

Sādhānas According to
Tripura Rahasyam
(Jnāna Khanda)



Swami Shantananda Puri

**Sadhanas According to
'Tripura Rahasyam'
(Jnana Khanda)**

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(Jnana Khanda)

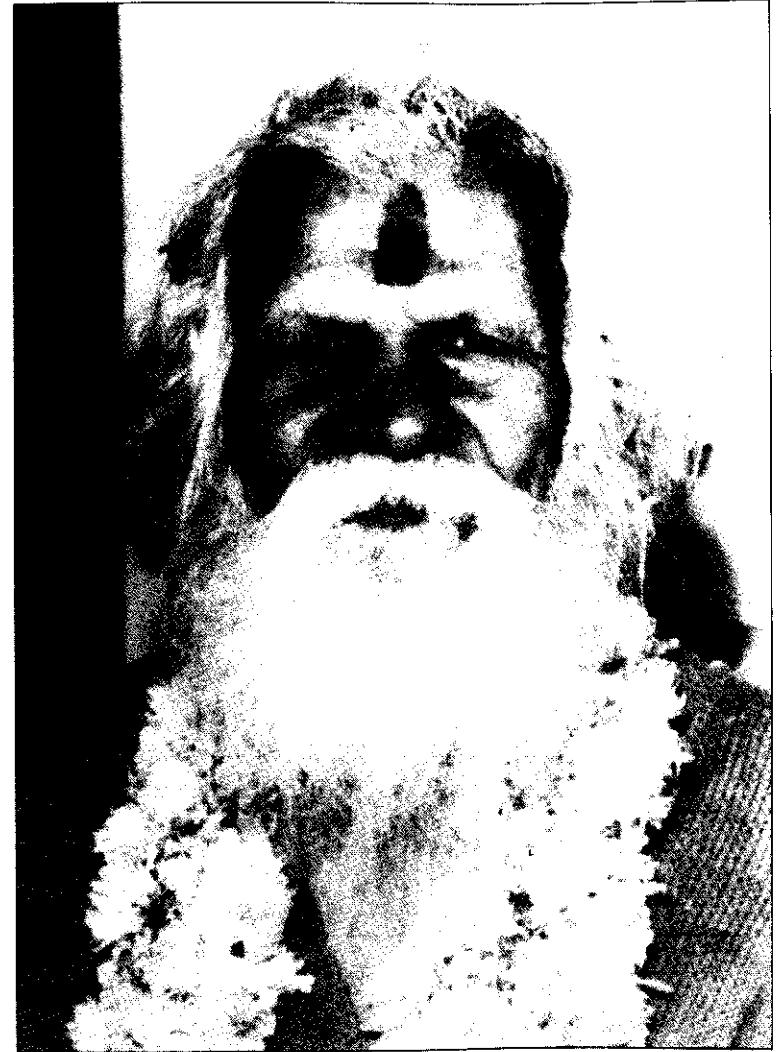
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H.H. Srimad Swami Purushottamanandaji Maharaj

SAMARPAN

*This book is dedicated with veneration
to the Lotus Feet of my revered Guru*

Swami Purushottamanandaji
of Vasishtha Guha, U.P., Himalayas,

*but for whose infinite Compassion
I would not have been able to formulate
my thoughts and put them down
in this book
and to the thousands of Spiritual
Sadhakas all over the world.*

– Swami Shantananda Puri

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Preface

“Tripura Rahasyam” is a classic in Advaita philosophy compiled by a sage called Haritayana, a disciple of Parasurama of Ramayana fame. It contains the various teachings and elucidations received by Parasurama from his Guru Dattatreya. Haritayana narrated them to Narada. Tripura Rahasyam consists of three parts known as Mahatmya Khanda, Jnana Khanda and Charya Khanda. The current booklet is confined to Jnana Khanda which comprises of 2163 slokas. This Jnana Khanda elaborately describes the process of Self-enquiry (Atma Vichara) which is the ultimate step in Self-realisation. It is unique in that besides explaining the state and nature of Pure Consciousness very lucidly, the entire sequential series of Sadhanas leading to it have been discussed and some of the experiences be may encountered during the various stages of Sadhana, which a Sadhaka could easily be misled to consider as the final Reality have been underlined. Many teachings look identical with those in ‘Yoga Vasishtha’ while some of the sublime statements tally with those in ‘Ashtavakra Gita’. Just as in

Yoga Vasishtha, this text also has adopted the method of explaining some truths through some interesting and unique stories.

One of the stories is regarding the son of a sage showing a very big kingdom inside a small rock in the mountain. For an ordinary reader, it would look to be an unbelievable flight of imagination. In this connection, it would be of interest to note what Mr. Manu Bhaumik, one of the most internationally celebrated scientists has observed in his book 'Code name God' (Spiritual Odyssey of a man of time).

"Cosmologists generally agree on the fact that something as enormously vast as our universe has emerged from an infinitesimally small nugget of space".

Tripura is a term which refers to the Goddess of Supreme Power who is worshipped in the Srividya tradition of the Saktas too as Lalita Parameswari, Tripura Sundari, Raja Rajeswari etc. She is the very Self or Atman who transcends all the three states of waking, dream and sleep as also the three bodies - Sthula (Gross), Sookshma (Subtle) and Karana (Causal nescience). Hence the term Tripura is applied to the Divine Mother who is not different from the Self. The text which deals

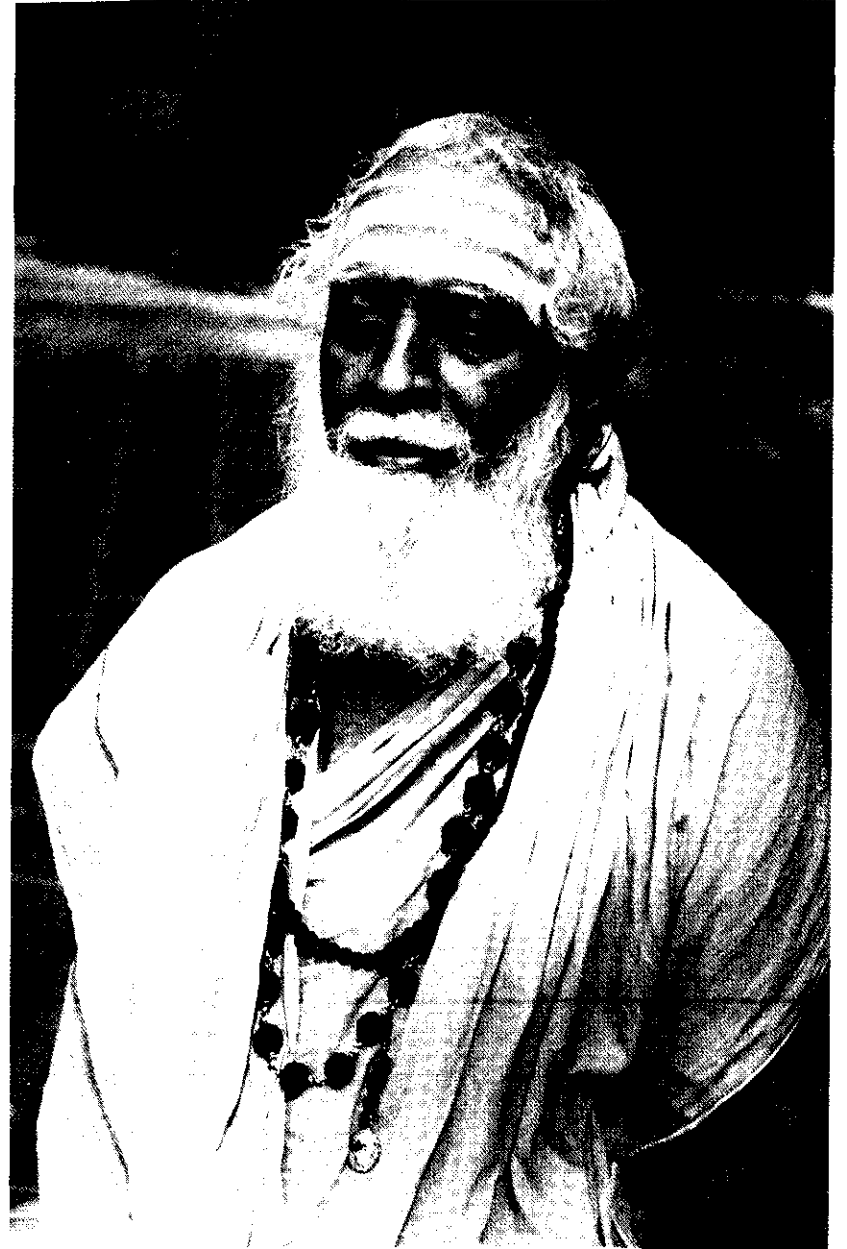
with the nature of the Self and the sadhanas leading to the ultimate state of Samadhi where Atman stands revealed in its own light has been rightly called "The Secrets of Tripura" - 'TRIPURA RAHASYAM'.

This is one of the few books which Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi of Arunachala used to extol. The book also seems to contain some of the principles of Kashmir Saivism where Sakti is also given prominence along with Siva.

