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freedom focuses on the inherent wisdom within the Heart of all, which is otherwise obscured by the relative Mind. Included are insights and practical advice on how to dissolve the impact of ideas and beliefs built on the assumption that reality is exclusively accessible through, as well as a by-product of, thought. The result of such elimination of Mind-dross is the birth into our true timeless and everpresent state, conferring so-called Self-realization.

PREFACE

We already are what we're struggling to become. Absurd as it may sound, this is indicative of the paradox we commonly live in-and the culprit responsible for its creation and sustenance is the Mind.

Coming

to terms with this dilemma, locating its point of origin and therefrom discovering its resolution, is the goal of this book.

The approach and methodology found herein is a blend of the author's own as well as various other spiritual/metaphysical disciplines

comprising the so-called Perennial Philosophy or Ageless Wisdom Teachings. From time immemorial, these teachings have been accessible

to anyone with an open mind and sufficient desire to seek that which lies hidden beneath the appearance of things. Not readily discoverable,

they are therefore referred to as the 'secret teachings' or 'esoteric doctrine'

behind the world religions. They're also found in various sources such

as the Hindu Vedanta, Zen Buddhism, Christian Gnosticism, Hebrew Qabalism, Chinese Taoism, Islamic Sufism and American and African Shamanism.

Though these teachings are considered 'esoteric,' there isn't

anything intrinsically mysterious about them. If they tend to remain concealed, it's due to the nature or temperament of the religious follower or seeker and his or her capacity to connect to the deeper insights of the spiritual doctrine. For example, unless the individual pursues the matter above and beyond the traditional indoctrination associated with the various major religions, the deeper insights remain undiscovered. One of the main reasons for this is the tendency for adherents to accept at face value what has been taught to them in the form of ecclesiastical dogma, rather than inquiring into their religion's originally intended teachings.

Although this work will refer to the various sources mentioned above, its main focus will be via the philosophy and method of the Hindu Vedanta (specifically Advaita Vedanta, representing the non-dual wisdom teachings culled from the Vedas-being, in turn, the world's oldest extant scriptural documents). This choice is the result of three main factors. Firstly, since Vedanta addresses the widest range of psychological issues (observation based on the author's 35 years of metaphysical and comparative religious study), its vantage point is the most lucid, flexible and all-encompassing. Secondly, most of its leading proponents are eclectic, incorporating aside from the teachings of Krishna, Shankara, etc., also those of Jesus and Buddha. And lastly, where applicable, Sanskrit terminology is being used because it proves to be the most descriptive, with the widest application in practical spiritual matters. (Note: definitions for Sanskrit words are supplied in the body of the text upon their being introduced; a glossary is also provided for additional reference.)

One of the hallmark traits of the Perennial Philosophy is the fact that one's chosen religion itself has no bearing on the capacity to realize the truth.

This is because the underlying principles of the world religions are based on universal metaphysics, which [as mentioned] is accessible to anyone with an open mind and an earnest desire to investigate. All paths up the mountain lead to one summit. It should be noted that all the information disseminated in these pages has been either generated by or filtered through the author's own knowledge and experience.

INTRODUCTION

This book is like no other in its field. It offers the most effective known means to realize what [metaphysics claims] already exists at the foundation of everyone's consciousness, namely an inherent state of bliss associated with pure unalloyed Being. The unwavering recognition of this is termed Self-realization. The potential for manifesting this revolutionary insight avails itself in the final stages on the path of the soul, whereupon it starts to become evident that our existential 'problem' has all along been merely a hypnotic trick in and of the Mind, which has systematically disconnected us from the reality of our true state.

This insight will further lead to the fact that, based on the assumption that we are in truth already Self-realized, there is nothing [positive] we have to do to awaken to the existential reality we are automatically living. That we are in fact automatically free. All we have to do is release the [negative] thoughts that are stubbornly dictating otherwise.

Of course there will be some very justifiable objections to this observation, not the least of which is why we don't seem to experience such freedom or enlightenment, not to mention why we're in fact prone to their very opposites, namely bondage and ignorance and, thereby, suffering.

These objections will be addressed in due course. But first, let's define and explore the premise of this work.

The Premise: FREEDOM postulates that the following axiom, if contemplated, processed and stored into the memory-bank will, in time, purify and thus prepare the Mind for its absorption into what may be referred to as the holographic paradigm (soul) of the Absolute Reality (spirit). (This latter postulated as being integral to human consciousness, yet is obscured and/or distorted by the focus of our Relativity-bound awareness.)

The Axiom: Regardless of what we think, say or do, the perfection of Freedom was, is and always will be who and what we really are.

As such, the premise is implying that, after committing this axiom to memory, nothing further need be done to facilitate it-that it rather engages quite the opposite: an undoing! Therefore, the elimination of erroneous ideas [ordinarily plaguing the Mind] represents the whole of this method. The claim being that such ideas are aggressively diverting the awareness

away from the natural bliss of the Self.

The de-programming of the Mind we're speaking of here is specifically in terms of its compulsion for philosophical speculation. And considering the degree over time that it's been conditioned to operate

this way, the process required to, in effect, de-hypnotize it, necessarily

involves what amounts to being systematically scheduled counter-hypnotic suggestions. These will therefore take the form of thematic repetitions of

metaphysical insights from various psychological perspectives in order to

flush out the accumulated dis-ease inhabiting especially the subconscious regions of the Mind.

Hand in hand with this approach, the method of Self-enquiry is prescribed, which will expedite the [ideological/egoic] dissolution process.

In fact, if Self-enquiry is correctly and honestly applied, the results can be instantaneous moksha (Liberation or Self-realization). This can happen any time. More likely, however, are glimpses into the Self-that, in turn, come more and more frequently as one progresses.

With time and perseverance, this method will succeed.

Moreover

[according to the author's understanding, as the result of his extensive

research], it is the quickest, most effective and powerful method available

within the annals of the spiritual arcanum.

Note that throughout this work there will be numerous instances where certain hints will be given, any one of which has the power to transport the individual-if ready and with the help, of course, of their own

developed insight-awareness-into the sphere of moksha itself (Liberation through Self-realization).

Dear reader, it is your good fortune (grace) that you found this book and grace that may in fact deliver your weary ego...if indeed it is weary.

(Note that, in this context, discontent itself is a sign of grace!)

* * * *

Whatever we think we need to remember or are capable of forgetting, is not the Truth. Simply because this is the activity of the Mind. And what we're

talking about here is causal to the Mind.

Therefore, what we're seeking has ALREADY been found! It's already within our midst. More: it is who and what we ARE! It is referred to variously

as Atmabhavana, (the essential constant feeling of Self), Atmanishta (the existential essence of Self) and/or Aham Sphoorti (the unbroken, incessant

flow of 'I,' 'I,' 'I. '), among other descriptions.

In light of this, it becomes evident that when the Mind is set aside (either disengaged or ignored), what remains over is the essence of Self,

which has always been there, yet is almost constantly diverted by the Mind.

Note the phrase 'almost constantly'...it is 'almost' so because the times

that it isn't being diverted, the individual is in fact experiencing various levels of [innate] euphoria-i.e. joy, happiness, well-being, etc. Now, these feelings of well-being are ordinarily attributed to being the result of fulfilling various sensual desires or other matters concerning the ego in the world. However, whatever good feelings are experienced, are themselves actually made possible by the Self. That is, only the Self can generate such feelings.

This factor alone should serve to inspire one to pursue the discipline of yoga; for, the pursuit of happiness is the central theme and impetus in the Heart of all sentient beings.

However, regardless to what extent it may appear that we pursue a given thing or not, we are in truth the essence of pure Being and are therefore-despite extremely convincing appearances to the contrary-in reality 'doing nothing.' This raises an important point and is worthwhile elaborating.

The idea of 'doing nothing' is in fact the ultimate reality behind the life play of every sentient being. Beneath the dramatic world appearance, the Absolute Condition is changeless Peace. It is an eternal stable state of pure Existence and pure Consciousness which, as a result, confers pure Bliss.

The drama of the world appearance is a mysterious and unfathomable manifestation [somehow] emanating the Absolute Substratum. The 'science' of metaphysics reveals that in fact there can be no resolution or intrinsic understanding of this manifestation. Therefore it is best that we meet it moment to moment, act according to what we feel is best in our Heart and question it no further. For if we attempt to live according to its ideal relative

dictates, it will-as it always has-enslave us in its vicious circular trap of ever-changing and wider-challenging parameters. If, by definition, the source, the sustenance and the outcome of every action is the Infinite Absolute, there can be no isolated weight, meaning or effect associated with any action in particular. This is why it is said that nothing, *per se*, is happening anywhere, anytime. The Infinite, before, during and after the fact, absorbs every thought, word and deed. Thus the Phenomenal is itself the Noumenal. The Relative is itself the Absolute. This is the gist of the Non-dual Perennial Philosophy, which is, in turn, the gist of the Ageless Wisdom Teachings.

* * * *

Depending on one's development, the whole or only part of this work may be necessary to assimilate before the breakthrough insight into the [everpresent!] state of Self-realization is in fact unfurled. In light of this, it would be appropriate to quote from the Introduction to the classic Vedantic treatise, YOGA VASISHTHA, translated by Swami Venkatesananda, which states:

“The text abounds in repetitions which are, however, not repetitious. If you do not like (or need) repetition, then read just this one verse:

This world appearance is a confusion. I think it would be better not to let the mind dwell on it, but to ignore it.

(I.3.2)

“This verse occurs several times in the scripture and it seems to be the very essence of the teaching. If that is not quite clear to you now, read the scripture. The numerous ways in which this truth is revealed will help open your mind.”

The essence of this work-and indeed, the whole of the Non-dual core of the Ageless Wisdom Teachings-has been already imparted. The likelihood is, however, that only a mental seed has been planted and so needs further

nourishment and tending. Therefore, let's now explore it in further detail.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PREMISE

Regardless of what we think, say, or do, the perfection of Freedom was, is and always will be who and what we really are.

Such observation follows the advent of Self-realization. Through it, the individual discovers that s/he has been all along naturally and innately free, and therefore enlightened (Self-realized). This condition or state is seen to be one's living essence which, upon reflection, may be alluded to as infinite consciousness existing as pure vibration...unalloyed, self-contained, everpresent. Or, more simply, it is one's natural state, unencumbered by thought.

Conversely, prior to such awakening, the psycho-dynamic experience of the individual is one of bewilderment, paradox and an inner self-defined attitude that he yet dwells in a fundamental state of ignorance.

However, as Self-realization later reveals, this is all contrived in and through the Mind. Although prior to that, it can only be taken as an hypothesis.

Thus typically thrives what is in hindsight discovered to be the thinnest veil of thoughts obstructing and/or distorting the perception of our true Self, by

their creating and then sustaining ideas of 'isolation,' 'bondage' and 'ignorance,' and through these, begets 'suffering'...where in fact nothing of the kind is ever really in existence!

Thus, prior to Self-realization, there seems to exist what therefore must be regarded as 'the appearance of a problem.' And, within the structure of this appearance, it tends to present itself as a major one. What has caused this? Although a number of factors may be considered, essentially it's our thinking that leads us into believing we're bound and limited, and therefore suffering.

Now, from the outset it can be pointed out that a significant insight into one of the solutions to our entire dilemma can be found in three

keywords in the above paragraph: 'appearance,' 'thinking' and 'believing.' Where 'appearance' suggests that the problem is baseless; 'thinking' refers to how that illusory problem manages to arise; and 'believing' ties in [the effect] of the 'appearance' with [the cause] of our 'thinking' it into being in the first place.

The solution thus requires the neutralization of the impact of the Mind on the individual's awareness, either through the quelling of its thoughts or—since they usually continue at their normally [commonly neurotic] pace—the art of remaining unaffected by them. This latter mode, referred to as vairagya (dispassion) is the first to be cultivated, since the former—referred to as manonasa (dead Mind)—develops out of it naturally over time. It's very important to understand, however, that the concept of the 'dead Mind' refers to the philosophical or speculative Mind and not the practical reasoning mind, which is obviously required to function in the world. This is stressed quite clearly in Zen, where in one of its famous proverbs, “When I'm hungry I eat, when I'm thirsty I drink, when I'm tired I sleep,” the idea is to be in the moment and not speculating on profundities (unless one is inclined to do so out of sheer entertainment!...the point is, not to be anxiously/seriously brooding on the flow of mentation, upholding the idea that there is some existential problem requiring some 'life-saving' philosophical resolution). In other words, one is no longer [vainly] attempting to use the mind in any capacity to understand or resolve the ultimate or ontological essence of Reality. More on this later. (Note that throughout this work the word 'Mind,' with a capital 'M,' is used to denote the philosophical/speculative mind.) Since the Mind's veil of ignorance, according to metaphysics, has been painstakingly forged over countless lifetimes of the soul [finding its home embedded in the subconscious], the method needed to remove it must therefore be quite a powerful one, requiring many years—if not lifetimes—of patient, diligent application. For, the coercive power of thought, along with its relentless capacity to deceive, affects us far more than we ordinarily realize or are usually even capable of estimating, because it operates on the subtlest levels, and typically involuntarily so. So that, if we manage to defuse the impact of our tendency toward philosophical speculation on the matter of our awareness, the Self will naturally shine through unimpeded. On the other hand, it's also possible for the veil to be lifted quite suddenly and unexpectedly. Rest assured, the soul of one who is capable of this has evolved and ripened, perhaps even unawares in the present incarnation, to reach this point. And to such a one, all it may take is a cursory exposure to some of the key concepts related to Self-realization. And since it's nearly impossible for an individual to assess their own level of development, therefore [and despite appearances] the Awakening can happen to anyone at anytime! It can't be overstated how important it is to grasp this fact. Because it can dissolve a debilitating and rigid misconception, as well as setting up a very powerful dynamic within the psyche—one of renewed hope and potential. The idea that one is not worthy or not ready for Self-realization is incredibly self-defeating...moreover, it is inherently false. This applies to virtually everyone, despite what may appear otherwise! For example, there are documented cases in India where hardened criminals have instantaneously—through an unforeseen cathartic event—achieved Self-realization.

So, the crux of our problem is our thinking we're bound and limited. And it's important to note that this is not an over-simplification! And what's upholding this crippling attitude is the fact that it's become our habit...the

most influential and, in fact, preferential habit we possess! For, it's a process that literally sustains our world, precisely in the way we have grown to desire it-intricately mixed, as it is, with the paroxysms of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, wonder and horror. As such, it has developed into a pathological addiction we've literally come to crave and thus have our Being in, shaping and directing our awareness, moment to moment, obsessive-compulsively. An entire book can be written on how we've been molded into this quality and caliber of desire. Suffice to say that much of that influence has been environmental-beginning with our peers, then parents, and lastly society as a whole. Obviously it's a psychological phenomenon. An example may help illustrate. Johnny sees his friends playing with a new toy. Their enthusiasm is contagious. Hence it becomes valuable to him as well. He gets his parents to buy him one. A week later it's sitting in his garage collecting dust, and that's the end of it. Its true value surfaces over time. Thus are desires created, sustained and destroyed, all taking place within and through the Mind. Thus do thoughts dictate. And we follow. Allowing them to shape our perception and attitude-not only about the world but, more importantly, about ourselves. This continuum of thoughts that we allow to define and condition us-moment to moment-as being 'this such way' or 'that such thing,' is something we've come to inherently believe as an authentic expression of our own core reality.

It isn't. It represents a very narrow view based on merely fragments of our totality. This, incidentally, points to the real import of the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta: that thoughts, as well as life's phenomena [being, in turn, the by-product of thoughts], are technically not illusions, but microcosmic units of expression within the macrocosmic Absolute. It should here be noted that this actually runs counter to the popular notion among Vedantins, claiming that the world is utterly an illusion. Where, in fact, esoteric Vedanta reveals that the world is seen to be an illusion only in a very special sense: viz. if/when any part of it is segregated and regarded as real unto itself, APART from its substratum source, the Self.

So, once thoughts are factored into and thus take their rightful place within the quantum Life paradigm, they're seen to have no exclusive command over the essence of our consciousness. That they've somehow taken command is what we must soberly acknowledge and focus our attention on. Because if left alone, this ego-generated 'thought machine' propagates itself on exponential levels, further reinforcing its stronghold on our perception (which is obviously confirmed by our past experience). That is, the foundation of the Mind [being a bundle of thoughts] is the ego [or 'I'-thought], which is the dynamo purposefully generating the entire dominion of Relativity. Take away the 'I'-thought and the world collapses. All a human being needs sometimes is a flag raised on a given psychological problem in order to realize its source-being, according to metaphysics, invariably based on fallacious ideas. In the matter we're discussing, the fallacy is associated with what has come to be our habit of conducting ourselves in the role of victim to the will of ego, and doing so oblivious of the consequences. And, more significant than this, doing so without ever thinking to question it, perpetuating the inertia of our illusion. (Incidentally, insights such as this are in fact what makes Vedanta so effective and, in this way, distinguishes it among metaphysical approaches.) The essential approach in Vedanta [as well as in all non-dual methods] isn't through a process of learning, but through a process of unlearning! Unlearning the 'limitation dictates' that have been relentlessly transmitted and subsequently sustained by and through our thoughts...

thoughts invariably based on the obsessive habit of relative value-judgments, unfolding out of the 'self vs. not-self' modality of spacio-temporal awareness.

Now, although the difference between one who understands this and one who doesn't is, according to our premise, utterly inconsequential, it seems hopelessly vast to one who as yet doesn't. And here's where the great driving mystery enters the picture: that, regardless of the belief or attitude, the individual has always been free -in real terms-is automatically free-with nothing to do to achieve, behold, or conquer. Yet, ordinarily (i.e. prior to Self-realization), the perception is that one is indeed bound and limited. And this is the nature of Maya, that it masterfully tricks and deceives, while the feigned object of the deception itself is really non-existent! "Illusion is itself an illusion," says Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. And this is all we really need to know. However, because the Mind is stubbornly fixated on the lustrous allure of Mara (temptation or fascination), seeing into its deceptive tricks is not enough to break its habit. Therefore we must apply our svadharmic sadhana (yogic discipline suited to our individual needs and obligations).

Therefore, regardless of what's happening, of what we're doing, perceiving or thinking...we ARE That. We are automatically that Absolute Reality...manifest in the visible and invisible, the knowable and unknowable...eternal, unchanging, complete. How can this be? As alluded to above, the awakening in so-called Self-realization reveals the fact that we were all along only superficially being coerced by thoughts that kept grilling us with ideas that we were blind and bound in and by ignorance. This is comparable to the phenomenon of our being mystified and deceived in a nightmare where, upon awakening, we realize it was nothing more than a fantasy spun by the Mind.

In essence, the way of the enlightened one is the result of the awareness of living in the pure vibration of SELF [pure consciousness], therein unaffected by thought. Because, although thoughts are part and parcel of the true Self, they are such infinitesimal fragments thereof, as to be- unto themselves-quite insignificant: since when factored into the Totality of Brahman, they effectively disappear. This is the result of one's awareness being essentially immersed into what may be likened to the full spectrum of all conceivable colors, resulting in the holographic 'white-out' [of pure consciousness]-unalloyed, unlimited and unknowable. The thought process is thus transmuted into a seamlessly mutable state of absorption back into the Absolute.

Now, within the philosophy of Vedanta, there are three basic approaches: the dual, the non-dual and the qualified non-dual (Dvaita, Advaita and Visishtadvaita, respectively). In this work we will focus on the non-dual approach or Advaita Vedanta.

The basic premise of Advaita Vedanta is that there is only Brahman in existence, and what therefore can only ever be conceivably perceived, felt or experienced-is simply Brahman. And this is so whether Brahman is the transcendental pure spirit [beyond the senses] or the immanent gross physical [experienced through the senses]. The former is referred to as Nirguna Brahman and the latter Saguna Brahman. So that there are no misunderstandings here, it should be emphasized that Brahman is the efficient cause and energetic substratum behind every object, event and human thought in manifestation. This encompasses everything from the most heinous criminal to the most compassionate

sage, including the summation of all of their thoughts, words and deeds. There is not a single vibration or substance in the universe that is not itself a direct and expression of Brahman.

It's necessary to further clarify the components within the whole of Brahman. Nirguna Brahman is the unmanifest, undifferentiated absolute reality; and Saguna Brahman is that Nirguna essence breathed out, as it were, or expressing itself in relative manifestation, as Life itself. Thus, anything that can be perceived or conceived is Saguna Brahman; and what remains over, i.e. that which is unmanifest and unknowable, is its source, Nirguna Brahman. It should also be mentioned here that Saguna Brahman is ordinarily specifically regarded as the omniscient, omnipotent Creator God, Isvara. However, esoterically, Saguna Brahman has the wider connotation that, since the entire creation is in reality the substratum Nirguna Brahman, all of its namarupas [names and forms] are part and parcel of its Saguna aspect. So that, not only is Isvara singled out and worshipped as the Saguna Brahman [which is done in the earlier stages of the path], so are all jivas as well as the world itself [which is practiced in the later stages]. This three-in-one aspect is referred to as Sohamidam [God, souls, world].

Now, the fundamental problem Vedanta seeks to resolve-which resolution is the answer to our archetypal human paradox-is our mistake in identifying ourselves exclusively with Maya [a.k.a. Lila-the Play or Sport of Brahman, regarded as 'illusion'-equivalent to Saguna Brahman] instead of the totality of Brahman [i.e. being the Nirguna plus Saguna Brahman]. This is the result of if/when the human observer regards his/her object of perception as isolated and apart from Brahman [which, by definition, is its very source]. That is, the very thing being observed-within or without, subjectively or objectively-is not only what it appears to be, it is, at the same time, factored into the totality of Brahman. Once again, the totality of Brahman is the fused expression of Saguna and Nirguna Brahman. Therefore, in reality, there cannot be, as such, any duality/plurality in existence-but only One Being: Brahman. This is supported by the famous axiom in the Upanishads: "All this, verily, is Brahman."

Therefore-and contrary to popular belief, even amongst many Vedantins!-the manifestation of Brahman, as Life itself, is not an illusion. (The first significant and most revered proponent of Advaita, Adi Shankaracharya, made this same assertion, yet it was cloaked in wording that was deliberately misleading-the reason why will be explored later). To reiterate, all that we have to remember is to not allow ourselves to isolate or exclusivize any aspect within the domain of Brahman, simply because no aspect can ever be drawn out of Its totality and realistically regarded as something separate. Therefore, all thoughts are real, all words are real, all actions are real [being the Saguna aspect of Brahman] as long as they aren't considered apart from their substratum, the absolute reality Nirguna Brahman. And herein lies the whole of Advaita Vedanta (the non-dual wisdom teachings), which is basically a fusion of everything. This knowledge has the capacity to instantly liberate the Mind from its imprisonment in Relativity, prone as it commonly is to endless circular categorization and judgment [via the self/not-self mode of reference]. From this the individual comes to realize his innately natural state of infinite consciousness, infinite peace, infinite love and infinite freedom [moksha]. It's important to note that the first few chapters will revisit the latter theme from various perspectives because understanding and assimilating this basic concept is foundational to effectively understanding and applying

what follows later. Moreover, it is the core teaching of Advaita Vedanta, where its absorption into the psyche primes the individual for the advent of Self-realization.

Regarding the approach or method the individual may be inclined to adopt, the one that is suitable of course depends on one's personality development and orientation. The thinkers will choose Jnana Yoga (the method of uniting one's awareness with the Absolute via wisdom insight), the sensitives will choose Bhakti Yoga (the method of uniting via devotion, in terms of surrendering the ego to the Self or God), and the activists will choose Karma Yoga (the method of uniting via the interior acknowledgment of the non-doership of the ego and/or the relinquishing of the fruits of one's actions). Technically, undertaking any one of these three yogas inherently includes the other two. Because the characteristics of all exist within each. What happens is, although the individual is inclined to focus on one, the other two automatically come into play, albeit subconsciously. Just as the Mind, the Heart and the Hands are intimately engaged in the process of producing a painting, playing an instrument, or writing a poem, so do these three yogas combine in the art of performing one's sadhana (spiritual work or discipline). This three-in-one yogic sadhana is called Purushottama Yoga, and is the essence of the path to Self-realization.

It is especially important to be aware of, for example, how vital is Bhakti to one predominantly practicing Jnana. Simply because a potentially lopsided emphasis on knowledge in the Mind over devotion in the Heart (or vice-versa) yields either aloofness or fanaticism, respectively. Since the three yogas are primarily concerned with the dissolution of ego, Bhakti Yoga provides the means to do so via the sacrifice through devotion to the Self or Brahman [which usually takes on one of the divine personalities within the Saguna Brahman, representing the Creator God [of different cultures] such as the archetypes of Isvara, Kali, Jehovah, Avalokitesvara, Allah, Anuktal, Osiris, or Zeus, projected variously as their personifications in Ganesha, Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Ahura Mazda, Horus, Ra, Mithra, Odin, the Nagual, or Quetzecoatl, among many others]. However, the object of one's devotion in the later stages equally applies to the manifestation of Saguna Brahman in Nature, comprising the Four Kingdoms [i.e. the Mineral, Plant, Animal and Human]. These, together with the world community of souls, are the Sohamidam or totality of the manifestation in Saguna Brahman. Bhakti applied herein [to the three-in-one Sohamidam] will provide for the sadhu the most powerfully transformative means critical in the final stages enabling him to neutralize the ego's intensely fierce struggle to maintain its survival. Bhakti reaches its zenith therefore in the practitioner's devotion to the entirety of What Is in manifestation. The ego is thus gradually sacrificed by its absorption into the whole of Existence, Manifest and Unmanifest. This is the culmination of its strategy.

Expanding on the application of these yogas, a metaphysical understanding of the social human dynamic is indispensable. We should first of all recognize the difference between the outer personality and the inner soul. Although it varies considerably from individual to individual, the personality possesses a characteristic common to all: primal infliction. No-one is exempt from this. Even after the rare event of Self-realization, the individual is yet, in terms of expression, subject to inconsistencies, lapses in reason, forgetfulness, etc. This is due to residual energies within the sthula and sukshma shariras (gross and subtle bodies) that are yet unfolding through prarabdha karma (karma selected by the soul from the

overall sanchita karma [which is the storehouse of total past karma] to be dealt with in the present incarnation). In such case, the jnani (realized soul) is purely a witness to the behavior of the persona (both his and others), which are-as they have ever truly been!-on automatic pilot [following the script of Isvara].

On the other hand, our tendency to judge others, creating sometimes extreme attractions and repulsions, sustains and even reinforces the barrier between self and not-self, which is the very food the ego thrives on. Not only do we have no right or justification for judging others, we technically lack the capacity to do so! This is because each of us is playing a role-and a vital one-in the drama of life. All of our actions and conduct is vital to the overall scheme of things, whose order and manner of unfoldment is beyond our comprehension.

Neither do we have any justification for judging anyone, because whatever characteristic we may be observing at any given time in another, we have ourselves demonstrated at some distant point in the career of our own soul, if not earlier in this very incarnation! Such is the inevitable dynamic associated with the soul's evolution-a gradual learning process. And everyone goes through it-the progression from the primitive to the refined, applicable to each of the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal) and the five sheaths (physical, etheric, astral/mental, egoic and intuitive). (It's worth mentioning that, in light of this, the best way to kill this ego is to starve it of its judgments. The deeper implication of Jesus' injunction, "Judge not that ye be not judged," is that, when we judge others, the real source of the judgment that winds up coming back to us, is our own self. And its impact on us is in terms of yet deeper contractions in and through the ego, which begets further suffering. Our discontent, therefore, increases commensurately with each judgment.)

Bhakti, being the devotional reverence and love ultimately for all sentient beings, honoring thus the substratum Self Absolute (Brahman) dwelling beneath their otherwise superficially inflicted personalities, is therefore indispensable to any of the yoga margas (paths of yoga). And, in conjunction with Jnana Yoga, it is the most effective means for dissolving the ego and thereby attaining Self-realization.

It should be clear by now that the central message/theme here is the absorption of ego into the Whole (Brahman). This is the primary mission of all yogas (the word yoga means to yoke or unite).

The jiva or Personality is merely a fleeting phenomenon in contrast to its foundation in Atman (which is, in turn, founded in its source Brahman), apart from which it has no reality. However, it itself (as ego) believes it is real, insofar as considering itself an independent entity. As long as it believes this, it must yet evolve through the various yogic paths, eventually finding its way back to its source; its true home.

To summarize, the three main margas or paths are the Karma Marga: disassociating oneself from one's actions and/or their fruits; the Bhakti Marga: surrendering one's ego to the Manifest Emissary of Brahman (the personal God Immanent) or Brahman Itself (the impersonal God transcendent); and the Jnana Marga: filling the Mind with light until it disappears. (Now, this latter sounds good, but it can be misleading. Actually the Mind, through Jnana, is being filled with what may be referred to as "an immanent yet transcendental Relativity" which implies light and darkness yet beyond light and darkness. This should avail a workable insight into the fundamental teaching of the Jnana Marga.)

It will appear that this work focuses mainly on Jnana, while the

methods of Bhakti and Karma Yoga are only briefly discussed. However, as just mentioned, the latter two are in fact integral to and implied within the former. And the central, underlying theme within all three is the dissolution of the ego. Therefore, irrespective of which path may be formally adopted, it is inevitable that they will all ultimately engage and converge. Ordinarily, in the course of the soul's evolution, the Bhakti and Karma Margas are adopted first. The Bhakti Marga, for example, is referred to as the 'Path of Least Resistance,' as opposed to the Jnana Marga which is referred to as the 'Razor's Edged Path.' This is because the way of devotion is easier in terms of practical application. Whereas Jnana Yoga requires diligent study and strict mental adherence including a constant vigil kept on the outgoing tendency of the senses and their resulting egoic reaction and engagement. Therefore Bhakti is considered the mother of Jnana, which latter is, in turn, the final marga preceding moksha.

Now, integral to the path of the Jnana Marga is found the most expedient and powerful method of all, known as Atmavichara or Self-inquiry. It is also the most advanced, necessitating the prerequisites of the Bhakti and Karma Margas, as well as an appreciable understanding of Jnana Yoga. The Atmavichara, also known as Maha Yoga, is a method whereby one asks oneself, 'Who am I?' in an attempt to trace one's awareness to its primal Source [behind the ego]. Where, after repeated attempts, the sadhaka (seeker) starts developing the capacity for accessing that Source in full awareness-through the intuitive faculty of the Mind. The experience that eventually starts coming with it is one of a sense of release, along with an indefinable, super-intelligent tranquillity (St. Paul's allusion to the "Peace that passeth understanding"). Detailed information on the prerequisites recommended for this powerful method is provided in Appendix One, A Field Manual for the Kurukshetra.

