But your lower *samskāras* [inclinations] return, and seem to possess you.

Since you had been instructed in the direct perception method, your realization of the Truth – on your first listening to the words of the Guru – was complete. Neither *asambhāvana* [incomprehension, sense of nothingness] nor *viparīta-bhāvana* [misconception, sense of difference] can haunt you ever again. Whenever your old samskāras of body, senses and mind seem to take possession of you, you have only to take a deep thought of your real nature as already visualized by you, in the light of the arguments then advanced or fresh arguments as they occur to you.

When you have done this over and over again, the old samskāras of the lower self will become emaciated and die. It is then that you may be said to have established yourself in your real nature; and the shadow of your old samskāras, if at all they appear, will do so only in obedience to your sweet pleasure.

1154. WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO GET ESTABLISHED?

The best and the easiest method to attain that glorious goal of establishment in the Truth is to listen to the Guru over and over again.

But if such frequent personal contact with the Guru is not possible, the next best alternative is to take, as often as possible, a deep thought of the Truth as first visualized in the presence of the Guru. This brings you into the climate of the Truth every time, and you experience it afresh.

When the samskāras [inclinations] of your real nature become strong enough to subdue the old ones by their very presence, you have no further sādhana to do. Desires can no more tempt you away from the Truth, and questions can no more disturb you. Because you always rest all alone in your own glory; and even when your body, senses and mind are functioning, you know (without knowing) in your heart of hearts that your real centre is never shaken.

You can face the death of the body with as much ease and complacency as you used to witness a pleasant ceremony in life. You may give vent to your feelings and emotions as vehemently as any ignorant lady; but you will be able to stop your feelings surprisingly suddenly and engage yourself equally naturally in any other activity of life, like an adept actor on the stage. If ever your attention is drawn to your real nature – by any word or hint from the outside – the activities of the body, senses and mind all vanish like a dream, and you remain in Peace at the inmost core of your being.

1431. WHY DOES NOT THE PEACE EXPERIENCED AT THE MOMENT OF LISTENING TO THE TALK OF THE GURU CONTINUE WITH ONE? AND HOW TO RESUME IT, IF LOST FOR THE TIME BEING?

At the moment of listening, the ego is crushed by the dazzling brilliance of the ultimate Truth which is proved to be your real nature. But as soon as you get out of that presence, the old samskāras [inclinations] of the ego (which were kept away for the time being) make their appearance again, to establish their supremacy over life.

You have only to look straight at them and say, ‘You are only my objects and I am the changeless witness’ or ‘You do not exist without me – pure Awareness – and so you are nothing other than myself’, adducing arguments if necessary for either position. This will at once take you to the same old experience of Consciousness and Peace.

Continue this as often as the ego springs up, to obstruct your perspective. You may stop all such exercises when you feel your position in the ultimate Truth is secure.

Voluntary and involuntary

287. WHAT IS INSTINCT?

Long practice of any voluntary action naturally becomes mechanical; and degenerates into instinct, which is involuntary.

477. A DISCIPLE ASKED: HOW TO ACQUIRE THE LOVE OF PADMAPĀDA FOR THE GURU?

‘By emptying your mind.’

Then how to empty the mind? Mind by itself does not want any thought. You can be said to have emptied the mind if you can so train your mind that only such thoughts as you require or permit come to you, or in other words when any thought or feeling comes to you only at your bidding. This can only be achieved by real *prēma* [love].

Reality alone has the right to come in unbidden; because that is the subject and the Reality. Thoughts and feelings sometimes come in unbidden, because you attribute reality to them. Know that they are unreal, and from that moment they will never be able to intrude upon you unbidden.

817. HOW IS A SAGE ALWAYS IN SAMĀDHI?

Question: Is the Sage ever in samādhi [a state of mental absorption]?

Answer: Yes, always.

Because, in the case of the Sage, the activities of the mind do not leave a virile trace behind, and that makes each one of them a samādhi. Of course, the trace is there, but under complete control and it will come up only if he wants it to. If he does not want it to, it will not. If he *wants* to think, feel etc., he can very well do it. If he does not want to, no. This is the *sahaja* state.

When a Sage remembers, the memory is non-responsible and purely objective, whether it concerns a thought or a feeling. But to an ordinary man, all this is subjective. Involuntary thoughts will never come in for a Sage.

1034. ACTIONS

Two distinct kinds of actions have been employed in order to visualize the Truth. They are called *voluntary* and *involuntary*, with reference to the attitude of the mind:

1. The *voluntary* action makes the mind active and tries to comprehend Truth as its object. This path is evidently doomed to failure, since it can never take you beyond objective truth.

Nirvikalpa samādhi [a state of unconditioned absorption] is the highest experience that can result from such action. It is preceded by an intense effort. In the relative level, this effort may well be considered to be the cause and nirvikalpa samādhi its legitimate effect. So nirvikalpa samādhi is limited by causality. The yōgin admits that he goes into nirvikalpa samādhi and comes out of it. Therefore it is also limited by time. In order to get into nirvikalpa samādhi, the body is necessary for the yōgin to start with. Thus nirvikalpa samādhi is also limited by space.

Therefore, nirvikalpa samādhi clearly forms part of the phenomenal.

2. The *involuntary* action is the other type. This is spontaneous and objectless. It comes over you involuntarily; you yield to it and merge into it. In its progress, the mind gets relaxed and ultimately disappears, leaving you to yourself all alone.

This experience denotes the real significance of the term 'deep sleep'. The interval between two mentations is another instance of involuntary action. You stand as yourself alone in both these experiences; but you do not cease to be the same Reality, yourself, in the so called dream and waking states. Therefore, you do not ever go into or come out of deep sleep, and it is uncaused.

Hence deep sleep, if correctly understood, is evidently your real nature. It is, strictly speaking, no state at all; and is far beyond any samādhi.

Waking, dream and sleep

796. WHAT IS A DREAM?

Everything other than your real nature (the Self, the ultimate Reality) is a dream.

797. WE OFTEN SEE NO COHERENCE IN A DREAM.

No. The reason obtaining in the dream state is different from the reason of the waking state. Hence the apparent incoherence.

1339. THERE WAS NO DREAM! HOW?

The so called dreamer was never dreaming, from his own standpoint. The dream is only a thought of the waking subject when he was not dreaming. So there was no dreaming, at any point of time. Therefore, there was no dream.

421. WHAT ARE STATES?

The states called dream and wakeful, when viewed from the standpoint of the apparent subject, appear only as the wakeful state. A state or experience is styled a dream when its corresponding objects are found to be non-existent.

In that sense, every past experience is a dream; and you have only one experience in the present – the wakeful.

1366. HOW TO VIEW OUR STATES?

Our so called waking and dream states are in fact only a succession of waking states, all equally real. In the same waking state, we subsequently correct some of our experiences. E.g. the snake in the rope. Similarly, one waking state may be corrected from another waking state; but we are never to take one state as waking and the other state as a dream.