Yoga Vasishtha has expounded with expertise the unreality of the world projected by Maya, about the annihilation of the mind as a necessary step and while establishing the Self or the Atman as the only reality, prescribes the hearing of these truths again and again as the sadhana for attaining Self-realisation. Tripura Rahasyam while expounding the same topics, with equal if not more lucidity and emphasis, has stressed on the various practical aspects of the sadhanas leading to Self-realisation elaborately.

Another beauty of this book is its emphasis that the method of Dualism starting from the worship of one's own favourite deity whether formless or with form like the Divine Mother, Vishnu or Siva is very necessary as that alone

will lead to Self-enquiry or Atma vichara leading one to the Sahaja Samadhi or being established in the Non-dual Reality viz, the Atman. The text enjoins that the worship of the Mother Tripura or any deity and subsequent sadhanas - all these stem from Satsang (company of holy men) and a deep all-consuming desire for and devotion to the goal of Self-realisation, which form the basic Sine-qua-non.



Sri Swami Shantananda Puri

CHAPTER I

Start of the Spiritual Journey

The seeking of the Reality starts only when a person gets disgusted with the world and his mind has been purified by the various rituals, obligatory ceremonies and worship of Gods. Parasurama of Ramayana fame got disgusted with the world and tired of all the ritualistic activities prescribed in the scriptures and having been guided by Samvarta, an Avadhuta sage, approached Dattatreya, the great Master, for instructions as to how to get perfect happiness. Dattatreya started explaining as follows:-

Following Karma-kanda and performance of actions (karma) will only involve a person in delusion and destruction. The very first step in the quest for happiness is enquiry (vichara)¹. One has to observe and enquire into the nature of the world and that of the Self. One can never get the ultimate bliss without a proper enquiry or investigation.

1. विचारः सर्वं मूलं हि सोपानं प्रथमं भवेत्।
सुविचारमृते क्षेमप्राप्तिः कस्य कथं भवेत्॥ II - 51 & 52

It is on account of ignorance (of the Self) leading to lack of discrimination and enquiry that people fall into the snare of the so-called duties and actions and become blind to the Truth. The best means for starting on this path of enquiry and for annihilation of ignorance is the Grace of the Supreme Divine Mother (the transcendental Power) who resides in the heart of all as Pure Consciousness². This Grace of the Goddess has to be obtained by worshipping with faith and devotion the Supreme Sakti (Power)³ called interalia as Tripura who abides as the Self of the self, in the manner dictated by the Sad-Guru⁴. In other words, one requires a Guru and one should implement the Guru's instructions with full faith and deep devotion. As a result of such worship, the mind is automatically propelled by the Grace of the Divine Mother towards Self-enquiry.

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2. साधनं त्वेकमेवात्र परमं सर्वतोऽधिकम्।
सर्वहृत्पद्मनिलय देवतायाः परा कृपा॥ II - 67 & 68
 3. विचारार्कोऽविचारान्ध-महाध्वान्त-निबर्हणः।
तत्र मूलं भवेद्भक्त्या देवता-परिराधनम्॥ II - 69
 4. तस्मान्निजात्मरूपां तां त्रिपुरां परमेश्वरीम्।
आराधयेदकापट्यात् सद्गुरु-द्वारतः क्रमात्॥ II - 71 & 72

CHAPTER II

Satsanga - Basic means for Moksha

The remedy for dispelling the miseries and sufferings of the world and the main factor which leads one to Moksha (liberation) is cultivating the company of holy men, sadhus and mahatmas⁵. It was the association with sage Samvarta, which led Parasurama to Dattatreya, the great Master of all ages. Here Dattatreya began to narrate the story of a king Hemachuda (devoting 8 chapters out of the total 22 chapters) in order to illustrate the beneficial effects of Satsanga in leading to salvation.

Hemachuda was a prince of Dasarna. While on a hunting trip he fell in love with a beautiful girl called Hemalekha in the hermitage of a sage and married her.

In due course, after returning to his capital, the prince found to his dismay that Hemalekha

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5. सद्भिः संगः परं मूलं सर्वदुःखनिबर्हणम्।
परमार्थफलप्राप्तौ बीजं सत्संग उच्यते॥ III - 7 & 8

showed no interest in enjoyments and was unresponsive to his amorous advances. When pressed for the reasons for her indifference to worldly enjoyments, the latter narrated her own views with all humility.

“Oh King, whatever happiness we feel in this world is tinged with misery⁶. How can it be happiness? The same object may give happiness to someone or somewhere while it may give misery to somebody else or elsewhere, according to the time, place and environment. For instance, fire is agreeable in winter but intolerable in summer. I am trying to find out what is the permanent happiness in life, which will remain unchanged for ever. Misery can be either mental or physical and the mental one is due to desires. The sexual happiness is common to both men, animals and worms. The beauty of a person is only a concept of the mind⁷. By constant association with another person an attraction grows and a desire comes up in the mind. All desires lead to misery”.

6. एकमेव सुखं दुःखं कालदेशाकृतेर्भिदा।
न तत् सुखं भवेन्नाथ यतो दुःखविमिश्रितम्॥ IV - 12 & 19

7. तस्माद्भ्राजकुमारैतत्सौन्दर्यं मनसोत्थितम्। IV - 65.
पौनःपुन्येन तदनु वाञ्छामुपसमागतः॥ IV - 69

On hearing all this, Hemachuda also ceased to have any interest in worldly enjoyments. The force of the latent tendencies (Vasanas) was so strong that he could not suddenly desist from his usual enjoyments but at the same time, he did not derive any joy out of them. He grew pale and dejected. Again when his wife Hemlekha went to him, Hemachuda asked her how to gain happiness because even when he indulged in worldly enjoyments due to the force of habit he was unable to derive any pleasure out of them. Hemlekha was pleased at this state of affairs as this state of vairagya (dispassion) could only arise out of the Grace of Tripura who is but the Self abiding in the heart. She then explained the Truth through an allegoric parable as follows:-

Pure Consciousness as Tripura, the Divine Mother, gave Buddhi (intellect) as a close companion to her son, the Jiva (individual soul). The intellect somehow, came into contact clandestinely with nescience or avidya (ignorance) which led Buddhi into delusion (Moha) resulting in foolishness and a highly wavering mind. Because of the corruption of the intellect, Jiva also forgot his own source (the Self or the Divine Mother) and his real nature in the form of

Consciousness was lost, having been completely shrouded by ignorance. He started desiring for a form and a name (nama and rupa). The wavering mind began to revel in imaginations and got attracted towards the various senses of perception like the eye, nose, ear etc. He began to imagine various pleasures and indulged in communion with the various objects of perception like sex, music, varieties of food etc. He liked some pleasant objects and disliked some others like harsh noise, ugly and dirty things. He got pleasure out of the former and revulsion or unhappiness out of the latter. These desires began to increase and no amount of their fulfilment created satisfaction. He began to burn in his desires and the non-fulfilment resulted in anger and greed, thus earning the censure of other people. The mind was steeped in sorrow and unhappiness and its discriminative faculty was lost. As a result of the inexhaustible desires, the mind, intellect and the various senses began to assume bodies one after the other (rebirth). The Jiva was completely identifying itself with the body-mind complex. Thus the bondage arose.

As the source of the Jiva is the pure chit (Consciousness), inspite of its association with the mind and intellect corrupted by ignorance, it always remains pure, bereft of blemishes and untainted. Pure Consciousness is all powerful and

remains the sub-stratum of the countless Jivas⁸. By itself it has no forms and is actionless. Thus having gone through the travails of sorrows and sufferings birth after birth because of its association with the senses, the Jiva became tired and disgusted. Somehow, due to the Grace of the Supreme Self or Tripura, the mind got purified through vairagya (dispassion) and regained discrimination (viveka). The Jiva was able to get control of the mind and gradually through sadhanas merged in its source viz., the Pure Consciousness. One should, therefore, meditate on the Self which is Pure Consciousness, which is alone (the world having disappeared) and illuminates all and pervades all⁹. That is the way to gain eternal happiness.

8. महासती मे जननी विशुद्धा निर्मलाकृतिः।
सर्वरूपाप्यरूपा सा सर्वयुक्ताप्यसंयुता ॥ V - 108-110

9. चितिरूपं स्वमात्मानं भजध्वं चेत्यवर्जितम्।
यतः सर्वं चितिमनु भाति सा तु स्वतन्त्रतः ॥ IV - 99-100

CHAPTER III

Faith - The best means

As Hemachuda was not able to understand or be convinced of the truth behind the allegorical parable, Hemalekha continued:

“Oh Prince, have confidence in me, your well-wisher. As your wife, I am interested in your welfare. In the path for final beatitude, faith in the words of a competent person is a must. Even in worldly affairs, one cannot go far without mutual trust in certain persons. As the mind is restless and untrustworthy, one should not resort to fallacious reasoning and purposeless discussion. Appropriate effort must follow right discussion from which faith emanates¹⁰. An earnest person should immediately resort to action after hearing about the Truth.

“Whatever object brings misery can never redound to our good¹¹. All the objects like wealth,

10. सत्तर्कसंश्रयेणाशु साधनैकपरो भवेत्।
सत्तर्कजनितां श्रद्धां प्राप्येह फलभाग् नरः॥ VII - 7
11. यच्छोकैरनुसंभिन्नं न तच्छ्रेयो हि सर्वथा। VII - 21

sons, wife, kingdom, physical strength, learning, fame, body, aids for beauty are transient and are already in the jaws of death¹². Obviously none of them can be the means for achieving eternal happiness. But man has been deluded by the power of Maya of the Supreme Lord into believing that the objects aforementioned are all desirable and worthy of ‘striving for’. The most important means for attaining the highest happiness is to take refuge in the Supreme Lord who is the master of maya and to worship Him¹³. That Lord alone can grant us true knowledge and get us across the ocean of Maya¹⁴.