As alluded to above, sooner or later the seeker will, as a result of the Application of these yoga methods, come to realize that his natural innate state is the unlimited Absolute of Brahman, and that moreover he has ever been the embodiment of That, regardless what he ever thought, said, or did.

Who will benefit from these teachings? For those in the earlier stages of the journey, they're usually not suitable. However, they will apply to virtually everyone in time. Here, it's important to bear in mind that we aren't always in the best position to determine our own level of readiness. Although, it's safe to say that if the reader is reading this and assimilating its message, he/she is likely a viable candidate. Also, a reliable barometer is one's potential for being open to new ideas. Only an open mind is capable of rising above [what metaphysics refers to being] its historic accumulation of erroneous ideas, representing stubborn obstacles to enlightenment. (Remember, the Jnanamarga is technically a process of unlearning.)

As mentioned in the Introduction, these teachings require a good deal of repetition, simply because the ego is the victim and product of a highly sophisticated form of social hypnotism, and won't yield its [ancient] habit easily. Therefore the tactic of repetition is an indispensable one, which can be likened to a mantram-with the very same mission: to wear down the bullish routine of the ego, with the mission of eventually dissolving it.

One of the most unique things of all is what these teachings are

attempting to convey is actually simpler than anything the human mind is capable of imagining! Their basic thrust focuses on the fact that Reality lies beyond what the Mind is capable of conceiving, due to its necessarily functioning in a linear, relative format, beholding the parameter of one concept at a time; therefore clearly incapable of embracing the ineffable Whole. Thus the Mind can at best only hope to transmit a contracted and fragmentary interpretation of Reality. Whereas the primal State-which also embraces [this fragmentary] Mind-is yet simultaneously beyond it. (In light of this, it can here be pointed out how and why the state of the Absolute can only be approached through a paradigm of awareness that transcends the relative logic of the Mind.)

The question inevitably follows: how are these aspects of the teachings-profound simplicity, universality, at-one-ment, etc.-determined to be so? Unfortunately, the answer isn't as simple to explain. Since the Mind is our only established means of evaluating or experiencing anything at all, when we attempt to enter the unique arena of a literally unfathomable condition (i.e. the true nature of Reality), we're confronted with an intellectual impasse. Such is the inscrutable domain of the Absolute, which is not only impossible to conceive or imagine, but is even moreso in vain to attempt to describe. For example, Vedanta uses the three-in-one concept of 'pure Being, pure Consciousness, pure Bliss' (Sat-Chit-Ananda)-which are, however and unfortunately, highly misleading as long as the Mind is used to apprehend them. (Therefore nothing is really gained by such a description, except if it is understood to be evaluated as a strictly deductive reference, which is the stipulation included in its presentation.) This is because the Mind tends to attach itself to its pets (concepts), allowing them to lead it into the boundaries of their limitations, conferring the very opposite effect of what Sat-Chit-Ananda is supposed to represent: pure freedom. The consequences of this misapprehension and how to overcome it are the central theme of this work.

As the title of this work suggests, we are already free and liberated. Regardless of how deeply we believe or even feel that we're suffering is, in reality, irrelevant. And, as already stated, as outrageous as this statement may appear to be, it's found to be unquestionably true upon one's awakening in Self-realization.

Obviously, when one is in the throes of suffering, it's difficult if not impossible to imagine that one's anguish, discontent, etc., can really be in fact inconsequential. Yet within and through the Primal Awakening one discovers the fact that vibrational waves of any quality or magnitude-whether even good or bad-are impermanent and therefore cannot be considered real (at least not in the way we ordinarily believe they are-i.e. as being real unto themselves. This latter is an important point, being one of the central themes in Advaita, and will be more thoroughly explored later). In this regard one must ask oneself, for example, "How real today is the headache I had a month ago?" Although its pain was felt then, today it is irrelevant. And the matter goes much further than this. It really involves who or what is really experiencing the suffering (which is Revealed by the yogic method of Self-inquiry).

Now, prior to discovering the ephemeral nature of suffering, we obviously need some manner of proof we can reasonably rely on before we can expect ourselves to pursue its potential truth. Vedanta addresses this problem by pointing out that we have to first be exposed to the teachings and then, with an open mind, reflect on them and see how they might apply to our life's circumstance. As Buddha emphasized, at no time is it

suggested that we blindly accept any metaphysical axiom without first putting it through our own personal litmus test of living experience. And if, or as long as, we remain unconvinced, we're then asked to treat such ideas as hypotheses-which may or may not be true-for only time will tell. In the meantime, the challenge before us is to discover the way out of our human dilemma, and follow it to its successful completion. And one of the earliest of the axiomatic ideas offered is that the most basic problem confronting us isn't abstract, exotic, or mysterious at all. It's our own Mind that drives us into the circumstance of bondage and suffering. And its central idea that 'we are ignorant and therefore suffering' is what needs to be discarded. And here's where we can address the supporting point of our main premise: that since the Mind is exclusively operating out of the world of Relativity, it is thus rooted in illusion, and therefore there can be no bondage or suffering in existence. It is this factor of exclusivity that trumps up the matter of illusion. Otherwise the world is Brahman Itself. It could be said that the whole purpose of Advaita Vedanta-or any non-dual philosophy-is a matter of breaking the habit of getting trapped by and through the Particulars.

Just as dreams take us to places we consider very real at the time, until we later wake up and call them dreams, so does the Mind in its so-called waking state deceive us into believing in the reality, as such, of its complex world of distinct people, places and things. Until one day, by the grace of the Greater Awakening, we recognize that this Mind-along with all its vast Creation-is itself a dream, as such. (Again, the keyword phrase here is 'as such.' For, if we take any specific matter in the relative world and play it back into its holistic source [in Brahman], we are apprehending it rightly-seeing/experiencing it for what it is in reality.

This is an important observation that is however stubbornly overlooked and misconstrued. Therefore the key to understanding what the Vedantins mean by "the Mind is an illusion," is to be aware that they're talking about the way we ordinarily perceive its manifestations (viz. as isolated particulars that are real as such-that is, as series of events, objects, people, etc. that are mutually exclusive and real unto themselves, and apart from their source in Brahman). This is the true import of what is meant by Maya, as opposed to its popular meaning [which is rank illusion on all levels]. Whereas the Sathya of Moksha (the true nature of Reality, revealed in Liberation) is knowing that such phenomena are integral to an uncompromisingly singular Being-beyond any division whatsoever, either implicit or explicit-existing as the substratum behind all phenomena. And this insight can only be the result of direct experience beyond the analytical reasoning process. In fact, as we have seen, it's automatically present and requires no effort at all to realize, per se; rather what is required is the elimination of abstract thinking, leading to the dog-chasing-its-tail plague of philosophical speculating.

Such is the mysterious impact of Maya: that it lures and provokes convictions, like the vision of an oasis on the desert-whereas such an oasis hasn't even the subtlest hint of wetness-it simply isn't there at all. We can thus conclude that we are already the Reality of Spirit, whose essence is Freedom. Only the Mind can ever tell us otherwise; and the Mind is an obsessive compulsive deceiver.

Simply stated, Self-realization is the innate, effortless recognition of pure Being beyond the hungry dictates of thought. Thus,

Self-realization reveals that, regardless

of the appearance in the theater of the Mind,
the Bliss of the Self is forever here and now.

CHAPTER TWO: THE QUEST

WHO AM I?

This is the only question-of all the philosophical questions-that really has any ultimate value. All other questions are reducible to this one; they are all contained in it. Because if we inquire into any philosophical issue, it can always be traced back to its origin, which is the person or entity asking it, being the individual. Now, "Instead of asking 'Who am I?' as a last resort in our quest for truth," the Vedantins tell us, "why not start with it?" The logic is: the mechanism doing all the judging [of what Life may be, inductively or deductively] is none other than the 'I.' So, how can we possibly make an accurate assessment of what is being perceived if we don't have a clear grasp of the instrument doing the perceiving? What is its nature? How reliable is it as an information gathering source? (Incidentally, this insight exposes how illogical and even inverted the whole approach of classical philosophy is, simply because it presumes that the instrument doing the searching is itself reliable.)

So, "Who am I?"

Whatever answer I can conceive, is only a partial representation of my totality. Also, if I claim I'm anything other than the Absolute Reality Itself (Brahman), I'd be deceiving myself in the most critical way. Simply because Brahman, by definition, is the only Reality in existence. (How this conclusion is reached must at first be accepted as an hypothesis, since it is the product of so-called Self-realization, and is deduced only through intuitive insight and not as a result of logical thinking.) This alludes to what may be referred to as the primal blunder infiltrating the ego-that it really isn't what it seems: limited, contracted and separative. Simply because through careful introspection in Jnana Yoga, it eventually becomes self-evident that there has to be a real component responsible for the experience of self-feeling. And from this one is compelled to trace its cause to a higher, more inclusive state of Being manifesting as a Universal Self-Entity. In other words, there has to be a substantial reality causal to the phenomenal ego, giving it its life-breath and consciousness. Again, if this is too difficult to conceive, you would be wise to consider it as a working hypothesis for the time being, to later see if it in fact coalesces in the Heart (i.e. the intuitive faculty of the cognitive intellect).

What can this mean? What are its implications?

To answer this, the only recourse is to analyze how it all got started. Obviously the ego has somehow asserted itself, thereby simultaneously giving birth to the appearance of entire multitudes of differential existences, comprising the world with all its diversity. Exactly how this has happened is one of the great mysteries. A mystery of such an order, in fact, it is said to be unsolvable (this

relates to the phenomenon referred to as Vivarta ['spontaneous creation' or 'apparitional causation'], which confers a mysterious, inestimable leap from the Unmanifest to the Manifest-in this case the incredible appearance of the ego arising out of the pure free Self). This is no cause for alarm, since the entire matter is in and of the Mind which, as Vedanta painstakingly demonstrates, cannot be expected to provide any reliable philosophical solutions. And the reason it's not any cause for alarm is simply because the solution to the paradox lies within the Heart and not the Mind. (The Heart here is referring to a component within the higher mind, which is the buddhi or intuitive faculty, acting as the subtle connecting awareness to the Cidakasa, which is more difficult to define, literally translated as 'ether in the Heart of Being.' Ironically, to understand this itself requires the buddhic faculty.) Therefore, the instruction is to transcend [by diffusing and disabling] the dictatorial impact of the Mind, along with its creator, the ego-which, as stated, represents a mysterious contraction that has somehow taken place within the free Self.

Exploring this in further detail:

Let's investigate the situation starting from the point of the ordinary familiarity of the ego, and see what properties/characteristics we can glean from its immediate proximity, then work our way backwards and try to locate the source, hopefully, of what caused this mysterious and awesome phenomenon of the world and life itself.

If we hope to make any sense out of what it is that thrives not only within but also beyond us (i.e. the ego and the world, respectively), we have to be capable of acknowledging that there exists an underlying primal condition or state of being which is omnipresent and eternal (i.e. everywhere and permanent). This state of primal Being, for convenience sake, we shall refer to as 'the Absolute,' representing the unalloyed, undifferentiated essence of Existence or Pure Being. Now, since the Absolute (Pure Being) is everywhere and permanent, each ego (or individual) must naturally have primary and continuous access to It; It must also be the permanent factor behind the ego. Furthermore, as it should become evident, It must be what the ego itself has been projected out of, or born from-for, where else could it have originated? Obviously this is logical, deductive reasoning. And its purpose isn't meant to furnish any compelling means of proof. Rather is it meant to merely appease the skeptical mind until such time that the buddhic insight transmits this information [beyond the need for qualification].

If/when we are capable of engaging the buddhic insight and thereby observe the immediacy of the 'I' essence, we will notice that the closer we approach the pure 'I' experience, the more the experience approaches being essential and pure (and in this sense, primal). This implies the engagement of a modality of direct perception devoid of our otherwise typical add-on thought colorations (modifications) which are, in turn, a direct by-product of the first thought modification: the 'I'-thought or ego, representing the generator-hub of all thought modifications. And it isn't by coincidence that this latter also represents the Creator and Sustainer of all our problems. This is due to the fact that problems themselves are the product of desires, value judgments, comparative relationings, etc., which all thrive on thoughts arising out of the 'I'-thought or ego. Simply because such desires and judgments are the tools whereby the ego sustains its

existence. This is the most vital and central idea that Vedanta seeks to convey. It is not a simple one in terms of presentation. However, when it's grasped it's recognized to be profoundly simple. So we should try our best to get a clear handle on its basic premise. For this reason, the preceding four paragraphs and the one that follows [being a simplified summary] should be carefully studied. Thereof, basically, the pure experience of the Self, or the 'I am,' registers as a steady state of substrate consciousness, in the form of a clear flow of 'I,' 'I,' 'I.' However, the common awareness-influx of 'I am this [such way] or that [such thing]' is the interfering domain of the ego. Yet this domain, if investigated, is found to be a false overlay on the truth or the natural reality. That is, the ego, being a modification or superimposition on the otherwise natural state of pure consciousness, is a contrived [albeit well-orchestrated] falsehood. And it is proved to be so by the fact that it's nothing more than a temporary phenomenon.

Now, this ego is subject to phases of waking, dreaming and sleeping. In the sleep mode, it, along with its cohort, the Mind, is non-existent. On the other hand, the substratum Self is continuous throughout all these phases. This is proved where, upon awakening, the ego recognizes that somehow, something that was all along 'backing it,' experienced a blissful sleep. This is the common experience of everyone; where the true Self-identity of the individual remains intact. Therefore the ego is Maya, and the Self is the lone reality. In fact, the Self is Existence Itself. The recognition of this in the Heart is called Self-realization. (One should take note, however, that the ego isn't referred to as illusion, per se, but Maya-since it isn't regarded as unreal in the true sense of the word, yet neither is it regarded as real; rather it is referred to as 'relatively real.' And here is revealed a great puzzle that in fact has the potential of launching one on a wild goose chase. This is why Adi Sankara and other Advaita refer to the nature of the ego as well as Maya itself, as anirvachaniya [indescribable]. In light of this, one would do well to consider what was said in the Introduction of this book, re the quote from Yoga Vasishtha.)

Brahman is defined here as the Absolute State of Being which is antecedent to all the causes and effects of Life [in its manifestation as the World-appearance], which is technically referred to as Nirguna Brahman. As such, It is utterly without attributes and therefore impossible to conceive. This means that It is not capable of being apprehended by any relative instrument of intelligence, but is rather contacted through a means that cannot be described or defined (this means of contact we have referred to as the intuitive faculty of perception called buddhi). In this way, we can only indirectly allude to It as being in and of the nature of the heart of one's Consciousness registering as the Pure or Absolute SELF [i.e. without attributes, ineffable, unknowable, all-pervading]. Again, this is the Nirguna Brahman. However, the whole of Brahman, termed Parabrahman, also encompasses the outbreath or manifestation of its attributeless Nirguna source, termed Saguna Brahman. It should be borne in mind that the term 'Brahman' popularly refers to Its attributeless Nirguna state-as the

source or substratum of the universe of manifest phenomena (Life). However, this is not the case in esoteric Advaita Vedanta, where Brahman is the fusion of all there is, manifest and unmanifest. (Please note the distinction 'esoteric' Vedanta is being made here because even with an advanced philosophy such as Vedanta, there remains the problem of the phenomenon of the popular and thus exoteric [and thereof commonly erroneous] misinterpretations arising. Thus the distinction is necessary.) From this we can understand the assertion that Brahman is the only real Being in existence, or the sole reality of What IS, which, as we have just seen, is supported by the fact that It is the changeless Source of all phenomena as well as the Foundation upon which phenomenal Life is built, encompassing every entified creature. However, with the advent of the human ego, the misconception arises that it is distinct and alienated from its source-viz. from its own true Self, which is Brahman. How is this possible? Well, in fact it is said to be quite impossible. But that it seems that it is, is accomplished by and through the Mind, the only place where all things ARE possible! And here's where the entire story unfolds. Yet, how real are the works of the Mind? Moreover, is Brahman approachable through this Mind? On the contrary, the fact is that:

The Absolute Reality is not what we think It is...
and yet It IS each and every thought, manifest and unmanifest
[comprising the range of the entire Mind], simultaneously.

What does this mean?

It means that whatever thought may be applied to It, such thought represents a definite limit on That which in reality has no limits; and yet *each thought is an infinitesimal fragment of Its totality*. It means that Brahman is neither subject to change, nor limitation, nor therefore attributes and, as such, It cannot possibly be circumscribable/definable by or through any single thought or even any contained system of thoughts (ideology or philosophy). Rather, It is equivalent to being ALL thoughts at once, as well as beyond all thoughts, simultaneously. This is one of the most important ideas to understand.

Why? Because we would then be in a more favorable position to surrender our obsessive, contracted focus on the incessant flow of thought-forms. Where, such surrender constitutes the very goal of the soul; the very purpose and quest of the Path. Because, make no mistake, this relentless thought-flow-comprising the Mind-places stubborn blinders on our otherwise naturally lucid perspective, causing literally the creation of endless contractions and therefore distractions that take the form of any and all phenomena, from internal subtle/mental to external gross/physical. For, the creation of anything, no matter how vast and elaborate, complex and intricate, beautiful and apparently perfect, is yet an unmistakable act of limitation on the Infinite Consciousness. And, any such act, in and of itself, cannot be considered anything but rank illusion, simply because it represents a temporary fragmentation of the holistic Absolute. It takes the form of a moment-by-moment contrivance that obscures and deranges the otherwise natural freedom of the Self, in the form of a hungry will to create. Yet, Who or What creates who or what?

Could it possibly be that no-one and nothing creates no-one and

nothing? This exposes a very interesting metaphysical conception which, if understood, alone has the capacity to transport the individual into the sphere of the Self. The idea that there is no-one assuming the role of Creator has nothing to do with the popular rebuttal that the philosophy of Vedanta implies nihilism. Rather it involves the holographic axiom that the reality of what might be referred to as the Archetypal Particular (representing virtually anything in manifestation from subtle thoughts to gross objects) is itself naught but the holistic 'white-out' of Sat (pure Being). Therefore there is nothing attributable at its conceivable foundation, but the [attributeless] Nirguna Brahman. Furthermore, and from a different perspective-since Brahman is, by Its very nature, without attributes-It must be therefore devoid of any differentiating properties or capacities. In light of this, we must acknowledge that neither is it capable of possessing any ability to create. Hence, we must conclude that it isn't the Absolute that creates. So, who or what does the creating? Deductively, it can only be the Mind. However, as we have discovered, this so-called Mind is also substantially non-existent. Despite appearances, it has no substantive value. Since, the deeper it's investigated, the less it tends to reveal its existence, until the witness is no longer capable of locating it and s/he finally realizes that in fact all along it was only presumed to have possessed an objective existence. This can also be said of the 'witness itself': the ego. Now we're getting somewhere! (hahaha! Or are we? This [line of reasoning] is tending toward the equivalent of peeling the layers of an onion, where we're expecting to find a substantial core, yet the fruit of our efforts yields the fact that there isn't any! For, even relatively/reasonably speaking, there can be no core! We're left with naught but Mind-convoluted-into-Mind-Brahman's ultimate existential trick!)

On the contrary, if we hope to apprehend the causal reality behind this Life scene, there can be no 'hands-on' logical revelation, but the necessarily complete transcendence of Relativity via the buddhi or intuitive Mind. This is the 'knowledge' Advaita Vedanta is attempting to impart. To simply revel and exist beyond the reasonable Mind. To seek the ineffable Within. To abandon the desire to arrive at a logical solution to the wonder of Life.

The result of this line of investigation yields nothing more or less than the fact that what we're finally and intrinsically dealing with, in reality, is an unfathomable Mystery.

At this point it would be helpful to clarify/elaborate some terms, and in the process of doing so, take a look at the relationship between Mind and ego and see how they may or may not relate to the Absolute Being: EGO (Ahamkar or Jiva): is actually nothing more than a specific and highly specialized thought, which is the 'I'-thought, and is therefore subject to birth and death within two significant cycles: one daily, through waking and sleeping, and the other over one's lifetime, and thus created, maintained and destroyed by a mysterious power that appears to emanate from the true Self (technically the Atman, which is equivalent to Brahman-see glossary). However, in actuality its origin and means of appearing are untraceable and, thereof, unknowable. It is attributed as being a product of Leela and/or Shakti (respectively, the

Play or Sport of Brahman and/or the Ineffable Power responsible for the appearance of the differentiated, relative world of Manifestation-both of which are regarded as mysterious emanations of Brahman).
MIND (Manas): is the agglomeration or bundle of thoughts emanating from the hub of all thoughts, the ego [or 'I'-thought], and is also subject to birth and death in the same two cycles [as the ego], since it is created, maintained and destroyed by the breathing process of the ego.

The ABSOLUTE (Brahman): the Unknowable; pure Being; That which has no causal attributes; manifests as change yet is Itself changeless; infuses yet transcends all substance; is the inscrutable essence and source of the Relativity Wheel of infinite expression; is within yet beyond logic and definition, space-time and causality, the Universe of Form and Formlessness; is the substantial and material cause of Life Energy; is defined as being not different from Sat-Chit-Ananda [pure Existence, pure Consciousness, pure Bliss]; is the pure, unalloyed, ineffable, inscrutable, unknowable SELF residing as the substratum Reality behind the mask of every egoic entity from humans to animals to plants and minerals as well as every atom and quantum, black hole and quasar.

MAYA (illusion): although literally translated as 'illusion,' it is in the exoteric sense considered the generative or creative power [shakthi] of Brahman, responsible for the projection of the World-appearance, the multiplicity of souls, and the Creator God. It is a mixture or blend of the Real and Unreal and is therefore referred to as anirvachaniya (that which is indescribable). Its origin and nature is as mysterious and inscrutable as its source the Brahman.

Considering how the above observations raise more questions than furnish answers, the most remarkable thing about the so-called 'awakening' in Self-realization is that there are no longer any questions forthcoming-as well as any regarding the existence or not of Maya, Mind, or even the ego. For example, the famous philosophical debate itself about whether Maya itself exists or not, becomes utterly irrelevant. In fact, even now it's a non-issue! Along with virtually all the other 'gravitational issues' that the Mind conjures out of thin air-for, as far as Reality (Brahman) is concerned, they simply, as such (as separate realities unto themselves), do not exist. Again and again this idea will be emphasized in this treatise, for it establishes the foundation of understanding the true import of what the illusory factor of Maya actually represents. That is, EVERYTHING is real except if/when any specific thing within it all is regarded as real unto itself and apart from its source in the ineffable Whole (Brahman). The idea that Maya is utterly illusion, through and through, is so engrained in the traditional Hindu mind, that example after example, as well as the clearest dissections of the sastric literature [from shruti to smriti] and testimony of sages, is not even enough to extricate it. And the reason it's so important to get a grasp on this singular idea, is because the central message of Advaita itself rests on it! Otherwise we're dealing with overt duality!

That which is the substratum of all subtle and gross phenomena is the one universal Being, the Absolute Brahman: the Self of all the selves.

The unwavering recognition of the holistic essence of this universal Self is termed Self-realization. However, Self-realization does not imply the acquisition of anything new. In fact, virtually

everyone is already so-called 'Self-realized'! It's the natural state of who and what we really, already are-intrinsic to that which animates the core of our moment-to-moment Being. It is our very nature. The statement, "Become what you are," may sound ridiculous and even humorous, yet it is literally true-which shows the strange predicament the Mind has lured us into believing ourselves immersed in.

So, what are the implications of this? And what's preventing us from acknowledging our so-called 'natural state' of Realization? Moreover, why do we sense with such conviction that we are, in fact, suffering? Which begs the obvious question: How can we discount what we're feeling, which amounts to what we're experiencing?! Let's take a careful look at the situation. If we investigate what's really happening here, and seek the essence of things rather than intellectually reacting to their effects, we should get a better understanding of the affairs of our living circumstance. That is, the world is not really the external and objective event that we've come to inherently believe. For example, in recent years there have been some compelling discoveries in the so-called New Physics (a.k.a. Quantum Theory) that addresses this very issue. Namely, that the physical world is, firstly, not really solid the way we believe it is. And, secondly, that it is a by-product of the Mind of the OBSERVER which is, in turn, the by-product of something vastly foundational, holistic and all-pervading-indeed not unlike the metaphysical conception of an Absolute Reality. (A more in-depth evaluation of Quantum Theory and how it tends to validate and even reinforce the principles of metaphysics and especially Vedanta is found in Appendix Three.)

In short, the world is not what it appears to be; this also includes the structure and status of our human condition. Consider the statement of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi: "The world disappears as the world as such." This means that the interpretation of the world as an isolated realm disconnected from the Absolute Reality, is the result of a false belief-projection of the Mind which, within the parameters of Self-realization, no longer produces its commonly perceived separative appearance-so, in this unique sense it is said to disappear.

We can also address this issue in terms of our own practical experience. If we consider what happens in the dream state: how the dream world is constructed with sometimes impeccable detail, and also how utterly convincing it all is, within the dream-should give us an important clue. That is, considering that such a dream-creation is nothing more than a product of our own mind, and, comparing the fabrication of that 'dream'-world with the fabrication of this 'real'-world, doesn't require such a leap of faith to see that the 'real' world is also a product of mind-power (Kriya Shakti). Moreover, since the world can be a beautiful or horrible affair, depending on our outlook and what we fathom or conceive it to be, further indicates that our mind is pragmatically externalizing its uniquely patterned energy, which results in the form of the character makeup of the world. Literally, therefore, the world and its Life is merely the Mind's intent made visible. Or, put more simply:

It's all in the Mind...

An old cliché. Nevertheless it's a philosophically sound and practical statement. Again, incidentally, Quantum Physics independently [and enthusiastically!] asserts the plausibility of this very idea, radical

though it seems. More and more theoretical physicists are gradually but surely coming to recognize the compelling evidence surfacing in subatomic particle experiments, that the entire world is a perceptual consensus created and sustained in and through the Mind; that physical substance is therefore itself nothing more than Mind-stuff. From this we can readily draw the conclusion that life's intricate melodramatic trappings of hardships and sufferings [from petty to grandiose] are nothing more than sophisticated products of the egoic, contracted Mind.

Re: 'ego-Mind': understanding this component is key to the means toward lifting the age-old hypnotic veil of delusion that keeps us blind and alienated from our true Self. We should recognize that the Mind, or the continuum of thought and our reliance and dependence therein, is a product of a compulsive relating between the idea of a contracted self vs. the world 'outside.' This is the Ego Program. And it's founded on the premise that "I am a contracted Being with therefore corresponding needs and desires that support and fulfill my encapsulated living function, which is antagonistic to, and potentially threatened by, the needs and desires of others, representing the 'world outside.'" Note that whatever the dynamic balance between these two poles happens to be, they're both self-referenced standpoints. This self-referencing process is the Ego Program at large, representing the dynamic function of society. However, rarely do any of its members stop to ponder the origin or meaning of the program or its process. The fact is, as we have shown in the previous chapter, it has no origin! It has mysteriously appeared as the result of what Vedanta refers to as 'apparitional causation.' And, once it has been set in motion, it then somehow perpetuates itself within a continuous feedback-loop. And, within this closed loop perpetuates the built-in assumption that one is connecting to Reality via the machinery of thought generation, thereby reinforcing the validity of the life of the ego. Let the reader recall that this ego is itself nothing more than a thought(!)-the essential 'I'-thought which, in turn, gives birth to virtually ALL other thoughts. Consider what happens upon waking in the morning: the very first stirring of awareness is invariably centered on the result of the 'I'-thought (for example, whatever is conceivably surmised or evaluated always has the matter of the ego as its backdrop...it always relates back to how it's affecting oneself). All other thoughts follow as tributaries...the whole world is thereafter created and sustained with meticulous precision, with this 'I'-thought as its backdrop.

We believe we are what we THINK we are.

This is a variation on Jesus' proverb, "As a man thinketh in his Heart, so is he." (where the phrase, 'in his Heart,' also suggests a state of belief.) As such, this is the power of the Mind in action. It also indicates how we're specifically hypnotized/manipulated by our thoughts. Yet, are we really the product of what we think? For example, when we happen to be not thinking of ourselves at all, do we cease being personalities...or cease being human?...do we cease being the Self?

The fact is that whatever indeed may be our true state, it cannot possibly be subject to being here today and gone tomorrow. Simply because, by implication of the character of Reality, such state must be in fact permanently present. It must always be in existence, in every moment now. This is foundational to what is inherently regarded as a function of Existence; that is, upon setting up a standard for what Existence or Reality must inherently possess, its function of

being an omnipresent continuum, by definition, must be fulfilled.
More on this later.

There's nothing to achieve which you haven't already in your possession. You're already fully enlightened. You already [naturally] are the very thing you're attempting to attain. That you think there are obstacles to surmount, mysteries to solve, or powers to obtain, are themselves the very obstacles blocking your way to the reality of What Is. That you doubt this and believe you're yet in need of something is, in fact, a highly sophisticated mind-trick.

CHAPTER THREE: FUNDAMENTALS OF VEDANTA

This Journey's Direction Is Inward:

1. Ordinary awareness accepts at face value the idea of the conditional setup of the self confronting the world. That the self and the world are contradistinctive and mutually exclusive. This is the Naïve Standard Life-Code of Reference. Within its core lies the realm of Maya [in its exclusive counterpart, breeding the illusion of separateness]. From which follows ignorance, fear, bondage and suffering, leading to desire for attraction from repulsion. From which, in turn, perpetuates Samsara (the Wheel of Rebirth).
2. This world-appearance is immense, complex, mysterious, of unknown origin, and endowed with indelible laws of physics, gross and subtle, all within the framework of space-time Relativity.
3. What is not ordinarily attended upon is the fact that whatever is witnessed in this world is done exclusively through the only conceivable instrument capable of doing so: the Mind.
4. When this Mind is studied, some hitherto unrecognized characteristics begin to surface. First and foremost, it is observed to go through phases of waking, dreaming and deep sleeping. And, since such phases exist, we must conclude that the Mind lacks continuity; especially since it is observed to be utterly non-existent in the deep sleep state. This becomes our first clue.
5. We are inherently compelled to seek out the truth of what, a priori, is. To accomplish this we must set up a standard for Reality. Consider: there are many characteristics that could feasibly be integral to what the scope of Reality may actually encompass. Whatever such characteristics we may settle upon, there is one that must be indispensable and foundational to each of them, and cannot be violated under any circumstances: Existence itself. And, as we just established, Existence, by its very implication, cannot be here today and gone tomorrow; it must be permanent and omnipresent (i.e. not subject to birth and death; not found in one place over another; nor present in one lifeform over another). Therefore, our Standard of Reality must rigidly adhere to that which is in

an unchanging state of universal permanence.