588. WHY DO WE ATTACH MORE REALITY TO THE WAKING STATE?

No, we do not do so. Both the active states [waking and dream] are waking states when actually experienced. That state in which you remain at any particular moment is then considered to be the waking state and more real than any other.

1156. WAKING AND DREAM STATES DISTINGUISHED

When you perceive an object outside, you are in the waking state. When you find that your perception had been a dream, you have come out of that state. Thus when you see that grossness is a dream, you get out of the waking state.

1189. KNOWLEDGE IN THE THREE STATES

Knowledge without quality is the content of deep sleep.

But in the other two states, quality is clearly perceived. And if the object is taken away from it, the suffix ‘-er’ automatically drops away, leaving the ‘knower’ as pure knowledge.

1290. HOW ARE STATES EXAMINED?

In deep sleep, the concept of general ignorance is destroyed, in order to show your real nature.

Ignorant knowledge gives reality to objects, forgetting its essence – knowledge. Here, in the waking state, your ignorant knowledge is destroyed, in order to show that you are the transcendental.

589. HOW DO I VISUALIZE A PAST INCIDENT IN THE WAKING STATE?

Certainly, you cannot visualize it before the waking, fleshy sense organs. So you have to create a set of suitable sense organs for the purpose, as you do in the dream state, and visualize the incident before them. So everything in the past is equal to a dream.

308. THE WAKING SUBJECT CANNOT DISCUSS DREAMS.

All questions about dreams are easily disposed of. The waking subject who audaciously puts forth the problem is most incompetent to do so, as he himself is entirely absent in the dream state. Moreover, the dream state is no dream state when actually experienced. It is then a clear waking state to the dream subject.

611. FEELING A DREAM A DREAM

If during the experience of a dream you ever feel that it is only a dream, many seconds have not to elapse before you wake up from the dream.

Similarly, if you feel that this waking state is only like a dream, you are sure to wake up to the Reality soon.

1347. WHAT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT THE STATES?

A state as a whole can never happen to its own subject, which is comprehended in that state itself. It cannot happen to Awareness either, since they are in two different planes. And there is no third party concerned in the affair. Therefore the states are not.

68. THE THREE STATES OF MAN EACH INDEPENDENT OF ONE ANOTHER

Deep sleep is usually said to be the cause of the dream and waking states. This is dependent upon the law of causality, which is misapplied here. A law obtains only in that particular state in which it operates, and it operates only between objects existing in that particular state. But if a law is to affect all three states, it must obtain in a common state, of which these three states are but parts.

The only thing common to these three states is the 'I'-principle, which permeates all of them and lights them up. This is no state at all, and is beyond all laws and limitations. The 'I'-principle cannot be the cause of the three states; and much less can the deep sleep state be the cause of the other two states. Therefore, among the three states, there can never exist any causal relationship. Hence each state is independent in itself, and bears no relation whatsoever with the other two.

To examine the three states impartially, one has necessarily to take up a position not in any one of the three states, but as a witness to all the three, i.e. as the witnessing principle standing out of the three states. When you take your stand in the 'I'-principle and try to examine the three states, the states will not remain as such, but will be transformed into Consciousness. This proves all three states to be only illusion.

320. REALITY OF STATES COMPARED

At the lowest level, there are the three states: waking, dream and deep sleep states. Examining them closely, one finds that there are only two states – the deep sleep and dream states. Examining them still further, one finds that there is only the deep sleep state. Examining deep sleep more closely, it is found to be no state at all. The dream and waking states are only appearances on deep sleep.

It is in and through Me that all activities take place. But the mistake is made in the attempt to objectify that non-doer self and its experiences, exactly as in other activities.

422. HOW IS A DREAM A DREAM?

You say you had a dream, relying upon memory alone. You admit in the same breath that the objects of the dream, including even the dream subject, were all unreal. This

shows that memory is no proof of the reality of the objects of the experience supposed to be remembered. If the objects of perception and the organs of perception were unreal, the perception also must be equally unreal.

The mind always works conjointly with the corresponding sense organs. Therefore, when the dream sense-organs and the dream body disappear, the dream mind also disappears. Then the dream perceptions do not have a container to hold on to. Therefore, the dream perceptions are not capable of being remembered in any circumstance. Hence, memory cannot prove a dream.

As you wake up from the dream state, you must wake up from the waking dream also. To say that you can now think of your past dream is also wrong. Even to think of a dream you must cast away all that is connected with the waking state, and become a dream subject for the time being.

461. HOW IS THE WAKING STATE A DREAM?

By a 'dream' we mean something which is not real. What is Reality? That which does not disappear at any time.

Now, what is there in the waking state that does not disappear? Nothing. Therefore, everything objective, connected with the waking state, is unreal.

But what we have just called the unreal appears all the while. Yes. When the unreal appears as real we call it a dream. Therefore, the waking state is all a dream.

But there is one thing that does not disappear in any state – pure Consciousness, the Ātmā.

1028. WHEN DID YOU WAKE UP?

If in your answer you refer to the waking time, it would mean that the waking state existed even before the so-called waking. In that sense waking has no meaning, and waking becomes merely an incident in the waking state. So also deep sleep becomes part of the waking state. Then the problem of waking does not arise, since deep sleep cannot be established as a separate state.

But waking is our experience, and this definitely precedes the waking state. In that condition which we call waking, which separates the two states, waking time has not come into existence, and deep sleep has no time of its own. Therefore it is timeless, and the experience is not of a subject-object nature. This is your real nature of pure Consciousness.

Therefore every state appears in you and vanishes into you. Thus you do not wake at all, since you have never gone out of your own Self.

But speaking from a lower level, you can say that you wake up from every state into that so called interval which is your real nature, or you wake up into yourself, where there is no time and so the question 'when' does not apply to it.

It has been proved that you are in your real nature in between two mentations. The states are mere expanded mentations. Therefore, the interval between two states is also your real nature; and therefore you wake up into that unqualified wakefulness which is your real nature, and it is only subsequently that the next state appears.

Within the waking and dream states you are awake to the world. But between the states you are awake to your own Self.

1151. HOW IS THE DREAM STATE NEARER THE TRUTH THAN THE WAKING STATE?

The waking subject holds that sense perception is the highest test of Truth. From this position, it denounces dream objects as unreal, as they are not perceptible to the waking physical senses.

In the waking state – dominated as it is by the triad or tripuṭī – the perceiver, perception and the percept are so clearly distinct and separate that it is very difficult to find anything common between them.

But as far as the dream state is concerned, there is a great difference. As soon as the dream is past, one can see clearly that the subject and the object series – appearing in that state – are both creations of the same mind, and therefore one in essence. So there is this much of Non-duality in dream. To that extent, the dream is nearer the Truth.

Therefore, the clear diversity of the waking state is first examined from the lesser diversity of the dream state, and the waking state is found to be nothing other than an idea.

1289. THE STATES ARE NOTHING BUT CONSCIOUSNESS.

The knowing act is the last act or link in the chain of any activity. There is nothing else, anywhere, to know it. The last knowing act, without itself being known, is non-empirical and is the ultimate Reality.

