

STEPS TOWARDS SELF-REALISATION

A Comprehensive Guide to the Spiritual Path

Revised Edition



Swami Ananda

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MAA, Bhabamayee Paramahansa
Swami Ananda's Guru

In humble dedication to the service of my most venerable Guru, who has lifted me from the darkness of ignorance into the light of Self-realisation, and in acknowledgement of the grace of the Lord who is universally manifested.

About the Author

At the age of nineteen filled with a burning dispassion towards the world and a strong desire to find a deeper meaning to life, Swami Ananda was guided by divine providence to a little hermitage on the sands of Puri, on the eastern coast of India, where lived his most venerable Master, the Holy Mother of Dibyadham. There he was guided by Her divine grace in the path of Self-realisation and was instructed to help seekers of Truth in the West. He has been doing so ever-since and to further fulfil his Master's instructions he has travelled and spent some time in the West and helped seekers there through talks and personal guidance.

Swamiji tells us that one cannot advance in the spiritual path nor find Truth only by techniques or mantras. Truth and harmony will be found in time within oneself by making sincere efforts to elevate one's daily life through self-control and a steady cultivation of positive qualities.

PROLOGUE

Dear Seekers of Truth,

There are many questions in life that are unanswered. There are many problems in the world that cannot be solved by our store of scientific knowledge. There is a lot of suffering around us which cannot be healed and many trials and tribulations in our daily lives which we cannot surmount. Will these questions remain unanswered, these problems unsolved and man's endless suffering unresolved, or is there an answer to these questions and a solution to these problems?

Dear brothers and sisters, there is an answer and a solution to all these questions. And the answer is not outside but inside us. If you are ready, if you are really sincere, and if you realise the seriousness of all these problems, turn the pages of this book. It will show you a few steps and essentials for Self-development.

Self-development is the answer to the problem of life. We may not be able to change the world around us, but we can at least change ourselves. This problem or mystery of life is not something which has come up today. It has been there for man since ages past. The answer to this mystery of life and the solution for life's

innumerable problems is the discovery of That Life, which is the Life within this life and the source of all life.

Man in all ages and in all parts of the world has always tried to discover something vaster, fuller and more satisfying than the joys and sorrows of mundane existence. And in his search, he has sailed the seas, flown to the planets, dug into the heart of the earth, built empires and civilizations, created sciences and arts. But he has not turned to his Self, the source and basis of existence.

This small booklet does not contain any marvellous new theory or any magical means or words that will suddenly open the gates of knowledge. It only expounds a few steps or essential requirements that aid one in a steady growth towards Self-knowledge or Self-perfection. Knowledge can neither be invented nor created. It can only be discovered within one's self through cultivation of one's self—sadhana.

The spiritual path, or inner life, is not a sudden magical experience, but a natural flowering of one's innate faculties and divinity, through painstaking cultivation of positive qualities. It is a steady growth that culminates in destruction of ignorance and attainment of an ultimate freedom and bliss that is permanent and complete in itself.

The humble writer has tried to present through these essentials the essence of sadhana and the science of Self-realisation. This is in accordance with the basic principles of most religions because the writer believes that Self-realisation or Self-perfection is the aim of all religions, though the means may apparently vary. Spirituality or Self-realisation is the essence that lies within all

religions.

The purpose of this booklet is not to expound a new theory, establish a new dogma, or introduce sensational discoveries in the field of thought. So-called new “-isms” only add to the utter confusion and frustration that is already prevalent in the world of spirituality. Here only a clear and simple line of action has been delineated, and the purpose of the writer will be well served if even a few seekers of Truth can be aided in their journey towards perfection. He humbly begs forgiveness from the learned ones for any discrepancies that may have found place in his writings due to his ignorance.

Swami Ananda
Santiago, Chile, October 1986

Note to the Revised Edition

The author humbly presents the revised edition of Steps to Self-Realisation. The first edition was written in 1986 in Santiago (Chile) when he was invited to give talks on yoga and spirituality.

The revised edition contains some additional explanations and expounds on the different types of yogas—karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and raja yoga—which were only but briefly mentioned in the first edition. Details are given of how one can practice self-cultivation to reach the goal of Self-realisation by following the methods in each type of yoga. It must be stressed, however, that guidance of a Master is essential at every stage.

The humble writer hopes that this booklet will inspire and help sincere aspirants on the spiritual path.

Swami Ananda
Puri, August 2012

SANJAM

Self-restraint

The foundation of Self-development or of inner life is sanjam. Sanjam means self-restraint or self-control. Man is a combination of the animal and the divine. In sleeping, eating, copulating, fearing and dying, he is not different from animals. But he can become divine through his capacity for self-restraint and discreet application of his faculties. Sanjam forms the base of any kind of sadhana. Without sanjam, sadhana bears little fruit. It is like trying to put up a huge building without a firm foundation. However, we should also note that when the techniques of sadhana are not known and spiritual life is confined to self-control—such as celibacy etc.—then the whole process becomes austere and tedious, and the aspirant will not be able to maintain his zeal for long.

Sanjam is not unnatural or forceful suppression, as is often misunderstood, but a gradual transformation and positive sublimation of the potential power of the human that is misused or wasted most of the time. It is the control and sublimation of energies that gradually raises the human from the base level of the animal to that of the divine. For man is not only human but in essence divine. His latent godhood is shrouded within the covers

of ego, intellect, mind and the senses. If the potentiality of an individual is channelised and elevated, instead of being directed outwards towards temporary enjoyment of phenomenal existence, he will discover within him a permanent divine bliss. The first step in aspiration for divine bliss is self-restraint, which is the very foundation of inner life.

The Soul, covered by the veil of avidya (ignorance), falsely identifies itself with Nature's desire for self-expression or manifestation, that is, the desire for multifarious enjoyments of its self-joy in many forms and many ways. It thus projects, in union with its illusory-force or maya, the whole of creation. Nature in its work of projection of this phenomenal or illusory existence uses mainly two principles. The two principles of creation are manifested in the individual in the form of prana (life-force, the gross manifestation of this life-force is breath) and virya (sexual energy). These two forces sustain the individual on the material level, and are the potential power through the control of which man can rise to the divine. However, these two forces are often misused and wasted for the sake of bodily pleasures in conjunction with the senses, thus drawing out the power of the soul and externalising the individual's self-consciousness.

In order to break the illusory identification of the Self with the world of phenomenal existence and to reinstall it in its pristine glory of Self-bliss, the first step is to close the doors or outlets of the senses through a gradual process of sanjam. This control of the senses leads to a step-by-step withdrawal of prana (life-force) from its involvement in bodily functions, and

sublimation or transformation of virya (sexual energy) into ojas (spiritual energy). The liberation of prana from its entrapment in bodily activities and its channelisation along with the sublimation of sexual energy is the base for meditation and further unfolding of higher spiritual states and experiences. The ordinary man has lost the power of self-control by leading a life of over-indulgence in sensual pleasures and through wrong habits of eating, seeing and hearing. In order to regain the energy that is necessary for Self-development, he needs to reverse this process. As the forces of life—prana and virya—are sustained on the material level by food, a proper food habit is the first necessary step in the process of self-control. Proper food habit means being selective about the food items one consumes. According to the science of Ayurveda, the food one consumes is converted in a gradual process into virya, and virya is finally transformed into mental energy. So one's mental energy is influenced to a great extent by the food one eats. As one eats so one thinks, or so is one's nature. In Sankhya philosophy it is said that nature consists of three modes or qualities—sattva, raja and tama. Sattva is purity, light and clarity. Raja is motion and activity. Tama is darkness and inertia. Food is also classified into these three categories.