6. Returning to our first clue (viz. that the Mind cannot be considered a permanent principle), and applying it to our Standard of Reality (viz. that which is not permanent cannot be considered real), we must hence conclude the Mind is not real. (As was earlier shown, technically the Mind is considered to be 'relatively real,' since it's a product of the shakti of Maya. However, the point being made here is that it is a meager fraction of the totality of our Self, and not in the least the all-encompassing all-controlling awareness-generator we've allowed it to become. And so, in order to defuse its all-consuming dictatorship role, it is efficacious in this philosophical context, as well as strategic on our Path of Return, to regard it as being unreal. In fact, with respect to the qualitative/quantitative degree of power we ordinarily ascribe to it, it is comparatively quite unreal.)

If the Mind is not absolutely [exclusively] real, are we to further conclude that we are not real? Yes, if we consider that we are the Mind. However, we are not the Mind! (For, when the Mind shuts off in deep sleep, we do not lose our continuity of Self-a Johnson, going to sleep, doesn't wake up a Benson.) And this is our second clue-and an important one.

8. Since the Self continues to thrive through the phases of the Mind, it qualifies as a candidate for Reality, providing that it does not suffer an interruption with the advent of the death of the body and the Mind. Let's investigate further.

9. To prove that there is no real death for the Self (as opposed to the ego self which is intimately bound to the Mind), we must consult a law of physics, namely that "energy can neither be created nor destroyed." Now, the forms or modifications of energy do indeed appear to change, but not their source (such as fire absorbed into an object and changing its form to heat, while the source of fire and heat is always energy). So is the Mind a modification of its source, the Self. Therefore the Self, being likened to energy, was never created nor will it ever be destroyed. At this point it would be necessary to emphasize the fact that the Self is really not the true source of the Mind. For that would imply that It created the Mind; and that would be, by definition, impossible. As pointed out earlier, its source is really Shakti. Now, what is the origin of Shakti? What created it? To help answer this, let's consult the Advaitic axioms set down by Sri Adi Shankaracharya:

1. Brahman is the sole Reality.
2. The World is an illusion.
3. Brahman is the World.

(Note: this isn't the popular interpretation of Sankara's Advaitic formula. The third axiom, directly translated, reads: "Jiva or ego is not different from Brahman." However, Sri Ramana Maharshi has interpreted it as 'the world,' insofar as the world is symbolic of Saguna Brahman, being the outbreath of Brahman, specifically as Sohamidam [God, Soul and World], which collectively can be looked at as World, per se. Differences in approach really come down to it being a matter of semantics. Nevertheless, the important thing is really the concept being communicated.)

What this apparent contradiction of ideas is saying is that the World is an illusion on its own terms, but is Reality as Brahman Itself. Moreover, it's important to understand that the World, or anything in it, is not an

aspect of Brahman, but Brahman Itself! That is, every concept, object, event and perception in and of the World is at once the Entirety. This relates to the concept of the hologram, where each facet contains the essence of the whole, like the DNA in each cell of the body contains the genetic coding for the entire organism.

Now, the origin of Shakti [which also represents the origin of the Mind], can be inferred in the second and third axioms. Shakti is the creative life force inhering in Saguna Brahman. From the Sanskrit it is translated as 'power.' It is thus the executive power of Saguna Brahman, and is therefore responsible for the fabrication of Maya (being thus, literally, the relative universe in space-time as well as the force that created it). It's important to realize, however, that it is impossible to come to a logical understanding about how or even why Shakti or Maya have come into existence. In truth, these are among the unfathomable mysteries of life, and it would be in vain to even attempt to resolve them. More importantly, what would be gained by knowing such things? Except to satisfy one's curiosity, there's really no meaningful advantage to be had. (And it's worth mentioning that this applies to virtually countless considerations people tend to believe are important to pursue-where in fact ultimately nothing is appreciably gained by doing so.)

10. Based on the clues provided, the first key for the journey to freedom can now be given: since the body is not real, pay no mind to it. And the second key: since the Mind is not real, as such, detach yourself from its thoughts. Or, more pragmatically speaking, accept each thought as it comes, and inject it into the Totality of Brahman. For, make no mistake, that is the 'spherical reality' inhering in the ontological nature of Being. There are a number of ways that this can be practically approached. The easiest is to accept that the Mind is on its own journey and will generate thoughts as it pleases. In this sense you can watch them like a motion picture in a theater. They are not you yourself, nor do they represent you-at least not in any continuously exclusive way. Although there's more to this observation than is being expressed here, for all intents and purposes, it's efficacious to consider thoughts as being non-representative of your real identity. Although technically they are yet fragments of your totality-in fact, infinitesimal fragments. Another approach-more difficult or less, depending on one's temperament-is to seek out the root-thought-which is the 'I'-thought-and chop it down like the trunk of a tree, and all the branches of ideas and leaves of thoughts will simultaneously topple. This is worth elaborating. The basis of the Mind is the 'I'-thought, since virtually all thoughts can be traced to the 'I' as their source. Therefore, the most effective way to defuse the powerful influence of the Mind, is to get to its root [viz. the 'I'-thought]. This method is the precursor to, and can be used in conjunction with, the most expedient and effective method of all, known as Atmavichara (Self-enquiry), which is described in item 11.

11. The most powerful method of Atmavichara is applied by asking oneself "Who am I?" (viz. What is my true nature? What is the source of the phenomenon experienced as 'I?') This can be practiced in or out of the steady state of meditation. In fact, after it is applied during meditation itself, it becomes even more effective when performed during the course of normal activities, since then the practitioner

has a better chance of allowing it to disengage his identification with not only the false ego overlay but the world proper, as well as his activities in the world. Of course this doesn't imply that he will then shirk his responsibilities. Quite the contrary. They will be performed more efficiently than ever, simply because no extraneous thoughts or concerns will complicate his activities. A practical motto in this regard would be: "Act as though everything matters; be as though nothing does."

12. As with most yogic methods, there are a number of approaches within the Atmavichara. The most popular one involves a vigil kept on the Mind [in the course of asking oneself "Who am I?"] where, as each answer comes, it is categorically denied as possessing any holistic value in the face of the Self. In this way each thought is indiscriminately rejected as not-Self by inwardly addressing each as "neti, neti, etc" (not this, not this, etc). And since virtually every idea, thought, or description is negated along the way, what is left over cannot therefore be in the nature of a relativistic value or property but rather is at once transcendental as well as all-pervading. It is in fact the core Self Itself. In this way the Mind-which itself is the thought process-is slowly but surely weakened, undermined and eventually finally destroyed. (Of course, this is the speculative philosophical portion residing within the concrete reasoning Mind, where the remainder of the reasoning as well as of course the intuitive Mind is left in tact. Therefore, the specific part of the Mind that gets destroyed in the advent of Self-realization is the ahamkar or ego-Mind.)

* * * *

The relative Mind seeks an Absolute answer.
Is this feasible?

* * * *

To summarize, transcending the specific mandates spun by the ego-Mind confers Self-realization.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MIND AND ITS PROBLEM

The last chapter divulged a fundamental principle in Vedanta which is necessary to further elaborate. It explained that the Creator [of the world] is none other than the Mind [which, in turn, is the product of Maya, being the substantial creation of Brahman in the form of Brahman's Leela]; and that, moreover [as we're lavishly emphasizing throughout this work], it isn't utterly illusory. Rather, it has an illusory aspect that surfaces in the manner that we ordinarily regard and experience it. That is, the way we succumb to our thoughts, typically allowing them to define, direct and limit us which, thereof, impacts our otherwise natural state of freedom.

This speaks to the idea of being either a witness or a victim of our thoughts. That is, either we allow ourselves to be victimized by our thoughts, or we detach from them sufficiently, becoming thus merely their witness. The benefits of this are far reaching, especially in terms of more efficiently enabling us to perform our sadhana or spiritual work.

Our capacity to be the witness of our thoughts would therefore not only relieve our emotional entanglements, it would also compellingly invite us to experience our true Self, in contrast to the superimposed falsehood that the Mind typically generates. And the reason it's false is because it constantly identifies itself with contrived limits of isolated fragmentation [as opposed to the natural expanse of universal integration]. And again, this ongoing contraction process is due to the dynamic upon which the entire Mind is founded: the 'I'-thought (ego)-which is the mother (progenitor) of ALL thoughts, being the very hub upon which rests the phenomenon of the entire veil and/or projection of Ignorance (avarana and/or vikshepa, respectively). The defusion and eventual extinction of this hub of the Tree of Illusion is the key task and goal of the Perennial Philosophy, and represents the sin qua non of what an individual could hope to realize, for it carries in its wake nothing less than Liberation itself.

One of the vital components within the process of the Atmavichara is known as vairagya (being dispassionate to thoughts). This is achieved [through the Atmavichara] as the individual begins to prioritize his/her natural state of consciousness over and above whatever otherwise potentially compelling thoughts the Mind may be conjuring.

The cultivation of vairagya prepares the Mind for its eventual momentous release via a systematic and scientific weakening of its character. Daily the sadhu studies/listens, reflects and meditates on the pitfalls and deceptions of the Mind until, lo and behold, he starts losing interest in it!

He eventually sees with acute precision how thoughts travel in circles of desire that never really satisfy; that would continue ad infinitum if left unchecked or unchallenged; and that would keep their victim precariously balanced on a highwire of fear and expectation for as long as their clever game inspires belief. Yet, this is specifically what he starts losing: the belief in the game of the Mind. The belief that it ever had any real and therefore permanent value!

What proceeds from this is referred to as the attenuation of the Mind, which entails that the individual either is no longer being manipulated by thoughts or, in rare instances, is no longer experiencing thoughts. In either case, the individual is freed from the limitations of Relativity, otherwise relentlessly spun by the restless Mind.

What proof can be had that the Mind-attenuated state is in fact an indispensable precursor to the realization of the Self? Only by actually experiencing such a state can we comprehend its real value. For example, that we cannot easily succeed in stopping our thoughts, indicates, at least inferentially, that such a state is intriguing, if not something to investigate and discover why it happens to be so difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. After all, there must be some reason why we find it an almost impenetrable barrier to break. (Note: Contrary to what some people may raise an objection to-regarding their fears of

what could conceivably occur pursuant to a suspension of the thought process-is yet another psychological maneuver orchestrated by the Mind: to vigorously foil our attempts to conquer it. This reinforces the presence of its instinctive obsession to maintain and control what amounts to being its arbitrary field of influence. On the contrary, this method is utterly safe simply because the Self cannot, under any circumstances, be threatened or compromised...even remotely so! This further suggests that, in fact, nothing in the universe can really affect the Self in any conceivable way. Contemplating this concept alone can yield untold benefits, specifically in terms of the cultivation of vairagya.)

To further illustrate: the deep sleep phase of the Mind is unique insofar as the individual is unencumbered by the creative allurements present in thoughts or dreams-which is why, upon awakening, it is recalled that such sleep was blissful. This suggests the importance regarding the need to transcend the phenomenal Mind (which Western psychology postulates as per the idea that the human mind requires rest from its creative function). However, in the context of Self-enquiry, such transcending is done in the waking phase of consciousness. The Atmavichara method basically leads to the following: in full awareness, one feels oneself being, specifically ignoring thinking. This is simply because thinking causes us to deviate from our Natural State. As soon as we think we are such and such or so and so, we narrow down our Vastness, our Unfathomable Essence, and fabricate thus one [false] Limit after another...thereby rendering ourselves into variously petty creatures. In such a circumstance, suffering can be seen as a self-inflicted inevitability.

This method, applied diligently over a given period of time will, if successful, result in the liberation of the individual from the confines and coercive entrapments of the body and the Mind. This is referred to as Atmasakshatkara or Self-realization. Yet, this is really a misleading term since there is nothing to realize or achieve, for the Self is [already!] everpresent within our very midst. Rather, there is only the Mind with its relentless river of thoughts [that block the experience of the true Self in the form of a superimposition] which has to be gotten rid of (i.e. neutralized, overcome, and eventually eliminated in terms of disallowing its dictatorial tendency to limit and control our awareness).

One may theorize for or against the functional purpose or role the Mind may possess-and indeed it sounds mad to even question that which appears to uniquely make us human-yet the litmus test involves stopping the Mind or disengaging it and witnessing the outcome. There is really no other way. Criticisms against the claims of freedom and well-being associated with Self-realization have no validity simply because the experience hasn't been had! If you've never tasted a mango, you don't know what a mango tastes like. Arguments must therefore crumble in the face of experience.

If Self-realization is genuinely accomplished, our journey has reached its zenith...there is no further distance to trek in the evolution of consciousness. As Sri Ramana Maharshi has said, "[Self-realization]... is the end of the road...the end of all."

Really, the whole idea of Self-realization is a ruse. Instead, the

process of discovery only amounts to eliminating the accumulated obstacles (thoughts that manage to define and confine us to being this way or that, instead of just Being) that block our otherwise natural state of living Realization. Again, the whole thing can be summed up thus: feeling yourself Being beyond thinking.

It's our thoughts that curve our otherwise pure state of consciousness into a kind of dream dilemma, replete with suffering, anxiety, anguish interrupted by moments of pleasure, desires for egoic recognition, desires of all kinds, fears of peer rejection, concerns of our children's welfare, assorted other burdens of responsibility, etc., etc. When in fact all these events, places and personalities actually violate the true standard of Reality, precisely because not one of them is permanent. That which is Real must endure. Vedanta says the Real (Brahman) underlies the Appearance (Maya), but is not each particular Appearance unto itself. So the Appearance is likened to the animated cinema on a permanent screen, where events like fire, floods and explosions are apparently fantastic and momentarily effective but really have no affect on the substratum screen, which is symbolically (in this analogy) the Absolute Self: i.e. not subject to change, nor to life and death. Even a relative analogy can illustrate this point: how real today is the toothache you had ten years ago?

Buddhists have described the natural State as being 'empty and awake.' Arriving at this so-called 'stateless state' is the result of two possible conditions. In one case, the Mind is suspended in an unmodified, unqualified condition, as if it were obliterated, while the subject is yet fully conscious...is in fact more conscious than ever because the specific limitations of tangential thoughts are not there to cloud or impede one's awareness of the pure consciousness of the Self (which is really there all the time). In the other case, the Mind is yet active; however, the subject is supremely dispassionate toward its activity. This level of dispassion is called vairagya.

The Self behind the ego has nothing to do with the entrapment of Relativity (the rise and fall of attractive/repulsive phenomena), but registers bliss supreme, simply because it is free from the oppressive activity of the ego-Mind. Vedanta refers to it as Sat-Chit-Ananda, which is pure Being, pure Consciousness, pure Bliss. A three-in-one mix, where neither exists without the other. That is, if you've achieved the awareness of pure Being, the other two conditions are automatically also present.

What all of this also starts revealing is that the 'Secret Teachings' behind all the major religions are really saying the same thing. Although, in my opinion, not as thorough, direct, or eloquently as the Hindu Vedanta (representing the 'end' or distilled teachings of the Vedas). This has been discussed in the preface. Now, the essence of Vedanta is Advaita (which means non-dualistic), which expounds that there is no lower essential entified 'being' created by Brahman, but is Brahman itself, since Brahman is the only real Being in existence. It is a delusion set up by ignorance to think that temporal Beings such as Man or Animal or Plant have any intrinsically real and independent nature separate from Brahman (or the Absolute). All Beings are the One Absolute. This is the result of our inclination to wield judgments on ourselves and the world, which is a direct product of our tendency to categorize phenomena—a primitive, misleading Mind function. As already mentioned, our big mistake is thinking we are such and such or so and so. This leads inevitably to suffering, due to the bondage associated with the thought process itself.

The very ideas of bondage and suffering perfectly describe the act or process of ego: which is simply a contraction-reflex on That which is otherwise transcendental and without limitation (i.e. free). The whole point is, thoughts come and habitually hold us captive-victims, as it were-and what's more, we'll swear we own such things. Afterall, it's compelling to conclude this since our identity itself is the summation of all 'our' thoughts. Yet, this is a self-contained deception of the Mind. Because, what other signals have we had the wherewithal to take heed of? Each of us, since birth, has been trained to observe and listen to whatever our minds happen to process and thereby conclude. To discover the possibility that there may be a verifiably unified substratum to the superficial existence of this Mind is a quantum leap.

If we can be objective about it, we should take notice of how, under ordinary circumstances, we formulate our philosophy of life: we assess the external condition facing us-i.e. the world with its people and things and perhaps That which caused it all to be-but never do we question the very instrument we use to do all the assessing, namely the Mind itself. But once our attention is turned inward, some very interesting things start happening. First and foremost, the most noteworthy quality of this Mind is its sheer brute power! Next in line is the quite strange and obviously contradictory fact that this Mind is itself purely a phantom! The more one attempts to take hold of it, the more evanescent it becomes. What seems to be happening within this haunted, superphysical dynamic is that the Mind itself is merely a magician's trick, while the real magician lies somewhere in back of it all. And the only logical conclusion is that that magician is in fact the attributeless Self Who, unlike the Mind, has no purpose to fulfill, does not undergo change (evolution), nor is It subject to birth and death.

The compelling paradox is why do we go through what appears to be such hellish turmoil on Earth if the Self (Brahman) is perfect? To answer this question, it should first be pointed out that the Self cannot be classified as 'perfect,' since it is attributeless and therefore beyond perfect/imperfect. And secondly, at the risk of sounding evasive, there's really no answer to the implication of this question within the boundaries of the relative Mind, and that until we lift ourselves out of its powerful clutches, we'll continue to disbelieve that we could be fooled to such an extent. (Our petty intellects are not invited to the Temple that houses the Secrets of Life. How could they be? Afterall, that which is finite couldn't possibly contain and comprehend That which is infinite. Can the cup contain the ocean?) The implication of Liberation is that once we realize that we were not, even for an instant, disengaged from our true Self, we'll then see whether any of these questions will arise at all. Can I possibly be not I? Can my Self possibly be not my Self-even for a second in time?! An absurd question indeed-yet this is exactly what we imply in our misunderstanding of this very crucial matter, through a unique act of forgetfulness! It's necessary to emphasize that Self-Realization is achievable through the Secret Teachings behind the world religions. In this regard, one should be aware of the fact that the respective Founders of these religions were proponents of a universal philosophy that shattered all known boundaries rooted in common logic and understanding. This is because such common logic [among the masses] is traditionally rooted in popular misconceptions carried down from generation to generation. Such statement is being made based on the fact that the religious founders invariably entered the scene with an approach that rebelled

against the prevailing cultural belief systems, based as they apparently were, on dogmatic precepts. Conversely, the clergy, through their failure to recognize the universal esoteric truth of what their respective Founders taught, have not only misled themselves through their own misinterpretations but, more significantly, misled others into believing views that were narrow, biased, separative and even hateful and intolerant of all other views-often even within their own factions and sects.

Therefore, the original teachings of each religion [in each case almost instantly] became esoteric, and were accessible only to those in rare possession of the Universal Key. And that Key always related-as we have been attempting to show-to the practical means of making a direct connection with the Self: uniting the practical, concrete awareness with the Universal Absolute Being, via the attenuation of the Mind. Thus the 'Secret Doctrine' within each major religion has referred to this Key in glaringly similar terms: the Zen Buddhists refer to it as mu shin (No-Mind); the American Toltecs called it the Nagual (arrived at via stopping the internal dialogue); the Gnostic Christians refer to it, in the words of St. Paul, as "The Peace that passeth understanding," as well as the Biblical "Be still and know that I am God"; the Hebrew Kabalists and Essenes call it Ain Soph (nothing knowable); and the Hindu Vedantins call it manonasa (dead Mind), leading to sahaja samadhi (Natural Bliss Consciousness) centered in Nirguna Brahman (the Absolute Being beyond attributes).

These are the 'Secret Teachings.' No great abstract mystery, except that the Mind has amassed millennia worth of hypnotic momentum and won't therefore readily yield its sovereign command despite its own indisputable logic that reveals it's nothing more than a petty affair locked in the corner of the vast wondrous mystery of life.

It's paramountly important to realize that the primary characteristic underlying the living practical expression of the 'emancipation locus' is one of disarming simplicity. This is the inevitable revelation associated with reaching the 'other shore'-viz. beyond the [exclusive component of the] ego-where resides the boundless power of silence, being the unsophisticated living expression of the sage permanently nested in the freedom of immaculate simplicity.

Here are some attempts at describing the indescribable:

incomparable crystalline no-mind being-ness
that never started and will never end

that existential impulse beyond the necessity or
capacity to remember or forget

the who/what-we-are moment-to-moment
truth of nature
even if unwitnessed!

And the one message to loom gigantic-to stand out above all the rest in this treatise, is the following:

Regardless of one's awareness or lack thereof of the existence of the Absolute Self as the substratum truth behind the ego, in no way, shape or form increases or diminishes its presence or reality. In this very sense, we are all already naturally realized. And, in this very sense we, in no way, shape or form, need plan for, strive toward, or accomplish anything above and beyond, either now or tomorrow, for we all are collectively already the very goal we believe we must struggle to attain.

Thus there's really NOTHING TO DO BUT TO STOP LIVING OUT THE IDEA OF SUFFERING.

Again, the classic objection to such a statement is, "What value is the idea that we are the Self, etc., if we don't experience it...if we don't feel the bliss or the well-being of such a state of consciousness?"

The answer to this is that if the [previous] statement or insight is duly contemplated and processed, it's all the Mind would really need in order for it to release its ages-forged habit of self-imposed ignorance. A brand of ignorance that has been positively collected along the way. An ignorance that dictates ideas that are limited, uninformed and archaic. Now, it's very important to understand the dynamic involved here. It's as if the human being has gone considerably out of his way, expending enormous energy, gathering specific information geared to grossly distort and misdirect what would otherwise be his natural understanding of the nature of life. Yet his understanding is really no understanding at all!-but is rather an automatic, direct connection with existence itself, beyond the need to speculate or philosophize about the meaning, purpose, origin, or distinction of his identity, the world, or life itself. This [need to speculate] is really the basis and launch-pad for all our ignorance. This preoccupation with inquiring into the nature of existence-referred to as ku tarka-is specifically what must be renounced. It's not an exaggeration to say that if it indeed gets relinquished, Self-realization is had.

Ku tarka also relates to involving oneself in philosophical debates. This is strongly discouraged. However, from the Advaitin point of view, witnessing such debates has value insofar as its affording the opportunity to learn, not from the ideas, per se, but rather their implication in the wider context of what drives the mind in its need to relatively know. Of course this brand of knowing is the polar opposite of the knowing implied in Jnana, which is the noumenal [viz. beyond the phenomenal].

In approaching any of the classic debates: first we have the matter of semantics with words, then semantics with ideas, and finally we involve ourselves with the wild goose chase of philosophical speculation, with the ulterior mission of securing a hands-on knowledge of 'what's what.' And this pursuit for a 'hands-on knowledge of what's what' is precisely where we're making our biggest mistake. Because the answer we seek is not amenable to reason or Relativity.

We should never lose sight of the fact that the goal, not only of Advaita but Dvaita and Visisthadvaita, is to stop the mind from plaguing [and thereby reinforcing] the illusion of the separative-bound jiva. Of course this condition sounds impossible, simply because it is impossible!

As long as the Mind exists, it will and must continue to plague. Therefore we must learn how to become dispassionate towards its relentless dictates. Therefore our charge is to extricate its hypnotic delusion-which is after all accomplished by the simplest means, sooner or later, in the course of our 'pathless path.'

Although the three methods differ in their approach to accomplish this destruction of the [philosophical] Mind, their goal is the same. And it merely depends on the temperament of the individual, as to which method is chosen. The Tyagi who can truly renounce the fruit of his/her actions, the Bhakta who can truly sacrifice his Jiva to Isvara, or the Jnanayogin who can truly realize that Brahman is the lone reality, all become Jivanmuktas in the end, all become One in Parabrahman. In fact, we are already That.

Now, interestingly enough (and as was earlier discussed), the inquiry into the nature of the self that is prescribed, known as Atmavichara, is in fact geared toward decimating this stubborn tendency [ku tarka]. This may be regarded as fighting fire with fire, since it involves employing the Mind to destroy the Mind. The process itself overrides the mental habit of juggling secondary concepts. For example, 'Why are we suffering?' or 'Why is there ignorance?' or 'If the Self is perfect, why and how does imperfection arise?' ...are all transcended by the counter-question, 'Who is asking these questions?' Where the answer, 'I am,' is followed by the final question [the Atmavichara], 'Who am I?' However, the final answer is not amenable to the Mind. This gets to the very root of the problem-indeed the root of all problems-and pulls it clean out.

From this observation, it follows that, what the Mind appears to do best actually itself causes the greatest problem, because it has the audacity to think it can apprehend and resolve the Mystery of Life! On the other hand, the Jnani (one who is a Buddha, enlightened or Self-realized) is one who is capable of living in absolute peace alongside [what amounts to being the unsolvable] Mystery of Life. (Or, more accurately, living in peace immersed in the Mystery.)

* * * *

At this point, the reader should take note of how much the entire issue of Self-realization depends on overriding what amounts to being ephemeral/phantom-like impressions in the Mind...the result of a methodical conditioning that gradually but surely has ushered one into a very contrived arena of experience, wholly abstracted from one's natural state. This is why it is said that Self-realization is already had; and that a shift in attitude is all that's needed to in fact embrace it in full awareness.

Therefore, the above reference to the fact that we already are the Absolute Self, having in fact nothing to achieve or strive for, is being stated as a counter-weapon in the form of an intellectual seed to be planted into the body-mind complex, that will sooner or later bear fruit in the form of the destruction of our manifold delusions. From this line of reasoning, it shouldn't be too difficult to comprehend the [otherwise admittedly radical] idea that we have really nothing to do but simply quit living in the conditioned attitude that we're uniquely isolated entities who are suffering.

For, suffering is an act of creation borne of the Mind. It comes out of thinking that we need something we believe we don't have. Its root

cause is the belief in ego-the separative, false identity unit that sets up the entire world of names, forms, entities and events as a massive not-Self domain replete with countless attractions and repulsions. To settle upon the existential fact of nature that we aren't in the least way limited by ego-Mind, is Moksha or Liberation. Nothing else need be 'realized,' for, as we have seen, the whole idea of having something to realize is itself the greatest obstacle to what is already present as (automatic) realization. In fact, only by a sustained Herculean effort have we inadvertently managed to create the world of non-realization-or so we believe ourselves subject to such anxious, living state of ignorance. So, all these complex delusive states of fear, suffering and ignorance are results of deliberate positive actions perpetrated by the 'ego manifesto.' As earlier alluded to, we actually wind up generating a remarkable amount of effort for the purpose of positively violating our inborn natural state of peace and harmony! This is clearly the case, because in order to return to that natural state, all we have to do is eliminate that very same effort [exemplified by the gross battery of negatives: the judgments and comparisons, the competitions and conflicts, that set us at odds with ourselves, each other and the world], and voilà!: welcome to the home of the Self-which we, incidentally, really never left for even a moment! Remember:

Upon the 'great awakening,' it is immediately evident that the state of ignorance has in fact never really existed-not even for a moment in time....

You see, suffering and pain, boredom and ignorance are created phenomena. Self-realization, on the other hand, isn't something to achieve-it's merely WHAT IS. The surest, most efficacious way to prove this to yourself is if you can either sit back and turn off your thoughts (without going to sleep) or effectively ignore them...you will immediately 'experience' the effulgent Self...that, among other things, It is omnipresent and eternally unaltered/undaunted by any force in the universe, seen or unseen; as well as utterly unaffected by any conceivable activity in or of the Mind-since it is the causal and unchangeable substratum of the ego and its projection, the world-appearance.

The whole problem is that it's all, in fact, too simple!
And in this very way it all just as simply eludes us.

This is because the Mind works in and through highly complex processes, entangled furthermore with variegated emotions and desires, comparative perceptions and value judgments, etc., etc.. Therefore we live and thrive on an intricate web of experience, thereby diverting our attention and thus disabling our capacity to discover our simplicity.

* * * *

To get to the simple essence:
What is the nature of Truth?
Silence.

So, Silence is the only discernible aftermath description of that which is thus determined to be the Causeless Cause of WHAT IS. That is, no

qualitative response can possibly be forthcoming to that which, a priori, cannot possibly beckon or validate even a single spark of energy... implying that the 'Causeless Cause' is technically the cause of nothing substantive whatsoever! You see, energy itself is Maya. Along with Mind, energy is analogous to dream-stuff-where, upon waking, the dreamer becomes predictably and verifiably aware of the process of having weaved an entire world out of the thin air of his imagination-containing, however, not a speck of reliable (permanent) substance. This is, nevertheless, only the relative, logical consideration for the response of silence. The metaphysical consideration is, however, purely intuitive and impossible to elucidate. It becomes likened to a Zen koan (existential riddle), and utilizable as an object for contemplation and meditation. In fact, if and when the Mind embraces Silence, the result is Nirvikalpa Samadhi (mind-attenuated state where the ego is completely submerged...where, if thoughts yet arise, they remain impotent, since the subject in this state is the purely impersonal witness).

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MIND AND ITS SOLUTION

First and foremost, regarding any philosophic concern or debate, we must always bear in mind that we're constantly dealing with the question of semantics.

In Vedanta, one will find a number of ways that mind can be defined and broken down into components having certain characteristics. The most useful, in my opinion, is the following: Overall, within the total field of awareness of the individual is postulated the antahkarana (mechanism housing the four internal organs of perception): 1. manas (thinking; logic); 2. chitta (memory; instinct); 3. buddhi (intuition; discrimination); and 4. ahamkar (ego).