“As this world is a well organised system, there has to be a creator and a controller whom we call as God. He is a unique creator, as, there being no other substance apart from Him, he created the world out of Himself and became its material cause. Out of the various types of worshipping that Supreme Being, the one without any selfish motive and any expectation is the best¹⁵.

12. सर्वमेतदस्थिरत्वात् कालसर्पमुखस्थितम्॥ VII - 22
13. अतः परमकं श्रेयः एतद्वै मुख्यतो भवेत्। VII - 24
14. तस्मान्महामायिनं तं अप्रसाद्य कथं भवेत्।
महा-मोहस्य तरणं तस्मात्तं सर्वथा श्रयेत्॥ VII - 30
15. निर्हेतुकं तु काचित्कं तत्सत्योपासनं भवेत्। VII - 51

He Himself looks after the welfare of His devotees. Disregarding all Prarabdha (result of past actions) and violating the laws prescribed by Himself for running of the world, He leads his devotees to the proper means for achieving the latter's goal and bestows success on them¹⁶. As the Lord alone is capable of changing even the destiny of the devotees who love Him without expectations and taking them on the path for their ultimate good, one should surrender oneself unconditionally to the Supreme God.¹⁷"

At this stage, Hemachuda asked his wife as to who was that Supreme God who was fit to be worshipped.

Hemalekha replied that the Supreme Being (of the form of pure Consciousness or chit) is alone called by various names such as Siva, Vishnu, Sun etc.¹⁸ He, being completely independent and all

16. ज्ञात्वा सर्वात्मना तस्य योगक्षेमवहो भवेत्।
अप्रतीक्ष्य कर्मपाकं नियतिं स्वां विधूय च॥ VII - 58

17. तस्मात्कुतर्कं संत्यज्य महेशं शरणीकुरु।
अहेतुकतया स त्वां नियोजयति श्रेयसि॥ VII - 67

18. स विष्णुः स शिवो धाता स सूर्यः सोम एव च॥ VII - 77

powerful has no form or body but still is able to create this world. He has no gross body and is of the form of Consciousness alone but wherever and in whatever form the devotees think of Him, He fulfils their desires by assuming the form imagined by them¹⁹. A wise man should worship the formless Supreme Being which is undifferentiated²⁰. Those who are unable to do so may worship the gross form which is firmly imprinted in their mind and still reach the goal.

This Power of Consciousness which alone exists is known as Tripura and She is the greatest queen who acts as She likes²¹. The world which has this Consciousness as the substratum, though essentially not different from Her, appears different like the image of an object (say, a city) reflected in the mirror.

19. भक्तियुक्ताश्च तैर्ध्यातो यत्र यत्र यथा यथा।
तथाधत्तेऽनेकरूपं भक्त-चिन्तामणिः स्वयम्॥ VII - 89-90

20. तस्मात्प्राज्ञ उपासीत परं रूपं हि निष्कलम्।
असमर्थः स्थूलरूपं यद् बुद्धौ संगतं दृढम्॥ VII - 93-94

21. चित्तिरेव महासत्ता सम्राज्ञी परमेश्वरी।
त्रिपुरा भासते यस्यां अविभिन्नं विभिन्नवत्॥ VII - 91
आदर्श नगरप्रख्यं जगदेतच्चराचरम्। VII - 92

CHAPTER IV

Higher Stages Leading to Samadhi

At this juncture, Dattatreya reminds Parasurama that Vichara or Self-enquiry is the most important sadhana for getting liberation (Moksha) and the mind becomes inclined to take up Self-enquiry only by the grace of the Divine Mother²². Till such time as the mind turns to Self-enquiry, even thousands of other methods adopted will not take one to his goal.

To continue with the story, Hemachuda desired to know from his wife as to who actually the Divine Mother was, how the Jivas came out of Her and what is our real nature. Hemalekha replied "only when a person knows the nature of his Self he would be able to know the nature of the Divine Mother.²³ One's own Self has to be experienced

22. एतावद् दुर्लभं लोके परानुग्रहमन्तरा।
विचारप्रवणं चित्तं यन्मुख्यं मोक्षकारणम्॥ VIII - 5

23. ज्ञाते स्वात्मस्वरूपे वै ततो ज्ञास्यसि मातरम्।
न ह्यादेशः स्वरूपेऽस्ति तत आदेष्ट-वर्जितम्॥ IX - 7-8

by oneself with the help of pure intellect and cannot be pointed out by anybody else, be he the best of the Gurus.

THE WAY TO REALISE THE ATMAN IS TO SIT IN A SOLITARY PLACE AND TO DISCRIMINATE BY ELIMINATING AND DISCARDING IN THE MIND ALL THAT YOU CONSIDER AS 'MINE'. ULTIMATELY THAT WHICH EXISTS BUT CANNOT BE CONSIDERED AS 'MINE' IS THE SELF²⁴. Whatever we think as 'mine' is only a possession and cannot be 'I'. For instance you consider me (Hemalekha) as your wife and not as Atman. I belong to you and I am not your real nature. While you can mentally discard everything which is yours, that which cannot be felt as yours and which cannot be separated as apart from you is the Atman."

The Prince who was highly influenced by this exhortation went away to a crystal palace situated in a lonely park outside the capital. Sitting alone in the ninth storey of the building near a window

24. गत्वैकान्ते विविच्यैतत् यद्यद् भाति ममत्वतः।
तत्तत् परित्यज्य परं स्वात्मानमभिलक्ष्य॥ IX - 14
ममार्थमखिलं त्यक्त्वा यत्यक्तुं नैव शक्यते।
तमात्मानं समालक्ष्य परं श्रेयः समाप्नुहि॥ IX - 16

he began to concentrate his mind on the method of enquiry as advised by his wife.

He began to reflect –

Almost all of us consider the body as representing 'I'. It cannot be true. It is only an assembly of various articles like the blood, the bones etc. and they are all subject to change every second. Neither can my mind or intellect be the 'I' or Atman. I am somebody different from these things.

There cannot be any time when I can feel that 'I do not exist'. So 'I' is always shining. A pot can be seen through the eye. Prana or vital breath can be inferred through the feeling of touch on the skin. A person requires a medium like a sense organ to know the material things like a Pot. By whom is the entity 'I' made to shine? He left off thinking of all objects in the range of perception of the mind. He saw some dense darkness which he mistook as the Self and experienced immense joy. When he again stopped his mind through Hatha Yoga, he saw a brilliant effulgence of infinite dimensions. He got a doubt as to how the Atman changed from a dense darkness to a brilliant light. When he stopped his mind again, he found his mind overwhelmed by

sleep wherein he saw many dreams with wonderful visions. Is it the same Atman which is successively changing the forms? Many a sadhak, at these stages of practice, is deluded into thinking that he has got enlightenment as soon as he gets such visions of light, sound etc. But the prince decided to get clarifications from his wife and sent for her.

On hearing about the experiences of her husband, Hemalekha began to narrate as follows :-

No doubt the effort made by you in stopping the mind (all thoughts) is very necessary for attaining the knowledge of the Self. But this effort does not directly constitute a factor for attainment of the Self (Atman). The Self being our very nature remains attained always and the question of attaining that which already exists does not arise²⁵. Just as an existing article hidden by darkness is found by means of the light from a lamp, it seems that the Self (with whom we have lost connection due to the darkness of ignorance) has been attained by the restraining of all the worldly thoughts (mind).

Even before you saw the darkness or the light, you existed as the objectless Self (as awareness)

25. अप्राप्तावात्मता न स्यात् आत्मत्वेऽनासता कुतः। IX - 70
अप्राप्तस्य भवेत् प्राप्तिः आत्मत्वान्नाप्तिरस्त्यतः॥ IX - 71

in that interval after restraining the mind before the darkness came. Hold on or keep your attention fixed on that awareness of "I AM". That meditation alone will lead you to the highest bliss.²⁶ As our mind is habituated to go in search of external objects and as we are conditioned to the delusion of perceiving objects through our senses only, many people find that all their search has ended in futility, not having attained the aforesaid meditation of objectless awareness i.e. on the mere existence as 'I'. There is no question of a search or enquiry or contemplation. One has to remain as the 'I' (Self) by diverting all the attention on the 'I' (the feeling of amness or being).