Every knowing in the relative level can be referred to a knowing beyond. The last one is transcendental Consciousness. The transcendental Consciousness alone can witness the states. Transcendental Consciousness cannot witness anything other than itself. So the states are nothing but Consciousness.

1299. I DO MY SĀDHANA IN THE WAKING STATE. HOW CAN THE DREAMER BE BENEFITED BY THAT?

A question in the waking state should have reference only to a waking subject or a waking object. A dream can never be either. So the question, as it is, cannot arise.

But the so called dream comes out as an idea in the waking state. An idea is nothing but Consciousness. A thought in the waking state about a dream comprehends only the dream state. But an answer to that on the spiritual level comprehends all the three states, because it takes you beyond all states.

A dream really means all that which has passed away. Therefore, the answer to a question about the so called waking state rightly includes the dream state as well. Whatever is past is an idea. A dream never exists in the present. So it is only an idea. A waking state experience may be said to have had a present, and it subsequently becomes the past. But the so called dream state has never had a present. If you say that during the dream you were in the present, I say it was at that point of time not a dream but a waking state. So, on that score also, there never was a dream. Therefore, there is only a waking state or only a dream state.

So there is no room for comparison. Reference can be made only to the past. By the time you perceive anything, the thing said to be perceived is in the past.

1330. WHO SEES THE STATES?

The subject who sees objects is called the ‘object-self’, which is in turn perceived by the real Self. The subject who sees objects is never seen by the subject himself.

If you say you are in the waking state, you are then *not* in the waking state, for certain. Because when you say so, you know the waking state as your object. The real Self alone can know it. But there is nothing else for it to know. So what appears as the waking state is the real Self. So are all states. The waking subject has no authority to assert this.

When you say you know the waking state, the ego who asserts this either stands out and ceases to be the ego, or what he sees is only part of the waking state.

1336. WHAT ARE THE STATES AND HOW TO KNOW THEM?

The waking subject is the chief constituent element of the waking state. So he cannot know it. The ‘I’-principle beyond cannot also know it, since there are no states in its realm. Similarly, the dreaming subject cannot know the dream state. The deep sleep state is also not known by the sleeper, if there is one. So the three states, as such, do not exist.

In fact all the three states are only one and the same background principle – Consciousness – and not states as they appear.

In the deep sleep state, you stand as that. But in the waking and dream states, you stand on memory and miss the Truth. Therefore, dispense with memory, and you are at once beyond all states and in Truth.

1343. HAVE THE STATES ANY LESSON FOR THE SPIRITUAL ASPIRANT?

Of course. The three states give us lessons capable of establishing us in the ultimate Truth. But it needs a Kāraṇa-guru to direct our attention to those lessons and to interpret them correctly.

The lesson of deep sleep is that I get to my real nature of Peace and Consciousness, when I transcend body, senses and mind.

The lesson of dream and waking states is that it is the one Consciousness – my real nature – which divides itself into the subject series and object series, and that I am witness to all mentations.

Who

309. ‘WHO IDENTIFIES?’

‘Who identifies?’ is a question sometimes asked. Identification is the parent of doership. The question presupposes a parent even to identification, and puts a doer before it.

In the question, Ātmā [Self] and anātmā [non-self] are both considered to be real, and on a par with one another. That should not be. Anātmā is only an illusion, and all questions come out of that illusion alone.

418. WHO HAS ANY PROBLEM?

You say that you have many problems. But I ask you, have ‘*you*’ really any? When you examine your problems more carefully, you will find that every problem belongs to somebody other than yourself, namely to the body or mind.

You, as the real ‘I’-principle, have absolutely no problem.

119. ‘WHO?’

‘Who’ is the law obtaining only in the realm of the *jīva* or mind. From there, usually, it is bodily lifted and applied in the realm of *Ātmā*, where there is no duality or relativity. So that question, in the present context, becomes meaningless.

In every activity, the ‘I’-principle is the witness. The activity is in the mind’s plane, or lower still. But the witnessing, conceding that it is a function, is taking place in the plane of Consciousness, without an agent, instrument, or object.

You can never bring the *Ātmā* – as such – down to the realm of the mind, nor take the mind – as such – up to the realm of *Ātmā*, to effect a contact.

Though the ‘I’ is always present in thought – to help it function in my light or presence – higher up I am witnessing it in my own plane, where I am all alone and unattached.

Witness

949. HOW DOES THE WITNESS STAND HELP ME?

The witness stand helps you to renounce everything in effect, without renouncing anything physically or mentally.

805. WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF STANDING AS THE WITNESS?

By standing as the witness, you establish yourself in the unity in diversity.

935. WHAT DOES THE WITNESS PERCEIVE?

The witness perceives only the material part of the activity, and never the Consciousness part of it.

1067. IS NOT THE WITNESS ONLY ONE?

No. It is neither one nor many, but beyond both. When you say that it is only one, you stand in the mental realm as an expanded ego and unconsciously refer to the many.

524. WORLD A WITNESS

Since the world proves you, the world may well be said to be a witness.

906. HOW IS THE WITNESS TRANSFORMED?

The witness is the highest limit to which one can go, on the way to the Ultimate. When you reach the witness, your understanding it as the witness disappears. But what appeared as the witness continues still, as the Reality.

310. THE CONTEMPLATION OF THE WITNESS ASPECT

When the mind's attention is directed to the silent witness, the mind has to get into tune with the nature of the witness and become silent also, or be dissolved in the witness. (Mechanical acting is mind becoming solidified, so to say.)

The advantage of the witness aspect is that it removes the basic error. So, that aspect of the Reality is the best suited for contemplation.

809. HOW TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE WITNESS ASPECT AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS ASPECT IN PRACTICE?

When your mind is active, you may take the witness thought with advantage, to eliminate yourself from objects. But when your mind is free and passive, the thought of your real nature is better.

646. WHAT ARE THE RELATIVE ADVANTAGES OF THE TWO APPROACHES, NAMELY OF THE WITNESS AND OF PURE CONSCIOUSNESS?

The witness is intended only to help you to transcend or dispose of any objective appearance as object, perception or thought, if such comes in from the outside.

But sometimes, the Consciousness aspect is considered better to contemplate the Absolute, because no activity of body, senses or mind is possible without the help of Consciousness. So the Consciousness aspect comes in without any strain on your part.

Consciousness is Happiness. We should always look upon it as conscious Happiness or happy Consciousness.

743. WHAT IS WITNESSED?

Only illusion. In the illustration of the figure in the rock, the 'figure-illusion' is witnessed by the rock. Similarly, everything other than Consciousness is witnessed by Consciousness. So actions, perceptions, thoughts, feelings etc. are all witnessed by consciousness. But these do not really exist. Neither does the figure. The figure-illusion alone is witnessed by the rock, and the object-illusion alone is witnessed by consciousness.

1035. WHERE IS THE WITNESS?

A thought can never be remembered; but you can think of the object of your thought once again, or you can remember the fact that you had a thought. So you think only of the objects of your former thought.