So, within the context of this treatise, as stated earlier, Mind (with a capital 'M') is referring to the ego (ahamkar) in conjunction with the logical mind (shudda manas), which collectively engages the speculative philosophic pursuit as the compelling modality within the thought process. And this is specifically what the jnana marga sets out to defuse or eliminate. This is what the term manonasa (destruction of mind) is technically referring to. It is this mental dynamic that is responsible for the obsessive drive in the individual to seek out and find the solution to endless barrages of self-wrought dilemmas. Dilemmas that will in fact continue ad infinitum if unless and until it dawns on one to investigate its self-perpetuating mechanism. This dawning coincides with the quest in Self-enquiry.

* * * * *

Yes. The Mind is an elaborate fabrication of the ego matrix [a bundle of thoughts founded/spun from the 'I'-thought] which, in turn, is a relative contraction on the Absolute SELF, creating thereby a separative paradox, whose origin and purpose itself is unfathomable.

Yes. This Mind is an incomprehensible orphan borne out of

empirically indeterminate parents (Self and not-Self). Therefore it is a product of reality (Self) and illusion (not-Self). It is consequently said to possess a relatively real existence.

Yes. This Mind, operating as it does out of egoic desire, as a result achieves moment-by-moment creative invention, hoodwinking its victim into the daily drama of that historic pretense 'the human condition,' causing thereby the impetus of the emotional dilemma of the vacillation between well-being and suffering.

And yes, eventually through years of self-introspection/self-enquiry, it's discovered that this Mind trumps up the same degree of realness in one's Life, as it does in one's dream. For, any attempt to pin it down is invariably met with failure. Like a dim star in the sky, the more direct one's gaze, the more invisible it becomes! Why? The answer is quite simple: it's not really there! That is, ultimately and specifically, as a self-contained, isolated entity, it has no abiding reality. Being a mixture of the real and unreal, obviously it itself cannot be empirically considered fully real. The illusory component within it-that feigns exclusivity and separateness-is the urchin responsible for our entire Shakespearean/Kantian dilemma.

How is it possible that the essence of this Mind is, as such, quantifiably empty?

Well...truth is stranger than fiction: the ultimate lifting of the veil-the art of waking up from this influential web of illusion-reveals the subjective certainty (intuitive knowing, beyond otherwise logical qualification) that this thing called Mind is a substantive phantom. [Again], just as while dreaming, the events are taken to be real until the dream resolves into waking, so does the Mind dial up the world as such, causing its [equally hallucinated] egoic victim to believe in its elaborate manifestation...until its charade is finally leveled by the sword of Jnana (spiritual wisdom). So that, left uninvestigated, Maya thrives on both sides of the eyes. And the only way out of its snare is through careful and honest introspective observation. By this, one discovers how the Mind itself carries the seed of its own destruction...how its own logic ultimately dismantles itself. For example, if the Light of Consciousness (the Witness) is traced to its real location (i.e. its true source), one will come to recognize how thoughts [comprising the Mind] are not only generators of objects perceived but are themselves objects perceived! To illustrate: the eye sees the sun; the brain sees the eye; the mind sees the brain; the ego sees the mind; the Self 'sees' the ego. (Note the quotations within the phrase "the Self 'sees' the ego." This is to emphasize that the Self doesn't really see anything at all, nor does it experience anything. What exactly it is that's witnessing all this is an unfathomable mystery. We can't say it's the ego, for the ego, as such, is merely a lifeless conduit, an inert instrument: because it has no intrinsic consciousness that can be considered real (vide: our standard of Reality). We can't say it's the pure free Self, because the Self, by definition, has no attributes. It therefore has no capacity for even assuming the role of 'witness.' (Again, it is the product of two components; one real, the other unreal.) Therefore, who or what is it that experiences all of this? The only possible answer is that there in fact isn't any 'witnessing' consciousness, simply because there isn't anything, as such, to witness! This might appear to be a reckless and unscientific observation, yet the uncompromising parameters of Freedom have demanded it be called forth! Moreover, the repeated

emphasis on the words 'as such' hints at the unique sense of how in actuality there is nothing to witness: it is meant in a specific sense (as was discussed earlier). That is, the Particular within the Whole has no separative weight, either in meaning, essence, or purpose. Thus the Whole itself is the lone reality: its Parts are only Itself and have no meaning unto themselves. Hence there is no world, per se, for the Self to witness or experience-since it itself is naught but the infinitude of Being in the Absolute Brahman. That is, the substratum [Brahman], when beheld in its absolute essence, causes a transcendental gestalt within the antahkarana, yielding what can only be referred to as the 'white out' Totality of pure consciousness. This is definitively, the archetype of sat-chit-ananda.

The idea that thoughts are themselves objects perceived may seem plausible enough, but how do we substantiate the claim that the Mind generates the objects and events of the world? Answer: the same way that it creates worlds in dreams until the dreamer wakes up to discover their non-reality (or, at most, their relative reality)...it's the selfsame phenomenon. This isn't scientific proof? Perhaps not. Yet, what we call 'scientific proof' presumes that the observer is first of all utilizing a reliable instrument for measurement, to say nothing of the reliability of the mechanism reading the instrument! This has its parallel in quantum theory, in Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Nevertheless, upon discovering the Self, the facts intuitively clarify...and, at that time, amazingly, there'll be no answers forthcoming, for there'll be no questions arising. This is a monumental insight to grasp. Because it speaks directly to the entire goal of Vedanta (the selfsame goal of the Perennial Philosophy) which is to live in one's natural, innate essence, beyond the judgmental, reasoning Mind: specifically, beyond that area of the Mind that is obsessed with inquiring/speculating/philosophizing about the nature of what one is in fact immersed in (per the relative world). Anyway, so-called scientific or empirical proofs are only attempts to calm the restive psyche. Instead, why not stop the instigator Mind at its egoic root and be done with it? Either we cut to the quick of the falsifying isolated self or continue yielding to its historic momentum of poetic deception. What other choices do we really have? Either we stay the course in accepting the illusion or we finally wake-up and be what we really are!

Either we recognize the importance of tracing the illusion to its source or we continue playing the role as its [fateful] victims.

So, what is the source of the illusion? Not really the Mind. That's the house it plays in. Its source can only be traced to the ego itself. (The ego is technically the foundation beneath the bundle of thoughts comprising the mind, which is the singular 'I'-thought.)

Now, prior to so-called Self-Realization, there is one question more compelling [and loaded] than any other, begging to be asked; that inevitably forces itself upon the one who's approaching the alleged breakthrough (Enlightenment)-and that is:

Why are we here?

Afterall, what's the purpose? Why does the ego exist? Where did it come from? Especially if we consider that the Self is perfect, how does imperfection in the form of ego arise? There are two answers to this. One is relative and the other Absolute. The relative answer is: If we look in the Rig Veda, it is explained for us how Brahman in its unmanifest condition (Its Nirguna State [in Pralaya]) somehow becomes eventually restless and

desires activity, as well as the urge to experience Itself. This has been equated to simply as the desire for being entertained. What transpires therefore is Its projection, via Maya-Shakti, into the Life-Appearance (being the Sohamidam [God, souls and world]).

And the Absolute answer is:

There is no ego, no world, no ideas of purpose or perfection or imperfection, apart from that which is its substratum, Brahman.

It's finally as simple as that. (No, it's even simpler. In fact, the concept of simplicity itself is even too complex! For, nothing whatsoever can be said about Its true nature. This is exactly why the Buddha was silent when pressed about the nature of 'what is,' in the form of a Self or Spirit. Vedanta refers to it as anirvachaniya-that which is indescribable.)

Yet, who in their right mind would ascribe to such a thing?

Well, no-one.

But not only no-one in their 'right' mind....

Self-Realization precludes the elimination of Mind, as such, altogether, no less any 'right' or 'wrong' mind.

And here, specifically, lies the blitzkrieg assault on all logic and reason! You see, Self-Realization beckons a fundamental revolt on any and all tendencies to settle upon any intellectual battery of 'knowns' that can be capable of reflecting Reality. Whether such concepts are even as sublime as peace and love, it is metaphysically unsound to embrace these because they're yet rooted in the relative spectrum, evoking thus polarized limitations on the otherwise transcendental nature of Being. (For example, even 'love' in the face of the Absolute Reality can be regarded as a fundamentally false and limited concept because its existence requires the reference points of a subject and an object-the one to feel love for the other, and vice versa; whereas, if we are in fact all really one, the duality of subject/object cannot possibly exist! Thus the classical definition of love collapses. This is not to say that a jnani is without love. Quite the contrary. The nature of a jnani is Paramatmanishtabhavana, which is the permanently poised natural attitude/feeling of oneness with ALL that is. As such, his/hers is a divine love.)

Therefore the fact indelibly prevails that no amount of logic can describe that which, in reality, IS-as Being itself, in its pristine, unalloyed state-but can at best only deductively allude to its true state. The fact remains that we cannot possibly go beyond an a priori assessment of the state of Reality via the Mind because we can only deduce or theorize that which exists in Reality, given the Mind's proclivity for working with effects-itself being an effect! So that, how can something which is itself an effect apprehend something which is, by definition, its own cause? Another, and very effective way of approaching the resolution of the matter of Mind [and its ability to] apprehend Reality is the following: The Mind is incapable of grasping the Self because the Mind is in Time and the Self is out of Time. Example: the Now. Attempting to grasp the Now, it instantly becomes the Past. Attempting to think about it or imagine what its true nature might be, it delivers us into the Future. Thus the Now is the home of the Self. The Now IS the Self. It can neither be directly seen or heard. For, sight and sound are merely its by-products. It is ever only pure Being, which is ever only purely expressing Its nature as pure feeling-and this beyond the capacity to know, as we ordinarily define knowing [viz. requiring a subject/object relationship]. Thus the Vedantic injunction that the Relativity in knower, knowing and known are practically

dissolved-as, in fact, they never really existed in the first place, but were merely an illusionary setup thriving within the illusion of a separative ego-Mind. Thus it is said that our true nature in the Turiya is transcendental of the Mayavic polarities of knowledge/ignorance, light/darkness, good/evil, truth/falsehood, etc. Thus it is impossible to know Brahman, yet impossible not to be Brahman!

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ADVAITA VEDANTA UNVEILED

Advaita Vedanta (the wisdom of non-duality) simply states that virtually everything witnessable within/without is ONE essence. This even includes dreams, illusions and ignorance itself. That there is no duality of truth and non-truth, of that which is real vs. that which is unreal. This is simply because the non-truth and the unreal do not exist, as such. Whatever is deemed false and unreal in life are part and parcel of the Totality of Existence. The point is, in of themselves they have no abiding reality, they cannot embrace or represent the Whole-as neither can any specific idea or ideal.

It could be said that the essential purpose of this 'philosophy' of absolute unity is to liberate the subject by breaking the chains of the entrapment of the ego-Mind, thriving as it does on relative judgments-the stubborn comparative relationing between one thing and another-pitting one thing against another, as if they were inherently mutually exclusive; causing thereby, accordingly, the illusion of duality, which begets desire and thereof suffering.

The Illusion of Suffering is the byproduct of the Delusion of Division. For, there is no real suffering. Whatever is assumed to be an experience of suffering is invariably based on the false belief of an isolated incident of identification (i.e. believing that a given perception is a reality unto itself and apart from the matrix of the Whole or the One). How does this cause suffering? Any sense of isolation based on division creates a contraction. And contractions are synonymous with suffering. The implication should be self-explanatory, for, applied on any conceivable level, contraction is the progenitor of pain in all its creative forms. An interesting, informative and simple exposé pertaining to the concept of expansion/contraction and its implications, is A Lazy Man's Guide to Enlightenment by Thaddeus Golas. What he goes on to explain is how one's basic attitude-whether it is contracted or expanded-itself literally shapes one's awareness. Basically, if one is expanded in attitude or mental outlook, one is inclusive, holistic and magnanimous in orientation. Whereas, if one is contracted in attitude, one is exclusive, fragmented and pigeon-holed. The former bestowing not only benefits to others, but benefits to oneself; whereas the latter yields the opposite. The former implies a defused and unobstructed, the latter a condensed and meddlesome ego. This implies that the ego is an emissary of the soul, and therefore possesses in fact a real and useful component. However, it must be utilized as a workable vantage point within the overall scheme of things (i.e. operable within the Play of Life [or Leela of Brahman]). It must not-as it's obviously done-take exclusive reign unto itself, but work as an instrument of the holistic paradigm in Brahman. What becomes immediately evident from this is the infliction and

consequences associated with the intensity of the potentially exclusive focus of one's ego (i.e. the more focused, the more contracted). The central and pivotal issue foundational to the Perennial Philosophy is therefore to use the ego as an instrument within the Plan of Brahman's projection of divine purpose...otherwise referred to as Isvara's Script. The multitude of egos are therefore an impeccably orchestrated symphony of Brahman's emissary in Isvara.

The final conceivable conclusion reached is that, in fact, the nature of What Is an utterly complete and eternal Mystery! The student of Advaita Vedanta is told early on, that the unmanifest Nirguna Brahman is an ineffable, inscrutable and unknowable mystery. However, the student eventually comes to learn that so is in fact Its projection into Manifestation (Saguna Brahman) equally an ineffable, inscrutable and unknowable mystery. The implication in coming to understand this are inestimably significant. In fact, it is the precursor to the entry into moksha itself!

This is Advaita Vedanta unveiled; this is the Tathagata (Buddha nature); the Tao [that cannot be named]; the final Zen satori; the Holy Grail Itself; the Ayn Soph of the Cabalistic Tetragrammaton; the Ahura Mazdao of the Zend Avesta; The Bardo Thodol of the Tibetan Tantra; the Sanctum Seculorum of the Sacred Heart of Christ; the Parabrahmam of the Jivanmuktha.

In both cause and effect, we are the One SELF immersed in pure Mystery; where whatever knowledge we appear to possess is only valid in isolated increments. Whereas the Whole of the Primal Essence remains impenetrable, being thus our own ageless eternal infinite Mystery.

* * * *

WHAT IS THEORY WITHOUT APPLICATION?

Hearing it a thousand times is useless if the mind maintains its outward attraction. If the mind is enthralled with the objects of its creation-the world of people and things-and not capable of effectively turning its gaze (investigation) inward, all talk of Self-realization will remain merely talk. The mind's enthrallment with the world implies desire for the things of the world. And unless one becomes dispassionate toward the things of the world (things, for example, that the ego believes lie beyond itself, and therefore needs), one's gaze will never be effectively turned within. Therefore no progress toward Liberation will be possible. The key word here is 'needs.' It's common to achieve repeated 'glimpses into' or have 'encounters with' the Self (such a visitation to the Absolute Self is known as savikalpa samadhi) and still retain certain desires in the form of 'wants.' But 'needs' implies a marked obsession with the idea of a separative 'external real world' (in the sense of being an independent and isolated reality), preventing therefore any real capacity or inclination for following the necessary inward journey, which of course is prerequisite to realization of the Self.

In fact, what really happens when one's gaze is effectively turned within is the gradual but certain defusion and/or elimination of all thoughts. Because, if we consider what's really occurring at the point of the activity of thought-creation itself, we should see that all thoughts are motivated by the relationship between the ego and the 'world outside.' However, being itself a fallacious arrangement (i.e. in truth, there really is no difference in nature between the two), thoughts are eventually

recognized to be unnecessary!

"Since consciousness is the Self and not apart from the Mind, concentration is not necessary for its realization. It is enough that other perceptions (namely thoughts) should be eliminated from the Mind and then the Self will be realized. Realization of Self requires absolute purity only and no concentration of mind. Absolute purity implies purity of mind. The only impurity of mind is thought. To make it thought-free is to keep it pure."
-Tripura Rahasya (ancient Advaitic text)

"Whatever you can forget is not the truth." -Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

The Self is not accessible through the memory. Therefore, whatever you think you need to remember or are capable of forgetting, cannot be the Self-discard it!

SAMADHI IS SIMPLY ABSENCE OF THOUGHTS.

Yet samadhi can be experienced in the presence of thoughts as well, on the condition that, in spite of the thoughts, the individual remains centered in the place where pure Consciousness thrives, whilst the thoughts being generated are merely spontaneous energy forms without their otherwise typical dictatorial impact. This is the advent of sahaja samadhi ('walking samadhi'-the natural state).

So, in the event of such an achievement, will one then desire to abandon everything else? Not in the least. Because there are no real desires for or against anything!

Sahaja samadhi is utterly inscrutable from the point of view of the reasonable thinking man. Any attempt to assess it in terms of commonsense logic and behavior is like trying to play baseball with the rules for chess. The logic that applies to the persona of the citizen of the world is irrelevant to the clear peaceful being of the sage beyond space and time. The closest one can come to describe the apparent activities that follow the Liberation state may be likened to an electric fan that's been switched off, where although no new energy is feeding it, shall yet spin for a while longer, running on momentum.

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In the early stages samadhi becomes first noticeable if and when the clouds and storms in the mind (thoughts and ideas) are essentially, even if momentarily, cleared away...leaving in that instant no veils or obstacles to the aham sphoorti (the natural state of the Self shining within). The outcome is a pronounced feeling of well-being, conferring Ananda (bliss). However, since it's a temporary experience, it represents one of the lower levels of samadhi.

There are, as one might have guessed, many kinds of samadhi. And within each category (viz. respectively: kevala, savikalpa, nirvikalpa and sahaja), there are also many gradations, of various magnitudes and durations (with the notable exception of the sahaja state, which is permanent). The earlier states of samadhi entail rising above the senses and the Mind (in terms of either thought diffusion or attenuation), for certain periods of time, yet with the ego and its latent mental tendencies (vasanas) still intact and therefore ever ready to derail

the transcendental state. The more advanced states are of longer duration and tend toward deeper introspective and, in some cases, trance-like states. These constitute nirvikalpa samadhi: a transcendental state where the world effectively disappears due to the ego being sublimated and rendered thereof temporarily non-existent-albeit yet latent and poised to eventually re-surface. And the final state [also referred to as the 'stateless state'] called sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi-same as sahaja samadhi, being equivalent to the state of the living sage-where the vasanas [along with karma itself] have been destroyed utterly, along with the ego and the Mind, as dynamics as such-who is fixed therein permanently, and is beyond relative comprehension or judgment. (Sahaja samadhi can be compared to sleepful-wakefulness [sushupti-jagrat] where one is fused in the two states of mind [deep sleep and wakeful awareness]. The Buddhists also refer to this as being 'empty and awake.')

The importance of eliminating the vasanas (latent thought tendencies) cannot be overstated. Self-Realization itself depends on one's ability to finally checkmate the warp and woof of the ancient tyrant Mind. In this regard one must cultivate vairagya (dispassion) toward any and all conceivable thoughts. (Of course, we're talking specifically about speculative, philosophical thoughts, and not everyday practical thoughts required for conducting our lives.) How to accomplish this? By realizing what exactly is the quality or value behind any conceivable thought. In this regard, with the exception of using thoughts to free oneself of thoughts, there isn't a single [philosophical] thought worth thinking. More than this, there isn't a single thought that isn't, unto itself, rooted in illusion.

Think about it. No pun intended. Such thinking right here is one of the rare instances where it can be considered a worthwhile endeavor-of course, in this case, [engaging thinking] to prove that thinking itself is a useless endeavor. This is tantamount to fighting fire with fire...for, only the Mind is capable of destroying the Mind. This is a popular concept in Advaita Vedanta, giving rise to the fundamental misconception [which is repeated here to elucidate a further point]: how can one possibly function without a mind? Well, one isn't being asked to. As mentioned above, it's a matter of using that area of the mind which is oriented toward being practically functional as opposed to the bulk of its tendency toward being abstractly judgmental and/or philosophical, which is clearly the breeding ground for delusionary entanglements. This is precisely what the sadhaka (practitioner) is seeking to do. And when one can live in the practical rather than the abstract, judgmental Mind, that Mind is said to be dead, and the individual is said to be a jnani.

The Mind is so deceptive, powerful and cunning, that it sets traps moment by moment-instantly!-to either coerce us into believing that it is 'exposing the fallacy' of our attempts to override its control, or to divert our attention in such a way as to even persuade us into severing our connection with the moments of our immersion in the bliss of our natural state.

Pause to consider carefully the abstract subtlety of this Mind; an entity, to be sure, that doesn't have a sovereign existence. Yet, observe all the trouble it causes. Or does it?...

What is discovered upon the moment of liberation is the fact that it was all likened to a snake in a rope. (As the story goes, a man was sitting at a shoreline in twilight, and noticed what appeared to be a snake coiled-up in front of him, close enough that he was frightened indeed to

move at all, lest it would lunge at him if he drew its attention. Until the next morning when the sun arose, revealing 'the snake' to be nothing more than a coiled rope....exposing the fact that all along his fear was for naught!) Such is the nature of the mind and the life it presents to the apparent entity...likened to a snake in a rope. Whereas it holds in all times and places nothing to be concerned about in any way, shape, or form. (Take note of the use of the phrase 'apparent entity,' since the existence of such isn't anywhere to be found. There is simply no real ego in existence [since ego, by definition, means 'separative entity apart from everything else']. This is the conclusion reached as a result of Self-inquiry.)

The relative Mind wants an Absolute answer. Is this do-able?

Such is the nature of the Unknowable. Since, that which IS, is unavailable to the relativity-bound domain of the intellect. It is simply unapproachable, indescribable, unfathomable and fully transcendental [relative to the analytical Mind]. Thus we are automatically the seamless-unified Self of BEING, whether or not we conceive or apprehend anything about It at all! We are automatically that. And, despite what we think, feel or believe, no apparent ignorance can essentially remove us from that automatic, unqualified truth of who and what we innately are. (Take note also of the use of 'apparent ignorance,' since it is also a fiction within the chaotic, restless world of the speculative-philosophical Mind.) Nothing and no power in either this or any other world could alter or even influence the automatic Absolute State of the ONE Self-the Self of all the selves. Beyond perfection and non-perfection, that which IS, simply is. No special 'knowledge' of its state of Being is required. (Please realize that the value and importance of this latter statement simply cannot be stressed enough-its implications defy articulation.)

Rest assured, no matter what condition is surmised to be vital to the existence and welfare of who/what you are, as well as that which is within and beyond the world and life itself, is already fulfilled.

Nothing need be done about anything at any time.

Know this and be happy.

Know that the only real obstacle to enlightenment is the thought that you are not enlightened! (For this is the seed of self-doubt, which discolors the field of experience and fabricates endless misconceptions, such as an ego to be tended to, massaged, fed, pitied or, yes, even eliminated.)

Consider: What do you really need? Whatever answer you give is nothing more than a THOUGHT! And unless you as yet believe that thoughts have significant value, this [latter observation] should expose the real issue involved, i.e. that it's all in the mind!

Now, isn't it true that you have nothing positive to gain but only the negatives to lose?

Isn't it true that the history of socio-ethno-psycho-conditioning has amounted to a character assassination of its members?...to the degree that each individual has come to believe in their 'innate human weakness' and 'permanent fated separation from their Creator or Supreme Being' (God)? Isn't it true that the quality of our awareness is an outgrowth of our system of belief [which, in turn, is primarily a product of social conditioning]? Yet isn't it also true that we have the power to change? ...that since we have ascribed to negative conditioning, we can just as easily ascribe to positive conditioning...and eventually to no conditioning

at all!

And this is the message of the ageless sage: that conditioning itself is an illusion; for, who or what is there to condition?!

FIND OUT WHO'S INSIDE THE BODY MACHINE.

You'll see upon investigating that, whatever It is, It doesn't have a pronounceable name, nor any discernible attribute, nor limit of any kind, nor core of reasonableness, nor idea of subject in contrast to any 'external object,' nor reference in time or occupation in space. You'll find out that it simply IS, and no conceivable thought can describe or circumscribe it. To say that it is Light or Truth or God or Love is to decorate it with Relativity (falsehood). The best that It can be even remotely hinted at in words-which are, by their very nature, limited acts of creation-is that It simply is. To offer anything further is to invite distortion and, indeed, illusion. Yet, purely for the purpose of inspiring the seeker on the path, certain explanations and descriptions of the so-called Supreme State are offered.

For example, Vedanta calls It (viz. the Absolute Reality or Universal SELF) Brahman, and descriptively alludes to It as Sat-Chit-Ananda (Sat is Absolute or Pure Being; Chit is Absolute or Pure Consciousness; and Ananda is Absolute or Pure Bliss). However, it is carefully stipulated that these are indirect references to the otherwise inscrutable nature of Brahman. There is no intention, therefore, to make a positive assertion about that which, simultaneously transcends and is yet immanent within the world of Relativity. However, its transcendental counterpart renders its totality utterly beyond the ken of reason. Thus it would come down to attempting to describe the indescribable...an obvious blunder.

Yet the assertion of Sat-Chit-Ananda is a necessary one-to quash the misunderstanding that can arise as to what one may expect to witness in the 'stateless state' of moksha. And the allusion points to the fact that this state [synonymous with ego-extinction; i.e. Liberation] is specifically not likened to non-Being, non-Consciousness, or non-Bliss. In other words, the state is not akin to nihilism (i.e. not in any way: non-existent, nescient, or baseless). The consideration for the double-negative stipulation being that if we were to otherwise make direct assertions, they would tend to set up another-albeit higher-echelon of Relativity (organized system of opposites), thereby constructing a more refined yet still falsified limitation. The ramifications of this are indeed far-reaching, not the least of which defeats our intuitive grasp regarding what the real nature of the Self is (which is devoid of transient attributes). And finally, and most significantly, making direct assertions would setup pre-conceived notions which would only serve to distort our approach: i.e. we would strive to achieve positive attributes, per se, rather than focus on eliminating and liberating our exclusive identification with all attributes, as such, negative as well as positive, where our mission is to embrace the transcendent within the immanent, holistically.

Although the sum and substance of the 'End Teachings' (Vedanta) is, in its essence, the most profoundly simple thing, still numerous discourses exist, tackling the situation from as many angles as the Mind weaves obstacles in the form of skepticisms or detours in the form of desires. And the variations on the themes of skepticism and desire are vaster than the combinations of snowflakes in a blizzard! So, the response had to be in kind, at least to the degree that general categories were so addressed with suitable instructions offered as a

countermeasure to help disengage our tenacious dependence on logic. Yet, in spite of their magnificence and transformatively purifying value, even such scriptural documents as the Bhagavad Gita, Yoga Vasishtha, Upanishads, Dhammapada, Tao Te Ching, Old and New Testaments, Naj Hammadi Library, Cabala, Zend Avesta, Popol Vuh, etc., are destined to be discarded ultimately. For the Awakened One is independently free and eternally peaceful, in need of nothing; neither wanting nor wishing for anything or anyone. (What could the sage possibly want or need if all he/she experiences is the Self only?) For, such a one is naught but a vibrant continuum, an existential realization, an absolute noumenon forever within yet beyond life and death, space and time, good and evil, thought and desire. However, en route to the final egoic surrender-the becoming aware of that which [really] one has always already been-the importance and role of the ancient scriptures cannot be stressed enough. For, in the course of studying them and discovering therein the means for evoking insights about not necessarily the true nature of Being but rather the negative attitudes and tendencies of the Mind that need to be eliminated, their practical value will be duly appreciated. (In other words, our nature of Being is not really the issue to be studied at hand in any of these documents, but rather coming to terms with, and realizing how to conquer, the mysterious psycho-paradox blocking us from our true nature.)

TRUTH IS INNATE AND AUTOMATIC.

* * * *

NOTHING EVER NEED BE ATTAINED...
...SPECIFICS ONLY NEED BE ELIMINATED!

FOR THE SELF IS ALL THERE REALLY IS.

What therefore is there to achieve or strive for?

There is only that which blocks one's experience from the Reality of one's own true nature that needs to be removed from the picture. However, and quite obviously, it is an illusion to believe in illusion (implying that there is something other than the Self)...yet to state even this, as such, is itself illusion and contradiction! Hence the only possible course of action that can lead to the truth of the matter is to remain silent. To remain silent within.

(The Biblical, "Be still and know that I AM God," alludes to this silence within...the silencing of the philosophical Mind. (If there is a doubt about this interpretation, consider then what else the word 'still' could possibly be referring to. Would it refer to the body? Additionally, this injunction also alludes to the Self, the 'I am,' that it is identical to God (the Absolute Being). As also does the spiritual name Jehovah: YHVH: I AM THAT I AM.) So that the entire effort is geared toward eliminating the obstacles-Mind-stuff comprised of [actually a confusion of] comparative judgments-which represents the purification of the Mind.

Admittedly, our habit concerning what may be referred to as 'peripherals' (worldly intrigue; human pathos; psycho-emotional desires) superimposed on the primal Being state, is a difficult one to overcome.

As to why this is so, is as paradoxical a question as any of the major philosophical questions (e.g. "Who am I?"; "Why am I here?"; "Why is there ignorance and suffering?"; etc.), and equally defies an adequate answer, insofar as the relatively reasonable Mind is able to comprehend. Therefore, in the meantime, we must have faith that this riddle will eventually unravel, however not in the way our intellects would imagine it to do so.

This latter point is critical to understand. That is, the analytical Mind-by definition, rooted in Relativity-is therefore utterly incapable of comprehending the trans-relative Absolute. Its entire will and desire is to reach a concrete intellectual understanding of the nature of reality, specifically in practical reasonable terms. But this is simply impossible. Therefore, as mentioned, metaphysics stresses the modality of comprehension through the only means feasible: [which Vedanta refers to as] the buddhi or intuitive faculty of perception. And, of course, any expectation of reaching an understanding of what this intuitive faculty scientifically is and how it operates, is also beyond the reasonable Mind. This needn't represent an impasse, however. Patience in the investigation of the Self, as well as the study of the scriptures in any of the spiritual disciplines, will reveal, in time, the practical operability of this critically key faculty of perception. Moreover, what is discovered in the course of one's study is the fact that there are indeed insights that can expedite the development of the buddhi. For example,

By realizing today what will one day inevitably materialize:
the act of abandoning philosophy itself!