Sattvic food is easily digestible, increases appetite, and is thus the cause of good health and cheerfulness. It also aids clear thinking. Sattvic food is pleasing to see, smell and taste. It is fresh and agreeable to the body. For example, vegetables, fruits, milk, cheese and cereals are sattvic. Food that excites the palate and is excessively hot, pungent, salty or sour is rajasic. Fried,

spiced and flesh foods are rajasic. Such food increases desire and passion, disturbs the harmony of the elements within the body—vata (wind element), pitta (fire element), kapha (water element)—thus breeding disease and resulting in sorrow. Tamasic food is that which is rotten, stale, tasteless and intoxicating. This kind of food increases lethargy and dullness of mind, resulting in ignorance, irrationality and violence.

Other schools of dietetics, such as macrobiotic, have classified foods into those containing positive and negative energies. It will be sufficient here to say that an aspirant should have a well balanced diet, and should take food which will aid him in his own specific path of self-cultivation. He should take into consideration his physical, geographical and climatic conditions, and receive advice of an experienced guide. Food should serve the purpose of sustaining and enriching the physical, mental and spiritual aspects of the individual. Food should be consumed as a means of sustenance and not indulgence. It will be helpful to always remember the following maxim in relation to eating: “Eat to live, and not live to eat.”

One more aspect of food which is important, and which must be taken into consideration by a spiritual aspirant, is the means of procuring food. For example, food procured through violence, such as killing of animals, retains the vibration of this violence even after it is consumed, and affects the nature of the eater in very subtle ways. So also, food obtained through stealing, or with money ill-earned, affects the mind of the eater negatively. There are many adverse affects of consuming food procured by ill

means on a spiritual aspirant.

It will not be out of place to mention here that one should be discriminative not only about food, but also about every activity of one's senses because it is not only food that affects the mind. The mind is also affected by what one sees, hears, smells and touches. We all know from experience how modern advertisements and lewd posters affect our mind negatively, and how cheap pornography available in magazines and at a touch of a computer keyboard affects both the young and the old today. So it is definitely necessary for a sincere sadhak to be discriminative about what he intentionally sees. Of course, some things one sees are unavoidable, but then through proper vichara (discrimination), one should remove the negative impressions of such visions from the mind, and not allow them to settle there and affect one's thinking.

Just as perception of negative things affects the mind negatively, seeing positive things will definitely have a positive effect. The beauty of nature—greenery of forests, snow on mountain peaks, flowing rivers, cascading waterfalls, exquisiteness of flowers—help to calm and soothe the mind and make it peaceful and one-pointed. That is why the hermitages of mendicants were built in forests, near streams and waterfalls. Most of the places of pilgrimage are located amidst scenic beauty because this helps to detach the mind from the mundane and connect it with the transcendent.

Now let us dwell a little on the effect of sound on the mind. When one hears angry words, one immediately reacts violently, though they may be just words. Conversely, loving and affectionate

words draw one to others, and soft words are soothing. This is how one is affected by what enters into the mind through the sense organ of hearing. Those who are exposed to modern-day loud, thudding and vulgar electronic music probably do not know how much damage it does to the brain, and how it upsets one's mental balance and inner harmony by arousing extreme rajasic and tamasic feelings and emotions. Having investigated the effect of sound on human moods, harmonious, soothing classical and instrumental music is used in therapy nowadays. The rishis and yogis were well aware of the effect of sound vibrations not only on the human mind, but also on surrounding nature. Hence the Vedic chants—the Sanskrit mantras and peace chanting—awaken the sublime in one, and spread vibrations of peace and harmony all around. It is a spiritual practice in India to sit together and sing the name of the Divine (kirtan). It helps tremendously in creating a collective mood of transcendence and in uplifting the minds of the participants. In fact it is an essential part of devotional practice.

We are reminded of the legendary three monkeys expounded by Mahatma Gandhi: the first monkey with its hands on its eyes, the second with its hands on its ears, and the third with its hands on its mouth. The message they convey is: “See no evil, hear no evil, and speak no evil.” Man can either add positively to his life or bring about his degeneration through what he sees, hears and speaks. Self-upliftment in the beginning depends not on big things, but on these small acts of eating, touching, hearing and speaking. The discriminate and proper use of one's sense faculties is not only a duty towards oneself. It is also the responsibility of each one of

us to spread positive vibrations and harmony by utilising the sense-organs in proper ways. That is why it was a tradition in India to make harmonious music through chants and instruments at dawn and dusk, to offer sweet smelling flowers, milk and honey into the flowing streams, to burn incense in the prayer rooms so that the sweet smell would pervade the atmosphere and lift the mind to the divine realms, and to light lamps filled with clarified butter (ghee) so that the soft glow would remove the darkness outside and within one.

“Om, O gods, may we, with our ears hear what is auspicious, o ye fit to be worshipped, may we, with our eyes, see what is auspicious. May we enjoy the life allotted to us by the gods, offering our praise with our bodies strong of limb.”

(Prashnopanishad and Mundaka Upanishad)

SADHANA

Self-elevation

Sadhana is the spiritual practices which lift a sadhak (spiritual aspirant) from the gross level to the subtle divine levels. Man was made in the image of God, but due to avidya (ignorance) he has forgotten his godliness and has become bound to the most superficial level of consciousness and existence.

There are different forms of sadhana or approaches to the attainment of Self-realisation. They can be classified into four types of yoga—karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and raja yoga. Though these different yogas are complete in themselves, they are actually applicable at different stages of the aspirant's process of growth.

In this little booklet it will suffice to give just a short description of the yogas since detailed techniques of all these yogas must be learned through direct contact with an able Master. There is much reluctance today in accepting the authorities of Masters and in submitting to their guidance, but the nature of the science demands it. It is a knowledge gained through direct contact and not through books or courses. This reluctance in acceptance of authority is quite understandable taking into consideration the total

confusion that prevails today regarding the genuineness of Masters. It is regrettable that this highest science has sunk to the levels of commercial commodities in the hands of imperfect teachers, but aspirants in this path are assured that sincerity is never overlooked by the power that guides the total effort of mankind for realising the highest Truth.

Karma Yoga

Karma yoga is a way to transform one's actions. Usually man works with his own self-motivated intentions with a view of getting certain desired results which he supposes will fulfil his material desires and give him joy. Because of this, his works become a chain by which he gets bound to the body and the objective material world. He gets caught in a vicious cycle of *kama* (desire) and *karma* (action), which forces him to incarnate in innumerable wombs. One gets a body for fulfilling one's desires and working out *karman* generated in previous births. Since desires are unending and every action creates consequences which one has to suffer or enjoy, one is caught in a never-ending cycle of transmigration. Unless this cycle is broken, one is in a helpless state of bondage, completely shrouded by ignorance about one's real transcendental nature.

Now, *karma yoga* is a practical means of freeing the ego or self from this cycle of desire and action. Two things have to be taken into account to attain freedom from action. Firstly, there is the question of what actions one should perform, and how one should perform actions so that they will not generate consequences.