Thought by itself is object of the witness alone. The object of the witness can never be remembered by the mind. Thought, divested of its objects, is the witness itself. So the witness is in the thought itself and not outside.

13. HOW AM I THE WITNESS?

Every perception, thought or feeling is known by you. You are the knower of the world through the sense organs; of the sense organs through the generic mind; and of the mind – with its activity or passivity – by your self alone.

In all these different activities, you stand out as the one knower. Actions, perceptions, thoughts and feelings all come and go. But knowingness does not part with you, even for a moment. You are therefore always the knower. How then can you ever be the doer or the enjoyer?

After understanding the ‘I’-principle as pure Consciousness and happiness, always use the word ‘I’ or ‘knower’ to denote the goal of your retreat. The ‘I’ always brings subjectivity with it. It is this ultimate, subjective principle ‘I’ – divested of even that subjectivity – that is the goal.

Consciousness and happiness may possibly have a taint of objectivity in their conception, since they always express themselves in the realm of the mind. When one is deeply convinced that one’s self is consciousness and happiness, one finds it as the nameless. Whereupon, even this namelessness seems a limitation. Giving up that as well, one remains as the ‘I’-principle, the ‘Absolute’.

When you try to visualize the Absolute in you, nothing can possibly disturb you, because every thought or perception points to yourself and only helps you to stand established as the Absolute.

To become a Jnyānin [Sage] means to become aware of *what you are already*. In this connection, it has to be proved that ‘knowing’ is not a function. In all your life, you feel you have not changed; and of all your manifold activities, from your birth onwards, the only activity that has never changed is ‘knowing’. So both these must necessarily be one and the same; and therefore knowingness is your real nature.

Thus, knowing is never an activity in the worldly sense, since this knowing has neither a beginning nor an end. And because it is never separated from you, it is your *svarūpa* (real nature) – just as ‘shining’ is the *svarūpa* of the sun and not its function. Understanding it in this way, and realizing it as one’s *svarūpa*, brings about liberation from all bondage.

When you reach consciousness or happiness, you lose all sense of objectivity or duality and stand identified with the ultimate, subjective ‘I’-principle, or the Absolute. Then the subjectivity also vanishes. When the word ‘*pure*’ is added on to consciousness, happiness or ‘I’, even the least taint of relativity is removed. There, all opposites are reconciled, all paradoxes stand self-explained; and everything, or nothing, can be said about it.

117. SELF-CLARIFICATION

A disciple asked Gurunāthan: ‘You have told me that I am not the body, senses or mind, that thought is pure Consciousness alone, and I am the witness always. How to reconcile all these?’

Answer: The difficulty arises out of your reluctance to accept that thought is made up of Consciousness alone. But instead, you take thought to refer directly to objects.

It has been proved to you that you are pure Consciousness, the ultimate witness to all your activities. This thought you are *not to take during any activity*, but only after it. A thought after the incident, that you had been the knower all along, relieves you of even the least taint of an attachment – as doer or enjoyer – that might have crept in unawares during the incident. During the activity, if you take the thought of the witness, the mind engaged in the activity gets diverted, and the activity suffers to that extent. This is neither desired nor advised.

By a subjective transformation alone can realization be complete. Then you have only to make it natural. For that, you must outwardly allow the body, senses and mind to continue their activities as before; but inwardly, after every activity, emphasize the Consciousness or witness aspect, so as not to allow those activities to form new samskāras [habit-driven inclinations].

You must understand that these statements were made from different levels. When I say that the ‘I’ in you is the witness, there thoughts, feelings, perceptions and doings are conceded. But when I say that thought is Consciousness, I do not stand out as the witness of thought, but I go into the make of thought. Then the thought as such vanishes. Body, senses and mind also vanish likewise.

When they are conceded, I am the witness. But when they are severally examined and proved to be Consciousness, I cease to be the witness.

It is he who has the ego present in him that does or does not do. He who has destroyed the ego in him knows neither doing nor non-doing.

120. ‘TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE WITNESS’ AND ‘TO BE A WITNESS’

These are entirely different things. But you should not try to know that you are the knower. Both together are impossible. Your knowership is objectless and can never be objectified.

You are always the witness. But you need not attempt deliberately to take the role of a witness. Only take note of the fact that you are always the witness.

You are asked to strengthen the conviction that you are the knower, in order to counteract the old samskāras [inclinations] that you are the doer, enjoyer etc. Though the substance of doership and enjoyership is effaced, the samskāras might still remain as shadows.

You are only to argue in your mind how you are always the real knower, and repeat the arguments over and over again. The time will come when the arguments will become unnecessary, and a mere thought will take you to the conclusion. Gradually, you will find that even when you do not think about the Truth, and whether you are engaged or not engaged in activities, you will feel without feeling that you are always the witness and that you are not affected by any activity or inactivity of the mind and senses in the relative sphere.

Witnessing is silent awareness. Do not try to make it active in any way. Consciousness never takes any responsibility for proving the existence or the non-existence of an object.

257. HOW DOES REMEMBRANCE PROVE ME?

Remembrance of any past incident consists in recollecting all that is connected with it, including also your own body and personality as part of the incident.

You cannot remember anything but your actual perceptions. So you must have definitely perceived your personality also, during the incident. This perceiver could be nothing other than your impersonal Self. So every act of remembrance proves you alone.

It was the mind that was in activity, and again it is the mind that remembers later. The mind silently gets the information from the witness, which alone was present during the incident.

Going deeper, you will find that memory itself is a misnomer. Because the mind can never bear witness to the mind itself.

Here follows an incident (not a story) of a lunatic cured by the witness thought.

258. A LUNATIC CURED BY THE WITNESS-THOUGHT

Once, in August 1950, when Shrī Ātmānanda stayed in Bombay for a couple of days on his way back from Europe, he gave audience to a good number of spiritual enthusiasts who flocked for short interviews with him. Among them was an educated young Parsi gentleman who was a lunatic for the past twenty years. But he had occasional sober moments, for an hour or two every day. Fortunately, it was during one of those sober moments that he came for the interview. As soon as he was led in and seated, Shrī Ātmānanda asked him: ‘Well, what is it that you want?’

Visitor: Well, Sir, I am not come for any spiritual instruction. They say I am a lunatic, and I too believe it, more or less.

Shrī Ātmānanda: Sorry, I am not a doctor myself. You must go to some doctor and take advice.

Visitor: No Sir, I have tried all that in vain. I heard that you are a great divine, and I am sure you can help me out of this malady.

Shrī Ā: No, you are mistaken. I am not a saint and I have no powers to help you in this. Please go and seek remedy elsewhere.

Visitor: No Sir, I am desperate. I shall not return without getting something from you.

Shrī Ātmānanda was in a fix. The gentleman’s face did not show any signs of disorder and he felt compassion for the man. So Shrī Ātmānanda asked him, rather abruptly: ‘Well! What is your ailment?’

Visitor: They say I am a lunatic.

Shrī Ā: Is it true?