We should consider that we are each heavily conditioned by a uniquely developed collection of ideas recorded since birth and, through such, we are thus practically directed and influenced. The problems arise when we allow such apparently limited ideas to usher us into relative/biased judgments, whereby we settle upon rigid conclusions. This is the classic example of the pivotal Theosophical axiom: "The Mind is the slayer of the Real." In essence, this represents our entire life's dilemma. And its only solution is to realize that the culprit presumably responsible for it, itself doesn't exist! Because the observation itself is merely a thought. And, as previously discovered in our search for reality, thoughts violate our scientific Standard. Since thoughts are not threaded by any constant of awareness, they lack continuity as well as reliability-subject as they are to being here today and gone tomorrow-consequently they cannot be considered completely real.

The idea that 'that which is not permanent, cannot be real' may not seem to establish any critical fallacy at first reckoning. Because we tend to think about our everyday experiences which seem, although fleeting, so substantially real. Yet, if we study the format of this passing phenomenon we should understand-without compromising via naïve perceptions-that something which isn't here now has utterly no graspable reality despite the fact that it was here in this very spot just yesterday or perhaps a moment ago. For example, say you were holding a leaf in your hand and you lit it on fire and burned it to ashes...where is that leaf now? How real can that leaf be? And, in this sense, how real could it have been? Does the fact that you hold it in your memory now give it any substantial reality? What happens when you cease to think of it? Then even the memory of the leaf is inoperative. How far must we take this? Are we compelled to say that it

lies dormant within the subconscious memory-bank? Even granting this, what is the reality of that leaf if you never so much as consciously recall it from your memory again? Does its reality depend on your one day recalling it from memory or, if that occasion never occurs, can it then be said to be utterly out of existence, and not before that condition goes unsatisfied? (i.e. its reality is dependent upon one's inclination to someday, any day, recall it from memory.) The argument itself isn't tenable.

Anyway, who cares about something that isn't dependable? Why trouble ourselves to such an extent with things that are fated to disappear? Yet this is exactly the way our faith in the world has developed. And it's the result of settling for things at face value, without duly investigating their real worth. This is not to say that we should indiscriminately ignore everything, but rather address and treat the world to the best of our ability without allowing it to infiltrate our Heart with fixations or attachments. After all, what is the world really? And antecedent to this question is: Who is there to experience it?

The fact is there is really no-one seeing life. For argument's sake we could say that only thoughts see or are seen. Yet, since thoughts aren't absolutely real, there's ultimately no-one doing the seeing, nor is there anything to be seen. Whatever is being perceived, is a creation in and of the Mind: albeit quite convincing in its appearance. This conclusion is the result of the career of our soul investigating the nature of what, a priori, is. The inevitable culmination of wisdom-jnana-on the other hand, plunges us into the 'stateless state' of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

These seemingly profound insights are yet meager dapplings to one who's uncovered the greater mystery [having found out, incidentally, that everything antecedent to it wasn't a mystery, or even a riddle at all!]. Yet the debates on these topics can get quite heated on the battlefields of personal philosophy, where the ego-commandos vie for ranking positions under the spotlight of perceived truth. Nevertheless, that which is real remains unaffected despite the warring factions' subconscious agreement to resort to delusionary rules of engagement with the consequence of reaching inevitably deceptive conclusions. And, in the wake of such clashes of intellectual confusion, the Mind is that much further primed for breeding obsessive compulsions for pet ideas that rebel, carte blanche, against anything that threatens the comfort of its familiar ideology. For, isn't this the dynamic holding us hostage to our all-too-predictable life routine? Which dynamic has caused our complacency with the bewilderment of the paradox. That, through years of steady and painstaking deliberation on the idea of the egoself at odds with everything [presumably] external to it, we have simply resigned our will to its apparent tyranny. However, this is only what appears to be the case. (Note once again the emphasis on the word 'apparent,' since there is no real tyranny because there is no real ego to be a tyrant!) Let's approach the situation from the angle of the so-called New Physics. Einstein, who paved the way to this modern approach, proved that matter is a function of energy and also that space is a function of time, describing the basic principle of Relativity. However, what he failed to further realize was that his theories [of Special and General] Relativity were themselves functions of the Mind! It's also noteworthy how this theories were developed in terms of the observer; for, from what other possible base of operations could the panorama of life events be assessed? Moreover, as we discover the interior mechanics of this life drama, we

see that not only is this observer (the Mind) apprehending and assessing, but also, and more significantly, it's creating its entire manifold world. This revolutionary idea has not only been asserted by one of the creation theories in Vedanta (see below), but is also being supported by the modern theories of Quantum Physics.

There are three basic doctrines within Advaita Vedanta, having to do with the nature of perception and creation. According to the jiva's insight capacity, they follow in this order: 1) Srishti-Drishti Vada (Theory of Gradual Creation); 2) Drishti-Srishti Vada (Theory of Spontaneous Creation); and 3) Ajata Vada (Theory of No Creation).

The first, Srishti-Drishti Vada is held by the sadhaka (seeker) on the path and is based on the assumption that perception follows creation. This claims there is an objective universe that was created by a Being apart from the individual soul, and that such creation unfolds through the course of evolution in accordance with objective physical laws. The second, Drishti-Srishti Vada, is held by the sadhu or veteran on the path, and is based on the assumption that creation follows perception. This propounds that the universe is ultimately a product of the subject's mind [i.e. within the individual soul] and that it however yet appears to unfold through evolution as well as conforming to physical laws. In other words, it also accounts for the doctrine of Srishti-Drishti Vada. It further stipulates that the world is created, sustained and destroyed from moment-to-moment by the mysterious force of Maya-Kriyashakti. And the third (Ajata Vada) is held by the jivanmuktha and is based on the idea that there is ultimately no individual soul apart from Brahman. It goes on to assert that in fact there is no liberation simply because there is no-one, as such, to be liberated. However, the Ajata Vada doctrine also admits to the temporal appearance and simultaneous operation of the other two [relativity-based] doctrines.

Understanding this arrangement and putting it in context will enable the seeker to get the proper overview of the workings of the Mind and its manifestations, and come to terms with the nature of its ability to delude and deceive in exclusive dimensions. (Note that this latter is a critical observation, holding a critical lesson.)

Once again, the second theory (Drishti-Srishti Vada) finds its parallel in Quantum Physics (see Appendix Three).

CHAPTER SIX: DEEP VS. FAD METAPHYSICS

Depending on the source of their exposure, newcomers to the world of metaphysics usually associate it with various psychic phenomena and powers. It's true that on the road toward metaphysics, such capabilities may indeed manifest-although not necessarily, or even normally. The fact is that these powers can do more harm than good-in terms of potentially stalling or even regressing one's progress, since one may be prone to misuse them or even be enamored by their potency, resulting in glamorous emotional attachment. Even more problematic is their tendency to bolster the ego...which is the exact opposite of what the seeker should be striving to accomplish.

Furthermore, it's not at all a sign of validation of one's level of

progress to gain such siddhis (lit. powers, such as clairvoyance, divination, levitation, psychokinesis, etc). Additionally, what would such powers really accomplish? Can any of them evoke enlightenment? If anything, they'll further reinforce the glamour of Maya. This becomes quite clear if we recognize what exactly these siddhis deal with: namely physical phenomena. More than this, we should also recognize what the word 'metaphysics' really implies: that which is beyond physics...which implies that such involvements with prediction (divination), E.S.P. (clairvoyance and clairaudience), elevating the cellular frequency of the body (levitation), and the power to move objects with the mind (psychokinesis), are strictly manipulations of physical phenomena, and really have nothing to do with metaphysics. (Although these ideas were popularized by the New Age Movement, is not to say that its role is compromised in terms of generally introducing the field of metaphysics...since it's done so to the benefit of literally millions of people throughout the world. Yet it would behoove many involved as a result of it to realize the essence of what metaphysics is really all about and not waste perhaps years, if not an entire lifetime, pursuing something ultimately useless and even counterproductive.)

Another popular misunderstanding about metaphysics is that the means to its discovery is shrouded in mystery. This is the unfortunate result associated with what was just discussed. (This will seem to contradict what is being said elsewhere in this treatise; viz. the reference to the final, existential mystery implied in and through the so-called Perennial Philosophy.) However, the mystery alluded to in this context is in terms of the availability of the Teachings pointing to metaphysics, and not metaphysics itself. And this is another important point. The Teachings themselves can at best only allude to the metaphysical reality or Absolute Existence (Brahman). Therefore, no discourse, ideology, or philosophy is capable of speaking the truth itself. This refers to the famous Buddhist proverb: "Mistake not the finger for the moon it's pointing to."

The natural tendency of the ego-Mind is to seek out meaning and purpose in the life surrounding it. However, the very idea of 'meaning' or 'purpose' is established on the basis of relative manifestation. Be it an energy event or physical form, it is thereof an experienced fabrication with a given origin, evolution, and destination. Conversely, when placed under the superscope of Jnana (transcendental wisdom), it is seen to be naught but a creation of shakti (power of the Mind's ability to create). And, as such, is not real...that is, not real in the metaphysical context...it is rather a fleeting symbol of the real-i.e. not in of itself real! As such, there is no real contracted factor of suffering, no real impact of success or failure, triumph or tragedy...for anyone or anything in any station in life at any time. For these are the traps deftly set by the ego-Mind.

If when your child graduates high school or catches pneumonia, or your friend dies in a plane crash or wins the lottery...although these things appear to occur [having a relative reality], the ultimate reality of their true nature, their substratum, is the Absolute Self. As such, nothing can add to or take away from their ineffable omnipresence of Self, which is the unqualified, unalloyed Bliss of Pure Conscious Being.

Therefore, in terms of what in truth is in existence (viz. the nature of Ultimate Reality), the objects, events and people of the world are, as such, inconsequential...instead, the only Reality is the One Self without a Second (Brahman). And, It cannot possibly undergo change of any kind, lest It be something less than real or permanent. (Note: that which is subject to even the least degree of change cannot be considered real since Reality, by definition, must endure permanently-It cannot be here today and gone tomorrow, for if it's gone tomorrow, it cannot at that time be considered to be in existence. Conversely, if it's not here today but comes into existence tomorrow, then how real can it be in this moment now? Although this seems silly to point out, it's important to do so because we assume that so many things are seoratively real (i.e. real as such) but neglect to plug them back into the foundation of Reality. If we can realize what this is implying, and accordingly re-organize our life-assessment strategy, we'll quickly awaken to the essence of what has ever been closer to ourselves than our own heartbeat, and re-set our life's priorities once for all time-that we are collectively the ONE SELF; with nothing to threaten our innate peace; no reason to labor for love or light or power, for we are these by nature; nothing to fear or covet or hope to gain, for we are even now the Perfection of Freedom, beyond time, space and thought.

Here's a capsulized version of our philosophical hunt for Reality:

Our Mission: To locate that which is Real.
Our Means: To first define what 'Real' is; and, in the course of doing so, set up a 'Standard of Reality' that we can agree upon and then determine what may or may not conform to it.

Our Standard of Reality: Innately Founded on Existence.
Its Conditions: Must conform to being:

1. permanent.
2. dependable.
3. omnipresent.
4. always accessible.
5. unchangeable.

Conclusion: The only reality that can possibly conform to our philosophical Standard, possessing simultaneously the inherent characteristic of being immediately discernible to our awareness, cannot be anything but the Self.

Commentary: The above Conclusion holds the key to the entire search when it states that which is 'immediately discernible to our awareness,' as well as emphasizing its everpresent accessibility. Reality cannot be here today and gone tomorrow or it couldn't be considered Reality. Also, since it is omnipresent, it must also be immediately accessible from any focal point in the universe, including of course the focal point of entified conscious beings. Having established that, the conclusion is clearly drawn that the most familiar and ordinary self that we experience, as the inward sensation of 'me-ness' or 'I'-ness, traced to the source in its unmodified or pure state (and hence written with a capital 'S': viz. 'Self'), is that very selfsame unchanging, permanent, omnipresent Absolute Reality. (However, it's

important to remember that the Self here identified is that Being which is simultaneously with and without attributes.) However, it is the attributeless [Nirguna] counterpart of the Self that is of moment. This is what floods the bhavana (feeling-attitude) of the jnani, bringing him in tune with the aham sphoorti of the Atman, and thus putting into perspective for him the fleeting attributes of the Saguna aspect of the Self. In this way the Nirguna Brahman bestows the integrated, holistic Reality and is the primal sum and thrust of the nature of Being. That is, the experience of the [Saguna] Particular is always simultaneously experienced as the Source [Nirguna Brahman].

* * * * *

At this point it should be quite obvious that the so-called 'Secret Teachings' represent a radical departure from any traditional religious as well as classical philosophical approach. And among their most radical ideas of all, as was mentioned in the Introduction, is the fact that nothing at all need be done! That is-at the risk of contradiction-the practical method entails a non-doing which accomplishes an un-doing. For, the process of evoking the state of Self-realization isn't an act of gaining anything, it's an act of eliminating something [in effect] that's blocking what is otherwise already there in all its impossible-to-imagine glory! And, the elimination process amounts to the undoing of all the historically agglomerated mental structures that wound up hooking us into the exclusive pathos of the world programme. This is achieved by effortlessly(!) remaining in the non-doing modality of the natural Self Being. (Note: the key words here are 'effortlessly remaining,' for, our Natural base of integral Being, the SELF, is the very definition of peace and equanimity. As such, it simply IS-without effort. We are That, without effort. We naturally are That. Therefore, our effort, in terms of our sadhana or abhyasa [metaphysical work or practice], is never concerned with positive achievement-but only negative elimination. This cannot be overstated.)

Here again, the question can be raised from another angle: why do we not experience our natural state if, as such, it really does exist the way it's here being described? The answer is found only through inquiry as to who it is that is receptive or not to the experience? Exactly where in manifest Being is the experiencer located? Find that, and you've solved the entire riddle of existence-which is, really, no riddle at all!

There is no riddle to being the Life,
nor mystery, nor paradox...
The Mystery is Life Itself, not being the Life!
The questions/doubts of how to be [the Life Mystery]
are the Mind's fabrications,
to be regarded as merely irrelevant.

The Vedantic approach outlines the format invariably followed by the sadhaka (trainee) 'on the path.' It includes sravana, manana, and nididhyasana. Sravana (hearing) is the theoretical learning of the concepts regarding the 'wisdom teachings'; manana (reflecting) is evaluating and comparing these ideas to one's own knowledge and life

experience; and nididhyasana (practical meditation) is putting one's resultant [transformed] knowledge into practice, which involves not only the act of formal meditation but, far more importantly, applies to a living meditation-that is, transforming one's daily activities to the point where there is no duality between the spiritual revelation and the mundane life. The above threefold process is what's really at work behind the scenes in any spiritual path. It's not necessarily applied consciously; instead, it happens quite naturally. However, the aspirant would do well to be aware that this is the actual procedure, and thereof intensify his effort. (It's interesting to note that it takes a certain amount of sustained effort to diffuse the Mind's tendency for expending energy, which tendency is an act of effort based on desire.)

A compelling factor that needs to be reckoned with and clearly understood about the Perennial Philosophy-and especially evidenced in Vedanta-is the apparent contradictions abounding. There are two basic reasons for this. The 'reasonable reason' is because the teaching is addressing different people at different positions on the path. For example, the need for effort may be asserted for one operating out of the [dualistic] ego, whereas an effortless non-doing-as discussed above-may be applicable for another who understands the fallacy associated with the existence of such ego. And this may be the case even though they may yet be operating out of ego for the time being. The point is they understand the essentially false or illusory nature of such ego-implying they're ready to lose it. The 'unreasonable reason' (or 'trans-reasonable reason') is due to the fact that jnana, per se, is itself beyond reason! This is best exemplified by the Zen approach in the contemplation of the koan. Their 'logic' is "A equals A, therefore A is not equal to A." This corresponds to the Ajata Vada doctrine in Advaita Vedanta, which states, "there is no Liberation, no one to be Liberated." Clearly an assault on Reason!

Converting knowledge into experience is the goal of the Jnana Marga (although literally translated as the 'the path of knowledge,' it would be more accurate to refer to it as 'the path toward Being'-the pure Consciousness of pure Being, yielding inherently pure Bliss-i.e. Sat-Chit-Ananda). Yet, this is only a way of alluding to the shift in awareness in question. For, technically speaking, there is no experiencer as such, and therefore nothing to experience. Or, conversely, there is no experience as such, and therefore no experiencer. How is this possible? If the investigation is made into what specifically may or may not be considered real within the context of 'experience,' it must be concluded that if it fails the test of our [previously determined] Standard of Reality (viz. that if something is subject to birth and death-or change-it does not meet the requirement of permanent reliability), it cannot be regarded as anything more than fleeting illusion. An old Vedantic proverb: "If a given thing was born yesterday and tomorrow will die, even now does not exist," confirms this. As an example, how intrinsically real is the event of a leaf falling on boulder a million years ago? Today we would observe this: Was the leaf less real than the boulder since it decomposed without leaving a trace in, say, 2 years; whereas the boulder took 700,000 years to disappear? Yet, today the boulder has also been out of existence for a full 300,000 years! How real should we consider not only the leaf, but even the boulder? Moreover, how real was the event itself to begin with? The inevitable conclusion would be that such events have a relative reality. Again, we're back to the concept of Maya, being a mixture of the

real and unreal, and therefore regarded as anirvachaniya (an indescribable mystery).

It's all a matter of coming to terms with the desire for experience. And whether or not one sees the need to overcome such desire, the fact remains that it can never be quenched! Consider: if and when a given recreational activity is indulged, upon its completion one of two things eventuates: either another experience is sought or the individual withdraws and daydreams, whereupon boredom not infrequently follows. Therefore, the desire to experience such activities is continuously rekindled. Taking the condition (the desire dynamic) and tracing it to its source, we notice a basic frustration emerge from the depths of the individual. That this appears only from the perspective of the ego, resolves the fact that it is predominantly rooted in illusion (here, again, the fact of the unreal is mixed with the real-and viveka is needed to sort them out).

Now, after sufficient investigation into the nature of one's identity, such frustration is seen to be founded on a misapprehension of what is otherwise the innate Bliss-nature of the Self. It's as if one were anxiously searching everywhere for a misplaced necklace whilst it was on one's neck the whole time! Again-and it can't be stressed too much-the Self is automatically, eternally fulfilled. The Absolute, being [by definition] beyond perfection/imperfection, It cannot admit of any attribute. As a result, desire is therefore based on the idea of a separative ego, which is, by definition, a myth without substance.

The important thing to remember about desire in the context of ego-Mind, is that it cannot be fulfilled under any circumstances. However, in the context of Self (Brahman), It is innately [already] fulfilled. Therefore, ordinarily, operating as we do from the ego perspective, it wreaks havoc and thereof represents the source of all suffering. It is in this context of desire that Gautama Buddha developed his practical spiritual philosophy. As such, his Four Noble Truths focus specifically on ego-oriented desire, speaking directly and concisely about the cause of suffering (desire) and its cessation (via the elimination of desire). It should be mentioned here that despite the practical usefulness of these axioms, they address only one of the factors that causes suffering.

This is where Vedanta is more applicable, conveying a practical psychology that describes a more thorough view of the human condition. Thereof it postulates three general types of latent mental tendencies (vasanas) that contribute to the phenomenon of suffering, of which desire actually isn't the most destructive. The three, starting with the most destructive, are: 1) aparadha (dullness based on diffidence to the teachings); 2) kama (desires diverting one's awareness to worldly pursuits); and 3) karma (past actions of the jiva, preventing right contemplation of the teachings). More on this later.

Buddha's Eightfold Path, which he formulated as a means to end desire, is effective when understood to be an approach adopting the 'Middle Way' in one's station in life. However, among the Vedantic solutions, the vichara marga (inquiry method) is even more effective and expeditious in eliminating desires, simply by asking oneself, "Who am I?"; "Who is suffering?"; "Who is desirous?"; and "Who is it that is claiming to be un-Self-realized?" The purpose of such inquiry is of course to take

us beyond the ego and into the Self.

There can be only one answer to all of these questions.
However, that answer is not only not available to reason,
it defies description.

It must be therefore discovered in the Heart [of one's Being].
There is simply no other way...

* * * *

Apparently, most of us, at least subconsciously, tend to believe there is something within the apparatus of the Mind that needs to be actively engaged in order to maintain the state of sahaja samadhi or Moksha. We are of the opinion, for example, that certain ideologies or insights-derived through some disciplined system of logic-need to be actively and continuously applied in some way in order to uphold the dynamic of Self-realization. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that it is quite an automatic, self-perpetuating process, utterly beyond the activity of mind.

First of all, samadhi is within yet beyond logic. It is the innate and essential experience of Brahman (the Absolute), and therefore encompasses all and yet is embraced by no specific relative values or characteristics. Perhaps the most accurate description we can formulate is simply contained in these five words: 'the Plenum in the Void,' where the more popular allusion is the singular concept, 'Void.' Yet this latter is highly misleading, having caused many to equate it with nihilism. The Vedantins have come up with the idea-in attempting to describe what [they are quite aware] yet amounts to being indescribable (i.e. anirvachaniya)-that it may be inferentially conveyed only via double negatives: namely, not non-Being, not non-Consciousness, not non-Bliss. And they're quick to caution us to be wary of even this definition, so as to disallow the Mind from attaching itself to yet subtler concepts, since they are, afterall, still merely concepts and therefore traps.

Is there, afterall, some ideology or logical system that needs to be actively applied in order to sustain moksha? Is there some idea or group of ideas that we need to continuously impress on our Mind for the purpose of upholding the dynamic of Self-realization? Actually, these questions themselves should alone expose the fallacy in such thinking. In light of this, we should readily see that, in fact, any spiritual philosophy, ideology or methodology is merely a means and not an end! Once the goal is reached, the method can be discarded. For, when the artist finishes the painting, is the brush pasted on the canvas?

Samadhi is the infusion (temporary or permanent) of the ego-Mind into its source, the Absolute Self. This, by definition, includes all relative values and views, implying that any concept or precept is incapable of [isolated] assertion, including ideas of logic, truth, love, peace, or goodness, since these yet depend on relative relationships (viz. subject/object) to exist.

Here's a sample from the Advaitic sastras: "The jnani is ... devoid of any thought of bondage or freedom." -RIBHU GITA, ch43 v29; "The greatest of all delusions is the conviction that knowledge is not a delusion." -TRIPURA RAHASYA, ch18 v156; "There is no doubt that a man realizes the Self only after purging himself of all thoughts." -IBID, ch22 v14; "Samadhi is simply the absence of thoughts." -IBID, ch14 v18

If one expects to successfully dissolve the ego, one must be willing to release whatever he's come to specifically depend upon.

This is a very simple observation. Any counter-logic attempting to refute it, can only represent the ego's reactive self-preservation instinct. It's worth noting that the ego's fear of the death of its Reason is even greater than its fear of the death of its body! Renunciation is the renunciation of the ego-Mind. Anything less perpetuates illusion, bondage, separateness and ignorance.

Nothing knowable shall remain;
For, whatever does,
There and then
Becomes our ball and chain.

Methods of logical proof or disproof can, at best, only point us in the direction of Jnana; because Jnana, although translated as 'knowledge,' has nothing to do with knowledge as we ordinarily define it (i.e. analytical, empirical, relative). Rather, it has to do with cidakasa (the pure sky of awareness or pure consciousness in the heart of one's Being). It's an experience that no system of thought or philosophy can describe, since it is actually all thoughts and beyond all thoughts, at once! If whatever method we might apply-Advaita, Zen, Sufi, etc-that doesn't in fact deliver our natural state of pure Being, we're failing in the quest of connecting our awareness to the Self. The idea that the Mind [being a bundle of thoughts] has to be transcended, as such, is evidenced in virtually every approach: Advaitins call it 'manonasa': extinction of mind; the Zens call it 'mu-shin': no-mind; Kabalists call it 'Ain Soph': void of thought; the Toltec American Shamans call it 'Nagual': the Unknowable; and the Christian Gnostics call it 'Sanctum Seculorum': pure spirit. However, although thoughts may yet continue, the point is that they're no longer taken as isolated verities, antagonistic or competitive with the totality of What IS (Brahman). The non-dual philosophies thus deliver a seamless reality: the unified field of Absolute Being, Manifest and Unmanifest.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Although indispensable on the path to enlightenment, no amount of second-hand knowledge obtained through the studying of books or listening to teachers, can ever emancipate a man until he himself investigates the truth and applies it to that which lies within. Therefore, turning the mind inward is the primary prerequisite to Self-Realization. In this regard, it's interesting to note that the Sanskrit word for hero is dhira (dhi: mind; ra: ability to restrain energy-which has taken on the meaning of maintaining the equilibrium of the mind insofar as not being tempted to divert it into value judgments concerning the world). For, one who is capable of achieving equipoise despite the delusory power of the Mind, and holding it thus in abeyance in the face of its dramatic self-spun spectacle of life, and who has become [as a result and incidentally] such a boon to the welfare of all sentient beings, is rightly called a hero.

How does the abeyance of the Mind's energy constitute a hero of the world and an uplifter of all Beings? Who benefits? Technically, this idea is only true within the limited scope of the relative world, which is thereof only Maya. Therefore, from the ultimate or Absolute perspective (a.k.a. the Paramarthika level):

No-one benefits whatsoever!
Who or what can benefit?
Because who or what is suffering?

There is no such thing as a separative ego, anywhere, anytime.
So, who is in reality there to receive pleasure or pain?
Find it out.

This is not to suggest that we should shirk our responsibilities, taking literally the Paramarthika perspective. This is an important point; as is a popular issue raised within the approach of nondual philosophy. It is said, in fact, that one cannot "live Advaita." For this reason the way of Paramarthika should be stored in one's subconscious, which therefore will allow one to live in peace amongst one's dharma and sadhana. Again, the injunction, "Act as though everything matters; yet be as though nothing does" capsulizes the message [being incidentally the way of Karma Yoga].

* * * *

Nevertheless, the element of separateness within the world-appearance is a hypnotic ordeal. Whether it's [arguably] a product of the mind or vice versa, it must be admitted that something is inspiring us to succumb to its exclusive magic phenomena. Not unlike a dream, in the midst of its dramatic spell its 'victim' is utterly submitted to its power. And yet-again based on the dream-upon awakening, that which was profoundly convincing as a state of reality turned out to be a passing fantasy! Such is the nature of this world as we see it! That is (and to reiterate a vital point), the world is not, per se, illusion...but how we perceive it is (viz. as a realm of particulars with separative and independent lives and functions disconnected and unto themselves).

As in the calculus: y equals the limit of a function of x , as x approaches zero (where y is the Absolute Reality and x is the Mind and its speculative-philosophical faculty), the ultimate state of What IS (Brahman) begins to emerge in proportion to the Mind being purified of judgmental/speculative thoughts. And, as It does, It also begins to clarify, once and for all, the entire debate about whether the world is itself illusion or not, and delivers the fatal blow to the institution of reason by finally revealing such debate itself to be wholly and utterly irrelevant! And this is the last word on the status of judgment (being the intrinsic function and essence of Mind), and why such judgment itself is the Architect, Builder and Homeowner of Desire and Suffering itself!
Self-realization more than tranquilizes the wily bull of stubborn speculation, it utterly obliterates queries in any and all forms!

Questions simply don't arise after Self-realization.

The fact is that not only are arguments concerning whether the world is

real or illusory, irrelevant in themselves, so are the debates regarding whether Man is God, or if it's fate or free will that governs the world. And, again, neither do questions such as 'Why are we here?' or 'Doesn't the fact that life itself involves an evolutionary process suggest there's a purpose behind our being here?' arise in any shape or form. Actually, the premier characteristic of Liberation is this [wonderfully refreshing] absence of questions. The Mind is no longer captured by the trap set by the exclusivity in the world-appearance; instead it's become a spotless mirror reflecting the Ineffable. It is in this sense that the ego-Mind [as a separative entity] is said to be dead-or, more accurately, discovered to have never existed.

The very nature of this [alleged] ego is inadvertently a highly complex and exhaustive effort at limitation. Step by step, its metamorphosis follows a parallel pattern with two distinctly degenerative impulses: an act of forgetfulness (ignorance) and an act of suffering. It becomes evident that the ignorance causes the suffering. Now, what causes the ignorance? It could be said that it's caused by the desire to be entertained by experience, which necessitates the creation of a subject and object (hence, based on the idea of an ego...which implies the 'existence' of a duality: self vs. not-self). Yet, where does this desire come from? If the Self is self-contained and perfect, how or why does it fathom desire for experience, or for that matter desire in any form? The 'answer':

Who says that the Self desires anything?

Who is it that's asking all these questions?

Find out who it is that's claiming the existence of any of these conditions...conditions that give birth to questions!

The only conceivable answer can only be found by asking the veritable master of all questions: the only question that questions the questioner: "Who Am I?"

For, "Who am I?" (which implies "What is the source of the I?"), asked with unrelenting perseverance, eventually must reveal the very pith and essence of Existence Itself, recognized finally to have always been even antecedent to the nearness of one's own heartbeat! Indelible and unchangeable as it is, and in no way in need of any qualification or even an external source to acknowledge! But forever whole, spherically empty in its fullness and transcendently primal.

Such is the nature of spirit.

Spirit is in no way affected by anything anywhere anytime.

Why? Simply because there is not the exclusive existence of anything anywhere anytime!

It finally means nothing what anyone ever thinks, says or does... After all, who is affected? And who's doing the affecting? Not only does the Self remain undefiled, undaunted, undesecrated, undented, utterly and eternally untouched and untouchable by thoughts, words and/or deeds, but such regarded occurrences as isolated events don't take place even in the most subtle form imaginable. We would do ourselves a favor to remember that what we're

dealing with, regarding the problems daily sustained and further reinforced in and through our own Minds, concerns a gradual and elaborately developed habit over the course of perhaps millennia (obviously, and although this precludes the belief in reincarnation, yet it isn't necessary to ascribe to such)-which obviously isn't so easily overcome by months or even years of study and training-at least not typically anyway. In light of this, we should take heart and cultivate patience, especially when we're discouraged the many times that we find ourselves reverting back to our familiar condition of anxiety, fear, and/or bewilderment, not to mention states of boredom.