The entire world constitutes objects of knowledge and knowledge (or awareness of the objects). There is no world in the absence of knowledge or awareness. The knowledge is dependent on the knower (the subject) for its knowledge. The knower does not require any proof to know that he exists. He is the only reality behind knowledge and the objects. That which requires no proof and is self-evident is the reality. Knowledge is a great mirror in which the

26. तं भावं भावय सदा परमानन्ददायकम्।
अत्र सर्वे महामोहग्रहग्रस्ताः परावृत्ताः ॥ IX - 78

objective world appears like reflections. So, Prince, realise with a mind that is stilled your own true nature which is one undivided (by time or space which are also illusory) general consciousness in which the entire world shines (like the reflections in the mirror).²⁷

If a person is able to merge his attention in that undivided consciousness i.e., in the feeling of "I am that Supreme Consciousness" ('I AM THAT') he becomes in due course the Totality - the 'All-doer' (Sarva Karta).²⁸ The general undivided Consciousness is one which shines as pure objectless awareness (as mere existence of oneself as 'I AM') (i) in the interval before waking up when sleep has ended (ii) in the interval between two thoughts and (iii) just before an object is perceived. Keeping our attention fixed on this intervening state of consciousness is a form of meditation which will lead to self-realisation. This is one's natural state by reaching which one is freed from all delusions. It is the ignorance of this state which has resulted in the functioning of this delusive world made of thoughts. This Super-

27. राजपुत्र सूक्ष्मदृशा तल्लक्ष्य निजं वपुः।
यत्र सामान्यचैतन्ये जगदेतद् विराजते ॥ IX - 92

28. तत्समावेश-संसिद्ध्या सर्वकर्तृत्वमाप्नुयात्। IX - 93

Conscious state is the substratum of all and takes the form of all objects and contains nothing but the Self.²⁹ This is the Lord of all, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and Sadasiva. Even meditating thus one can reach this state.

Final Advice

Stop all thoughts (this comes through repeated practice and through vairagya by withdrawing the mind from all objects of likes and dislikes) and thus restrain the mind from going outwards.³⁰ With all your enthusiasm and interest hold the mind in the thoughtless (inward) state (an intense desire to find our own true nature will be of maximum help in this). The mind is thus brought to the condition of a new born baby which has no thoughts (as it has no vocabulary) and revels in the state of being (the feeling of 'I AM'). It is then that the Self can be realised as Pure Existence or Being - the source of the world. The 'I' disappears and so the idea of 'I see' is also transcended. When one becomes 'that' which is 'ALL' (the Totality), the individual who started as a seeker disappears.

On hearing this, Hemachuda sat in meditation and got absorbed in the Self for a long time,

29. सर्वाश्रयं सर्वरूपं अपि सर्वविवर्जितम्।
एष सर्वेश्वरो धाता विष्णुरीशः सदाशिवः ॥ IX - 97

30. पश्येषदन्तः संरुध्य स्वात्मानं स्वात्मना सता।
त्यक्त्वा बहिःप्रसरतामन्तः प्रसरणोद्यतः ॥ IX - 98

forgetting the external world. After remaining in this state of Samadhi for a muhurta when he opened his eyes, the sight of his wife and the world disturbed the peace of his earlier state. He quickly closed his eyes. His wife, again, began to advise him as follows :

The state you now experienced while closing the eyes but lost on opening the eyes is far away from the state of repose in the Self. A state which you get only by closing the eyes cannot be a perfect state³¹. There are various pseudo peaceful states during one's practice, which the seekers mistake as the final absolute state of enlightenment and get deluded. There are countless knots in the rope of delusion like a wrong firm belief in the body being the Self and in the difference between the Jiva and God³². Only when all these knots are cut asunder by enquiry (vichara) and meditation, liberation takes place.

The great undivided consciousness exists everywhere and at all times. It is neither attained by closing of the eyes nor lost by opening them.

31. निमील्योन्मील्य वा नेत्रे तत्पदं न समीक्ष्यते। X - 17
निमील्य कृत्वा गत्वा वा प्राप्तं पूर्णं कथं भवेत् ॥ X - 19

32. ग्रन्थयः कोटिशः सन्ति मोहरञ्जु विवर्तिताः।
तत्र स्वरूपासंविद्धिः मोहरञ्जुरुदीरिता ॥ X - 23

In the highest state, no duty remains to be done³³. To think that I shall perceive the highest undivided Consciousness by stopping all thoughts is a knot which has to be cut asunder. So also eradicate the other strong knot "I am not this" (for example that Atman is not there when I open my eyes). See the Self who is of perfect bliss everywhere. See the world in the Self as the reflection in the mirror³⁴. Actually there is no seer or action of seeing where the Self is involved. One has to abide as the Self in his own natural state.

Following this advice of his wife, Hemachuda got Self-realisation and remained ruling his country for twenty five thousand years as a Jivanmukta (liberated). On seeing Hemachuda, his parents also followed his path. The courtiers and in due course all the citizens of the city of Visala also gave up their body-sense and all of them became liberated. Hence anybody who longs to have self-realisation should have satsanga (seeking the company of holy men). It is a primary requirement.

33. न ते कर्तव्यसंशेषो विज्ञाय परमं पदम्॥ X - 35
त्यज ग्रंथिं संनिरुद्धं पश्यामीति हृदि स्थिताम्।
इदं नाहमिति ग्रंथिं उन्मूलय परां दृढाम्॥ X - 36

34. पश्य सर्वत्र चात्मानं अखण्डानन्दबुद्धितम्।
पश्यात्मन्यखिलं लोकं दर्पणप्रतिबिम्बवत्॥ X - 37

CHAPTER V

Basic Reality of the Universe and Power of imagination

At this stage Parasurama expressed his inability to comprehend as to how the world with all its objects is not different from the Consciousness and how the Pure Consciousness or Knowledge devoid of all known objects could exist.

Guru Dattatreya began to explain-

This entire Universe is only an appearance just as in the dream. The Lord, as per the Scriptures, is one with unimaginable power and He alone existed prior to creation. He manifested by His Will Power the picture of the world on the screen of His own Self without any material, as a matter of play (leela). This great God who is all pure Consciousness, created the world out of his imagination. As any mental creation is of the nature of the mind only, having come out of Pure Consciousness, the world is also Pure Consciousness and has no body or form. The very

existence of objects is the manifestation of Pure Consciousness. There is no place or object outside Consciousness. Before creation, there existed the great freedom of Consciousness which was pure and single. That was of the nature of the Will (sankalpa) alone. From that will, the world of the nature of a reflection has appeared. The World created by the Will of God having complete freedom is commonly experienced by all the individual souls (Jivas). These are all the conclusions of the Scriptures.

The entire creation is like the magical world created by a magician out of nothing. This creation is a mental imagination of Siva who is absolute awareness and Sri Tripura is the SAKTI (energy) and witness of the whole creation. Since the universe is only a projection from and in the mirror of Consciousness, its unreal nature can become evident only on investigation. The world cannot stand any investigation because of its changing unreal nature. Time and Space are also part of these reflections and unreal too. Thus the universe which shines is only the Self, the Pure Consciousness - the one and one only.³⁵

35. यदस्तीति भाति तत्तु चित्तिरेव महेश्वरी।
एवं जगच्चिदेकात्मरूपं ते सम्यगीरितम्॥ XI - 85

As Parasurama was unable to understand how the world continues to look real even after learning to the contrary from Dattatreya, the latter elucidated it through a story :-

Once a King, Sushena, in Bengal performed a horse sacrifice (Aswamedha). The horse went through various countries followed by the princes and a vast army. On account of the disrespect shown to a sage Tangana on the way, the sage's son destroyed the army and took the horse inside the Ganda mountain standing in front. On hearing of this affront, the King sent his brother Mahasena who appeased the sage Tangana and his son by praising them. At the behest of his father, Tangana brought the princes and the horse from inside the mountain and delivered them to Sushena. In answer to the query of Sushena, Tangana told him how, in order to fulfil the desire of his son to rule a kingdom, he taught him the highest perfection in yoga. As a result, his son created a huge world in this huge stone encircled by the ocean and ruled it. As Mahasena expressed a desire to see that wonderful world, the sage's son took the subtle body of Mahasena along with him by means of yogic powers and entered into the mountain. The king Mahasena saw the sky, the Moon, the Sun, oceans and seven islands full of

rivers, mountains, various worlds, celestial beings like Indra and his followers, demons, human beings and semi-divine beings. He also saw Satya loka, Vaikunta etc., and the sage's son playing simultaneously the roles of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Mahasena was amazed at this illusion. On coming out of the mountain, the sage's son casually informed him that during the one day they remained inside the mountain, twelve hundred million years had passed by in the outside world which had completely changed. Mahasena's brother and numerous progeny belonging to his lineage had died. The capital of Sushena had become a forest. Many a river had dried up and mountains had been razed to the ground. On hearing this, Mahasena fainted with sorrow and when he came to his senses, began to lament loudly over the loss of all his relatives and the kingdom. The sage's son consoled the king thus :-

By lamenting will you be able to regain what you have lost? Whose relatives are the people who have died? Even the worms in your body are also connected to you and why don't you grieve for them? Reflect O Prince as to who you are? Are you the body or something different from it?³⁶

36. राजन् विमृश कस्त्वं वै कान् विनष्टान् प्रशोचसि।
देहस्त्वं देहभिन्नो वा देहः संधातरूपकः ॥ XIII - 37

You are not the body; you are its possessor. Just as we say 'my shirt', we say 'my body'. You are not the body just as you are not the garment.³⁷ Similarly, you say - my vital breath (Prana) and my mind. What actually is your real nature?

Mahasena confessed that he did not know who he was in real nature and the grief naturally came to him, the reason wherefor was not known.

The sage's son explained "People deluded by the Power of Maya (the Supreme Goddess) do not understand the Self and hence grieve vainly. As long as one is ignorant of the Self, so long will there be misery. Just as a dreamer is foolishly alarmed at his own dreams (e.g. of a tiger pursuing him etc.) so the man who is ignorant of the Self is terrified. The waking state resembles the dream state. The world of the waking state appears to be real to all only by the force of habit of imagination. You saw such a big world inside this mountain. Was it not there while awake? Is it true or false?