Visitor: Yes, it is true, more or less.

Shrī Ā: How can you say so?

Visitor: Because I know it. I cannot think about anything consistently for some time.

Shrī Ā: How do you know that?

Visitor: Well, I know that. I can see my mind running from object to object, in quick succession.

Shrī Ā: But are you that changing mind, or are you that knowing principle which never changes?

Visitor: Of course, I am that knowing principle.

Shrī Ātmānanda retorted with some force: ‘Be that knowing principle always, and don’t worry about your mind.’

The gentleman opened his mouth wide and sat aghast for a minute, and said with luminous satisfaction: ‘Yes! Yes! I have got it. I want nothing more from you now. Allow me, Sir, to go, and I shall write to you from home.’

Shrī Ātmānanda: ‘Yes. You may go and be at peace.’

He went home straight and wrote to Shrī Ātmānanda regularly, after three days, one month, three months, six months, one year, and three years (the last being in August 1953) – all equally assuring that he was leading a steady, happy, contented and prosperous domestic life with his dear wife and children, of course with hearty endorsements from each of them regarding his normality.

This was indeed a miracle of the ultimate witness. Shrī Ātmānanda had only just helped him to direct his own attention to that talisman in himself and he was saved.

520. HOW CONFUSION ARISES WITH REGARD TO THE WITNESS

Suppose you are the witness to a particular thought. A little later, you remember that thought and you say you had that thought some time ago – assuming thereby that you were the thinker when the first thought occurred, though you were then really the witness of that thought.

This unwarranted change in your relationship with a particular thought – from when the thought occurs to when you remember it – is alone responsible for the whole confusion with regard to the witness.

When you seem to remember a past thought, it is really a fresh thought by itself and it has no direct relationship with the old one. Even when you are remembering, you are the witness to that thought of remembrance. So you never change the role of your witnesshood, however much your activities may change.

701. THE NEED AND APPLICATION OF THE WITNESS ASPECT

You are asked to do deliberately what you are doing unknowingly now. Take note of the fact that you are already and always the witness.

Remembrance is the faculty which makes life appear a connected whole. Remembrance means knowing first and recalling afterwards, without considering that the agents are different. Knowing belongs to the witness and remembrance belongs to the mind. The two activities take place in two different planes.

But knowing is strictly not an activity. Usually, all activities – of body, senses and mind – are attributed to the ‘I’, the background. But really the ‘I’ can never be involved in all this. This false identification is the root of all trouble and misery.

If you can, in any way, cease to continue this false identification, you are saved. To do this, the witness aspect is brought forward. The witness is always silent and changeless. Objects or activities are not emphasized at all in the witness aspect. The witness is unconcerned and can never be brought out for evidence regarding facts.

When you stand as the witness, you see that the things witnessed are not in the witness. So you transcend all duality.

Thus standing as the witness, being all alone, you stand as the right Absolute itself. The witnessing is superimposed upon the Reality, but this does not injure you.

667. WHAT IS THE POSITION OF THE WITNESS, AND HOW AM I TO DO THE WITNESS EXERCISE?

The mind perceives objects – gross or subtle. The witness perceives the mind perceiving objects. The witness is the intermediary between the real ‘I’-principle and the apparent ‘I’-principle.

The witness has no body and so it has no outside. It has no mind and so it has no inside either. So the witness is always subjective, and the witnessed are all inside (meaning inside the mind) and not outside.

Everything past remains only as thought-forms, and thought-forms are cognized only by the witness. Therefore whenever any statement is made relating to the past, it means you were the witness; and if you say you had no mental activity, you were the witness to that absence also.

In the exercise of the witness aspect, you are not examining the witnessed at all. You are only eliminating – by the use of discriminatory logic – the known (witnessed) including body, senses and mind from the knower or witness. The knower is further proved to be nothing but knowingness or pure Consciousness, the real Self. Thus you rise gradually from the ego to the witness, and then you find that you are the right Absolute.

After visualization of Truth, conceding the existence of the world, the same exercise can be done in an improved form for the purpose of getting established in the Truth. You may begin by thinking that you are the witness as already known. But this thought does not continue as a thought. Because the witnessed being absent, the witness refuses to be objectified. Thus you stand as the disinterested witness, which you know to be nothing other than the Absolute. This perspective enables one to continue worldly activities effectively and disinterestedly.

616. WHO SEES?

Not you, but the see-er or perceiver. The perceiver alone perceives. Each perceiver that perceives is different from every other perceiver, as a perceiver.

But you say you saw the same form as you did yesterday. Both the perceiver of yesterday and the perceiver of today saw only the particular form before each of them. They were both ignorant of what the other perceived.

But there was some other principle that perceived the sameness of the two forms. It was not either of the former perceivers of form. And that principle that perceived the sameness did not perceive the form.

Question: How to transcend the wrong groove of thought?

Answer: When the ‘How’ disappears.

Question: Why am I not able to experience the Truth when I am away from Gurunāthan as deeply as when I am in his presence?

Answer: Because you give room to that unwarranted sense of away-ness. You mistake the Guru to be the body and think him away or near. But he is never the body but Ātmā itself, and as such knows no nearness or away-ness. Be convinced of this Truth and your sense of away-ness will disappear, and your experience will become steady.

Work

738. WHAT IS HUMAN EFFORT?

Human effort consists in creating bondage for oneself, clinging fast to it, and wanting to become free without giving up bondage itself.

803. IS WORK A HINDRANCE TO SPIRITUALITY?

Not always. It is a hindrance if the ego is present. It is a help if the ego is absent.

128. ‘WORK FOR WORK’S SAKE’

This should be our real goal. Work will be more successful in the absence of the ego than when it is guided by it, because in the absence of the ego all your energy is available for the work alone. When the ego is present, part of this energy is usurped by it, for its own maintenance.

919. SINCE HAPPINESS IS MY REAL NATURE WILL NOT MY WORK SUFFER FOR WANT OF AN INCENTIVE?

No. The question touches the Absolute and therefore you should not expect an answer from the intellectual level. The answer can only be from the level of experience. Your work will become objectless and something other than happiness will take the place of the incentive. The work will continue to be done perfectly even to the minutest detail, unknown to the mind, and in all such work you will enjoy yourself.

511. THE INCENTIVE TO WORK

To the ordinary man, the fruit of action provides the incentive to work.

The fruit of action is desired simply because it is supposed to give you pleasure. And pleasure is liked for your own sake and not for the sake of pleasure. Your real nature has already been proved to be Peace and Happiness, which are the source of pleasure. Therefore, the ultimate incentive for any work is to touch your own nature of Happiness.

The ordinary man does not know this truth, and considers pleasure as something different from him. So he stands in need of some incentive to make the effort to reach it.

But the Sage knows well that this Peace or Happiness is his own nature and needs no incentive nor any effort to reach it, since it is already reached and established, so far as he is concerned.

Similarly, an incentive for action is required only by those in the realm of duality. The Sage, having transcended duality, does not recognize actions to be real at all, much less the incentives for them. If ever he appears to do anything, those actions come up spontaneously, and he never takes a thought about it afterwards.