On the other hand, if we can realize that these various moods are simply prompted by creations of the Mind steeped in relativity, and therefore are not real, as such, we'll stand a chance to that much sooner overcome our emotional vulnerability. And, make no mistake, such ingrained habits are the result of a continuously reinforced 'idea-rhythm' which each of us has subconsciously slipped into, resulting in a conditioned hypnotic state that dictates a predictable consensus that we are an Ignorant, Impotent and Failure-ridden Species innately and permanently inferior to the God who created us! However, these are merely thoughts!...including the thought that postulates "Our unique existence as a species being a product of and therefore disconnected from the sublime Creator." Again, it can't be emphasized enough: these are merely thoughts!

And what is the implication of: "These are merely thoughts"?

This obviously isn't so simple to address. In fact, an entire treatise could be expounded on it. Attempting to put it simply: each thought, per se, although real, is only capable of representing an infinitesimal fragment of the whole of Brahman (Absolute Being). From the individual's perspective, suffice to say that, among thoughts, the best of them are merely indicators pointing to that which truly resides in the Jivatma (rarefied component of the individual soul-tending thus toward the Atman), which is simply Sat-Chit-Ananda.

Now consider what transpires upon either their cessation...or upon ceasing to allow them to inflict us with their importance. The following is a vigorous attempt to [as yet feebly] convey the Shaanthy (Peace) residing even beyond Relativity's ideal polarities of love, light, beauty and power, which otherwise registers as the transcendental conscious bliss of pure Being, realized in the Heart, without the least trace of effort (for it is the natural state of our true essence pulsing in every moment now).

There is no "Man vs. God"

or "this vs. that"...

There is only one ineffable Being in existence.

The rest is a transient dream.

Therefore, who are you, really?

If you say you know, then merely your Mind has answered.

In which case you must inquire deeper still.

The holistically incomprehensible realm of Moksha conveys nothing likened to the exclusively tangible manifestations of things relatively knowable. Bearing in mind that it defies description, we can allude to moksha by saying that it embraces the whole of Brahman, Manifest and Unmanifest, as well as the fact that it is simultaneously

beyond even [this] concept.

In the final steps on the path to Self-realization, there are basically two approaches: to inquire or surrender. Either investigate the source of the ego or allow it to dissolve through an act of surrender. As we know, these are the methods of Jnana and Bhakti respectively. And each has advantages and disadvantages. Jnana is the faster of the two because it focuses directly on the problem, the Mind, which has the enormous innate power to deceive and coerce; whereas Bhakti is slower, simpler in principle and safer. However and ironically, Bhakti has the tendency to reinforce the idea of the false self (ego) by virtue of its very method to lose that false self: via the act of devotion through worship, where since the idea [of worship] implies a lower entity surrendering itself to a higher one, there is the tendency for some to become attached to the idea that they are permanently such a separative entity. This is why the act of surrender itself must be thorough and true. If it's half-hearted, the consequence is worse than if Bhakti weren't applied at all. Moreover, there is the danger of fanaticism-that one's method and object of worship is superior to all others. Despite this, it's inevitable that Jnana will eventually be adopted-as many sages acknowledge that "Jnana is the offspring of Bhakti."

We can say that the paths of Jnana and Bhakti relate to Advaita and Dvaita (non-dual and dual knowledge) respectively, which, in turn, relate to realization and devotion. It must be emphasized that although the goal is non-dual Self-realization, the aspirant worshipping a supreme Being through means of prayer, incantation, or meditation is fulfilling the vital purpose of purifying and strengthening the mind, thereby preparing it for Self-realization. It should also be pointed out that the two paths aren't mutually exclusive; rather they're intertwined up to the very 'end.' However, the ironic thing is that when one approaches the threshold of Self-realization, the recognition begins to dawn that there is no 'end' because there was never any 'beginning'...which implies there was never any path either! Moreover, there is no struggle, no bondage, no release from bondage, and therefore no Liberation. These concepts are castles in the air. They're no more substantial than a dream or hallucination. It's the realization of the Self, the true state of Pure Being-which is, by nature, all there is-that delivers the unchallengeable certainty that phenomena, regarded as such, are merely egocentric fabrications. Furthermore, the very term Self-realization is highly misleading, since it implies a state to be achieved over one that is lacking. Whereas in truth it is already fully in existence. It is natural, innate and automatic. In reality, nothing need be 'overcome' to attain it, not even the idea of ignorance. For, if we investigate the matter rightly, we will see that no-one can possibly be the recipient of ignorance, simply because there is no-one, as such, apart from the Absolute Being. Therefore, ignorance has no place to roost, except in the dualistic paradox that somehow manifests as a dream within a dream-the product of the mysterious magic of Maya. Where, in this sense, it could be conceded that such paradoxical event needs be 'overcome.' Still, this too is technically an illusion. So, we very much are dealing with a dream within a dream.

The relative Mind expects an Absolute answer. Is this reasonable?

CHAPTER EIGHT

It's vital to remember that moksha or jivanmukthi is the state inclusive of yet beyond thoughts, will and desire; and since these attributes of Shakti (the manifest power operating as the lifework of Brahman [Sport or Play of the Absolute Being]) are themselves transitory as passing cloudforms, they shouldn't specifically be taken to heart. Referred to as the chit-jada-granthi (knot of mind-stuff constricting or clogging the buddhic faculty of the Heart), this obsessive compulsion of putting faith in the elements within the world of chimera, as things in themselves (i.e. being isolated and apart from the Whole), has to be shattered by breaking the very spell it has seemingly cast. This is accomplished by realizing that even now such knot in the Heart doesn't exist! Yet, to reiterate, this process of doing implied on the path to Realization is really a process of undoing! As earlier stated (and it can't be emphasized too much, especially in light of the fact that the Mind needs to be de-programmed of its accumulation of delusory concepts and precepts): there's no need for us to do anything positive-such as acquiring some unique state of awareness or consciousness-for it is already in its most fructified state of completion, utterly within our midst. All we really have to do is clear away the environmentally conditioned, delusionary obstacles to our innate [natural] Consciousness, which is the abode of the Self. And this amounts to an undoing or dissolving of one's dependence on the accumulations of false concepts-which, by the way, technically includes all concepts, bar none! Why is this? Because all concepts, as such, must be holistically false. This is because there can be no conceivable concept that is capable of embracing, unto itself, the whole of What Is. It can never, that is, be anything more than fractional.

The fact is that utterly everyone already experiences the full Self in every moment of time. Only the mind diverts one's awareness of it. Referred to as Atmabhavana-and considered the crown of metaphysical experience [being the experience of the jivanmuktha or jnani], it is technically our true nature at all times! Thus it is quite an ordinary event-not some deeply subtle or abstract ordeal requiring some exotic or mysterious leap in consciousness. Rather is it an unsophisticated and completely natural occurrence.

The strange thing about it, however, is the fact that if and when the knot in the Heart is released, although the now-clarified experience seems as though a new world has emerged, at the same time, the recognition is that it has always been this way. To further illustrate the point: is anyone not in touch with the Self? In the scriptural passages we notice how the

word 'self' is capitalized or in some way highlighted to give it distinction; yet we shouldn't infer from this that It's anything particularly esoteric or exotic. Actually it's quite the opposite; it's quite the ordinary feeling that everyone has within, of their own feeling-identity. What distinguishes the Self from the lower self or the Absolute Self from the relative or egoic self, is the throng of relative thoughts comprising the ego, and thus defining it in exclusive, separative terms.

Some will criticize that this philosophy invites the opening of a Pandora's Box of confusion, grandiosity and even madness. This could be the conclusion based on evaluating the method alone, failing to recognize the significance of its mission or goal. Obviously the method

itself winds up becoming an assault on the Mind's dependence on reason. And if the motive for its doing so isn't recognized, such criticisms are understandable.

Now, regardless of what caliber of argument can be raised to refute the state of moksha, it cannot withstand the validation that accompanies the experience of the state itself. Short of the experience itself, however, it's easy to get trapped by what can be compelling rebuttals to the revolutionary ideas associated with the Vedantic philosophy. This is why it's important in the middling and later stages to eliminate or modify engaging in the polemics

of debate (ku-tarka), for the temptation to turn the practical value of the teachings into an abstract philosophy is great. This is a common pitfall that many succumb to, and wind up involving themselves in areas of study that are really a diversion from metaphysics.

It should be pointed out that at no stage is excessive debating recommended; which is particularly true of the earlier stages because, at that time, the temptation to do so is at its highest. This is also why, especially in the beginning stages, the aspirant is encouraged to put a certain measure of faith in the guru and the scriptural teachings (as earlier mentioned, adopting the ideology within the teachings, if necessary, as hypothetical at first, until they begin to take root as a result of the trainee's insight about whether or not they seem true).

At any rate, before too long the sadhaka comes to see how protracted debating is not only a waste of time but, more importantly, it actually reinforces the very thing he's trying to dissolve: the ego-Mind. Because for every battle won or lost, the ego inherits more momentum, and consequently the task of attenuating it becomes that much greater. Not only that. Who is there to debate with, anyway? If it's an ajnani (one who's considered relatively ignorant), then such merely represents the personality, which is a passing show. It amounts to there being nothing present there but the Self which cannot debate since It is nothing less than the Absolute Itself. For, how can the Absolute have any limiting adjuncts that could ever be considered independently real? If they were real, as such, they would have to be permanent (vide: our scientific Standard of Reality); and if they were permanent, they would have to be unchanging; and if they were unchanging, they would have to be considered exempt from manifestation ...because whatever is in manifestation must be subject to death and therefore change.

* * * *

He who even while doing his work
remains as in a sleep, is a jnani.

* * * *

The perfection of inner stillness or silence is expressed by the term sushupti-jagrat (sleepful wakefulness). Thus, the jnani or jivanmuktha is never out of samadhi, whether idle or at work. In such a state (being the highest stage of samadhi, and the only permanent one: sahaja samadhi), the identical level of bliss experienced in the deep sleep state is carried over into the ordinary waking state. So that a perfect blend of two states of mind (i.e. one present and aware and the other indifferent and aloof) is not created but realized. And this is the true import of the

term 'realization,' which implies not anything created or obtained, but at once recognized and acknowledged [to have in fact been there all along]. The sahaja samadhi state marks the culmination of the path of metaphysics. Obviously it is the result of a number of contributing factors, the main two being vairagya (dispassion) and viveka (discrimination). Basically, viveka sorts the real from the unreal, and subsequently vairagya is being dispassionate to the unreal. In light of this, our search technically involves the identification of that which is unreal, since the real has no definable attributes and therefore can't be located. This is so despite our belief that we're seeking out the real. Nevertheless, when such discoveries [of the unreal] are made, we cease being impassioned by them. Therefore through this developed vairagya we become asleep, as it were, to that which isn't true or real; hence although we live in full awareness, we do so as if we're somnambulistic (the state of sushupti-jagrat). Pause to ponder the advantage of being capable of carrying on in the world as a purely impersonal witness...as if the world were a theme park and you were merely a spectator being entertained, watching scenes of wonder and/or terror beyond joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, but the transcendental bliss integral to unalloyed Being. This isn't a fantasy. In fact it's quite reversed! That which we commonly take for real is now seen to be the fantasy; while that which is holistically incapable of entering our field of vision or imagination, is exactly what is discovered to be real and true.

"He who realizes pleasure, pain and every other phenomenon to be in and of the Self, is a perfect sage." -Tripura Rahasya.

The above statement seems to contradict the idea that all that is manifest-i.e. the world and its objects and events-are Maya (popularly translated as illusion, in terms of it being unreal or nonexistent-see Glossary). The fact is that it is very real, but it is the Self only! (Note: due to its importance, this idea is being yet again repeated here and further elaborated.) The idea of unreality comes about if and when the world or anything within it is considered to possess any specific reality or exclusive agenda apart from the substratum Universal Self.

Referring once again to Sri Sankaracharya's tripartite Advaitic formula:

1. Brahman is the only reality.
2. The World is unreal (mithya).
3. Brahman is the World (Maya).

Now, although postulate no. 2 states that the Universe is unreal, implies that it is so on its own terms (i.e. separated from the substratum Absolute Reality or Brahman).

However, postulate no. 3-apparently a contradiction of the former two, but really completes the circle and points to the truth of What IS-states unequivocally that the Universe is real even to the extent of all its quirks and imperfections, if it is realized to be nothing other than Brahman Itself (i.e. the holistic Absolute).

And we should again emphasize that even if it is not so-called 'realized,' it still IS what it is; which is ever and only the Self Being. It requires nothing to qualify It. It is not in any way influenced by

fluctuations in manifest awareness. Thoughts, words or actions can't touch it. Emotions can't dent it. And there's nothing we have to do to preserve or ameliorate it. It is what it is with or without our recognition or whether or not we meet its holistic yet transcendental reality in our relative awareness. Still, the incredible irony of it all is the fact that it is closer to each of us than our own heartbeat! Yet we think it is so exotic, esoteric and otherworldly we have trouble even imagining we can behold it even for an instant!...while all the time, even this very moment now, it is our very own self being! The fact of the matter is: you cannot not be the Self, even for a split second in time! Consider how it could even be possible to not be your self, your identity of feeling...even if you felt you were somehow someone else, you would still feel like 'you'! And, because the Self supersedes the body (since the body is a particular constituent within the [whole] Self), not even the destruction of the body it inhabits can take the Self outside itself, even for a nanosecond! It's absurd to even contemplate the idea of 'the Self leaving the Self.'

The simple reason we find it so hard to believe that what we're looking for is closer than our nose is that the Mind steadily showers us with false and chaotic ideas, leaving us in its wake trapped and hypnotized by its egoistic plight: a petty finite conceptual repertoire with its stubborn history of redundancy. But we tolerate only so much of this before boredom begins to set in, where the lustrous attractions of the sense world can no longer hold us specifically captive and enthralled. Anyway, it's inevitable that we'll realize that the things that give us pleasure aren't in of themselves responsible for that pleasure, but are merely temporary catalysts connecting us to the real source of pleasure, which is Brahman. And to achieve the certainty that this source is our very own nature-as the living reality of what we already are-we must defuse our interest in our compulsive involvement of worldly pursuits. For, what in the world is there to strive for if we discover that we are already naturally in possession of the very goal of our life's quest?

This is not to suggest that we abandon our duties and commitments to our families and friends, or cease and desist in lending our hand to make this a better world if that is our calling. For, when Self-realization is achieved, it matters not what the body is doing; however, it cannot violate its interior spiritual mandate...it can only act in a way that fulfills the natural order of things, which implies the preservation of the species (which, in turn, addresses the principles of love, harmony, cooperation, etc., for these are characteristics pertaining to the concept that all that exists is unified in Brahman). And it is our obligation to bring this about if and when the opportunity affords-which is based on if and when our karma dictates.

If, for example, it is within our means [given our personal knowledge and capability] and a given task is made available to us, then, as enlightened jnanis, we will offer no resistance in carrying out such task. Regardless of whether it is within our calling to sit meditating in a cave for the rest of our life or assuming the responsibility of a CEO of a major corporation, we take it up without the least resistance simply because we are not attached to our thoughts, words or actions-but are merely vehicles for the incomprehensible Plan of Isvara. This may be difficult to rationalize, but our only recourse here is through the application of our intuition in discovering the import of what is being suggested.

The fact of the matter is that the only way we can resolve this

confounding problem of our duty to the world is if we access it intuitively, without judgment. Clearly, such resolution lies beyond relative understanding. We have to be able to realize what Jesus intimated: although the enlightened one is in this world, he is not of this world. Also, within the context of this, assuming we are jnanis, we are now aware that whatever our involvement (svadharma or personal duty) to the world, our acts are always attenuated by dispassion, for we know that it is presumptuous to attempt to establish a relative utopia in the face of what is considered to be a condition [the way in/of life] that transcends our relative comprehension. This condition is regarded to be operating out of a flawless plan unfolding in evolution, which is rooted in relativity, and working through perfection/imperfection [for the purpose of the soul's growth on one hand, and the 'entertainment' of the Brahman Self on the other]. For we understand that relative manifestation encompasses within itself the tai chi (blend of opposites) which cannot therefore exist otherwise. Beyond this we know it is naught but Maya nevertheless-the play of Lila; and needn't be inordinately focused on.

CHAPTER NINE

Vasanas (latent habits of thinking) either hold us or continuously lure us back into our familiar tendencies-especially in terms of viewing ourselves at odds with the world and/or having the belief that we need to daily struggle for our comfort and pleasure, well-being, etc. We are told that our [apparent] quest for freedom is centered on our ability to overcome these vasanas. It could be said that freedom is indeed ours when we are released from our vasanas. (Note: once again, the use of the word 'apparent' in the above phrase '[apparent] quest' is to point out the fact that there is no real quest; it being merely a fabrication, in turn, of the apparent Mind.)

How to achieve this? Actually our only recourse is diligent perseverance. Where perseverance is a product of grace, which is a product of karma, which is a product of time or the age of the soul. What this suggests is that the soul through time invariably learns the lessons critical to its breaking through to its source or origin in the Universal Self of Brahman. These lessons align with the concept of the quality of karma that bestows upon the individual the grace to persevere primarily in one or more of the yogas-to culminate in the Bhakti and Jnana paths that focus on the release of the vasanas.

The idea that it all boils down to something as factual and unglamorous as the age of the soul that determines its degree of advancement, may prove a bit disconcerting to some. Nevertheless, this is the bottom line criteria. Karma, grace, insight, and finally Self-realization itself are largely factors of time. 'Largely' because there is yet a variable involved, and it comes into play in the homestretch of the journey. And it suggests that years, and in some cases, lifetimes can be saved in the process. Specifically, it entails if/when the appreciably evolved sadhaka (referred to as a pakva) can recognize the significance of what might be referred to as 'walking the path with Heart.' Here again the buddhic faculty has

to be engaged to comprehend the interaction of the Jnana and Bhakti Margas required. Actually, the one cannot thrive without the other.

Obviously, that the reader is [by implication here, relatively intensely] involved in the dharma of the soul, indicates the advanced age of the soul concerned, as well as the level of grace involved.

Now, these [apparent] vasanas are so deep-rooted in the human constitution, they usually go unnoticed in their effect, which can be even for advanced souls, oftentimes

extremely subtle. (Note: in order to be perfectly clear-notwithstanding repetition-vasanas are nothing more than properties within the Mind, per se, and should not be regarded as anything beyond the Mind.

However, they and the Mind are mutually interdependent. It could be said that when one gets defused, so will the other.)

On the other hand, in the early stages

of sadhana, it's quite inevitable that these tendencies will doggedly re-exert themselves, whereupon the aspirant discovers that s/he's once again engaged in the old trap of the Mind's preoccupation with desires entwined in the eros/pathos roller-coaster of sensuality. When this happens, however, he shouldn't allow himself to react with self-effacement. He should respect the power of the Mind, understanding the depth of its capacity to coerce, while all along maintaining his sadhana in seeking its source. Or, he should consciously and willfully surrender the ego-Mind. However, it should be remembered that the ego-Mind technically doesn't belong to him anyway-in fact, to reiterate once again, it doesn't even exist!...as Self-inquiry eventually reveals.

In due time, through not an insignificant course of sustained effort, these forged habits will start loosening their strangle hold, until one day he finds himself clarified in a place of silent equilibrium, where nothing of what was the phenomenal world, as such, can any longer affect the peace that he innately, naturally is (which is the Self). However, due to the fact that the vasanas yet have an instinctive foothold on his thought process, he will continue to descend into the world of relativity. And since such condition yet prevails, the state [tending toward Self-realization] just described falls into the range from savikalpa to nirvikalpa samadhi-which implies that the vasanas [and thus the ego] are yet lurking within the sadhaka, as well as the fact that effort is required to achieve and sustain that state.

Only in the latter stages of the journey toward jivanmukthi (final Liberation) do the vasanas finally get dissolved, until, at last, the sadhaka finds himself firmly seated in the place of the clear sky of Consciousness where, mysteriously, no effort is required. This is the supreme state known as sahaja samadhi (the natural state of pure Being), where one is immersed thereof in Sat-Chit-Ananda.

In fact there are numerous terms that describe the state of Liberation, each of them an interpretation from a slightly different vantage point, yet with the same basic idea: holistic and free from comparative limitations. (Bear in mind that "holistic" is 'in and of the Whole,' as well as 'the Totality of What Is, beyond yet within, overt and covert, subject and object, real and unreal.')

The issue of vasanas is probably the most important of any that would concern the aspirant, and therefore should be studied and troubleshot accordingly. Because if there's any real desire to destroy our delusionary veil of ignorance, these relentless vasanas must be overcome.

So, what quality/quantity of effort could possibly be required to diffuse the bullish staying power of these incredibly addictive vasanas? (Indeed, they are themselves the operative tendencies that impel any form of addiction to develop. They are themselves the primary breeder of obsessive compulsive behavior.) Make no mistake, the effort required in some cases winds up bordering on the superhuman. Suffice to say that the effort required is usually greater than what we're capable of estimating to effectively derail these stubborn vasanas. This effort is itself based on the overall desire to be liberated, which is referred to as *mumukshutva*. Yet the paradox is, the effort is the product of a preset design.

In order to gain a tactical advantage on these latent forces, we must take up two other 'fire-fighting' concepts. As mentioned, first we must utilize *viveka* (discrimination) to distinguish the real from the unreal. Then we must enforce within ourselves *vairagya* (dispassion), so that we no longer continue to play into and thus perpetuate our desire for that which is unreal. For example, we know through *viveka* that the desire to obtain riches is founded on the unreal, due to the twofold fact that the desire itself is fleeting and its fulfillment cannot be 'taken with us.' And, once this is determined, we would then engage *vairagya* based on the fact that this particular *vasana* (desire for affluence) can neither bring us any reliable degree of happiness because it fails to address the basic quest of our soul, which apart from survival and comfort needs, has really nothing to do with materialistic involvements. Why not? Simply because such involvements are impermanent. (By now it should be quite evident that the entire matter boils down to that of the nature of reality and where it is capable of being discovered in the life surrounding us. For, within that nature lies the true and the real [i.e. the permanent].) In this way, all the *vasanas* can be pinpointed and eventually eliminated. As earlier mentioned, *vasanas* are not merely desires. In fact, desires are the least problematic within the three major categories of *vasanas*. They are, in descending difficulty: 1) *karma* (past action; dullness; inertia; *tamasic*); 2) *aparadha* (activity of the ego; misapprehension of the teachings due to self-righteous pride; *rajasic*); and 3) *kama* (desire; purposeful in pursuit for pleasure; *satvic*). Let's analyze the three categories in detail: The *karma vasanas* are considered almost impossible to overcome without a 'descent of grace from the Ordainer,' since forces are playing out their qualities of energy due to acts committed in former lives. There is no remedy for it other than attempting to engage *Karma Yoga* (renouncing the idea that one is the doer of the actions). Now, depending on the severity of the past actions, individuals dealing with *karmic inertia* are prone to be inundated with *vasanas*, which makes it very difficult for them to enter the stage of devotion or contemplation necessary to kill out the *aparadha* and *kama vasanas*.

The second group, the *aparadha vasanas* are associated with a diffidence in the teachings and a general disbelief in the reality of the Absolute (*substratum Brahman*) underlying the phenomenal universe. This is the result of a strong and defiant egocentricity that tends to want to settle upon the belief that the world is merely as it appears. That the ego's vantage point and resultant perception is the only true reality. Again, the solution isn't an easy one (although much more hopeful than in the case of the *karmic vasanas*): the only means to overcome these *vasanas* is to abandon unfavorable logic and take to approved logic as found in the scriptures and expounded by a guru. This means that the aspirant must

resolve to be more flexible and not be doggedly attached to the ideas developed in his childhood and young adult years regarding the nature of Reality, God and Self. He should not be afraid to set out on a new course of adopting given concepts in the form of hypotheses so as to test their validity before automatically rejecting them at face value and developing a defense for his own pet ideas, as most people are inclined to do. This entails predominantly adopting Bhakti Yoga (worshipping the Self or Brahman [beyond the ego] in the person of a guru or Ishta Devata [chosen deity]).

The last of the group, and the least debilitating, are the kama vasanas. People tend to have a more or less obsessive involvement with a wide range of desires as their last obstacle to opening to [or connecting to] the pure consciousness

of the Self. At the base of all desires is the compulsion toward a sense of striving to satisfy what is considered a need, but is, at best, a want...a want for something that is believed will satisfy the pursuit of pleasure. The only way out of the pull toward such involvement is through the application of the aforementioned approach of viveka followed by vairagya. This entails predominantly adopting Jnana Yoga (the path of knowledge through viveka, vairagya and Atma Vichara).

To summarize: when a kama vasana arises, dissect it with viveka and apply vairagya to these factors concluded to be unreal.

It's not an exaggeration to say that all efforts are geared toward the destruction of these experientially inherited tendencies. And, the only thing that can possibly bring about their destruction is the fervent desire for emancipation (mumukshutva). Nothing can be achieved without it.

Arduous study and/or discussion or debate are useless without it!

Casual desire for Liberation is also in vain; it must be strong and willful, relentless and unwavering....for the results are proportional to the intensity and duration of this very will to conquer. Just as if a man is trapped in a burning house, the immediate concern is getting out, so also must the aspirant pursue Liberation to the exclusion of all other desires, with the same degree of urgency.

And, again, the final and most powerful of all methods to be used in tandem with the above (which method, incidentally, is utilized exclusively in the 'end-game' battle with the ego-Mind), is the atmavichara marga (Self-inquiry method). The following [further] elaboration of this method will provide a keener insight and therefore yield a more effective strategy.

We can approach the atmavichara from many angles and still

be quite effective. The popular approach is [when asking "Who am I?"] the sadhu evaluates various possible answers and replies, "neti, neti" (not this, not this, etc.) until he eliminates all the Maya and settles

therefore upon that which remains: the Self. Another approach when asking "Who am I?" is to also see within the interrogation process the other question it implies: "Whence am I?"; and thereof tracing the source of the ego to its rightful origin Source and Creator: again, the Self.

After some time in practice with the vichara marga, the aspirant, in the course of asking "Who am I?", starts becoming more and more quickly and automatically centered on the Self, without having to go through the tedious process

of eliminating those which are the non-Self components of his being.

So that it becomes an instantaneous kind of mini-samadhi, which lasts as long as his karma will permit-which, of course, depending on quality and focus, may be classified as either savikalpa or nirvikalpa samadhi (an unwavering focus

on the Self, yet with effort, and therefore bound to be terminated at some point by the vasanas reasserting themselves).

How can the magnitude and magnificence of the successful outcome of this endeavor ever be related? Only the faintest hint approaching its actualization could ever be possible. Its inexplicable wonderment is far greater than the fulfillment of our deepest dreams! How could this be?

Because through it one has reached the ultimate base of operations of Reality itself.

What is the true significance of this? Nothing less than the 100% raw truth of Being Itself, which is infinite Consciousness 'experienced' as pure Bliss. (A workable idea of the 'trans-relative' magnificence of this Causeless State may be gained if we can fathom that whatever sense of joy or pleasure we ever experience in this world is never anything other than a mere trickling from the infinite storehouse of the Bliss of the Self. Coming to terms with the fact that there is technically no 'experience' involved [since there is no experiencer], requires the engagement of the buddhic faculty of perception. Obviously it defies logic. This may appear to be an insignificant observation; however, if one can comprehend its esoteric implication, nothing less than Self-realization itself will result!)

Why does all of this sometimes seem so complicated? Because the Mind has made it so. Therefore the strategy of the Jnana method is to begin by adapting itself to the insistent ego-Mind, and walk it backwards-retracing its steps, as it were. This necessitates a good deal of conceptual jockeying in order to befriend the Mind on one hand and provoke it on the other. The motive for befriending it would render it more amenable to the logic of the non-dual teaching, which it would otherwise regard as offensive and even threatening. It will anyway, but befriending it will take the edge off its predictably rebellious reaction. And the provocation that would follow is in the form of a challenge addressing to the idea of the relative vs. the absolute well-being of the individual. And in light of these two choices, it's clear which carries the greater and stabler benefit.

Now, this method of approaching the ego-Mind is designed to allow it to realize its inability to realize the holistic absolute, until it finds itself in a weakened condition. It is at this opportune moment when the abrupt method of Advaita's Self-inquiry is advantageously applied, whereupon the ego-Mind finally recognizes its source, the Self, and begins its journey home. (Note: this aspect of Advaita is similar to the abrupt satori of Zen, as well as part of the esoteric teaching of Jesus when he said, "...taking the kingdom of heaven by storm.") The whole idea of bondage is unreal in the purest sense.

The so-called condition of 'bondage' is an arbitrary daydream; a word without any real meaning. The more one entertains such a thought, the tighter does its byproduct in emotive belief constrict itself around one's heart of awareness. (This is the chit-jada-granthi [knot in the Heart] referred to earlier.)

Bondage is only a thought.

The Mind will accurately reflect the Self if only it is relieved of the speculative-philosophical thoughts now flooding it. It's a matter of

breaking a habit. If it seems difficult (which it surely will) or even impossible, just start out by ignoring such thoughts. Watch them as you would watch a movie on the screen. (This is a metaphysical fact: you don't own any of the thoughts you're having, simply because there is no real separative 'you,' as such, to begin with. That is, there is no you apart from your source in the [Universal] Self.) And, just as the screen represents the real Self-being thus unaffected by what ever happens in the movie-accordingly realize that you are that screen and not, as such, the fleeting images projected onto it. For, it is their fleeting value that conveys the fact that they are at best fragments of the Self, and not very significant to be sure. However, they're not unreal either-as is the exoteric interpretation of the Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism). In light of this, be the witness of the thoughts and not their victim.

Surely it's our thoughts that set up our desires and concerns, and from these, our sense of insecurity. And their profoundly complex intricacy can deceive us in such subtle ways that we tend to have trouble assessing or anticipating them-therefore our developed disposition tends to resist any possibility of shifting its gears into the direction of release. Clearly, prior to Liberation, we're convicted inmates serving time in our own Mind (which Mind started out as judge and jury-where it's now become warden and jailer). Until we wake up from this arbitrary setup, which is finally without abiding substance. Remember, substance-literal or figurative-is a developmental process conjured through an elaborate system of relative beliefs created and sustained by and through the Mind. And, with the help of such systems as Vedanta, it also becomes the role of the Mind to reorder and prioritize them accordingly.

Yet, if we can understand that this Mind, as such (i.e. as an entity unto itself) is really a phantasm, what in reality, as anything particular, unto itself, is conceivably being created, sustained and destroyed?

Nothing.

We have verily reached the point of no return.