King, know the Self³⁸ which is Pure Consciousness and the world of the waking state

37. न त्वं देहः किन्तु देही मदेह इति भाषसे।
यया मद्ब्रह्मिन्त्येवं स देहस्त्वं कथं वद ॥ XIII - 41

38. जाग्रच्चित्रदर्पणं चावेहि आत्मानं चिदात्मकम्।
परमानन्दितस्वान्तो भव शीघ्रं महीपते ॥ XIII - 91

which is a Projection in the mirror of the Self. Quickly experience the transcendental bliss which fills up your heart and thus leave off your grief.

In continuation, the sage's son explained-

This world should be conceived as born by the creative contemplation of Brahma, the creator. Due to the habit of many births, this world has been firmly imagined by all as having a real nature. Even though the world in the mountain as also the one outside the mountain were both of similar imagination, the time and space were of different scales of measurement. The same aspect revealing itself as two different kinds exists in nature. While water suffocates men and animals, it helps fish to breathe freely inside the water. Thus many objects of the world exist with twofold opposing aspects. Ultimately as the world outside the mountain as also inside the mountain were both born of imagination, there is nothing outside or inside where the Reality is concerned. Hence all the objects of this world of imagination are pervaded by that Power of Consciousness the great Goddess Tripura, who is called by various names as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva by different sects of devotees.³⁹

39. एतत् परा चित्तिः प्रोक्ता त्रिपुरा परमेश्वरी।
ब्रह्मेत्याहुर्वेदविदो विष्णुं वैष्णवसत्तमाः ॥ XIV - 44
शिवं शैवोत्तमाः प्राहुः शक्तिं शक्तिपरायणाः XIV - 45

As a city appearing in a mirror is not separate from the mirror, the world which appears in the Consciousness is not separate from the Consciousness. Just as there is one undivided mirror in spite of the several reflected images in it, there is only one Consciousness - the only Reality.

Whatever place or time is imagined by whomsoever and in whichever manner, it would appear there in that manner either as a long or short time or in a gross or subtle manner.⁴⁰ The time and space would appear as large as your firm imagination. In the outer world, the time and space appear to us as imagined by the Creator (Brahma). We should give up our delusion by contemplating on the pure Consciousness - i.e., by holding our attention firmly to the 'I', bereft of all thoughts of the world.⁴¹ (Incidentally, Bhagawan Ramana has also told that by keeping our attention on the I-I feeling which is continuously welling up spontaneously one could get liberation). On hearing this advice, Mahasena took up to contemplation of the Self through Samadhi and finally attained the supreme state of Nirvana (absorption in Self).

40. देशः कालोऽथवा किञ्चिद् यथा येन विभावितम्।
तथा तत्तत्र भासेत दीर्घसूक्ष्मत्वभेदतः ॥ XIV - 83

41. निश्चित्यैवं त्यज भ्रान्तिं शुद्धचिद्भावनक्रमात्। XIV - 92

CHAPTER VI

How to Realise the Nature of the Self - Advice to ASHTAVAKRA

Now, Parasurama wanted a clarification as to how the ultimate knowledge called Self could be realised in practice if it is beyond all cognition. What is the nature of liberation and how one could reconcile the Sages getting engaged in action while being established in Pure Consciousness.

Dattatreya began to explain :-

The State of Supreme Consciousness is to be experienced or realised and not cognized like worldly objects. In that state, the Consciousness alone remains and even the awareness of 'I AM' disappears. Any other knowledge obtained from Scriptures or sages is a secondhand knowledge which is not of much use.

Here, Dattatreya illustrated this point with the story of Ashtavakra.

“Once King Janaka conducted a big fire-sacrifice (YAGA) of the Divine Mother as the

formless Self. Simultaneously Varuna, the presiding deity of the waters started an identical fire-sacrifice. As the priests and scholars in large numbers preferred to attend the Yaga of Janaka in response to the latter's invitation, Varuna's son (Varuni) resorted to a ruse by challenging all the scholars and priests for a debate in the open court of Janaka. Having been defeated with fallacious polemics, all the scholars in thousands were got drowned in the ocean as per the terms of challenge accepted by them. In truth, all those scholars were secretly taken with all honour from under the ocean to attend the sacrifice of Varuna. One of the scholars who was thus drowned into the ocean was Kahola whose son Ashtavakra, on hearing about his father's end, rushed to the court of Janaka and defeated Varuni in no time. He then insisted on Varuni being drowned in the ocean. Varuni immediately brought all the scholars and priests who were supposed to have been drowned from out of Varuna's court, including Kahola, the father of Ashtavakra. Ashtavakra, proud of his own achievement and puffed up with pride slighted all other scholars.

Just then an attractive young woman-ascetic wearing ochre robes and matted hair appeared in the assembly and challenged Ashtavakra to describe that Absolute state which, if reached, bestows

immortality and on attaining which all doubts are set at rest and desires vanish once for all. Ashtavakra explained :-

It is the state of Pure Consciousness where the world is projected like the image of a city in a mirror. Such a transcendental state is unknowable because there is no one to know that Supreme knower, beside itself.

The woman hermit derisively asked Ashtavakra - O sage - you have obviously had no practical experience but are talking out of bookish knowledge. There is an evident anachronism in your statement. How can a state which does not exist, because it is unknowable, be reached so that it can confer immortality? You should confirm that such a state does not exist and you do not know. If it exists, then it is not unknowable. You have a knowledge of the image but not of the mirror!

Being thus reprimanded, Ashtavakra confessed his ignorance of the matter and humbly requested the ascetic to enlighten him considering him as her disciple.

Thus requested, the ascetic continued to explain:-

The only ones who have known the Reality in this assembly are King Janaka and myself. The

Supreme Consciousness has to be realised by oneself and is not a matter for discussion. So long as the mind is turned outward towards the objects of the world one can never realise his Self. No amount of logic or perspicacious intellect can lead one to Self-Realisation. Without ever having rendered any service to the Sadguru and without the Grace of God one cannot become aware of the Reality⁴². Then one has to dive within oneself by stilling all the outgoing thoughts of the mind.

While a lamp illuminates objects on all sides, no second lamp is necessary to see the original lamp.⁴³ The first lamp shines by itself. Similarly while all the objects are illuminated by the Consciousness, the latter shines by itself. Even to be aware of the absence of awareness during sleep saying "I slept well. I was not conscious", you require the light of Consciousness.⁴⁴

The light of Consciousness always shines by itself without the need of another illuminator. This

42. नैतत्तर्केण सुज्ञेयमपि सूक्ष्मधिया क्वचित्।
विना सद्गुरुसेवाया देवतानुग्रहाद्विना॥ XV - 78

43. यथा हि दीपो विषयान् प्रकाशयति सर्वतः।
स्वयं प्रकाशयतां नैति क्वचिदीपस्य कस्यचित्॥ XV - 85

44. अप्रकाशेनापि सैव चितिशक्तिः प्रकाशते। XV - 91

matter should be investigated subtly. One has to abandon all activities and resort to one's own essential nature. This means that one should abandon all thought activity also. The inwardness of the mind by the cessation of thought cannot arise unless all desires and expectations are erased.⁴⁵

Thus abandoning all thoughts completely you must remain as Atman which is your essential nature i.e., remain in the simple awareness of existence (simply 'BE') void of all reflection or enquiry.⁴⁶ Thus the so called 'unknowable' is realised and one abides in immortality for ever.

It is not so easy to understand immediately what all I have now said, by hearing it once. Ask King Janaka again and he will explain. Thus concluding, the woman ascetic (perhaps it was Goddess TRIPURA Herself) disappeared in a moment.

On the pleading of Ashtavakra, King Janaka began to narrate :-

The Reality cannot be categorised as entirely knowable or entirely unknowable. In order to

45. यावन्नान्तर्दृष्टिमेति तावत्तां न प्रपश्यति।
अन्तर्दृष्टिर्निरीहा स्यात् सेहायाः सा कथं भवेत्॥ XV - 95
46. परिहृत्य तु तां सम्यक् स्वभावमुपसंश्रय।
क्षणं स्वं भावमाश्रित्य निर्विमर्शस्ततः परम्॥ XV - 96

realise the Self one has to approach a Guru. This is the first essential step. For one who is an extrovert, Reality is difficult to realise while for one whose mind is turned inward by abandoning all thoughts of the world it is easy. As this Consciousness which is the substratum of the universe is the one by which all objects are known, it cannot itself be known or seen like other objects.⁴⁷ It is the subject. Thus when all the knowable objects are negated, what remains is the knowledge through which all others were known - Pure Consciousness.