World

733. HOW IS THE WORLD ESTABLISHED?

When one says that the world is, the Self does not come in to prove it. It is the senses and mind, which form part of the world, that strive to establish the world.

873. HOW IS THE WORLD A THOUGHT FORM?

Take the mind away from the world. What remains? You can neither say that it exists or that it does not exist. So you alone remain.

Therefore, the world is only a thought.

268. UPON WHAT DOES THE WORLD DEPEND?

The world depends upon the subject alone. The world appears exactly in terms of the stand taken up by the subject.

When you are subjectively transformed, after hearing the Truth from the Guru, the apparent world also undergoes a corresponding transformation; until, at the last stage, the subject and the object both stand as one in pure Consciousness, the 'I'-principle.

591. EVEN AFTER UNDERSTANDING THE TRUTH, I SEE THE WORLD AGAIN. WHY?

It is not you who see the world again. It is the illusion of the apparent 'I' seeing the illusion of the world. What does it matter to You?

525. WORLDLY TRAFFIC

Worldly traffic is as if you were first to draw a picture. The picture does no more than externalize the idea which was in you. But you stand before the finished picture as a stranger and begin to enjoy it. You are in fact enjoying yourself.

695. WHY CAN I NOT SEE THE WORLD WHEN I AM IN CONSCIOUSNESS?

When you see the tree, you stand as the tree. When you think of the tree, you stand as that idea. When you stand as Consciousness, both tree and idea of tree merge into Consciousness, leaving you as you are.

You cannot see the world from Consciousness, because Truth can never see falsehood. Look at the deep sleep state and everything will become clear.

1174. WHAT IS THE WORLD?

The Absolute, wrongly supposed to be time, space and causality, is the manifested world.

The three states exist here, not for nothing. Take them all together, as an integral whole and not separately. Between themselves, they explain each other. The waking and dream states also explain each other. Deep sleep explains the other two. So the three states are intended to enlighten you, about your real nature. A unanimous affirmation from all the three states, and particularly from the deep sleep state, is the only criterion for the reality of a thing.

7. WHAT IS IT THAT APPEARS AS WORLD?

As soon as we wake up from deep sleep, the existence of a ready-made world – including our own bodies – confronts us. To examine it closely, we utilize our sense organs straightaway – one by one, relying on their superficial evidence without a thought.

The organ of sight asserts that the world is only form and nothing else; the organ of hearing that the world is only sound and nothing else; and so on. Each organ thus asserts the world as *its* sole and particular object. In effect, each sense organ contradicts the evidence of the other four organs, with equal force. This hopeless mess of contradictory evidence, and the stubborn denial by each of the sense organs of the others' evidence, form positive proof of the falsity of this world – as it appears.

But all the while, the existence of a positive something is experienced without a break, beyond the shadow of a doubt. This, on closer analysis, is found to be that changeless, subjective 'I'-principle or Consciousness itself.

373. HOW TO RECONCILE THE STATEMENTS: 'I AM THE WORLD' AND 'THE WORLD IS NOT'?

na mē bandhō 'sti mōkṣō vā, bhrāntiḥ śāntā nirāśrayā .
ahō mayi sthitam viśvam, vastutō na mayi sthitam ..

[For me, there is no being bound
nor getting freed. Confusion fails
to find support, and comes to peace.
All of this world exists in me:
where it does not exist as world,
but as unchanged reality.]

Aṣṭāvakra samhitā, 2.18

There is no wave at all in water. In the verse above, Aṣṭāvakra asserts first that 'the world shines in me', but only to lift the layman from the mire of illusion.

Immediately, he corrects himself and comes out with the whole Truth. No, the moment the world touches me, it becomes transformed into myself.

So I am alone, and the world is not.

558. CORRECT EXAMINATION OF THE WORLD

The name 'world' denotes the gross as well as the subtle worlds. The subtle world is nothing but the mind or thought. The mind goes into the very make of the gross world, but is also quite independent of the world itself.

Even after the gross world has disappeared, the mind continues to exist, holding within itself the whole world deprived of its gross characteristics. Thus far, an ordinary man can well proceed, because life itself is composed distinctly of the physical and the mental aspects. So, standing on the mental plane, the physical can well be examined and reduced to the subtle.

This has again to be examined, taking your stand on a plane higher than the mind itself, but in substance not essentially different from the mind. That plane is the plane of knowledge, Consciousness or the 'I', which goes into the make of the mind. Taking your stand, at least in idea, in that plane of Consciousness and examining the mind, you will find that the subtle world loses its characteristics of being subtle and diverse; and it shines as pure Consciousness and one with you.

If you leave it anywhere else before taking it to this ultimate Truth, the examination is incomplete and the finding, to that extent, untrue.

595. AN ENQUIRY ABOUT THE TRUTH OF THE WORLD, GROSS AS WELL AS SUBTLE

The world has been taken up for examination from time immemorial by scientists and philosophers. Both of them rely upon the generic mind, with its varied aspects, as the only instrument for the purpose. The scientists have tried to solve the objective diversity by reducing everything to atoms or electrons, but cannot find the way beyond. Philosophers, ignoring the gross, have taken up the subtle world of thoughts and feelings (the apparently subjective diversity) for analysis, and cannot go beyond nothingness. Thus both of them are entangled in the same vicious circle.

In every perception, thought or feeling, two aspects come into operation. The view part and the material part. The view part is the result of one's own individual experience and *samskāras* [inclinations] and therefore differs with different individuals. This part, the more important of the two, is lamentably ignored by scientists and philosophers alike. They analyse only the material part of their so called experiences, taking their stand in the changing mind alone.

Their fundamental mistake is their inability to take note of a changeless principle, the 'I' standing behind, lighting up all their so called experiences. Without this stand in the changeless 'I', the changes can never be correctly examined, whether in the gross or in the subtle realm. This irrefutable stand is shown only by the *vēdāntic* or *advaitic* approach.

For diversity to be, unity must stand behind, supporting it. You are merging diversity into unity every time a perception, thought or feeling merges into Consciousness, the 'I'.

606. THE WORLD AND WHAT IT SHOWS (PROVES)

The world is nothing but perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Now let us examine what these are. Many 'presents' (experiences of the present) made into one 'present' con-

stitute a concept or a thought. Similarly, many spatial points made into one constitute a percept.

Admitting that you cannot have more than one simultaneous experience, many ‘presents’ or many spatial points become impossible. So there are no percepts, thoughts or perceptions.

As ordinarily accepted, a thought is made up of many time points or ‘presents’ at one point of time. But there can never be more than one present at one point of time. Therefore, thought is a misnomer. And so is the world.

But still you see the world. Yes, let us for the time being concede that seeing exists. Yes, I see. But then what does this prove? It proves only ‘Me’ and not anything else. You say: ‘The world appears.’ When you say it ‘appears’, you mean that it is lit up by Consciousness, on your side. In the statement, the ‘world’ is objective and ‘appears’ is subjective. To whom does it appear is the next relevant question. Of course to you. You light it up by your Consciousness. So every object points to Consciousness and proves nothing else.