Herein words are inherently understood to be based on the Unknowable Substratum, apprehended as SILENCE.

(That is, for every word written, substitute the word 'silence' in its stead-for that has ever been the case anyway. It is the essence of what truly is.)

For yet only SILENCE has ever been...

Naught else can possibly appear that can ever be thought to be, as such, real...

For there aren't such real separative thoughts ever being...

Do we need further proof? Yes?

Then consider this:

When asking the ego: "Who am I?"

What happens after diving the depths of inquiry?

"Not this...not that...not sensation...not thought..."

Until...philosophical thoughts die out without effort...

What's left?...

Surely nothing scientifically knowable...

or definable...

yet

SUCHNESS is

**pure consciousness
in bliss.**

"Return the way you came," said Sri Ramana Maharshi.

That is, trace the path of the hypnotized ego-Mind, backwards, until you reach its point of origin-being the dwelling place of none other than ParamAtman, the Absolute Self. And, make no mistake, that ego-Mind is in a highly advanced stage of hypnosis-programmed by society, family, friends and peers since its inception. In effect, it has to be de-hypnotized, de-programmed, to be capable of returning to its primeval state.

* * * *

Project: The Bid for Self-realization.

Prerequisites: No Opportunity Necessary; No Experience Needed.

Equipment Needed: Fluid Attitude. Open Mind.

Method: Investigation of the World-Appearance.

Rules of Engagement: Found Within.

Goal: Ego Death.

* * * *

When the Mind is effectively defused [as a separative generating phenomenon], there is nothing left but Pure Consciousness which is nothing but Pure Bliss Being. Even these attributes, subtle as they are, are limiting and misleading. For nirvana cannot be indicated by words or ideas, no matter how rarefied, poetic or metaphysically descriptive (this latter phrase a first rate oxymoron!). Nirvana translates as 'the flame is blown out,' where 'flame' is the activity of ego-Mind-its manifestation of awareness; so that, the fundamental idea of a 'knower' or 'experiencer' or even a 'witness' is no longer functioning-it has been literally blown away.

It's usually the case where the first experiences of nirvana or samadhi dissipate after various lengths of time. These fortuitous episodes serve to inspire the sadhu to pursue his sadhana that much more diligently. Technically, when the state is permanently secured, it is referred to as paranirvana or mahasamadhi. The individual is thus considered a jnani, a sage, a Buddha, a Christ...is, in fact, nothing other than the One Absolute Self or Brahman.

There is nothing further to realize. For, what was there ever to realize? There was never any riddle to solve, except the riddle of removing the riddle of the abstract Mind that creates riddles in the first place! There was never anything to do or accomplish; for the Self is ever free and in need of nothing; not space-time, relativity or evolution. For the essence of WHAT IS is self-contained and absolutely beyond the relative manifestation of perfection/imperfection. In fact, it lies beyond even this...for nothing at all can ever be asserted about its true state. It simply is. (In fact, it's best to forget that it even 'simply is.' The key and the way is to disassemble virtually every thought or idea about it.)

It's important to realize simply this: The fundamental error we're making in our quest for [ontological] wisdom is our expecting to derive

absolute answers from relative questions; where, in fact, it's really impossible to ask an absolute question in the first place...simply because they cannot exist. The phrase 'absolute question' is the emperor of the nation of oxymorons.

CHAPTER TEN: FREEDOM DESPITE RELATIVITY

What a jnani says or does, in some cases, may not only be unintelligible to those around him/her, it may just as well be equally unintelligible to himself. For, the nature of freedom lies beyond the range of reasonableness, which ordinarily acts as a modifying agent for the purpose of organizing and defining that which is otherwise inscrutable. Moreover, the jnani has arrived at a place where he can ask in perfect innocence: "What is there to understand in matters of this world? Is there any finality of purpose with respect to the proposition of 'understanding'?" It's all merely arbitrary and theoretical. Moksha (Liberation) is concerned with freedom, not understanding or rationalizing-known murderers of freedom! A jnani just lives, (s)he does not question. According to the best of his awareness, he may appear to be working vigorously, yet he knows that nothing, per se, is really taking place. He knows this because, among other things, he has lost any sense of experiencing the effort or noticing any depletion of energy that accompanies any so-called acts of doing. He's no longer deeply concerned with life's passing incidentals. Instead, he's in the thick of life's central current, which has no boundaries of definition either in action or abstraction-for these are only fleeting conditions of Relativity. And Relativity is only a synthetic measuring tool used to define that which is presumed to extend into space-time but is founded on merely a random web of thoughts. Stop the abstract thoughts and the powerful effect of the Relative Foundation collapses! This is the real message of non-dual metaphysics.

Stop the abstract thoughts and Relativity ceases to plague.
No boundaries of definition exist either in action or abstraction.
No concerns for understanding or rationalizing...for these are
the licensed killers of freedom!...
Stop the Mind and the Self remains over.
This Self yields Bliss. Naturally.

(In other words, the Bliss of the Self is always underneath the activity of Mind, but Mind keeps diverting our attention away...diverting it to matters in/of the ego.)

This radical 'translogical' approach of Advaita (which is, incidentally, akin to the koan method of Zen) that speaks of the destruction of the Mind (manonasa), may sound nihilistic to people that have yet to realize the undercurrent of what the teachings are attempting to convey. And that is that there's an eternal, vital Being that is beyond perfect/imperfect, and ever-ready for us to re-join in our awareness if and when we're capable of lifting the obstructions that veil and alienate it from us. And, again and again it is emphasized that that Being is none other than our own Self. And, while Advaita speaks of destroying the Mind or ignoring its thoughts is precisely because thoughts are the obstructions! Indeed our only

obstructions.

If you could only trust, even for a moment, and stop listening to [or at least heeding] those thoughts...you'll see for yourself what miraculous flight in the Heart will follow. What well-being and sublime love will automatically flow! What uplifting desire to embrace all beings! Clobber them with love and peace! The love and peace that already rages in their own Heart, unawares! O!...What beauty in life there is!...and how it's been ever before you and within you, as you! And, lo!, how you've ever felt deep inside yet talk your way out of its wonder! And how such thoughts

manipulated your perception...how you fell for what your perception dictated!...how your entire world was built and buttressed by your belief in that perception...but now you see its masterful deception...for now you feel it beyond the ruse of Mind...and now you know...you know in fact that you've always known...that the issue in fact is not in knowing-that there is in fact nothing to know!...

that you've reached the end of a journey that really never began!...that there has never in fact been a journey to take!... for, where are you ever in need to go?...for, what are you ever in need to obtain?!

Make no mistake, the sticking point in failing to release oneself from the stubborn onslaught of thoughts is more than just the inability to break a habit, it's a matter of a subconscious lack of trust, specifically in terms of what may go awry in the actual event of stemming one's attention to the flow of thoughts. It's as if we believe that some form of chaos or madness will overtake us should we somehow succeed in curtailing the Mind's commands. This stands to reason since even when aspirants are convinced of the beneficial results associated with the attenuation and/or stilling of the Mind, along with the built-in failsafe mechanism of the Self [in the face of whatever conceivable may happen in life], it's still a perilous condition to the subconscious mind. So, this matter of lacking trust is an important hurdle to clear on the path to the unlimited Self. However!...we cannot allow ourselves to stand hypnotized by the power of Mind-deception dictating the psycho-dramatic archetype referred to as 'the human condition,' which we've grown to accept as our existential fate. Also, it's very important to understand that whether or not we purify or attenuate the Mind, the fact is that we already embody the very essence of freedom, despite if we believe or feel that we're 'victims of the Mind'! We are already innately Realized regardless of what we think, say or do. This is Advaita Vedanta. And it is informing us, in no uncertain terms, that we are already and automatically free...the free and unlimited Spirit.

* * *

Ultimately, Advaita admits not to the existence of a path, for if it did it would not only have to admit to the existence of an entity moving along that path, but it would also have to admit there is a relative movement from darkness to light. This it cannot do. Simply because this would establish a duality. Therefore Advaita speaks of a world-projection containing separative entities, which is the idea that needs to be overcome. Therefore we must play-act the need to trek such a theoretical path, considering the gravity of the story somehow contrived by that truly miraculous urchin, the anima mundi (paradigm of the archetypal world soul or ego), if we can ever hope in the final end to shatter the unreal aspect of its illusion! This is truly a paradox because, upon investigating, there is nothing unreal to be found!

Nevertheless, something apparently plagues and thus we must do the necessary dream-work, utilizing the laws of dream-physics within the dream-purpose of the dream-world.

It would be prudent to mention that the closer one gets to the moment of final Liberation (sahaja samadhi), the more intense will the ego make its stand. Because the more it senses its existence is being threatened, the more it battles back, at times fiercer than anything the aspirant has ever witnessed! And when it's making its last stand, the tricks it can pull out of the hat of its now desperate imagination can be formidably challenging ...specifically tailored to the individual, of course. As such, the prospective jnani should prepare himself accordingly, and shouldn't be unduly harsh on himself for any incidental backsliding. Also, he should refrain from getting discouraged or feeling ashamed for being victimized by the deceitful ploys and sleight-of-hand maneuvers of this now enraged and indignant ego-Mind. He should realize that it is all naught but empty chimera anyway! No matter what happens, literally, there isn't the slightest consequence on the substratum reality-on the only reality in existence! This is the truth. There needn't be any doubt about it. For, the effectiveness of the ego's trick is predicated on its ability to instill false beliefs into its victim. And the greatest of those beliefs is the fact that a potential tragedy is bound to occur if, under certain conditions, we don't follow this thought or that idea. Without a doubt, fear is the ego's most powerful weapon; and we fall prey to it continuously. However, and conversely, if we see through its clever tricks, we'll begin to awaken to the fact that there's really nothing to fear-but an ego that itself doesn't exist! The strangest thing is that we're actually fearing something that doesn't even exist! Again, the analogy of dreaming serves quite well to illustrate: At times we can find ourselves reacting so intense to a dream -which of course we know upon awakening is unreal-that it can elevate us to such a degree of fright, causing such violent physiological reactions, as to almost precipitate a heart attack! (There are in fact documented cases where such things have happened, although the subjects were predisposed to serious heart problems; nevertheless the shock value of the dream and that it was so convincingly real, was significant enough to trigger a seizure.) This goes to show how we can react to something that isn't even there. The point here is, however, that it's not only happening in our dreams but, more significantly, in the course of our waking lives-and constantly! And this is simply a product of the ego-Mind-which itself lives in the dehatma buddhi (identity exclusively wrapped in the body; lit. 'I am-the-body idea'). As long as we think we are this body-mind complex, we similarly believe it relates to things in the world it can subsequently gain or lose. This, in turn, precipitates involvements and even obsessions with security and well-being.

To recap the premise of this work: The purpose of bringing these observations to our attention is that by doing so we critically initiate a subtle transformation process within our psyche. By methodically adopting ideas that represent expansive counterpoints to egocentric contractions, we are in effect planting seeds of freedom into the intellect, and in due course we'll reflect on them until they gain sufficient status within the higher priority slots of our memory banks. At this stage we start referring to them more and more until they start

becoming familiar and even second nature. Gradually they start superseding our former ideas (erroneous ideas concerning: 1) Our limited persona at odds with others; 2) Our weak and inferior human condition; 3) That we are egos without any hope of attaining the stature of an entity we believe has created us; etc.). And the moment that enough of these obsolete and self-effacing ideological habit patterns are broken, the entire energy network of the ego-monolith receives its most critical/foundational jolt; and then, as the pressure gets further applied with patience, perseverance and dispassion, before one knows it, the ego-Mind is suddenly ready to give up the ghost.

* * * *

Technically, we have ever been in a natural state of knowing (viz. Self-realization). Yet, the incredible thing happening is that, by an act of effort, we tell ourselves we really aren't! We literally go out of our way to inform ourselves as such...to deny, with deliberate and calculated effort, what we otherwise naturally are! This, I submit to you, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Philosophical Jury, is the primary cause responsible for the entire passion play of misery we find ourselves entangled in! (And, as previously mentioned, that this is referred to as 'the human condition,' supports the observation that, under ordinary life circumstances, we all typically share this problem indicative of the general malaise of anxiety, boredom and discontent.)

* * * *

The entire problem and foundation upon which is built the paradox inflicting the human in spacetime, may be summarized thus:

The relative ego-Mind believes it has the capacity to realize and behold the holistic Absolute Reality.

Is this a reasonable expectation?
Can the cup contain the ocean?
Is such an endeavor reasonable?
If not, how unreasonable is it?

On the contrary, Self-realization is beyond the sensation of direct perception theorized to exist in and through the analytical mind. Rather it involves an impossible-to-describe intuitive recognition within the buddhi. This entails a complete transcending of the habit involving the glorification of isolated ideas or philosophic conceptions [which are by nature invariably] rooted in Relativity (it is impossible for any philosophy to break the shackles of the Relative Plane, since the tools integral to the philosophic pursuit are themselves governed by Relativity). Quitting this ancient and most formidable of all known habits is accomplished by repeatedly applying "neti, neti, etc" ("not this, not this, etc.") to virtually every one of its upadhis (attributes in the phenomenal world). However, this is only the initial stage. Later, the method is modified by saying "not this, as such; not this, as such; etc." Because the Particulars within the phenomenal world (Brahman's projection or Leela) are indeed real, but not real as such (viz. not real apart from their source in Brahman). As alluded to, this is being

stated again and again because it is one of the greatest factors overlooked and/or misunderstood in Advaita Vedanta.

What we are left with is what has always resided in the Heart- however, as a result of this new understanding, devoid of the obsessive judgmental Mind, resolves thus [incomprehensibly] Atmasakshatkarā (Self-realization).

OM NAMA SIVAYA!

* * * *

To summarize:

The mind is a superficial overlay on the individual soul. It can cause the individual to appear either excessively heartless or intellectual or emotional, etc. Yet these are only appearances. Beneath them rages the pulse of Being itself. And everyone has it full.

This is why the mind has to be gotten rid of. Not the practical reasoning mind, needed to get us through the world, but the Mind that is the value-oriented philosophical-speculative judgment machine. The Mind that obsessively compulsively tears us away from our innate natural Bliss. The Mind that destroyed the Innocent Child in the Heart. Or seemed to destroy. Fact is, the Child is very much alive and waiting to be reunited with its soul's awareness, to play once again the Sport of Brahman. And the means to securing this is done by an effortless release of the stronghold habit of Mind. Of course this comes as a result of considerable sadhana, implying considerable evolution.

OM SHAANTHI SHAANTHI SHAANTHIH

CHAPTER ELEVEN

INTRODUCTION TO QUESTION AND ANSWER DIALOGUES

Of the following two dialogues, the first is reproduced here verbatim from a series of emails over the course of a seven week period. It is somewhat technical in nature, since the individual understood some Sanskrit and also had a working knowledge of Vedanta.

The second dialogue is a composite from various replies to questions from four different people, through emails and a chat server. It is simpler in context, more direct, lucid and less technical than the first. It is being presented last because of the nature of its concluding observations, that were made by one of the questioners who obviously experienced a significant breakthrough in understanding, apparently accompanied by varying degrees of samadhi.

In light of this, the general reader will likely better follow and appreciate the second dialogue.

Both have been edited and in some cases extensively embellished, although not altered in their essential content.

* * * *

QUESTION AND ANSWER DIALOGUE (PART I)

Q. Namaskaar.

This is fortunate to me, to be able to interact with you. I am ignorant in matters of the spirit. Please guide me through the steps towards understanding the Self. It is sometimes so confusing when, for example, the answers are in ourselves, how do we make our efforts focused only on these. The daily life has tremendous impact in the thinking process and that detracts us from reaching for the ULTIMATE.

Sir, please take me through every step, and treat me like a full blown ignoramus and suggest ways to remove this veil of ignorance.

A. Namaskaaram.

The greatest of all barriers to moksha is the very idea that one is in bondage. Whatever veils or obstacles the ego-Mind happens to [apparently] create, remember that the real Being within All-the Self-remains unaffected in pure Bliss.

To say that 'I am ignorant' is an impossibility. They are words without meaning, O Brahma...

The Self is the only reality in existence; the rest is dream.

Now, the above stated postulates are really inconsequential.

They are merely meant to serve as counter-thought weapons: to destroy the agglomerated ego (which itself doesn't exist!)...they are used like a thorn is used to pluck another thorn out of the skin and, once it's out, both are discarded, O Siva...

Q. To mean "I am ignorant," as it seems an impossibility, is yet possible, because "the I" that you are referring to is the actual "I" and the "I" I am referring is this "I" that I think is "I." "The I" that I am thinking is obviously different from the "I" that you are referring to, and therefore I request humbly to elucidate as to what is this "I" that I should actually be referring to? What is the process that should help me realize it?

A. The key words above are "...this 'I' that I think is 'I.'" And, in turn, the key words in this phrase are "I think." Note that the 'I am' is the Self; the 'I think' is the ego. Since the ego is a dream-phantom, so is the delusion of 'I think!' To whom do thoughts occur? Investigate in full awareness, without lapses or breaks in focus. Where exactly is located the mechanism that thinks or receives thoughts?

The idea of 'process' is itself dvaitic, in the sense that it presumes a movement between a modality of lack to one of fullness. The vichara marga is the 'process' that kills out all 'processes,' all dualities.

Q. Whenever I ask myself this question, "Who am I?", the answer that I get is "This body is not you." It is like "Is 2 + 2 equal to 4, pat comes

the reply, it is not 5." Therefore as much the intuition or knowledge suggests that the body is not what I is, how does one head towards the complete understanding.

A. Atmavichara is not designed to produce an 'understanding' or even any answers. Rather its purpose is to help us destroy all questions, along with the full range of relative logic. The whole business of 'understanding,' 'recognizing' or even 'witnessing' is based on the assumption of duality. And duality precludes a knower and a known-or two entities. Are there two selves in the individual? (The very word 'individual' means undivided.) There is nothing positive to gain; rather only phantasms of negatives to relinquish. And this implies the works of none other than the Mind. If thoughts tell you that you still need something, let them. On the contrary, you know better-by what your very natural State of Being is: sahatmananda (natural bliss of Self): wherein resides the energy of the Universe, O Rudra.

Q. What do the words tat tvam asi and sat chit ananda mean?

A. Tat tvam asi informs us that the reality behind the mistaken identity (ego) is really none other than the Self or atman, which is brahman. We're told that another name for Self is satchidananda, being three aspects that the Mind extracts from the turiya state (the so-called Fourth State, being the state beyond the three phases of the mind: waking, dreaming and sleeping) so that it can make sense out of that Magnificence; just as the Mind categorizes the mulaprakrit (root cause in nature) in the form of the gunas. (Notice also how each has a correspondence to the other: sat relates to satva, chit to rajas, ananda to tamas.)
To whom do thoughts occur? Again, investigate in full awareness, without lapses or breaks in focus. Where exactly is located the mechanism that thinks or receives thoughts?

Q. The only way I know to investigate is by complete surrender to GOD and by constant meditation.

A. Bhakti and raja yoga are indispensable applications that lead to the mother, jnanayog which, when fully engaged, thrives as the sruti note that is automatically recognized to have been always there.

Q. There are times that I am drawing inspiration from Shri Ramana's own meditation times inside the Temple Cellar along with ants, etc....

A. It's important to understand that Sri Bhagavan was not really involved in dhyana since the Awakening at age 17, rather was permanently locked in effortless(!) sahaja samadhi. Meditation implies subject/object as well as applied effort.

Q. Am I positioning incorrectly during meditation that the pain appears to be unbearable?

A. It's likely so. If the pain is localized, see if different positions or, for example, sitting upright in a chair instead of cross-legged would help. If not, it's likely one of the defenses of the ego since it recognizes that

such activity represents a threat to its existence; so it takes out its fears on the poor innocent body!

Q. Can we point out a location to SELF? If so, would not that make it localizable.

A. It's said that the monad or atman is focused in the spiritual Heart Center (located about 3" to the right of the sternum). Yet, this is only the relative reference point. The heart of Self is nowhere more than anywhere else, either in thought, word, deed or form.

Q. Sometimes it becomes difficult to separate from the thought, though it is now easy to distinguish from this corpse form. More so, when relinquish from the thought, it becomes a difficult task to deal in daily life - to talk (in fact the inclination to talk has sunken so low that it is misconstrued as lack of interest in life by family members and has drawn criticism after criticism). How to resolve this?

A. The greatest gift you can give to all concerned is the gift of your own deliverance. For, who are these people apart from you? Who is anyone if not the Self? And is not the Self already beyond perfect/imperfect? The world-appearance with its exhilarations and tragedies is just that-an appearance. Fear not the snake, it's only a rope!
My teacher, in response to the question of how to enlighten others after one achieves mukthi, replied, "After you achieve Self-realization, there are no others."

Surrender the works of your mind and body (being the fruits of prarabda karma) to the God of the Universe (Isvara). There are actions you must (are destined to) perform and others you choose to add to the mix. The latter-whether good or bad actions-are still agami karma, and therefore add to the overall sanchita, of which additional portions must consequently be later worked out. Therefore it benefits one to surrender without further judgments or concerns about the affairs of jagat, letting the Divine Plan work its mission, using us as tools. The best course is to remain silent.

Also, the surrender should be motivated by Love for the Divine. Faith is not a blind belief but a belief that whatever happens is spiritually ordained, and the Ordainer (the god of the manifest worlds) looks after your welfare, which is not necessarily your comforts. This is like going to a doctor and trusting the medicines he gives without engaging in prolonged conversation of the chemical nature of the drug or how the drug enters the blood stream, etc. Remember the lotus in the marsh example: it is better to live like water on the lotus (detached) rather than the water in the marsh. The best recourse is to NOT philosophize or endlessly discuss (ku tarka) but be silent [in mind].

Q. Sometimes, when thoughts occur to realize the self, it is these words that haunt me, due to my own inadequacy in the language (I suppose) that for such a simple thing to realize and so many words to terrorize those thoughts. Then I console myself saying, that "Oh Lord, if you want me to realize you, you would show me the way when I deserve it. And these words are mere product of human thought and therefore are meaningless by themselves when I see myself in You."
Is that a right way to look at it? Something tells me it is. Please

reaffirm.

A. Yes, exactly. Nama as well as rupa are, unto themselves, merely mithya. The grace that comes to find the way [in jnana] is really simply a matter of one's position in evolution. This could be looked at in other ways, but-to me-it simply boils down to the age of the soul.

Q.....which of me is asking the question "What is the best way to meditate without creating bodily pain?" It cannot be the Self for Self is all-knowing, therefore Self cannot be asking that question, therefore the only thing that is left asking is the ego. If that is true, then, would ego in the fear of its own destruction, ask whether is there a better way to meditate without causing bodily pain? Please enlighten.

A. A good question. And a tricky one. In fact, any answer put cannot possibly satisfy the relative ego and the Absolute Self in a single sweep. Who or What, then, really can be wanting to sublimate the ego (if not the Self)? It may be surmised that, within the relative framework of the [illusory] ego, there thrives the satvic so-called atma-buddhi of the jiva who, phoenix-like, is willing to sacrifice itself along with its soul-body appendage (from the antahkarana to karina-sarira) for the sake of resurrecting its unalloyed atman. The end-result is supposed to be the fusion of jivatman in Brahman, as the state of sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi. Yet, this is all relative and ultimately transient. All Mind-theater. We are already That. People believe they aren't and some believe they found out why not: because the Mind dictates it thus. But, where is this Mind? In fact, this is a beautiful illustration of the clever subtlety and intricate depths that the belief in this [magical] Mind can provoke us to explore-and, before we notice, become enchanted and deceived, then suddenly get arrested and taken for prisoner in the process! This is where the atmavichara can be most effective. My guru referred to it as a brahmastram-where when the Mind engages us in the combat of maya, the divine weapon of "nan yar" is our only hope to defeat it!

Q.....therefore, there has to be a specific posture that would help us realize ourselves, for a man with EGO as I still seem to possess, needs to be belittled on that aspect to understand SELF. For people who have shelved EGO, a posture may not make any meaning.

A. Unless you're speaking allegorically, there is no posture or asana fit to promote Self-realization-in of itself, that is. At least to my understanding. There isn't any reference in the Upanishads or other sastras or any teaching of any muktha that alludes to hatha yoga as having any direct bearing or critical benefit promoting atmasakshatka. Not to say that it's not an aid; just not a very important one. Regarding the pain; it's of the body. (I have 8 herniated discs; my body is a mass of pain. Not really who the I AM is, however.)

Q. Isn't pain on the body a way for the SELF to destroy EGO or master EGO. For by ignoring the pain, the EGO is disregarded and soon a part of the body in disuse (here EGO) would vanish.

A. Exactly! Such is a blessing in disguise. It provokes overcoming the dehatma buddhi (the I-am-the-body idea)

Q. Pardon me if I have uttered anything contrary to what a man in pursuit should have uttered.

A. There is only ONE Being in existence. Who's to pardon who?

Q. If Mom wants to go east with me, and wife wants to go west with me and I as SELF or EGO, how do I satisfy their EGOS. To remain silent-possibly will help. But how does it resolve those individual wants. Where does the question of my EGO come into play in this game? To me, I am looking at it as an excellent "test" from the Lord.

A. All egos are destined to be food for Kali. Be glad if She mercifully devours them sooner than later! However, en route to their dissolution, why concern over their wants? On the other hand, fulfilling their NEEDS to the best of our ability: this is our dharma (svadharma). Regarding the [hypothetical] wife and mother incident, I believe it would be best to follow neither, since both-assuming they were aware of the circumstance they created-have violated their svadharma, as it applies to you. At any rate, irrespective of what your decision would be, so long as your motivation is devoid of ego.

Q. What does the sentence, "The best course is to remain silent" actually mean? Does it mean Sir, if I am asked to do something, do it without questioning?

A. Not at all. This was the latter part of Sri Ramana's reply to his mother when she wanted him to come back home. What he was alluding to was the best course [or bhavana] for a sadhu to adopt, is a mental poise that transcends reasoning (as a result of an unconditional acceptance of whatever life's circumstances befall him). This state of mental equilibrium is mounananda-being settled or sunk, as it were, into the Silent Bliss of the Self.

We're actually creating karma by worrying/evaluating/philosophizing about the right thing to do. This is why, instead of engaging ku-tarka, the 'best course is to remain silent' or to maintain [steady INWARD] mouna: the Natural State of the Self-likened to being 'awake in sleepfulness' (sushupti-jagrat) which itself confers pure Consciousness (chinmaya).

A. Thanks for the explanations.

As much it is not appropriate to ask this question now, for I have not yet realized ATMAN, though the belief in the existence of THAT is inevitable in my Buddhi, the Buddhi wants to know as how ATMAN and BRAHMAN are the same?

A. Depending on exactly what point of view the situation is being observed from, the highest interpretation is that the difference is only in name and not in substance.

It's as though we, for example, upon awakening, go through a DE-realization process-as the ego engages itself. It can be argued that the prajna state (equivalent to sushupti) is one, not of wisdom,

but of nescience, oblivion.

Q. Is this Atman/Brahman relationship a Permanent Reality or a concept? Does it exist without the act of Mind?

A. Atman and Brahman are mere relative constructs of the Mind. For once we pass relying specifically on the realm of thoughts, there is nothing to compare anything with, for Relativity as a reality apart from its source in the Absolute Brahman, is dissolved.

Q. Further, it is difficult to explain in words...which are mind's product-are obviously inadequate.

Therefore, we cannot conclude using Mind, either way whether what is left after the mind and the body are left behind, is ATMAN and whether ATMAN and BRAHMAN are the same.

A. Agreed. The Mind is in its own quagmire and can't hope to furnish answers or resolutions to the holistic Reality. Our only alternative is through the intuitive buddhic faculty in the antahkarana (components of the mind, emphasizing the organs of spiritual perception).

Q. I suppose one has to realize ATMAN, even before to address this question-for a strong belief in me exists that if I am mature enough to understand the TRUTH, the Divine Will will dust off the answers in me, for me to understand these questions that I am posing now. I guess, therefore asking questions is in itself an evaluator on the spiritual progress one makes.

A. As with almost any philosophical issue, there are basically two levels from which this can be addressed: the relative (vyavaharika) and the Absolute (paramarthika). On any yogic path, including the path of jnana, one is dealing with a blend of these two. Now, from the paramarthika perspective, we could address this as follows: provided there is an ego established in Reality; then it would make sense for there to be 'progress' (ie: from a fault-ridden state to an enlightened one).

Yet, is there really an ego formed within the [eternal] substance of Sat? When this question is answered, all other questions become irrelevant.

Q. Please show directions for the progress.

A. The phenomenon of so-called 'progress' resides within the vyavaharika or relative plane of the ego-Mind. And within this relative plane there are myriads of notions of comparative icons that make up the so-called 'individual psyche.' And among those notions, the one that demands to behold the awareness that qualifies and quantifies the worth of this 'psyche' is the very instigator of [subliminal] suffering. The atmavichara weapon is our only means to neutralize this powerful vasana.

Q. The above explanation leads me to believe, that there is no sense of belonging in that SAT state-for everything is one and hence there is no belonging. If that is the case, then if we evaluate our heading towards SELF-is that akin to a SIN? The very act of evaluating, though an

expression of EGO, can't we interpret that as EGO submitting to the spiritual self and eventually EGO submerged into SELF and only SELF exists at the end? If that is the case, why can't EGO evaluate where it stands in front of SELF?

However, it does show to me that once we evaluate, then we are ASKING for something in return for the act of "DOING" towards SELF, which defeats the purpose of submission.

Please elucidate on the point.

A. Whatever transpires in the stream of Mind-flow, let it. What has to be reckoned within the mechanism of such activity (the snake) is the existence of nothing other than its everpresent substratum source (the rope). Let this snake hiss and feign attack all it wants, and even frighten us occasionally(!), we know it's just Hollywood, as such-merely a dream. It's important to understand that the snake in fact has a real component underlying it- yet its unreal aspect surfaces when we fail to trace its source back into the Whole of Brahman.

Regardless of what you think, you ARE THAT anyway...AHAM BRAHMASMI...and any entertainment of the idea of 'progress' only reinforces the mithya aspect of dvaita, which plunges one further into ego. (There are no pakvas, nor even sadhus or gurus...) (Being 'this way' or 'that thing' amounts to a transient dream.)

Who are you apart from Brahman?