An easy solution to this problem would be to renounce all actions. “No head, no headache” as the saying goes. But this is not at all practical. The sustenance of the body is not possible without actions. Secondly, one’s present actions are not entirely out of one’s choice. They proceed from or are generated by the deposit of actions accumulated previously. Unless this deposit of accumulated actions is worked out, one cannot completely stop performing actions. As long as there are the deposit of accumulated actions and desires, one will be helplessly propelled into action by nature. This is why the Bhagavad Gita says that one may choose to stop the organs of actions, but the internal organs such as the mind will still be active; thus this kind of inactivity is tamasic. One who prevents the outer organs from acting, but sits thinking and desiring is just a hypocrite.

According to the principles of karma yoga, action is not to be abandoned but performed selflessly, without expectations of fruits or any desired results. It should be done to the best of one’s abilities, but with complete detachment regarding the results. Again, the performer of these actions should not consider himself as the doer (karta). He should only be an instrument. When the ego or I-sense is detached from the activities of nature, then there cannot be any bondage. Nature (prakriti) acts through the instruments of sense organs. The Self is actually the Non-doer, but it gets deluded and bound when it identifies itself out of ignorance with the movements of prakriti.

Actually actions do not bind; it is the sense of being the doer and enjoyer (kartritwa and bhoktritwa abhiman) of actions

that bind us. Thus when actions are bereft of the sense of doing and enjoying, then they cannot bind. So proper or prescribed actions (bihita karma) done with a sense of detachment and in a spirit of service become means of preparation for the higher goal of liberation, instead of becoming strings of bondage. The path of karma yoga helps the aspirant to gradually develop mental equanimity through freedom from likes and dislikes, and freedom from expectations and attachment to results. So in many cases, karma yoga is an essential step before taking up meditation and other higher practices. Yoga of action acts as a base for the other yogas.

The purpose behind young disciples spending years in the company of a realised Master doing selfless service is to develop a basic receptivity and eligibility before the transmission of higher knowledge. Through the practice of karma yoga the heart expands, and the mind is freed from selfish limitations; the aspirant develops obedience and humility, which is most necessary for true progress on the spiritual path. Aspirants today are attended with no success or very little success due to the lack of basic eligibility. Even a realised Master requires a proper vessel to transmit knowledge. One of the ways to acquire this basic eligibility or receptivity is through obedience and selfless service. Thus karma yoga is a preparation for the practice of other yogas.

Bhakti Yoga

Just as karma yoga is a way to transform one's actions, bhakti yoga is a way of channelising one's feelings towards a

personified divinity or God. The ordinary man is tied to this material world by feelings of what he thinks is love; but it is actually attachment born of desire. In the beginning, it is difficult to rise above these feelings and cut these strings of attachment or detach oneself from them. As long as one's feelings are directed towards the outer objective world and entrapped in it, the mind will also be drawn towards it and cannot be focused on any inner object of meditation.

But if one's feelings are directed towards a personal God with a form that can be seen objectively, then the mind will get drawn towards and focused on the God. Where the heart is, the mind will follow, because the mind and the heart are intimately connected. This is the basic principle on which bhakti yoga is based. But it should not be mistaken to be only a step for beginners in the spiritual process. It is a path complete in itself, and by the practice of only bhakti one can also attain the ultimate end.

There are nine steps or forms of practice of bhakti or devotion. They are shravana (listening), kirtan (chanting), smarana (remembering), archana (worship), bandana (praising), padasevana (service of the feet), dasya (service as servant), sakhya (companionship), atmanivedana (self-surrender).

Shravana is listening to the chantings of the Lord's names and to the bhakti shastras in which the elevating divine deeds and glories of one's chosen deity or incarnation of God are described. Kirtan is chanting or singing the Lord's name and His glories. Smarana is thinking about the Lord. Archana is worshipping one's chosen deity by bathing, dressing, anointing, decorating

with flowers, and offering incense lamp and consecrated food. Archana can be performed physically by using objects or just mentally. Bandana is singing hymns and praises of the Lord. Padasevana literally means serving the feet, but actually what is implied is serving with one's own feet. Serving with one's feet means circumambulating the deity or the temple in which the deity is installed. It also means going on pilgrimage by feet to sacred places or temples. Some have also interpreted padasevana as serving the Guru or acharyas by massaging their feet. Dasya is regarding oneself as the servant of the Lord and serving Him with that attitude. Sakhya is considering the Lord as one's most intimate and closest companion. Atmanivedana is absolute self-surrender expressed physically by prostrating completely to the deity.

A more intricate or subtle aspect in the practice of bhakti is developing a loving relationship with one's ishta. Ishta is one's chosen aspect of divinity such as Rama, Krishna, Devi or Mother goddess, Buddha, Christ and also one's Guru. There are four types of relationships or bhavas.

Dasya bhava: To regard one's ishta as one's Lord and Master and to serve Him with the attitude of a servant. This can be seen in Hanuman's relationship with Lord Ram, for example.

Batsalya bhava: To regard the Lord as one's child, as Mother Yashoda regarded Krishna, or to think of oneself as the Lord's child, like the Christians call God, "Father in heaven." Some worship the feminine Mother aspect of the Divine, and consider themselves as the child of the Divine Mother, as the prophet Sri Ramakrishna did.

Sakhya bhava: To consider one's chosen deity as one's friend and oneself as His friend. Arjuna, Uddhava and the gopas in Vrindavan interacted with Lord Krishna as His friends.

Madhura bhava: to regard one's chosen ishta as one's Divine Beloved and to develop a likewise relationship with Him, as the Gopis in Vrindavan did with Lord Krishna.

There is another bhava which may or may not be included in the practice of bhakti. This is santa bhava of yogis and mendicants which is the attitude of peaceful contemplation of the Divine.

The devotee also regards the Lord as his all: his mother, his father, his close friend, his most intimate companion, and his most precious possession.

“Twameva mata cha pita twameva, twameva bandhu cha sakha twameva, twameva vidya dravinam twameva, twameva sarvam mama deva deva.”

(Thou alone art mother, also father alone Thou art. Thou alone art friend, also companion alone Thou art, Thou alone art knowledge, wealth alone Thou art. Thou alone art everything, my Lord.)

Japa arouses divine feelings (bhava) and is one of the main practices in bhakti yoga. It is also practiced by sadhaks of other disciplines. Japa is the continuous repetition of a mantram. A mantram is a special combination of certain sacred syllables which may or may not include the name of an incarnation of the Divine. The mantram is surcharged with spiritual energy and has the power

of manifesting a particular divinity. This power is in the form of a seed, and by proper and continuous repetition of the mantram, the power manifests in the aspirant or devotee and connects his mind with that particular divinity. Some mantrams can also manifest higher states of consciousness, and not the form of a divinity.

Japa of a mantram is very effective in cleansing and calming the mind. The repetition of sacred mantrams or singing of the Lord's various names may seem primitive to some people, but is very effective in awakening divine feelings and moods called bhava. The special mood is helpful in elevating the mind to higher states. Japa is a very simple but effective method for purifying the mind and preparing it for contemplation of the Divine.

Bhakti starts with the practice of taking shelter in the Lord (saranagati), and culminates in complete self-surrender to God and experiencing the visual manifestation (darshan) of the devotee's chosen aspect of divinity.

Jnana Yoga

Jnana yoga is the path of knowledge. At the root of manifestation of this cosmic creation is maya, a power inherent within Consciousness. Maya manifests or projects the One as many. This maya, which is also called avidya (primal ignorance), is the cause of individualisation of consciousness. Avidya shrouds or veils the true essence—pure consciousness—by its power of veiling (avarana shakti) and then manifests manifoldness by its power of projection (vikshepa shakti). Because of these two powers, avarana and vikshepa, Consciousness loses awareness of

Its pristine nature and gets involved in the play of illusory objective projection.