You are not the body or the mind or the vital breath (Prana). The Self always flashes as 'I' - 'I' due to its self-luminosity. In the Pure mind free from all thoughts of outside objects one's real nature becomes manifest.⁴⁸ This is the only Sadhana necessary for the realisation of the Self.⁴⁹ While for perception of a specific external object besides the elimination of all other thoughts, sole

47. एवं वित्तिरियं वेद्या वेद्यव्यावृत्त रूपतः।
न तु स्वभावतो वेद्या सा वित्तिर्विश्वसंश्रया॥ XVI - 21
यत एतद् वेदितुः स्याद् रूपं तस्मान्न वेद्यते॥ XVI - 22
48. प्रत्यावृत्तं मनः शुद्धं निजरूपावभासकम्। XVI - 33
49. अन्येभ्यस्तु परावृत्तिरेव शुद्धिर्हि मानसी।
एतदेव परं तत्त्वज्ञाने साधनमुच्यते॥ XVI - 48

concentration on that one object is required, Self-realisation requires only one condition - elimination of all other perceptions. This is because Consciousness is never separated from the Self unlike external objects. The Consciousness is ever shining.⁵⁰

The topmost sine quanon for attaining the knowledge of the highest Reality is purification of the mind which is ensured through rituals like pujas, vairagya etc.

Ashtavakra then raised a beautiful question - "Oh king, you have said that when once the mind is turned away from the objects, the highest Consciousness is seen to shine in that mind. As this condition is fulfilled during sleep, we should be able to get Self-realisation during sleep and there is no need for any sadhana."

The King replied :-

During sleep even though the mind seems to have turned away from all thoughts, still it is deeply engrossed in sleep which is an effect of Tamoguna. In a mirror whose surface is completely anointed with dark ink, even though all other

images have been avoided as the mirror is tainted with ink, it has lost its power to project images. Similarly, the mind not being pure while in sleep loses its capacity to reveal the power of Pure Consciousness.

The mind has two aspects - Light (ie., Pure knowledge) and Deliberation (ie. thoughts about an object seen in the light). They are called Prakasa and Vimarsa respectively. Pure knowledge is an undifferentiated state (NIRVIKALPA) as all thoughts cease. In deliberation, there are mental images due to the functioning of the mind (SAVIKALPA)

Even during waking state while seeing an object, before the deliberation state, there is a momentary interval of Pure Consciousness (Light without deliberation) which is termed as Samadhi. Similarly just before sleep ends there is a samadhi state of pure light without deliberation. As people have never had the experience of a Samadhi state and as it is momentary in the sleeping state as at the time of perception of objects in the waking state, they do not recognise it. The undifferentiated Samadhi state, sleep and the perception of objects are all similar in that the intensity of light (Prakasa) is the same in all the three cases. They seem to be different as the types of deliberation which follows the light are different. In the post

50. एवं व्यावृत्तभावानां व्यापारद्वयभासनम्।
अव्यावृत्ता चित्तिर्यस्मात् तस्मान्नात्र तथा भवेत्॥ XVI - 38

Samadhi state, the idea pervades that I was pure consciousness and I just remained still and actionless. In the perception of objects, the deliberation as to the nature of the object seen e.g., "This is a pot" remains. In sleep, there is a feeling of the experience of the unmanifest primordial matter.

In Samadhi, Brahman, the Supreme Consciousness is continuously glowing. That is the engulfer of time and space and is the Pure being. It cannot be the ignorance of sleep. It is that Consciousness which lends "existence" to all objects. It is always positive. Hence a state of sleep which negates the existence of objects cannot lead one to pure Consciousness. How can that Goddess who is Pure Being (IS!) be associated with sleep where a state of perception of inertness predominates. Sleep is followed by the awakening of all conditionings of differentiation which are kept in abeyance during sleep. Hence the experience of sleep is not capable of leading one to self-realisation.

Then King Janaka continued to explain the various kinds of Samadhis. On hearing about the various fleeting moments of Samadhi at various intervals and on various occasions of sudden ecstasies of happiness, surprise, fear etc. Ashtavakra asked an interesting question :-

"Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the state of absorption in Pure Consciousness without any differentiating thoughts. Attaining that state is supposed to destroy the multitude of ignorance which is the cause of liberation. If as you say there are many occasions during worldly activity when Nirvikalpa Samadhi arises irrespective of how, and for what duration, they should have resulted in instant liberation. Why is it not so?"

Janaka began to explain - At first indirect knowledge of the Self is to be acquired from the Scriptures through a Master (Guru). But this theoretical knowledge alone (which is called Savikalpa) is of no use. It has to be supplemented by practice leading to Samadhi. This practical knowledge born of Nirvikalpa Samadhi alone can eradicate ignorance and objective knowledge. Experience of a casual samadhi in the absence of theoretical knowledge does not also serve the purpose. A man ignorant of the qualities of an emerald cannot recognise it by the mere sight of it nor can a man recognise it unless he had seen it earlier. So Samadhi is useless to people unless they deliberately attain it through efforts in the proper manner.

The sadhanas to be done for attaining the supreme state are as follows :

As a result of meritorious deeds done in infinite number of past births one gets devotion to a deity. As a result of worshipping that deity with devotion for a long time one gets disgust for worldly enjoyments and exclusive interest in the Self.⁵¹ With this Vairagya (dispassion), exclusive desire for realisation of the Self and staunch faith he has to approach a real Master (Sadguru) and learn from him about the non-dual Supreme State.⁵² This theoretical knowledge is termed Paroksha Jnana (indirect). Then he should do proper enquiry (vichara) about the Self and establish his knowledge of the Self through genuine arguments. He should then meditate on the non-dual Reality called the Self by holding on his attention to the I-consciousness which is identical with the transcendental pure consciousness (just as the electricity in the bulb is the same as the electricity in the Generator). This state of absorption when matured with practice leads to the Supreme State called 'Samadhi'.

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51. अनन्तजन्मसुकृतैः देवता भक्तिं राष्यते।
तया संराध्य सुचिरं तत्प्रसादात् ततः परम्॥ XVII - 63
वैरस्यं भोगवृन्देषु तत्परत्वं च प्राप्नुयात्॥ XVII - 64
52. वैराग्य-तत्परत्वाभ्यां श्रद्धया चापि सङ्गतः॥ XVII - 64
सद्गुरुं प्राप्य तत्प्रोक्त्या वेत्यद्वैतं परं पदम्।
एतद् ज्ञानं परोक्षं वै ह्यस्त्यद्वैतमितीह यत्॥ XVII - 65

King Janaka then began to narrate how through the process of hearing (Sravanam), enquiry and investigation through contemplation (mananam) and getting absorbed in the Samadhi state he reached Self-realisation :-

One night, while sporting with my wife I heard the sweet songs of Siddhas (semi-divine beings) going in the sky referring to the non-dual Supreme Reality and I immediately experienced that state. At that very time, I resorted to self-enquiry (vichara) and meditation. I was in the self-same state for half a muhurta and remained absorbed in my Self for another one hour approx. I was completely immersed in an ocean of Infinite Bliss. It was an indescribable unparalleled state. I was deliberating : - "What is left to be attained by me? What is there to be done by me? I am of the nature of one undivided consciousness. In this natural state how can there be any activity for me? I lack nothing. Control of one mind is of no use as all other minds also belong to me and they are left uncontrolled. Minds controlled or uncontrolled appear only to my mind's eye. Where is the question of Samadhi to me who is perennially in Infinite Consciousness? How and what activity takes place in me and what good or

bad result (merit or sin) can accrue?⁵³
I have no duties to be performed nor any action not to be done. I remain unstained and of the nature of an ever shining light.⁵⁴

Such a state as of mine can be obtained by the most mature and best qualified seekers in no time. For those whose fitness is of the lowest grade, the fruit born of knowledge comes to them after many lives of devotion to a deity. For the people of middling grade it takes some time and they have to go through the process of hearing, Self-enquiry and meditation before they attain knowledge. Samadhis like the ones which occur without this indirect knowledge will not take one to liberation. Oh Ashtavakra, now you investigate and meditate on what you have heard. Ashtavakra returned to his own place and became a Jivanmukta (liberated while alive).

53. मम क्रिया कथं का स्याद् ययाऽपि स्तः शुभाशुभे। XVII - 101

54. कर्तव्यं वाऽप्यकर्तव्यं मम नास्त्यपि लेशतः॥ XVII - 102
अनस्तमितभारूपोऽहं सुपूर्णो निरञ्जनः॥ XVII - 105

CHAPTER - VII

True Nature Of Liberation and Bondage

Dattatreya continued his dissertation to Parashurama.

Reality or the Atman is ever known as it always remains realised. People do not know it, being deluded by Maya. Our mistaken conviction that we are the body is only the play of thoughts. We appear in the form of the body only on account of a firm resolve (sankalpa). Hence, if we transcend these conceptions of the mind we can see the Atman who is of the form of Pure Consciousness and who is beyond the limitations of all thoughts.⁵⁵

Liberation (Moksha) is not to be had either in the heaven, the netherland (patala) or on this earth.⁵⁶ It is the light of Pure Consciousness which

55. तस्मात्संकल्पमात्रस्य वर्जनात् परतः स्थितम्।
शेषं शुद्धचित्ते रूपं स्वात्मानमुपलक्ष्य॥ XVIII - 16

56. न मोक्षो नभसः पृष्ठे न पाताले न भूतले।
संकल्पवर्जनात् शुद्धस्वरूपस्य प्रथैव सः॥ XVIII - 18

is one's own true nature. It can be attained merely by leaving all Sankalpas (thoughts). Liberation is not at all different from the Self.