1200. WHAT IS THE WORLD?

We experience only consciousness of objects, gross or subtle. Can you draw a line of demarcation between Consciousness and object, in that experience? *No*. Consciousness can well exist, all alone, without objects. But, objects can never exist without Consciousness. Therefore, all is Consciousness.

If one is deeply convinced of the unreasonableness of all questions, then it is very easy to get established in the Truth.

A thing has never been born of itself and a thing has never been born of anything else...

Shrī Shankara [unverified]

If one has risen to the level of seeing that an object is nothing but Consciousness appearing in the form of the object, then in that level: ‘To know is to be.’ But in the waking state, one is in a much lower level, where tripuṭī [triad of doer, doing and deed] functions and knowing is not taken right up to ‘being’.

1280. HOW DOES THE WORLD APPEAR AND WHAT IS ITS SOLUTION?

Pure Consciousness, which is the ultimate Reality, expresses itself first as self-consciousness, without admitting any medium whatsoever. This is the most immediate of all knowledge and is identical with ‘being’, completely beyond subject-object relationship.

This Consciousness seems to degenerate, by appearing to express itself through the mind and senses, as thoughts and perceptions. By accepting the medium of the mind and senses, the appearances – namely thoughts and perceptions – seem to be separate from the Self. This is how the world appears, though in essence it is nothing but the Self.

Therefore, the solution of the world does not lie in any objective search outside, by way of the sciences or philosophy, but in withdrawing into the real Self within one. This may successfully be achieved by following the ordinary mental knowledge itself

to its very source, through the most immediate expression of knowledge, namely self-consciousness or objectless knowledge.

Yoga

162. YŌGA AND DEVOTION

These are both processes of intense activity, always upholding the doer and enjoyer – even at the highest state, though in a highly general form.

As long as this taint of duality lasts, you do not shine as the Absolute.

1442. WHAT IS THE CONCEPT OF YŌGIC MEDITATION?

The yōgin takes the waking world alone to be real and starts from the waking body, trying to expand and exploit the potentialities of the mind. The method adopted is meditation, and the goal is the merging of the meditator in the meditated. During the meditation, as it is usually practised, the mind never ceases to objectify and duality is never transcended.

108. SIGNIFICANCE OF YŌGA AND SOCIAL SERVICE

All practices of haṭha-yōga or any other yōga – based upon the body idea in some form – were compared to the strivings of a man bitten by a mad dog, and acting under the effect of the toxin which makes him believe that he is a dog. He tries to straighten his tail which is non-existent and which he feels curling behind him, like a dog's. This seems foolish to all sober men.

Similarly, the yōgin is trying to perfect his body and mind by yōgic practices. This is laughed at by the Jnyānin [Sage], who sees clearly that the body and mind are mere illusions, like the tail of the man bitten by the mad dog.

It is just in this manner that persons try to improve the world, without carefully examining what the world is.

When time is proved to be non-existent, one third of the world disappears. And the other two thirds also disappear when space and causality are similarly proved to be non-existent.

1023. A PEEP INTO THE HEART OF YŌGA

Yōgins say vaguely that they are trying to control the mind by dint of vairāgya (dispassion) and exercise. This is easily said. But who is it exactly that controls the prāṇa [vital energy] and the mind?

Certainly not the mind itself; because the purpose of the exercise itself is to still the mind, and the same mind can never be simultaneously the subject and the object of the same activity. So some independent principle beyond the mind must be guiding the yōgin to control the prāṇa and the mind. Is it not better to be that free principle itself and cease bothering about the mind or anything else?

Leave the mind to itself. This is how the mind is dealt with in the direct method.

424. HOW DO THE YŌGIN AND THE SAGE REACT, WITH REGARD TO PLEASURE AND PAIN?

When the body suffers, the yōgin, as a result of his incessant practice, takes away the mind from that spot and arrests it elsewhere, thus avoiding the pain. Even when thus separated from the body, the mind has its own sufferings. This sort of evasion does not enrich him, but on the contrary injures him much. Because, later on, he will find it much more difficult than an ordinary man would, to leave off a mind so highly developed and to rest in his real nature. The habit channels of the mind are so difficult to be overcome.

But the Sage views pleasure or pain in quite a different manner. He lets the body or mind enjoy or suffer as it comes; only seeing that it is the body or mind alone that enjoys or suffers and that he – the knower of them all – is not involved in them in the least.

The yōgins, of their own choice, leave the body to itself and labour hard to train the changing mind to expand and acquire powers.

But the one who takes to the jnyāna [knowledge] path leaves both the body and the mind to themselves, and chooses to retreat into his own real nature of Peace within.

Glossary

- Ācārya*: a Sage and founder of tradition, who teaches a variety of aspirants in the different paths of jnyāna (knowledge), bhakti (devotion), and yōga (meditation)
- Advaita*: Non-duality. In particular, a realization that the knower and the known are identical. They are not two, but only one.
- advaitin*: non-dualist. A teacher or student of Advaita philosophy
- adhikāri*: an aspirant to spiritual attainment
- aham*: Sanskrit pronoun meaning 'I'
- ahankāra*: ego. The apparent, acting 'I' – as opposed to the true knowing 'I'. ('Aham' means 'I', and '-kāra' means 'doing'.)
- ahimsa*: non-injury, non-violence
- ajāta-vāda*: the argument that Truth or Reality is 'ajāta' or 'unborn'
- ajnyāna*: wrong knowing, ignorance ('jnyāna' means 'knowledge', the prefix 'a-' means 'not')
- ānanda*: happiness (see glossary entry 'sat-cit-ānanda' below)
- anātmā*: non-self, other than self ('ātma' means 'self')
- anubhava*: experience, whose undergoing continuity extends throughout the course of life (see page 72, note 74)
- Arjuna*: Lord Kṛiṣṇa's friend, a great archer in the *Mahābhārata* epic
- Ātmā*: the real Self
- Ātma-vicāra*: Self-enquiry (see page 158, notes 1081 and 1361; see also glossary entry 'vicāra' below)
- bhakta*: devotee
- bhakti*: devotion
- brahman*: the all-comprehending. Sometimes translated by the phrase 'all there is'. (See page 160, note 601)
- buddhi*: intellect
- cit*: existence (see glossary entry 'sat-cit-ānanda' below)
- darshana*: seeing, vision; referring to philosophical systems as ways of seeing; and referring in Advaita Vedānta to pure consciousness, as the unmixed seeing of true self
- dharma*: quality (literally, that which is held or supported)
- dharmi*: the qualified (the holder or supporter of qualities, which is itself unaffected by the qualities that depend on its support)
- dhyāna*: meditation upon any model or ideal

drishya: literally, the ‘see-able’. In particular, it refers to an object (or objects) which are taken to be seen or otherwise perceived.

dvaita: duality. In particular, an assumption that the knower and the known are two different things. (See glossary entry ‘Advaita’ above.)