Pure consciousness is shrouded within five sheaths (koshas), and becomes an individualised, limited being. Being conjoined and identified with these five sheaths—sheath of food (annamaya kosha), sheath of prana (pranamaya kosha), sheath of mind (manomaya kosha), sheath of discriminative knowledge (vijnanamaya kosha) and sheath of bliss (anandamaya kosha)—the individual experiences the three states of “waking” (with all five sheaths), “dreaming” (with all except sheath of food) and “deep sleep” (with only sheath of bliss). Due to conjunction with these five sheaths and three bodies—gross body (sthula sharira, corresponding to sheath of food), subtle body (sukshma sharira, corresponding to sheaths of prana, mind and buddhi) and causal body (karana sharira, corresponding to sheath of bliss)—the individual (jiva) experiences pleasure and pain, and goes through innumerable cycles of transmigration—birth, life and death—in countless wombs and various bodies.

The avidya (primal ignorance) forms the sheath of bliss and the causal body. It is the final cover that separates one from the pure essence. In deep sleep one feels bliss because one is only a cover away from the Soul that is the Bliss in Itself. It is yet a bliss of ignorance as one is still covered by avidya that is the cause of individuality and transmigration. As long as the avidya has not been totally eradicated, the individualised consciousness, which we call a soul (jivatma) keeps on transmigrating, experiencing illusory births, deaths, and pains and pleasures of life.

This process can stop only after the veil (avarana), which covers the true nature of the Self or Pure Consciousness, is removed through Self-realisation (atma jnana) and Establishment in one's true nature (svarupa stithi). Svarupa stithi is consciousness resting in Its own true nature, or in a state of pure being and pure awareness. This is the last stage in the process of Self-realisation and it is attained through jnana yoga.

Jnana yoga is for those advanced souls who have already crossed all the preliminary stages. Having already covered a lot of ground, such souls do not have to follow a process of gradual transformation. They can negate all modifications of Nature (prakriti) through discrimination and proper understanding, and identify directly and completely with the underlying Principle of creation.

This process of self-denial is based on discrimination (viveka), that is, discrimination of the eternal (nitya) from the non-eternal (anitya) nature of the world (nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka), and dispassion (vairagya), that is, dispassion towards the unreality of sense perception and aversion (viraga) towards enjoyment (bhoga) of the fruits (phala) of actions (ihamruta phala bhoga virogah).

To develop these two faculties of pure discrimination (viveka) and absolute dispassion (vairagya), there are a few steps or disciplines that are recommended for one who takes to the path of knowledge (jnana marga). They are control of mind (sama), control of senses (dama), renunciation (uparama or uparati), endurance (titiksha), faith (shraddha) and concentration (samadhana).

Sama is restraining the mind (mano nigrah) from

identifying with desires for sense-indulgence. This is possible only through constant awareness of the mind and trying not to be trapped by its machinations. Not to be under the sway of the mind is controlling the mind and not stopping the mind. To be successful, one needs some understanding about the workings of one's mind and also practice.

Sama goes hand in hand with dama, which is control over the external sense organs. It is restraining the sense organs from putting into action the negative promptings of the mind. It is about not letting the organs of action (karmendriyas: hands, feet, mouth, anus and generative organ) and the organs of knowledge (jnanendriyas: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin) indulge in actions which have negative repercussions, disturb one's peace and tranquillity, lower one in others' esteem, and bring about one's downfall. For example, restraining the eyes from intentionally seeing things which incite one's base desire, disturbs one's self-control and make the mind restless and unfit for higher contemplation. To give another example, there may arise a negative impulse to steal something, but when one does not put this impulse into action and restrains the organs from doing it, one is applying dama.

Upama or uparati is the renunciation of all worldly desires, enjoyments or actions in order to strictly follow or focus on one's dharma (svadharma). In the present context, it is the pursuit of Self-enquiry and finally Self-realisation. A mind that is bound by worldly duties is not free to pursue or concentrate one-pointedly on Self-enquiry. Thus to concentrate all one's efforts to gain

knowledge of the Self, secular duties also have to be renounced.

Titiksha is physical and mental endurance of hardships and obstacles that come in the path of sadhana, especially the dualities of heat and cold, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour. It does not mean not feeling these dualities, but tolerating them and rising above them, either through resignation to the will of a Higher Reality (ishwara) or by thinking it to be inevitable in a human body as a consequence of one's past actions (prarabdha karma).

Shraddha is faith in the teachings and words of the Master and shastras, especially in the Vedantic shastras in this context. Faith is necessary at first because the Self—Atma or Brahman—cannot be proved through either perception (prataksha) or inference (paroksha). The knowledge of the Self can be gained only through direct cognition (aparoksha anubhuti). To have direct cognition of the Absolute, one has to first hear the great teachings (mahavakyas) of the Upanishads (shravana), then think about the mahavakyas (manana), and then do deep contemplation (nididhyasana). But before one can start true contemplation, one has to have strong faith in the words of the shastras and the instructions of those who have realised the Absolute Truth. Shraddha develops into mumukshata which is strong yearning to know the Ultimate Reality directly and to be liberated through that knowledge from the cycle of transmigration and from the illusion of individualised and limited existence.

Samadhana is deep concentration or fixing the mind one-pointedly on the object of contemplation leading to total absorption in it to the exclusion of everything else. When priority is given to

one particular thought by exclusion of the myriads of thoughts that run about in the mind, it is called samadhana or chitta ekagrata (one-pointedness of consciousness).

Through the diligent practice of the above steps, deep reflection and constant contemplation or meditation one attains the ultimate goal of total identification with the Self—the true essence and substratum of one's being and of this manifested creation—the One and the All.

Raja Yoga

Raja yoga, or ashtanga yoga, is a well studied scientific process of elevating the vital energy and with it the consciousness of the practitioner. Ashtanga means eight limbs, namely yama (ethics), niyama (discipline), asana (posture), pranayama (control of life-force), pratyahara (withdrawal of senses), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi (supreme equanimity).

Yama and Niyama: Principles of ethics and morality as well as self-control and self-discipline form the base of this system of practice. Thus the first two limbs or steps of the eight limbs of Ashtanga yoga are yama and niyama. Yama consists of ahimsa (non-violence), satya (truthfulness), brahmacharya (continence, control of sensual pleasure), asteya (non-stealing), aparigraha (non-covetousness). Niyama consists of shaucha (purity, cleanliness), santosha (contentment), tapas (austerity), swadhyaya (self-study, spiritual study), atmanivedana or ishwara pranidhana (self-

submission and offering of one's life to God).

Asana: The third step is asana. Asana here means a steady and comfortable posture in which one can sit unhindered for a certain period of time, as this is indispensable for the practice of meditation. However, asana also implies the practice of some hatha yoga before or along with the practice of raja yoga. The practice of hatha yoga leads to raja yoga. The practice of hatha yoga only as an end in itself can become a form of body-centred culture or an aid to physical well-being and nothing more, as it is commonly the case today. The true purpose behind the practice of hatha yoga is preparation of the outer and inner body with its channels (nadis), and spiritual centres (chakras) for the practice of raja yoga. It will not be out of place here to write a few words concerning hatha yoga.