It is the Sankalpa of the mind (firm thought) which creates objects and becomes the world (just as your mind created a dream world in the dream). When we see these objects outside like the house, table, men etc. as per our firm imagination (sankalpa) various forms are perceived. All the objects which are perceived are subject to change and hence unreal. When these objects come before you they are present. It is likely that due to passage of time, environment etc., these objects may cease to exist one day. They would be said to be non-existent at that time. At the time you are bereft of thoughts (sankalpas) Atman alone shines in its own light. It is in the background of this light that you feel the existence and non-existence of objects. So long as one's mind is having sankalpas leading to the perception of outside objects, one is not able to see the Self which is the substratum. As this pure Consciousness viz., the Self remains both at the time of perception of the existence as also the non-existence of the world, it is the only Truth (Satyam). When we see the various images in the mirror we do not perceive the mirror. The perception of the world is like the reflections in

the mirror. All these external objects are seen due to an illusion and they cannot be real.

In this illusory dream world we established a nexus of ownership, being a parent or husband or wife, of love or hate etc., and this relationship caused the bondage. If the sankalpa leading to the relationships with objects is renounced the Self alone reveals itself and that is liberation.

Now Parasurama raised some doubts :

1. When Pure Consciousness illumines the objects by its light, how can that light as also the objects illumined could both be the same (identical)?
2. King Janaka had said (as per narration) that only by leaving sankalpa (thoughts of resolution) one could realise the Self. As the mind is the instrument through which the Self cognizes objects, how can mind be the Self as also an instrument of the Self?

Dattatreya began to clarify the issues raised by Parasurama :-

In dreams it is the one mind which by imagination shines with variety consisting of yourself as the seer of the dream and also the

objects seen i.e., various persons, tiger, forest etc., seen in the dream. It shines in two ways as Consciousness and also as the objects perceived in a the dream. Even a blind man is able to know the objects without light because the Consciousness is ever shining. Without the Consciousness no object can shine (can be perceived). As a reflection cannot be different from the mirror, no object can be different from the Consciousness. The waking state is also another dream where the mind has taken the form of all objects. The mind itself becomes a tree in the dream and becomes an axe also, an instrument which cuts the tree. The action of cutting is also unreal. Hence the mind as an instrument of perception is also unreal. Hence the mind which is the cause of an unreal act i.e. perceiving objects (as in the dream) is also unreal and does not exist even in the waking state.

The Self as Consciousness, by its pure will (the Power of Maya) creates an illusory mind and acts with differentiation as the seer of the objects and also as the objects seen. It can also remain without any differentiation and without thoughts (hence no objects too) in the Nirvikalpa state. A magician can project by his magic multiple forms but the magician is never deluded by his own magic. In the same way, the Pure Consciousness

seems to be hidden by its Power of Maya which has created a world of different objects. This appears only in the perception of others. The mind is only the Self and nothing else. As the light of the lamp kept inside a pot with holes goes outside through the holes, the Consciousness (which is called the Self or Atman) goes out through the gates of the senses to illumine the external objects. As the Consciousness is not limited to one place but is everywhere whole and actionless, actually there is no movement or going out of Consciousness. The Self alone is the mind. The apparently moving Consciousness is called the mind and the unmoving one is of the nature of the Self. On the renunciation of all thoughts of external knowledge there remains only the Pure Knowledge and this is called liberation. There was never any bondage for any body. It has only been a delusion and in order to remove this, one has to undertake Self-enquiry and investigate as to what this bondage is and who it is that is bound.

A firm belief (in imagination) in an illusory bondage is alone the greatest bondage like a boy believing in a ghost and being frightened of it.⁵⁷ A firm conviction in the existence of the mind is

57. एष एव महाबन्धो बन्धसत्यत्वनिश्चयः।

मृषाभीतस्य बालस्य यक्षग्रह इव स्थितः॥ XVIII - 124

also another factor in the illusion of a bondage. It is only proper investigation which can dispel the illusion of the bondage resulting in the cycle of births and deaths again and again. One should think how this bondage can exist for the stainless Self. When the mind is established in the natural state free from thoughts there will be no more duality and the Self alone remains (the dream of the world caused by the mind disappears). The waking state and the dream state are similar in this nature.

HOW ACTION OCCURS IN JIVANMUKTAS (LIBERATED WHILE ALIVE)?

The lowest category of sages are those who after getting wearied every moment by the enjoyments of both good and bad as a result of their past actions (Prarabdha) have become knowers of the Self.

The middling type of sages are those who, though enjoying the results of Prarabdha Karmas are not aware of them like the one intoxicated by wine.

Those who are not affected by and do not slip from their natural state even by the varied results of past actions (Prarabdha) i.e., by any amount of joy or miseries, are not surprised at

miracles, behave like any common man externally but are tranquil within, are the greatest among Jnanis (knowers of Self).⁵⁸

This difference among the Jnanis is due to the difference in maturity of intellect and knowledge on account of the different results of past actions i.e., Prarabdha.

58. ये तु प्रारब्धकोटीनां फलैरपि विचित्रितैः।
न स्वस्थितेः प्रच्यवन्ते नोद्विजन्त्यापदां गणैः॥

न विस्मयन्ति चाश्चर्यैर्न हृष्यन्ति महासुखैः।

अन्तःशान्ता बहिलोकसमास्ते ज्ञानिषूत्तमाः॥ XVIII - 164 to 166

CHAPTER VIII

Principal Sadhanas and the Conduct of Jivanmuktas

Dattatreya began to explain how the conduct of those liberated varied widely from person to person:-

Even though there is no difference in the means adopted for Self-realisation, there is difference in the degree of gradation in the progress of accomplishment of the means which is in turn due to the difference in intellect and the effect of the Prarabdhas (result of past actions) left. As the ultimate knowledge (i.e., Pure Consciousness) is a *fait accompli* and ever self-shining, no means are necessary to attain it.⁵⁹ As this consciousness remains hidden under the Vasanas i.e. past latent impressions in the mind, all the Sadhanas prescribed in the Scriptures are only to exterminate the vasanas. Depending on the type and the extent

59. चैतन्यमेव विज्ञानं तत् सदा स्वप्रकाशकम्। XIX - 9
तत्र का साधनापेक्षा नित्यभानस्वरूपके॥ XIX - 10
राम तस्माद् वासनानां निरासे साधनं स्मृतम्॥ XIX - 13

of Vasanas, the intellects of the seekers differ and the amount of spiritual effort required also varies accordingly.

Inter alia, the three main categories of Vasanas are those relating to 1) Sinning against Atman 2) Past actions and 3) desires (including lust and passion).

Lack of faith in and misapprehension of the teachings of sages and scriptures is sinning against the Self and this is the first vasana. This can be removed by developing firm conviction against the faulty misunderstanding (and by the company of holy men) or lack of faith.

The second type viz., Karmavasana is the impurity existing in the intellect as impressions due to evil deeds in the past. Such people cannot grasp the teachings of the master even if explained lucidly. This Vasana cannot be removed even by any spiritual sadhana done in crores of births except through the Grace of God.

The third is the vasana due to multitude of desires. This can be removed only by developing vairagya (dispassion) which again can arise only by perceiving of defects like sorrows emanating from worldly enjoyments.

The foremost of all Sadhanas, which is the base for all other means for self-realisation is a strong desire for liberation (Moksha).⁶⁰ Any hearing and contemplation of Atman (Self) without a desire for liberation is infructious. This desire for liberation should be intense and strong (volcanic yearning). This desire can be made intense only by vairagya i.e., utter indifference to worldly objects by perceiving the defects in worldly enjoyments.⁶¹

The intense desire for Moksha leads one to exclusive devotion (Tatparata) to his goal of Self realisation. This motivates intense spiritual effort resulting in attainment of the goal.

After wandering for several births oblivious of his Self and after performance of some good actions leading in due course to devotion of God, he may seek reading of scriptures and the company of holy men. Then he may do the sadhanas by series of steps and attain the highest goal. The basis for the sadhanas is association with holy men (Satsanga). One can get the Satsanga by virtue of

60. तत्राद्यं सर्वमूलं स्यान्मुमुक्षुत्वं न चेतर्त्। XIX - 35

61. सा मुमुक्षा भवेत्तीव्रा समर्था फलसाधने।
एषा विमुक्तेरन्यत्र दोषदृष्ट्यैव जायते ॥ XIX - 43

the meritorious deeds done in previous births. The one who by his nature has a pure mind bereft of even the smallest vasana (due to austerities practised in previous births) will be able to get the highest knowledge with least effort.

The difference in the states of various sages is due to the difference in maturity i.e., the level of vasanas covering the mind. This is the reason why Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, though possessed of knowledge are far different from each other because of the qualities born of their innate disposition.

Sage Vasishtha was a ritualist given to Karma Yoga, Sanaka and his brothers were renunciates, Narada was a devotee, Sukracharya was a well known preceptor and supporter of the asuras, Sage Brihaspati was the preceptor and supporter of the Gods, Vyasa was busy codyfying the Vedas and Janaka was a king. All of them were, indeed, enlightened even though they were engaged in different types of activities.