iṣṭa-deva: chosen deity (from ‘iṣṭa’ meaning ‘liked’ or ‘preferred’, and ‘deva’ meaning ‘god’ or ‘deity’)

iṣṭa-mūrti: literally, ‘embodiment of liking’. Hence, form of God chosen for worship.

jīva: literally, ‘living’ or ‘alive’. In particular, it refers to a person or personality considered as a living expression of consciousness. (See page 13, note 118.)

jīvan-mukta: a person (jīva) who is free (mukta) from the bonds of personality. This is of course logically impossible, and thus inevitably paradoxical. It implies a spontaneous standing back in pure self that stays completely undriven and unaffected, beneath a show of bodily and sensual and mental acts which take part in a driven and affected world. (See page 198, note 510.)

jnyāna: knowledge

jnyāna sādḥaka: an aspirant on the path of knowledge (jnyāna)

Jnyānin: literally, a ‘Knower’ and hence a ‘Sage’. In particular, one who has visualized the ultimate Truth and is firmly established in it. (See page 193 and following.)

Kāraṇa-guru: a Sage who is established in the ultimate Truth and undertakes to guide spiritual aspirants to the same goal (see page 87, note 420)

karma: action of any kind by the body, senses or mind. *Akarma* is actionlessness (see page 112, note 574)

karma-yōga: doing action disinterestedly. It is the perfection of the active principle in man, and is the theme of the *Bhagavad-gītā*.

kartri: doer or actor, made up of body or senses or mind

kartri-tantra: originated and governed by a personal doer (see page 75, note 1241)

kūṭastha: the witness of the individual jīva or life principle (see page 163, note 1359)

lakṣhaṇa: pointer (see page 123)

mantra: a harmonious sound or group of sounds, capable of creating or applying some definite and potential energy, if properly uttered. (See page 134.)

mārga: path, way, method – in particular, a way to Truth

māyā: illusory appearance – created by artistry

mentation: any activity of mind – including all turning of attention through perceiving, thinking and feeling

nirvikalpa: literally, ‘without conception’. In particular, it refers to a meditative state of such deep absorption that all objects of conception have disappeared. (See glossary entry ‘samādhi’ below.)

prakriyā: process or method of enquiry towards Truth (see page 172)

prāṇa: living energy that is inspired to express consciousness in purposeful and meaningful and valued actions; vital functioning; living breath

pratyakṣha (*aparōkṣha*): literally, ‘perceivable by the sense organs’. Spiritually, it means direct or subject to the ultimate experience, and that is the real ‘I’-principle. (See page 60, note 568.)

prema: love (see page 131, note 110)

rajas: energizing inclination to excited activity (see glossary entry *triguṇas* below)

rasa: literally ‘sap’ or ‘juice’, and hence it indicates the essence or the essential savour of a feeling or an experience

sādhaka: a spiritual aspirant engaged in *sādhana* (see next glossary entry)

sādhana: striving to achieve, in the course of spiritual training and discipline (see page 192)

Sage: One who has visualized the ultimate Truth and is firmly established in it. Also called a ‘Jnyānin’. (See page 193 and following.)

Sahaja state: the natural state of spontaneous living, established unwaveringly in plain Truth (see page 199)

samādhi: literally, ‘absorption’. In particular, it refers to a meditative state of absorption where the turning of attention has been stilled. The absorption may be ‘*savikalpa*’ (‘*with* conception’) or ‘*nirvikalpa*’ (‘*without* conception’). Thus, a *savikalpa samādhi* is a state of deep absorption, in some object of intense conception. And a *nirvikalpa samādhi* is an unconditioned state of even deeper absorption, where no object of conception appears.

samskāra: conditioned tendency, left behind by the habituating effect of past actions and experiences (see page 113, note 498)

sannyasin: renouncer

sat: existence (see next glossary entry ‘*sat-cit-ānanda*’)

sat-cit-ānanda: ‘*sat*’ meaning ‘existence’, ‘*cit*’ meaning ‘consciousness’ and ‘*ānanda*’ meaning ‘happiness’ – as three aspects of one same reality (see page 206)

sattva: harmonious and peaceful balancing of lazy inaction by excited activity (see glossary entry ‘*triguṇas*’ below)

sāttvic: peaceful, resolving, clarifying. This is the adjectival form of the noun ‘*sattva*’ (see the glossary entry immediately above).

shāstra: science, intellectual discipline, text or book used for recording and teaching such a science or discipline (see pages 214 and 33)

shuddha: pure

siddhis: powers acquired by the mind as a result of devotion, *yōga* or *jnyāna* – the former two being temporary and the last permanent (see page 215)

sphuraṇa: literally, ‘bursting forth’, ‘sparkling’, ‘shining’. Hence used to describe the subjective and self-luminous manifestation of ‘I am’, unlimited by any particular object. (See page 212, notes 1395 and 410)

svarūpa: one's own true nature, as always present to oneself; the true nature of anything, as always present to itself

svarūpānanda: one's own true nature, realized as happiness itself

tamas: retarding inclination to lazy inaction (see glossary entry *triguṇas* below)

tattvōpadēsha: instruction into Truth

triguṇas: three basic qualities of (1) *tamas* – inclination to sloth and sluggishness; (2) *rajas* – inclination to activity and emotions; and (3) *sattva* – balancing the former two, leading the way to peace and Truth. (See page 208, note 937 and following.)

tripuṭī: triad of doer, doing and deed or perceiver, perception and perceived in every activity (see page 237)

uttamādhikāri: higher aspirant ('uttama' means 'higher', 'adhikāri' means 'aspirant')

Vaṭivīshvarattamma: an illiterate lady from a village called Vaṭivīshvaram, on the way to Cape Commorin. She became a renowned Sage of great esteem, by her deep devotion alone to her Guru, without taking to any other kind of sādhana (discipline) whatsoever. She did not even care to listen to her Guru's spiritual talks; because she was engaged in cooking his food and doing other personal services to her Guru, which she rightly considered by far superior to every other sādhana.

vastu: impersonal reality, thing-in-itself

vastu-tantra: originated and governed by impersonal reality (see page 75, note 1241)

Vedānta: literally, the 'culmination' ('anta') of 'knowledge' ('veda'). The name 'Vedānta' is thus generally used for systems of philosophy that elaborate and explain the terse philosophical questions of the Upaniṣhads, which are the culminating texts of the Vedic literature. In this book, the name 'Vedānta' is particularly used for Advaita or Non-dual Vedānta.

vedāntin: a teacher or student of Vedānta philosophy

vicāra: searching thought, discerning reason, reflective questioning (see page 157, note 1281)

vidyā: right knowledge

vidyā-vṛitti: higher reason, functioning consciousness ('vṛitti' means 'functioning', 'vidyā' means 'knowledge')

vivēka: discrimination, which may function either through the intellect (buddhi) or through the heart (hṛidaya)

yōga: any process by which the mind is sought to be controlled or expanded

yogin: a practitioner of yoga