Hatha yoga involves the practice of asanas (postures), mudras (special postures combined with breathing techniques to seal the energy, so that it does not descend downward), bandhas (contraction of certain parts of the body to form a bridge between the uprising energy and a spiritual centre or chakra), some cleansing kriyas, and a few easy pranayamas. Hatha yoga first of all helps to make the physical body more flexible, relaxed and steady by removing the tension in the muscles and the stress one carries in the physical body. Secondly, it removes the blockages that are there in the nadis due to pockets of accumulated matter, such as phlegm etc. Thirdly, it harmonises the three main elements—wind (vata), fire (pitta), water (kapha)—which make this body-machine

function. The practice of hatha yoga further helps to awaken, to some extent, the dormant centres of pure energy in the body and tone up the three main channels—ida (the right passage of the sun), pingala (the left passage of the moon) and sushumna (the middle passage)—through which the life force flows. In the body of a yogi, the spiritual energy and subtle currents ascend and descend through these channels.

The body of an individual is generally in a state of imbalance, so it is usually not possible to start raja yoga without harmonising the body first. As the body and mind are interconnected, only in a healthy, harmonised body is it possible to maintain a steady posture and steady mind. The actual purpose of hatha yoga is not to make one into an acrobat or a muscle-man, as is often mistakenly understood, but to prepare the body for the practice of steady meditation, which is the seventh step in the system of raja yoga. So hatha yoga is only an aid to the practice of raja yoga and is complementary to it.

Pranayama: Pranayama is the fourth step in the practice of raja yoga. Pranayama is usually interpreted as control of prana or life-force. But it is not only that, it has other significances also. Pranayama is a scientific process of releasing the life-force from its usual activity of bodily functions and directing it back towards its source or origin. Through pranayama, first of all the prana is made to flow freely and rhythmically through the channels. When the prana flows rhythmically the mind is to a great extent freed from vacillation and restlessness. This is stated in the Bhagavad Gita

as follows: “Equalising the outgoing and incoming breath moving within the nostrils” (V-27). Then the life-force is channelised and made to rise up to the higher centres.

With proficiency in practice, the breath naturally ceases to function. When the life-force rises and comes in contact with higher chakras, the yogi re-discovers immense potentialities that are dormant within the human body. This is the much-talked-of magical powers of yogis. Aspirants who aim at Self-realisation should not be too concerned about acquiring these powers, and even if they come their way in the process of practice they should overlook them and proceed towards the final goal of Self-realisation without giving them much importance. The aim of a true yogi is not the acquirement of miraculous powers but the attainment of liberation from the cycle of transmigration by realising the true nature of the Self. So acquirement of siddhis or powers is like stopping half way in one’s journey, to pick up gold coins that lie scattered on the roadside.

Pratyahara: After pranayama comes pratyahara, which is withdrawal of the senses and the mind from external objects. When the activity of the prana can be arrested and disengaged from bodily functions and centred or focused within, withdrawal of the senses occurs naturally. This is a scientific and natural way of withdrawing the senses from their respective objects. It should be noted that this is not the same as the control or restraint of the senses as mentioned in dama in the previous section on jnana yoga. Control of the senses involves effort, but withdrawal of the senses

in pratyahara happens effortlessly. When the prana is controlled, channelised and centred within through pranayama, the mind can be easily withdrawn from the outer and focused within.

Dharana: When the senses are withdrawn and the distraction of the objective world is minimised, the restlessness of the mind subsides and the mind is able to flow without interruption towards its object of contemplation. This continuous flow of thoughts towards a seed or object within (pratyaya) is dharana. Dharana logically follows pratyahara because it is only when distractions of the outer world are shut out through the withdrawal of the senses that the mind becomes interiorised and thoughts can be guided to flow continuously like a stream in one direction.

Dhyana: When the mind gets focused on the object of contemplation there is meditation (dhyana). If the mind can remain focused for a considerable period of time, the state of dhyana stha ensues. In the state of dhyana stha, for short periods of time the meditating person loses awareness of the body and the outer world. Actually there are many forms of meditation and they can be learnt from an accomplished Master and practiced.

Samadhi: Dhyana or meditation culminates in samadhi. In the state of samadhi the mind gets completely absorbed in the object of meditation and one loses awareness of the body and outer world for longer periods of time, the duration depending on the intensity of absorption. The yogi or aspirant proceeds progressively

through a few successive states of samprajnata samadhi (samadhi that accompanies awareness) and asamprajnata samadhi (samadhi that accompanies no awareness) till finally all inner seeds (pratyayas) which manifest in these stages of samprajnata samadhi, becoming subtler at every progressive stage of samadhi, drops and nirvija samadhi (samadhi with no seed) and nirvikalpa samadhi (samadhi without duality) is attained.

In the final stage, there remains only the uncovered, unfragmented awareness of the Self. Absolute Oneness is attained by the yogi.

Kriya Yoga

Kriya yoga is yoga of synthesis and is a specially developed form of raja yoga. It synthesises the techniques of asanas, mudras and specialised forms of pranayama and meditation. It combines asanas, mudras and a special technique of pranayama with meditation and japa, and is a speedier method for attaining mind control and samadhi. There is no forceful retention of breath or rigorous postures. It is a natural and easy technique for working out the karmic deposits and kleshas (internal impurities) of a yogi and to give him the bliss of samadhi in a shorter time than the other yogas. The regular and sincere practice of kriya yoga expedites the process of evolution of an aspirant. The secret techniques of kriya yoga are to be learnt from an adept practitioner.

A seeker should keep in mind that a technique may be very developed but unless it is imparted by a fully Realised Master—

or at least by one who is truly advanced—it does not give the desired results. The developed technique can become just physical exercises or hatha yoga practices: a tool without fire or power. It should always be remembered that technique in itself cannot give one realisation. Every technique has to have the living power of a Realised Master, and it must also be practiced with diligence; only then will it bear fruits.

The spiritual path being very special, an adventure into the unexplored regions of consciousness should always be practiced with help of able guidance. Even at preliminary stages of pranayama and meditation guidance is necessary.

Now we come to certain auxiliary aspects which are necessary aids for Self-development. Spiritual life is not only practice of certain techniques or yogas. It is also a process of steady cultivation of positive qualities through satsanga (right company and proper environment), swadhyaya (self-study or study directed towards knowing the Self), seva (selfless service), sadachara (right conduct or right attitude), santosha (contentment), and shraddha (sincerity and faith).

SATSANGA

Right company and environment

Sat means Truth, thus satsanga means association with Truth. In our context, the truth implied is the Ultimate or Absolute Truth. The ultimate satsanga is direct union with the Absolute Truth, but before that is possible there are certain ways by which we can associate with that Truth. We can do so by hearing about the Truth, through discussions about the Truth, and by contact with those who are close to or in contact with the Truth.

Satsanga also means right company. Company can either help to build or destroy the desire for Truth. Company is a very important factor in the preliminary stages of spiritual life. Company influences our life, our attitudes, our habits, and even our thinking and behaving to a great extent. So satsanga is very important for preparing one in the search for Truth. It is advisable, especially in the early stages of spiritual life to have the company of like-minded people. A sadhak should at least see that if favourable company is not available, he does not entertain the company of those who disturb and distract one from one's aim. Right company is like the air, sunshine and water required for the seed of positive aspiration to grow.