CHAPTER IX

Vidya Gita - The song of knowledge

Dattatreya continued his teachings :

Once there was a seminar in the court of Brahma in Satya Loka where all celebrated sages of yore were assembled. They asked Brahma - "The different enlightened sages act differently - some being always immersed in Samadhi, some being immersed in devotion and some in discussion etc. Who among them is the best?" Brahma and Vishnu led all the sages to Lord Siva who invoked the Supreme Goddess of the highest knowledge - Brahma Vidya - who appeared before them all and explained. She began expounding more or less the same truth as expounded in earlier chapters of this book about the Pure Consciousness being the Supreme Reality, also called the Self and the entire world being illusory like the reflection in a mirror. This Consciousness is the same as the Divine Mother Brahma Vidya. As a part of Her sport (leela) and by Her illusive power, She seems to become the Jivas who after transmigrating from

birth to birth, get Self-realisation and liberated finally with the Grace of a Guru. The non-dual knowledge is the highest but it cannot be attained without initially resorting to dual knowledge and worshipping for a long time the Supreme Vidya, the Goddess of the highest knowledge - also known as Tripura. When the mind gets purified by meditation / worship and becomes free from all thoughts (annihilation of the mind), Self alone shines. This is knowledge or realisation of the Self. At that stage the notion or appearance of the body considered wrongly as the Self is destroyed. This knowledge is called Vijnana - the knowledge of direct (aparoksha) experience. As we all experience fear on account of duality i.e., considering the objects of the world as separate from us, the state of non-duality destroys all fears and sorrows.

The main means for attaining this liberation is exclusive devotion (TAT-PARATVAM) to the pursuit of Self-realisation. If this is ensured no other means are necessary (it will by itself lead one to other means, if any, necessary).⁶² Persistently staying with this resolve "I shall accomplish this task of Self-realisation" and implementing it is called 'exclusive devotion'.

62. एवंविधमहामोक्षे तत्परत्वं हि साधनम्।
तत्परत्वे तु सम्पूर्णे नान्यत् साधनमिष्यते ॥ XX - 78

Who is the best among the enlightened?

The one who is given to 'exclusive devotion' is the best among the seekers.

To remain established in the Self which is Pure Consciousness is the ultimate accomplishment. Certain mystical powers may be acquired spontaneously during the spiritual practice. They being far inferior to the goal are to be ignored as otherwise they will constitute powerful obstacles towards Self-realisation.

The state where one remains absorbed in the undivided Supreme Consciousness renouncing all identification with the body (even in states like the dream) is the most excellent one.

Such a person, if ever engages himself in worldly activity, will have to get the latent impressions (vasanas) of past actions awakened with effort.

While being wholly engaged in action, such a realised person, though seeing the objects never sees duality. Even when engaged in activities the one who never gives up his absorption in the Self (Sahaja Samadhi) is the best among the Self-

realised persons.⁶³ Such excellent persons are bereft of all doubts, desires or fears of any sort.⁶⁴ They see both bondage and liberation as illusions in their own Self. These teachings from the Goddess of the True knowledge are known as Vidya Gita.

63. एवं सिद्धि मनुप्राप्तः सिद्धेषूत्तम उच्यते।
व्यवहारपरो नित्यं न समाधिं विमुञ्चति ॥ XX - 127

64. संशयो वाऽपि कामो वा यस्य नास्त्येव लेशतः। XX - 129
निर्भयो व्यवहारेषु स सिद्धेषूत्तमो मतः ॥ XX - 130

CHAPTER X

Supplementary questions and answers regarding Self-realisation and the Sadhanas

Now Parasurama requested Dattatreya to elucidate the essential means or sadhanas for attaining the Supreme knowledge, by what characteristics one can recognize the realised souls and also how the realised sages were able to participate in the activities of the world managing to keep their minds detached.

Dattatreya began to explain again :

The Principal means of knowledge is the supreme Grace of the deity who is one's own Self.⁶⁵ That is also the easiest way and the greatest of all Sadhanas.

For this purpose, exclusive devotion to the deity to the exclusion of all external objects is

65. ज्ञानस्य साधनं मुख्यं देवतानुग्रहः परः। XXI - 7
एतत् सर्वोत्तमं राम प्रोक्तं ज्ञानस्य साधनम्॥ XIX - 8

necessary. This will lead a person to a theoretical understanding of the truth. He should also share this knowledge by expounding it to others. This exposition will help him to imbue and absorb those ideas. This ultimately results in his identifying all individuals with Siva and he is no longer affected by pleasure or pain. Thus he becomes a Jivanmukta (liberated while alive).

Thus intense devotion (Bhakti Yoga) coupled with expounding of the truth to others is the best of all means and nothing else can excel it.

Characteristics of a Jnani / Jivanmukta

Many of the characteristics of a sage (jnani) are so subtle and objective that it is impossible to know them and to recognise them by the application of particular signs. The speech, the conduct, the spiritual sadhana of the Self-realised persons etc. are so common that they can be imitated by many other common people too.

The best Jnani is one who has no reaction to and remains unaffected by honour or dishonour (insult), loss or gain, victory or defeat. He is the one who gives clear answers to any question pertaining to his experience about the Self. He is spontaneously enthusiastic in expounding matters

relating to jnana. He has contentment and purity of mind. He never starts any fresh action. He remains with a tranquil mind even in the most critical situations.

A seeker should use these qualities for testing his own spiritual progress and constantly examine himself and not others as to whether he possesses these qualities and to what extent. One should not bother to think about the progress, virtues and faults of others.

Just as a person drunk and under the intoxication of liquor speaks and does various things which he does not remember later, the enlightened Jnani may sometimes engage himself in some activities which he is not aware of. The Jnanis of the highest category are not aware of the body or its actions as they constantly abide in their natural state or Pure Consciousness. He is like an actor on a stage taking the role of a woman but internally aware of his real status. Here Dattatreya narrated the story of Questions and Answers exchanged between a Brahmarakshas (the spirit of a dead Brahmin learned but degenerate) and two princes.

Once there were two princes who were brothers named Rukmangada and Hemangada. While on a hunting trip, they accosted a Brahma

Rakshas (a superior type of Brahmin ghost) in a forest. The ghost being very learned in scriptures, engaged them in a debate in Sastras (Scriptures) with the condition that they will be eaten away, if defeated. He began to put questions to Hemangada and the latter who was the foremost among the Jnanis (sages) began to answer them as follows :-

Spirit : What is more extensive than space and subtler than the subtlest atom ? What is its nature?

Prince : 'Consciousness' is most extensive and the subtlest. It is self-luminous and is one's own Self.

Spirit : What is one-pointed attention? What is birth?

Prince : To rest in one's own Self is concentration. Birth is the mistaken notion of selfhood in the body. It is due to the conception of 'doership' of the self.

Spirit : What is the main obstacle which prevents the realisation of the Pure Consciousness and how can it be eliminated?

Prince : Absence of discrimination between Self and non-Self is the main impediment. This absence

of discrimination can be destroyed through Self-enquiry. One should find fault with the objects of enjoyment and that would lead to Vairagya (indifference towards worldly objects and their engagements). It is vairagya which will lead to Self-enquiry. Self-enquiry is the examination of the known or seen as also the objects to be seen or known. One should contemplate as to who sees the objects. The answer being 'I', again enquiry should be pursued as to who is the 'I' (who am I?).

Spirit : Who is fearless and who is freed from sorrows ? Whose mind is 'not dependent' on other objects?

Prince : The one who is free from attachment is fearless. The person who has his mind under his control is free from miseries.⁶⁶ The mind of a Self-realised person (the one who has understood the only thing to be known) is Self-dependent.

The Brahma Rakshas was extremely pleased with the replies and released the prince. He himself was also released from a curse which kept him as a rakshas.

66. निर्भयः सङ्गरहितो निर्दुःखो जितमानसः।
ज्ञातज्ञेयस्त्वदीनात्मा शृणु त्वं ब्रह्मराक्षस॥ XXI - 103

CHAPTER XI

Jnanis and active life

Vasuman, the Brahmin who was released from the form of a ghost, before leaving, asked the Prince one more question :

Yourself, having a thorough knowledge of the Self, the Supreme State, are leading a princely life and doing actions like hunting. How can such a state of incompatible actions happen? Is it not like light and darkness occurring together at the same instant?

The Prince answered : Your delusion has not left you completely. How can existence as your own Self be opposed to action? No action can obstruct the highest knowledge which always exists and is ever-shining? That Pure Consciousness alone is the knowledge of the Self in which the image of a world with all its Phenomena and activities appears.

The world with all its activities has arisen due to a strong will (intense imagination) and when once liberated, the world or the activities in

it cease to have any reality and they cannot bind the Jnani.

All actions which are based on duality are also an illusory phenomenon in that non-dual Consciousness. As thus these actions are dependent on the Self-awareness (consciousness) they cannot render the Self-knowledge ineffective or destroy it.

Jnanis react to environments (which are a result of Prarabdha - latent tendencies due to past actions) differently due to the apparent difference in their own stages of realisation. For the knower of the Self there is no recurrence of delusion again. All actions are knowledge alone just as the reflections in the mirror are not different from the mirror (even where a reflection is seen only the mirror exists in truth). The Prarabdha Karma in respect of a Jnani is only inferred by the on-looker. The Jnanis of the highest and middle order will have no tinge of Karma left in them because they are in Perfection and do not see anything apart from the Self. As they are always in a Samadhi state they do not feel pleasure or pain, their prarabdha karmas having been burnt by the fire of knowledge. They make no difference between samadhi and worldly transactions. The lowest order of Jnani is apt to relax from the realisation of the

Self and would seem to be involved in worldly actions. This again is an appearance or a conjecture on the part of the onlookers. The state of a Jnani or Jivanmukta is identical with that of Siva. Who can understand them?