The company of saints and Realised Masters is most desirable, and of great importance to a spiritual seeker. One cannot imagine the tremendous impact such company can have on the mind. The very presence of such Elevated Beings can positively affect the core of one's being and change the direction in which one's mind usually flows. It can prevent the mind from being pulled towards the objective world and direct it inwards, towards the inner most essence of one's being. The presence of a highly developed being can not only direct one's mind towards Truth, but also surcharge the very atoms of the environment in which He dwells with positive vibrations. The subtle vibrations that emanates from a Realised Being can arouse within another the latent desire for liberation. Not only does it affect spiritual aspirants, but it even elevates the most ordinary people from states of depression. Just the ideal of great souls serves as an inspiring example to seekers and helps them surmount many difficulties and doubts in the Path.

The implication of satsanga is not limited to the company of saints and elevated beings. When like-minded people get together to sing or chant the names and glories of the Lord and to discuss the scriptures and to contemplate the Divine, that is also satsanga. In such satsangas one gets spiritually recharged. The company of artists helps an artist to develop his artistic skills, the company of academics charges the brain of a scholar, likewise the company of other sadhaks or spiritual aspirants help an aspirant tremendously. The human mind has a tendency to imitate, and it imitates those or that with whom it is in constant contact. This is very evident when one observes the effect of television and films

on young minds. Much violence and negative practices that the youth indulge in today is the direct effect of what they see on the screen and in magazines, and also what they see the elders doing. If this can be reversed and the young minds can be exposed to positive thinking, higher ideals and good company, it will certainly help to build a healthier society.

Under the heading of satsanga we may include environment and attitude. The mind and mood of men is definitely affected by the environment they live in. Though the atmosphere of Christian monasteries, Hindu ashrams and Buddhist viharas may afford the ideal atmosphere for spiritual life, not everyone can afford to live in these places all the time. But one can and should try to build a favourable atmosphere in one's own house and family. Unless one is totally centred within one's self, outer conditions will affect the mind adversely.

A spiritual aspirant should further learn to respect and love all manifestations of life and the divinity innate in all beings through a cultivation of right attitudes towards them. All harsh words and hurt inflicted on another return back to one like a boomerang in obedience to laws of Nature, and disturb the peace of mind most necessary for contemplation on the Divine.

Satsanga is a key step in the process of Self-realisation. All these forms of satsanga, namely company of the righteous, company of saints, good environment and harmonious relationship, lead to the final satsanga, that is, the realisation of the Ultimate Truth.

SWADHYAYA

Self-study or study directed towards knowing the Self

In the twenty-first century world today, when man has become merely a commercial or material being, the company of saints and like-minded seekers may not always be readily available. This century, however, affords us the privilege of abundant reading material. Countless good books and scriptures are now available in almost all languages. Saints and realised souls very often transmit their grace and teachings through their writings, so a diligent and regular reading of selective books—known as swadhyaya—can act as an alternative or supplement to satsanga.

Swadhyaya helps to remove the negative conditioning implanted in our minds and build a favourable mental mood conducive to spiritual growth. As words have a tremendous effect on the mind, a regular reading of certain texts helpful to our specific line of growth can be of immense help.

Reading with a proper attitude builds a favourable store of thoughts on which the mind can fall back at times of doubts and depression. It is an effective aid in calming the disturbed mind. Moreover, such scriptures offer us invaluable information and guidance in regard to the dynamics of spiritual practice, which we

may not otherwise have except directly from a Teacher. Many a times, scriptures ignite the latent desire for Reality and inspire one to seek it.

Reading of the scriptural texts is an essential part of jnana sadhana because it removes the darkness (tamas) that is in the mind and awakens vichara, the faculty of discrimination between the Real and the unreal. It is only with proper vichara and viveka aroused through sadhana, and through listening to and reading the shastras that one can negate vikshepa (dispersion of the mind) and avarana (shrouding veil).

It should be added here that reading with a proper perception of the truths hidden behind words, especially in regard to certain scriptures, is more beneficial than just a casual reading, because often the intrinsic spiritual significance of such texts is hidden behind the externality of words. This is especially true in regards to many Hindu scriptures and even the Bible. These invaluable secrets reveal themselves to the ones who have direct perception of Truth. The purpose of such secrecy is probably to hide the treasure house of knowledge from the undeserving ones, in order to avoid its misuse. So it is advisable during the perusal of these texts to take the help of those who know. It is beneficial and productive not only to read, but also to dwell on what one has read. This is called manana. It is only when one does manana and nididhyasana—constant contemplation of a subject—that the knowledge one has gathered from books begin to settle in the mind, and the truth begins to reveal Itself in all its aspects.

It must be kept in mind that book knowledge can only be

an aid to Self-realisation, but cannot in itself bestow it. Reading should not be an end, but only a means or aid to knowledge. A prudent selection of a few books that inspire us is better than reading too many which may confuse us. So reading can be a great aid to Realisation especially in this century.

SEVA

Selfless service

Action is a very important aspect of our daily life. Survival is not possible without action. But action also becomes the cause of bondage because actions leave their impression in the mind and these impressions stored in the mind are carried from one birth to another. Actions also have consequence and generate either merit or demerit, resulting in joyful or painful experiences. An individual who is bound to the results that actions produce has to incarnate in different bodies to enjoy or suffer the consequence of both positive and negative actions. Thus the individual gets bound to the cycle of transmigration.

Self-motivated actions done with expectations of results produce consequences. More so when the performer of the action gets identified with the actions as “I am the doer.” Seva is selfless action or service, which is a means to free oneself from the bondage of actions. Selfless action is that which is performed without any self-interest or motive of self-gain, but for the purpose of purification with a higher goal in view. Thus such selfless action does not generate any negative consequence for the performer; it only purifies. Seva trains one to rise above the sense of being

the doer (kartritwa bhava), which is the actual cause of bondage. Through real seva one learns to become an instrument of the Divine. Selfless service helps to thin out the ego, which is the biggest obstacle in the path of Realisation.

Thus seva is an essential preparation for higher life. That is why in India it was a tradition for young aspirants to go to the guru kula (the house of Guru) where they lived with the Guru, served the Guru, studied the shastras, and learnt about the mysteries of the Self.

Birth and death are links in a chain forged through action. Action is born from desire, which is born from ignorance of one's true nature. Selfless action or seva is a means to free one from the bondage of action.

Seva is the performance of actions with a spirit of dedication. Joining a philanthropic group or giving millions in charity without the right attitude may not necessarily be seva, but the smallest of actions done selflessly without any expectations may be called seva. It is not what we do that is important but how we do it. Work becomes worship when done in a selfless spirit and with dedication. Even ordinary actions become divine if they are performed without any motive of self gain and attachment to results, without the sense of agency and done only as an offering.

The aim of selfless action is to gradually inculcate within the doer the qualities of service, humility, obedience, selflessness, and to work out the deposit of selfish desires which has accumulated within. Little acts of kindness help to open the doors of the heart and make one feel the divinity within all beings,

thus preparing one for higher life.

Service is a great purifier that cleans one of the impurity of selfishness and pride, and frees one from self-centredness. True purity in essence is the absence of ego and desires. Selfless service is thus an essential requirement for Self-realisation. It helps to prepare the receptivity and base for higher knowledge. The attitude of selfless service converts even the common action of daily life into a constant worship of the Divine. In fact the Bhagavad Gita stresses that the performance of selfless action with equanimity is yoga. Although seva is essentially karma yoga, it has been discussed here as a separate topic because seva is a basic preparation for all yogas.

SADACHARA

Right conduct or right attitude

Human society is like an interwoven piece of fabric. No one exists in isolation. Each individual is interrelated with others to form social units, such as the family, a commune or any such institution. And some rules of conduct, behaviour and sense of duty are very necessary for individuals to interact with each other smoothly, and for human societies to exist in harmony. It is lack of this sense of proper conduct and duty which throws society into a state of confusion and imbalance, like that of the present day.

Every society functions according to its understanding of life and the purpose of human existence, and has evolved some criteria of conduct and behaviour which matches its central purpose. In India, where from time immemorial the main goal of life has been Self-realisation or God contact and man's preoccupation has been to manifest divinity in life, the code of conduct and sense of duty here have a spiritual basis and are considered an integral part of dharma. Dharma is set of principles that upholds humanity and maintains the balance of creation. It also means the path of righteousness. This code of conduct is called sadachara—how man must conduct himself in life, how he

should interact with others; the duties he has to perform so that he may attain merits or righteousness (dharma) which will finally lead him to emancipation (mukti). Sadachara is as necessary for a man of the world as for the recluse or spiritual seeker for the smooth functioning of society and for attaining the highest goodness. Without sadachara the spiritual process, in fact life itself, will be as if without a vital limb. Sadachara is the outer manifestation of cultural and inner refinement.

Sadachara concerns the individual's relationships with others, such as that between husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, employer and employee, ruler and subject, elder and younger. In fact it concerns each individual's attitude toward the other and society as a whole.

In sanatana dharma the sense of proper interaction has been extended to include nature. Animals, trees, the sun, the earth and the other principles of Nature were worshipped as gods. This was an expression of reverence for all creation, and respect for the laws of interdependence. Thus sadachara includes what one's attitude should be towards not only animate beings but also what one presumes to be inanimate. The truth of this is very much apparent today when man realises that he cannot live only by money or material progress. He needs trees, pure air, clean water, and clear sunshine. Man has just begun to realise the harm he has already done by not knowing how to utilise nature properly and interact with it properly.

What concerns us here are the specific rules of conduct and behaviour of a spiritual seeker regarding his attitude towards

the preceptor and other seekers in faith. Knowledge of this minimises the offences one makes on the path, and we need to know because offence is like a hole in a pot which one is trying to fill by one's positive efforts.

SANTOSHA

Contentment

Material progress is said to depend on activity and change. The rate of material progress of a society today is evaluated by its rate of consumption. At the root of this consumption and change, there must be discontentment: a constant dissatisfaction with the existing state.

The modern dictum states that stability and satisfaction is the death of progress. So the producers and advertisers keep the modern man constantly desiring new things and prevent him from being satisfied. Thus the individual finds himself in a state of perennial dissatisfaction.

This state of dissatisfaction may be the formula for material prosperity, but on the other hand, it is also the main cause of the individual's inner depletion. First of all, the process of endless activity due to constant dissatisfaction leaves very little time for any inner development. It also generates restlessness within. This restless energy prevents one from being still. Without stillness no meditation or contemplation on any higher truth is possible. That is why it is said in the Bible, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalms 46:10).

Yoga and other spiritual disciplines are exactly for the purpose of removing restlessness from the different levels of one's being—physical, mental, emotional—and bringing about a state of quiescence and stillness within. Just as one gazing into still waters can see into the depths, one can probe into the depths of one's being only when the mind is calm and still. As long as discontent is not removed, there cannot be stillness, and without stillness there can be no peace.

Progress is all right, but what is the purpose of progress? Is it not to make us more comfortable and enable us to have more joy? If one sincerely asks oneself, "Does progress give us this?" How can progress at the root of which is dissatisfaction give one joy? Moreover, if progress is only material progress it is only one sided. What about the other aspect of man, the inner aspect, the soul and spirit?

The Bhagavad Gita says, "He whose mind is not shaken by adversity, who does not hanker after pleasures, is free from attachment, fear and anger is of steady wisdom" (II-56).

So the aspirants and seekers of Peace and Realisation have to learn to discard discontent—the enemy of peace—and cultivate the divine quality of contentment (santosha). Discontent is not only an enemy of peace; it also destroys goodwill towards others, and is the cause behind most disrupted social relationships. So santosha is not only necessary for spiritual life, but also for a harmonious social life.

One who has cultivated this precious quality of santosha and is peaceful in all circumstances has reached that step which

is very close to the uninterrupted joy of Self-realisation. From contentment is born stillness, and from the silence of stillness comes forth contemplation. Contemplation links one to the higher Self. A contemplative, or a devotee, resigned to the will of God is thus ever content, and his peace and joy is undisturbed.

SHRADDHA

Sincerity and faith

Finally, shraddha is that feeling of sincerity of the heart without which a hundred efforts or practices become useless. Without shraddha or strong faith all other steps for self-progress are of no avail. Sincerity and the strong desire to attain a fixed aim in life overcome multitudes of desires in the mind that try to sway away an aspirant from the Path of Truth. Shraddha is unswerving faith in the Path, the directions of a Master and also in the goodness and benevolence of the Supreme Guiding Spirit or God.

Mumukshuta is another quality an aspirant must possess. It is a strong desire for liberation. Without this strong desire it is indeed impossible to overcome the various obstacles that one's lower nature or the mind projects on the Path of an aspirant in the form of doubts, obstacles and sense attractions.

Without a strong desire of one's own for Truth and Perfection, no technique, no spiritual system, no master can help one to attain the goal of Self-realisation. So all other steps, together with sincere faith and the desire for liberation, lead one gradually towards the Ultimate Freedom or Union with one's True Nature or

Self.

All these are steps or conditions that lead a sincere aspirant to the goal of Self-realisation, which is the dissolution of the non-self in the Self, and the limited life in the eternal life. This is the solution for all human problems and all human sorrows. The root of all problems is within the individual, and the world cannot be changed without changing ourselves. The outer is only a reflection of the inner.

SAMADHI

Many have asked about samadhi, so it would be right to explain it in a few lines. It is the culmination of meditation in a state when the mind becomes one with the object of meditation. There are different degrees of this absorption and accordingly there are different stages in samadhi called bhumikas.

In the final stage, the subject and the object merge into Oneness and duality is transcended. The identification of the Self, that is Pure Consciousness, with the various sheaths is negated and the Self glows in its pristine brilliance. The tripudi or triad of seer, seen and the act of seeing is transcended and there is only the uncovered, unfragmented awareness of That – the Absolute, the One.

I offer humble descriptions of these steps into the hands of seekers, so that they may shed a little light on their path towards Self-realisation. May the grace of Realised Masters and the Supreme Spirit help and guide sincere aspirants to the goal of perfection.

Words of Eternal Truth

(1)

Know that through the practice of Truth, non-violence and celibacy one progresses towards Emancipation. Without these, all efforts amount only to pouring water into a cracked vessel.

(2)

Sincere dedication to the Master is the secret of all success; and progress is in direct proportion to one's dedication.

(3)

Learn to see the One in all and all in the One, this is the essence of Realisation.

(4)

I can give you countless messages but if you do not practice you will never get Perfection.

GLOSSARY

<i>acharya:</i>	master
<i>ahimsa:</i>	non-violence
<i>anandamaya kosha:</i>	sheath of bliss
<i>anitya:</i>	non-eternal
<i>annamaya kosha:</i>	sheath of food
<i>aparigraha:</i>	non-covetousness
<i>aparoksha anubhuti:</i>	direct cognition or experience
<i>archana:</i>	worship
<i>asamprajnata samadhi:</i>	samadhi that accompanies no awareness
<i>asana:</i>	posture
<i>ashtanga:</i>	eight limbs
<i>ashtanga yoga:</i>	yoga of eight limbs or eight steps
<i>asteya:</i>	non-stealing
<i>atma jnana:</i>	self-realisation
<i>atmanivedana:</i>	self-surrender
<i>avarana:</i>	veil, cover
<i>avarana shakti:</i>	power of veiling
<i>avidya:</i>	primal ignorance
<i>bandana:</i>	praising
<i>bandha:</i>	contraction of certain parts of the body
<i>batsalya bhava:</i>	regarding the Lord as one's child or regarding oneself as the Lord's child
<i>bhakti:</i>	devotion
<i>bhakti yoga:</i>	yoga of devotion

GLOSSARY

<i>bhava:</i>	concentrated feelings
<i>bhoga:</i>	sense enjoyment
<i>bhoktritwa abhiman:</i>	ego-sense of being the enjoyer
<i>bhumika:</i>	different stages
<i>bihita karma:</i>	prescribed actions
<i>brahmacharya:</i>	continence, control of sensual pleasure
<i>buddhi:</i>	discrimination
<i>chakra:</i>	inner spiritual centre
<i>ihamruta phala bhoga virogah:</i>	dispassion or aversion towards enjoyment of the fruits of actions here and hereafter.
<i>chitta ekagrata:</i>	one-pointedness of consciousness
<i>dama:</i>	control of the senses
<i>darshan:</i>	experiencing the visual manifestation of divinity
<i>dasya:</i>	servant of the Lord
<i>dasya bhava:</i>	feeling as Lord's servant
<i>dharma:</i>	righteousness, duty, cosmic principle
<i>dharana:</i>	concentration
<i>dhyana:</i>	meditation
<i>dhyanaस्था:</i>	steady state of meditation
<i>guru kula:</i>	the house of guru
<i>hatha yoga:</i>	yoga consisting mainly of physical practices
<i>ida:</i>	the right passage of the sun
<i>ishta:</i>	one's chosen god
<i>ishwara:</i>	God
<i>ishwara pranidhana:</i>	offering of one's life to god
<i>japa:</i>	repetition of mantram
<i>jiva:</i>	individual
<i>jivatma:</i>	individual soul

<i>jnana:</i>	knowledge
<i>jnana marga:</i>	path of knowledge
<i>jnana yoga:</i>	yoga of knowledge
<i>jnanendriyas:</i>	organs of knowledge
<i>kamyā:</i>	desire
<i>kapha:</i>	water element
<i>karana sharira:</i>	causal body
<i>karma:</i>	action
<i>karma yoga:</i>	yoga of action
<i>karmendriyas:</i>	organs of action
<i>karta:</i>	the doer
<i>kartritwa abhiman:</i>	the ego-sense of being the doer
<i>kartritwa bhava:</i>	the feeling of being the doer
<i>kirtan:</i>	chanting
<i>klesha:</i>	internal impurity. there are five kleshas, namely avidya (ignorance), asmita (egotism), raga (desire), dvesha (aversion) and abhinivesha (tenacity of mundane existence).
<i>kosha:</i>	sheath
<i>kriya:</i>	cleansing techniques in hatha yoga
<i>kriya yoga:</i>	yoga of synthesis
<i>madhura bhava:</i>	regarding one's chosen ishta as one's divine beloved
<i>mahavakya:</i>	great teachings in Vedanta
<i>manana:</i>	remembering
<i>manomaya kosha:</i>	sheath of mind
<i>mano nighrah:</i>	restraining the mind
<i>mantram:</i>	special combination of certain sacred syllables
<i>maya:</i>	power that manifests the one as many

GLOSSARY

<i>mudra:</i>	special gesture with breathing technique
<i>mukti:</i>	emancipation, liberation
<i>mumukshata:</i>	strong yearning for liberation
<i>nadi:</i>	channels of the inner body
<i>nididhyasana:</i>	constant contemplation of a subject and integration of the truth one has heard and thought about through shravana and manana.
<i>nitya:</i>	eternal
<i>nitya anitya vastu viveka:</i>	discrimination of the eternal from the non-eternal nature of the world
<i>niyama:</i>	discipline
<i>ojas:</i>	spiritual energy
<i>padasevana:</i>	service of the feet
<i>paroksha:</i>	inference
<i>phala:</i>	fruit
<i>pingala:</i>	the left passage of the moon
<i>pitta:</i>	fire element
<i>prakriti:</i>	nature
<i>prana:</i>	life force
<i>pranamaya kosha:</i>	sheath of prana
<i>pranayama:</i>	control of life-force
<i>prarabdha karma:</i>	consequence of one's past actions that is manifesting in this life
<i>prataksha:</i>	perception
<i>pratyahara:</i>	withdrawal of the senses
<i>pratyaya:</i>	inner seeds
<i>raja:</i>	motion, activity
<i>raja yoga:</i>	see asthanga yoga
<i>sadachara:</i>	right conduct, right attitude
<i>sadhak:</i>	spiritual aspirant

STEPS TOWARDS SELF-REALISATION

<i>sadhana:</i>	practices of self-perfection
<i>sakhya:</i>	companionship
<i>sakhya bhava:</i>	regarding the Lord as one's friend
<i>sama:</i>	control of the mind
<i>samadhana:</i>	concentration
<i>samadhi:</i>	supreme equanimity
<i>samprajnata samadhi:</i>	samadhi that accompanies awareness
<i>sanatana dharma:</i>	eternal dharma
<i>sanjam:</i>	self-restraint
<i>santa bhava:</i>	attitude of peaceful contemplation of the Divine
<i>santosha:</i>	contentment
<i>saranagati:</i>	taking shelter in the Lord
<i>sat:</i>	truth
<i>satsanga:</i>	association with Truth, right company
<i>sattva:</i>	pure light, clarity
<i>satya:</i>	truthfulness
<i>seva:</i>	selfless service
<i>shastra:</i>	scripture
<i>shaucha:</i>	purity, cleanliness
<i>shraddha:</i>	sincerity, faith
<i>siddhi:</i>	supernatural powers acquired by spiritual practice
<i>smarana:</i>	remembering
<i>shravana:</i>	listening
<i>sthula sharira:</i>	gross body
<i>sukshma sharira:</i>	subtle body
<i>sushumna:</i>	the middle passage
<i>svadharma:</i>	one's own dharma
<i>svarupa stithi:</i>	consciousness resting in its own nature

GLOSSARY

<i>swadhyaya:</i>	self-study, study directed towards knowing the self
<i>tama(s):</i>	darkness, inertia
<i>tapas:</i>	austerity
<i>triputi:</i>	triad of seer, seen and the act of seeing
<i>uparama:</i>	renunciation
<i>uparati:</i>	renunciation
<i>titiksha:</i>	endurance
<i>vairagya:</i>	dispassion
<i>vata:</i>	wind element
<i>vichara:</i>	discrimination
<i>vihara:</i>	Buddhist monastery or temple
<i>vijnanamaya kosha:</i>	sheath of knowledge
<i>vikshepa:</i>	dispersion of the mind in the multifarious objects
<i>vikshepa shakti:</i>	power of projection of multifariousness
<i>viraga:</i>	aversion
<i>viryā:</i>	vital energy or sexual energy
<i>viveka:</i>	pure discrimination
<i>yama:</i>	ethics