Q. The answers that are received from you, sir, as much as they are mind constructs, is interesting in one sense that we use EGO to kill EGO. That is, these sentences and their meanings are used to submit EGO, by it understanding the meaning of the sentences. It sure is wonderful. Hope the prayers are incessant, the faith is steadfast, and pleading unceasingly for the GRACE of SELF, to submit EGO. It sure is wonderful.

A. As the saying goes, "The jivanmuktha has an ego equivalent to a burnt rope. It looks like a rope, but it can't be used to tie anything." As such, this ego is really the paramatman: an integrated focal spark that IS at once the virat, hiranyagarba and parabrahman. On the other hand, the videhamuktha, is not, however, further realized at all; rather merely without any locus that can be identified as even paramatman.

Q. I would like to change my line of questioning at this time. Repeatedly, BRAHMAN is associated with source of light and the MAYA with shadow of it.

A. Depending on how it's perceived (which process of perception, remember, is itself Maya), the light itself (prakrit) as well as its source (mulaprakrit) can also be categorized as Maya. In turn, its birthplace is the Unmanifest, the Void of the Clear Sky of Awareness or cidakasa (residing beyond thought and symbolized as the blackness of space). In this context, thought is tantamount to light, while its cause in pure Being is tantamount to darkness. This view is considered the esoteric counterpart to the naive-realism of what is believed to exist (amongst the newcomers to metaphysics), namely that 'light' is good, true and real, while 'dark' is evil, false and unreal. Nevertheless, this 'higher' view is also an illusion!

Q. However, the question that exists is, why in the first place was this MAYA ever created? If we consider that this FREE WILL that we seem to possess is created by GOD and it is the FREE WILL which creates MAYA or the BRAHMAN itself that creates MAYA, why is MAYA there in the first place?

As much as we can say that it is meaningless to ask for the purpose of this question: "why does MAYA exist at all?"

A. It IS meaningless, as is ALL philosophizing. It gets us nowhere. Except to spawn MORE questions. On the other hand, if and when the mind is defused and absorbed back into its source, the mithya aspect within Maya evaporates along with any questions pertaining to it. Indeed all questions become irrelevant.

Discourses on your [classical] questions may be readily forthcoming, yet they will ultimately go in subtler and ever wider circles, answering, in effect, nothing. And so we wind up where we started, with the same basic paradoxical theme: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How? The final answer entails uprooting the Original Question: "Who am I?", which destroys ALL subsidiary questions. "Who am I?" is the trunk of the tree of ALL questions. Ask it straight-away, every day, with piercing intent and fell that giant sequoia of endless sorrows! It will work. (It already has!)

A sustained jolt of samadhi is the proving-ground for all these claims and promises in the field of jnana. Still, the ego is stubborn... therefore the sadhana must be equally stubborn.

QUESTION AND ANSWER DIALOGUE (PART II)

Q. Namaskaaram.

Sir, it is said that the Mind is rooted in illusion. What purpose therefore can it possibly serve?

A. Namaskaar. The idea of purpose itself is a creation of the Mind.

Q. Then why do I feel that it's important to fulfill the purpose accorded to my soul in its journey toward Self-realization?

A. Self-realization will come if and when you release the idea that there is any purpose you need to fulfill. In fact, Self-realization is already here now!

Q. Are you implying that I really have nothing to do? Nothing to attain or achieve?

A. Exactly. You already are the very thing you're trying to attain.

Q. Then why are we discussing any of this at all?

A. That's a good question. But here's an even better one, "Are we here in fact discussing anything at all?"

Q. Are you implying that this isn't taking place at all?

A. If you were suddenly capable of stopping your thoughts, what could you assert about our being here now?

Q. Nothing at all if I couldn't formulate a single thought!

A. Yet would we cease to exist, in your estimation?

Q. That's a philosophical riddle. I cannot answer honestly yea or nay.

A. Exactly. But more than that, there isn't even a question presenting itself to the one in the pure consciousness state. And why not? Because questions-along with Man's common condition of bewilderment-are matters of the Mind which is perpetually fertile with games, entertainments and creative artforms: these are what Vedanta refers to as Brahman's Lila (God's Play) or the famous Dance of Siva.

Q. If that's the case, then where is the negative connotation to this Lila? Isn't it an integral part of Reality too?

A. Exactly. It's a part or expression of Brahman, the Absolute Reality. The significance of the idea that it is illusion is because the particulars within it are ordinarily taken to be real unto themselves, as isolated and independent realities, apart from their source, Brahman. The whole point is that freedom, which is synonymous with Brahman or Pure Being, should never be forsaken by or through an act of limitation such as the Mind is continuously in want of creating. Whether these limitations take the form of questions, philosophies or value judgments on one hand, to matters of comfort, security or any other life concern on the other, they should be regarded in either case as, per se, illusions. That is, unto themselves and apart from the Whole, they are not real. Simply because Reality, by definition, is a unified whole.

Q. But how does one conclude that "Reality is a unified whole"?

A. The only way to discover it is through direct experience. And the only way to experience it is, of course, by and through the advent of Self-realization, which is nothing more or less than the disengaging of the Mind. Of course, not the practical reasoning mind, which allows us to function in the world, but the abstract philosophical Mind.

Q. In other words, you're saying that the Mind is therefore an obstacle to Self-realization?

A. Yes. The Mind continuously diverts us from the Reality that is otherwise steadily being revealed in consciousness which, if left alone, is not distorted by thoughts. To further clarify, you might say that thoughts represent individual units of judgment which, in turn, are rank limitations precisely because they're fragments of consciousness that somehow

coerce the thinker into divorcing himself from his own base of operations, which is the Absolute Reality or Brahman within yet beyond Relativity.

Q. So that, if the mind is capable of surrendering its diverse names and forms, would the individual then experience Brahman or the Self?

A. Yes he or she would. But the Self is not really anything that can be experienced, because it is not an object. For, as my guru would always say, there would have to be two selves within each of us; one to generate Beingness and the other to witness or experience it. The Self simply is who we really are. It needs no qualifying recognition. It simply is.

Q. Sir, you haven't answered my question about how the conclusion is drawn that Reality is a unified Whole. How is it determined to be so?

A. When the abstract Mind is effectively stopped, what ensues is the Reality of What is. And What is, although it defies definition of any kind, including being holistic, unified, etc., is however alluded to in these terms upon the subject's return to relative awareness-the return of ego-Mind-whereupon these attributes, as well as references such as satchidananda (Pure Being, Pure Consciousness, Pure Bliss), 'the One without a Second,' 'the Absolute Self,' 'the Unknowable Substratum,' etc., are all valid ways of indirectly describing or alluding to the nature of Brahman, within the relative framework of the Mind's system of perception. However, from the standpoint of Brahman, there are no definable attributes whatsoever! For, no matter what is conceivably named or defined, it immediately sets up a relativistic framework which, by its very nature, is a limitation and therefore a misrepresentation. As Lao Tzu has said, "The Tao that can be named is not the eternal Tao." It's very important that we understand the pitfalls associated with any attempt to define or describe that which is the essence of Freedom itself. For, not only are they misleading and even erroneous, they also become mental traps and dependencies. If we bear in mind that freedom has no goals, purpose, motive, or any other relative attribute, we would realize how impossible it would be to attempt to define it. In fact, freedom demands that the statement just made ("...has no goals, purpose, etc..") itself be discarded. It is what it is on its own terms. If it had even a single characteristic beyond Itself, beyond its innate essence, it would cease to be what it is!

Q. Would this be considered the core teaching of Vedanta?

A. You could say that.

Q. And by knowing this, would the aspirant then only need to apply it to his daily life in order for Self-realization to manifest?

A. Self-Realization is already manifest.

Q. Then why do I not feel that I am realized?

A. You are, but your Mind keeps telling you you aren't!

Q. How do I know that what it's telling me isn't true?

A. There really isn't any way to know other than by ignoring it or, better still, at least experientially stopping it, and then witnessing the outcome. Of course it is extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible-to altogether stop one's Mind. There's a good reason for this. It is directly related to the ego's failsafe mechanism. Now, you should understand that the ego and the Mind are intimately related. One works in tandem with the other. We could say that the Mind is founded on the ego or the notion of 'I' or, more accurately, the 'I'-thought. And this 'I'-thought is responsible for virtually all other thoughts.

However, the method of effectively ignoring one's thoughts results in the same outcome-provided the understanding follows as to why thoughts themselves are fundamentally flawed and even damaging. Therefore, using either method, if the ego-Mind is effectively shut down, and the individual recognizes that not only will no harm eventuate but, more significantly, the resultant state of awareness or presence will be so overwhelming that this Mind will no longer be honored as the commander-in-chief it is regarded to be. This is why the attenuation of Mind-either through ignoring thoughts or the stopping of thoughts, is considered the magnum opus of the disciplined sadhaka. Now, it's important to understand we're talking specifically about philosophical thoughts and thinking, not the thought process that naturally goes along with one's practical life.

Q. So, how does one effectively ignore or stop these thoughts?

A. By letting them happen!

Q. I don't understand.

A. Now that you know that such thoughts are deflecting your innate, pure state of consciousness, they will, in time, yield to the Self, become defused and die peacefully. All that need be done on your part is to remember their ultimate worthlessness while at the same time not resist them in any way!

Q. Why should they become defused and/or die of their own accord? They never did before!

A. They never did before because you never realized their true worthlessness. Now that you do, their power to manifest with unchallenged authority has been mortally shaken. In effect, this very insight has enabled your planting a seed that will gradually germinate in the buddhic or intuitive faculty and serve to undermine their superiority. Therefore it's only a matter of time before they'll relinquish their stronghold.

Q. Am I to assume that this knowledge alone is enough to provoke Self-realization?

A. Even now you are in need of nothing. Merely allow the seemingly relentless thought-train to exhaust its energy of its own accord and in its own time. In fact-and you would do well to mark these words carefully-you don't even have to wait for the thoughts to defuse or stop for Self-realization to occur! Even as the switch to an electric fan is shut off, the fan will still turn-doesn't mean there's any real energy in the fan.

Even as a rope has been burned, it may still look like a rope...but a knot can't be tied with it.

So an individual who continues to work and think and speak, yet who's Heart has found the peace of his/her own true Self Being, is one who has understood that he was ever and always Self-realized, and now knows beyond the subtlest trace of doubt that whether he has or doesn't have thoughts, or whether he speaks or not, or acts or not, is absolutely irrelevant because he knows that he is not the doer. He knows, in other words, that he is not the contracted, exclusive ego.

This fact that we are already 'there' should always be reflected upon, for it mirrors the truth as clear as any other insight within the Teachings.

The greatest progress is available through this approach, even if the objective doesn't seem actually achievable, the resulting discipline in attitude will serve to transform one's bhavana which will, in turn, develop the capacity to settle into the natural state via the buddhic faculty.

So that, again, it's a matter of being an impersonal witness to the theater of your Mind. Watch it as if it were a cinema. The thoughts on the screen are not you! The more uninvolved you can become with those thoughts, the quicker they will lose their vise-like grip on your Heart. The quicker they will die off. Remember also that they will do so of their own accord! You needn't do anything but watch-sit back, watch and enjoy! Have some popcorn!

Q. Is there anything I can do to expedite this process of thought elimination?

A. The steadier you are in that attitude of the effortless acceptance of your Mind's energy habit-what has been called 'choiceless awareness,' coupled with the insight that the Mind and its contents-thoughts-are intrinsically valueless, the faster you will realize that you have never been unrealized. For, the greatest obstacle to Liberation is the thought that you are bound. Remember that, after all, it's only a tiny little thought that manages the log-jamb of the Infinite!

Q. Is that really possible?

A. Of course not! That's why it's said that the Mind is an illusion! That a single thought (the 'I'-thought) can cause the Absolute Self to collapse into eons of anguish and suffering in the form of a soul's journey through Time is a farcical blunder of the first order! What could possibly affect that which is not even available to being objectively perceived, no less choked to death-even if temporarily-by a fleeting thought?! hahahaha!

Q. Yet it seems to have happened just that way!

A. Yes, but notice that the key phrase you used is 'it seems.' In truth, nothing whatsoever, in any remote shape or form, has 'happened' at anytime, anywhere! Again, it all goes to show how elaborate, magnificent and unfathomable is the power of the Mind!

Q. But how come we experience this world so blatantly? How can it all seem so convincingly real and solid?

A. Again, that's the power of the Mind. The Vedantins refer to it as

kriyashakti, or thought-power taking form. Yet, as alluded to earlier, it's like the illusory power of the dream; when you're in it, it's utterly convincing...until you wake up. The analogy is perfect.

Q. So the whole matter can be summed up as "It's all in the Mind."?

A. True and false. From the Mind's viewpoint-the relative viewpoint-it's true. However, from the viewpoint of the Absolute, it's false...because how can something be contained within that which, unto itself, doesn't exist?

Q. Please sir, merely repeating the idea that the Mind doesn't exist is obviously not enough to convince anyone that it actually doesn't!

A. It's easy to misunderstand this caveat in Advaita. The Mind is a projection emanating from the Self. It has no real independent existence APART from the Self; otherwise it's very real. Its unreality surfaces only when one fails to realize its source in the Whole of the Absolute. For this reason, it's incapable of exclusively dictating-as it ordinarily appears to-since it is merely a fleeting, infinitesimal fragment of the Self.

Q. Why fleeting?

A. Because it is subject to birth and death daily. In dreamless sleep, it ceases to function and, therefore, in that 'place' of consciousness, it's really dead or non-existent.

Q. I can acknowledge that the mind isn't a continuum in the true sense of the word, and in this sense it doesn't meet the requirements for the Standard of Reality you've outlined. Still, I can't fathom why it has come into existence at all!

A. This question, which reaches into the very core of the purpose and function of the Mind, cannot even approach being answered. This is because the very tools we must resort to using are themselves the Mind's own instruments of logic, which simply aren't capable of exposing the fallacious aspect of the mother that bore them. Such self-preservation instinct runs through all of nature, and the Mind is no exception. As a result, it perpetuates a closed-loop circle of: anxiety-bewilderment-quest-delusion-illusion-suffering-[and back to] anxiety-bewilderment-etc. And all the stations on this feedback loop have their basis in the Mind's logic. That is, for example, "It's perfectly logical to suffer because we're subjected to illusion"...or, "It's logical to be on a quest [for answers] because we are in a state of bewilderment," etc.

Q. I see. So that the only way to shatter the throes within the vicious circular system of: illusion-bewilderment-quest, etc., is to transcend the Mind's insistent game of logic lying at the system's base.

A. Precisely! And once we arrive at that place where the sky of the Mind is cleared of its storms of thoughts, we will experience a direct, intuitive 'knowing' that there is no need to even contemplate the purpose, or lack thereof, of the existence of the Mind, or the existence of ignorance, anxiety,

suffering, etc., or even the existence of the world and its people, objects and events. That intuitive 'knowing' will cause virtually all philosophical, religious, ethical, humanitarian, social and political questions and concerns to become ultimately irrelevant. The compulsion to seek out a given answer is proportional to the compulsion to formulate a given question. Therefore, as the compulsion to formulate questions approaches zero, so does the need correspondingly diminish to find answers. This is not to say that we shouldn't do our best under the circumstances we find ourselves...in whatever compels us and becomes our calling-which is according to our prarabdha karma.

Q. I can understand that, but how do we get to the 'place' where our compulsion to ask questions is actually alleviated, let alone obliterated? As you said, "bewilderment causes the quest." Wouldn't we first have to cure our condition of being bewildered?

A. Those are two factors that make up part of a closed loop of cause and effect. We would have to say that anxiety first needs to be cured before bewilderment. But then before we can address the problem of anxiety we would have to first cure suffering, and so on, until we wound up having worked our way back from where we started: the quest. This is the proverbial 'dog chasing its tail.'

Q. So what you're implying is that we can't beat the Mind at its own game.

A. Absolutely. The best way to confront it is to use the same technique as a bullfighter. Let it think it's going to maul you and, without resisting, let it charge over and over again what it believes is the real you, but is instead only your now empty ego-reflection, until it gets tired and weary. Then when you see that it's ready to collapse from exhaustion, you impale it with the final and fatal blow of your brahmastram (the 'Divine Weapon,' in the form of the question "Who am I?").

Q. What does it mean to "not offer it any resistance"?

A. It means just that. When the Mind poses a question or a riddle, or exposes a contradiction in the method of your approach to defuse it-for it gets fiercely defensive when threatened, let it assert its arguments and rebuttals. But you will not resist with counter-arguments to support the approach you've adopted. Let it kick up a storm of counter-logic that may even seem to be undermining your Advaitic stance. However, you will not feed it by engaging in polemics because such debate will only serve to recapitulate the classically delusory and self-perpetuating 'dog-chasing-its-tail' philosophical battlefield.

The fundamental motivation for the Mind's movement is the glamour of sensation. The Mind's host, the ego, has to come to realize that not only is there a price to pay for the sensations it conjures-that is, in terms of their exclusivity-but that our attitude toward such sensations, unto themselves, aren't at all what they're cracked up to be. That they don't really deliver what we continuously dupe ourselves into believing they can: a stabilized and dependable current of happiness and contentment. That, at best, the isolated sensations of the world are fleeting hints and glimpses of happiness. That, actually, they never fail to let us down...if not immediately, certainly ultimately! And we know this. Yet we faithfully

return for more! Why? Because we know no other way! Until we each discover for ourselves the way outside the police-state territory of the Mind. And this discovery is inevitable for virtually everyone-in time.

Q. What is "the price to pay" that you mentioned?

A. The price we pay is a double-edged sword: it's high before and even higher after the approach of sensuous experience unto itself. For, not only do we pay in terms of effort before but we pay in terms of anxiety, frustration and bewilderment long after each event has passed, because our expectations are typically shattered! And this phenomenon is cumulative-adding up, as it does, with each experience subsequently had...so that eventually the resulting negative attitude develops into some degree of dejection or, in some cases, even depression.

This condition eventually inspires the subject, out of self-preservation, to elevate himself above and beyond the entire vicious-circle process. It's at that auspicious moment where, having had the good fortune of being exposed to the path of jnana-or reasonable facsimile-the aspirant can seize his opportunity to disarm the sentinels of the tyrant Mind, for it's here that it finds itself in its most vulnerable state. For, when pushed far enough into the arena of suffering, the ego-Mind will come under attack by a level of awareness within the subtle reaches of its own field of influence, being a region of the higher mind or 'pure mind' known as the buddhi or intuition. But for our purposes, we'll refer to it as simply the satvic or purified mind, whereas the lower regions of the mind-or the impure strata-are composed of the rajasic (excitable/passionate), tamasic (dull/lazy/sensual), or rajotamasic (the combination of rajas and tamas), respectively.

Now, once war is declared on this ego-Mind, the individual quickly recognizes the importance of the cultivation of viveka and vairagya in order to dissolve the vasanas that typically hook him into the realm of its separative and isolated territory. As you know, this involves sorting the real from the unreal (viveka), and subsequently becoming dispassionate to the unreal (vairagya).

Q. And after the vasanas are neutralized, the war on the mind is over and the Self can finally claim victory?

A. No and no. The war isn't over quite yet. That was one major battle of perhaps dozens more that the mind has yet to lose before victory can be claimed in the war proper. We have to remember that although we might neutralize these vasanas for a time, they're yet composed of latent energy and are therefore bound to resurface. Also, some individuals have more vasanas than others, as well as being of varying magnitudes. And this is what determines the number and intensity of the battles to come. In this regard it could be said that whatever practical training the aspirant pursues, this matter encompasses the very essence of it. Nothing could be so important as to gain control over these latent habits within the psyche...being so deep rooted as to literally be the tyrannical dictators of not only our trends of thoughts and actions but our moods, attitudes, and even our state of well-being, specifically because they shape and define our desires. Yet we have still to recognize that these desires are themselves deep-rooted in the powerful illusion of

the ego.

Beyond this, the truth of the matter is that the Self has nothing to do with battles, victories or defeats! The Self is beyond that which is exclusively related to phenomena. This requires further explanation.

Although the Self technically also encompasses the phenomenal world, nothing within that world is capable of trapping or defining It. That is, the world is in the Self and not the other way around. Therefore the Self is the whole, which is the sum of the parts as well as incomprehensibly beyond this sum; yet no part can ever limit it or even influence it, not even subtly. Thus it remains purely Conscious in the 'white-out' Bliss of pure Being. This is the import and significance of Sat-Chit-Ananda.

We might say that the aspirant should keep this uppermost in mind.

But we won't. Instead we'll say that he should store this in the deepest cavern of his Heart, because he is no longer subject to the delusion that he possesses a dependable mind he can count on-for although the subtler stratae within it are strengthening, its grosser levels are beginning to crumble.

Q. Please elaborate on that.

A. What the aspirant is seeking to affect is a satvic mind, which is a mind that is clear and pure, and capable of assimilating the free, pure nature of the Self; which is done by eliminating the grosser rajasic and tamasic elements. This is in keeping with the fact that we have nothing that we need to achieve or gain, but only something to eliminate or lose. We already have everything we need. Therefore we're advised to trim off the fat-eliminate the dross. We are, so-to-speak, wiping the mirror of the Mind free of philosophical thought-debris until eventually there's literally nothing left.

And while en route to the clear mind-sky state, the ego has to 'suffer' many deaths. And yet, mysteriously-simultaneously-there is no suffering at all! How is this possible? When the journey nears its end, this will be clearly understood-that all along there was no such thing as suffering at all. Just as there was never any water in the mirage on the desert.

Q. This is finally starting to make sense to me. How many times does the Mind have to die?

A. Only once. Prior to that it's being pummeled into submission, where it retracts into a temporary sleep phase, yet with dormant tendencies waiting to re-assert themselves. Remember the vasanas.

Q. Until finally the vasanas are annihilated?

A. Precisely. And then, and not before, is the man a jivanmuktha, a jnani. He (or she) has awakened to the fact that he has always been the Free Self Absolute. The difference is that now there's no Mind to get in the way. At least no Mind that can dictate to him anything consequential. For he is utterly and totally free. This is why this state is referred to as Liberation or Emancipation, which is the meaning of moksha or mukthi. The ego has been released. The import of this is unfathomable and even unappreciable to the unsuspecting, the unaware. Otherwise it's a birth into the sheer miraculous. The exhilarating culmination of the Life journey itself! Words are quite feeble here. The newborn jnani has nothing left to do. More than this, he

realizes there was never anything for him to do or accomplish, for whatever he might have actually needed he already had at his disposal, since he always had and always will have the Self which is his true identity, which is itself everything knowable and unknowable as well as the cause of everything knowable and unknowable. He is at-one with Existence. He is at-one with Brahman. Indeed, he is Brahman.

Q. But this is so hard to imagine...so difficult to conceive!

A. It would be far more accurate to say that It is impossible to imagine or conceive! Because imagination and conceptualization are functions of the Mind. This-as it has been painstakingly explained-is beyond the Mind! It has nothing to do with the Mind and everything to do without the Mind! It is not something that needs to be imagined because figments of the imagination are gross obstacles that divert us from Its reality! Neither can It be conceived, perceived, invoked or evoked, induced, sublimated or even divined, for these are also only operative through the faculties of the mind, therefore they are functions of the mind and hence illusory. Moreover, you are not asked to inscribe It in your mind's eye, nor are you asked to psychically impress It on any astral sheath. There is no way that It can be made exclusively available to your physical or mental eye. Yet It is ever before virtually every sentient Being everywhere in every moment! It is closer than your breath, more intimate than your heartbeat and more profound than your fear of death. It is boundless, ever effulgent, perfectly balanced, equally visible and invisible, everywhere and nowhere. It is finally holistically accessed in the wake of the death of the Mind. There is simply no other path that leads to its door.

Q. How long do I have to wait and how much further do I have to go to reach that door?

A. You never had a step to take nor a moment to wait! That door has ever been touching the very tip of your nose!

Q. Then why haven't I opened it yet?

A. Evidently you've been mind-creating other paths and other doors. Everyone-but none-comes into the world immediately seeking their bliss; they just have the wrong notions about where it can be found. So they follow the obvious and incidentally naïve paths that carry the obvious and naïve rewards. But they never stopped to notice was that the thing they were seeking was the selfsame thing they were using to seek with! And I'm not referring to the mind here but rather Awareness Itself. Therefore they followed one of the paths that conjured the maze of dreams isolated exclusively within the world-appearance-the common naïve-realistic world-the world taken at face value, accepted as such, and by virtue of its relative setup, are hooked into the magic wheel of suffering.

Q. How does one wake-up, then?

A. By realizing you have never been asleep! The dreams you were dreaming and believed without question were never really there...were

only a mirage; and like the mirage of an oasis on the desert, when you come up to it you see that it has no wetness, no ability to quench your thirst, no way to bathe in it; in a word, it just isn't there...nor was it ever there! The same with dreams: they are illusions; and illusions are illusions-they just aren't there.

So how can you wake-up if you're not really asleep? Who tells you you're not already awake? Find out.

Q. The Mind says so!

A. Yes, but as we have seen, the [speculative philosophical] Mind is also an illusion! You mean to say that you're taking orders from something that isn't really there?!

Again, who's telling you you're not awake...that you're not free and Liberated?

Q. Something is telling me because I don't feel like I'm awake or Liberated!

A. You're right...you have to find out who or what is telling you because you have evidently lost the connection to your own authority and inadvertently transferred it to an unknown source. In this case a non-existing source!

Q. Even if I find out who or what is exerting its authority over me, how will that information help?

A. The point is that no-one and no-thing is exerting their authority on you but your own erroneously drawn conclusion that something is, as well as the unfounded conclusion that you're in a state of ignorance and bondage. Abandon this foolish attitude and simply be who you really are!

Q. But that's the whole problem, I really don't know who I am!

A. You cannot know who you are! Can the Self know the Self, as if it were two selves playing two roles: as subject and object? That's another mind trick, and it's just not real! Can the eye see the eye?!

Q. With a mirror it can!

A. Good! You're serving to illustrate my point! What is a mirror but a reflection? Doesn't that sound familiar? What have we been saying about the reflection? That it represents the ego-Mind. The ego-Mind is a reflection of the Self. But it's crucial to realize that it's not really the Self. Can we comb the hair that's in the mirror? Can we drink the reflection of the glass of water in the mirror? In the same way, the Mind can't be trusted as an emissary of the Self. In fact, it's as trustworthy as our ability to drink the reflection of that water! In other words, the Mind-mirror is an infinitesimal fragment within the holistic Absolute. It shines like a flickering candle before an exploding star.

Q. OK. Correct me if I'm wrong: 1) the mind, which is a bundle of thoughts whose rotary hub is the 'I'-thought, is also the source of all our

problems; 2) it itself cannot provide any solutions to its own trumped-up dilemma; and 3) all we have to do is ignore it and it will eventually go away.

A. Well put. I have nothing to add to that.

Q. You mean that's the whole teaching in the nutshell?!

A. It's as simple as that.

(the aspirant fell silent for a full three hours.)
(finally, he spoke:)

Q. Yes, I can see why so much explanation is needed to prepare the aspirant for eventually coming to terms with those three simple yet incredibly profound ideas. Exposing the inherent fallacy of the Mind is a long and drawn out affair because it is infinitely clever and steadfast in its strategy for self-preservation. I can also see the vastness of its creative combinations of ideas, that would continue ad infinitum had we not the capacity to eventually see through its awesome and relentless display of intellectual gymnastics. I have also been observing the intensity of its phenomenal judgments and how often they stray toward comparisons of ideals that create for us anxiety and discontent, regardless of our lot. It's easy to see how one desire after another manipulates their victim to the point of chain-reaction obsession, with no end in sight. Still, one cannot help but have the utmost respect for the colossal power of this Mind-for it is capable of virtually anything-except, of course, Self-realization!

Nevertheless, and despite its awesome prowess, I see now what the teachings are trying to convey: that the Mind and its creation is a mirage in the desert, a barren woman's son, a snake in a rope. I see the breadth of its wonder as it invokes the most intricate and flawless appearance, leaving no conceptual stone unturned...creating predictable, inviolable laws of physics, producing conditions and events that can withstand the most profound scientific scrutiny, providing the most dependable phenomena capable of upholding repeated experiments in time and space, heat and sound, gravity and magnetism, light and extension. Yet, it is all merely transient! As thorough and solidly real as it appears, that's how elusive and fleetingly unreal it is in Reality! I see this now only because I have been able to somehow follow my Heart beyond the Mind, and returned with what at least makes symbolic sense with regard to the state the jnanis describe as Sat-Chit-Ananda. And further, to communicate what that state really is can only be done in SILENCE.

Swamiji, you have provided the opportunity for me to cross that final threshold today. Many years and many lifetimes has this moment been however in the making.

That your ego and Mind are dead signifies that you are no different than the Self itself, the Guru within the Heart of All, and therefore there is, alas, no-one to thank, for the Self surely requires no homage, no ritual sacrifice, as these are reserved for those who are yet deluded by division. I realize, in fact, that it matters not a whit if I or anyone else ever arrives at so-called 'Self-realization,' for, regardless of what we think, say or do, we were, are and always will be innately Self-realized...automatically free! That it's only the Mind that appears to derail our awareness. Yet

this phenomenal magician's trick is without substance, having no greater intrinsic value than a passing dream. I understand now that the idea of the Mind dying was a clever ploy, for it never lived in the first place! I see now, Swamiji, that nothing has changed at all, only that what I sense as 'thoughts' forming and passing-are merely there, without purpose or consequence. They can never truly shape life or alter Existence. Concepts like 'peace,' 'love,' 'harmony,' 'community' along with their counterparts 'war,' 'hate,' 'discord' and 'division' are mere words without meaning. That which IS cannot be ameliorated. It is the transcendental yet immanent Absolute Existence which always was, is and always will be, simply because It doesn't answer to time, space or causation.

Indeed, this is the barest reporting of our existential magnificence... for, as I have learned, it is not describable or amenable to the Mind's logical limit. Indeed it is the Mind that artistically destroys it. For the Mind itself is the very essence of folly. All one need do is consider how it habitually insists on the packaging and labeling of freedom, as if that's the recipe for its happiness-and it will eventually come clear to all to what extent it is capable of deceiving. How it divides and conquers Harmony! How it machinates alienation and fear! How it creates Time and kills it! How it fabricates its own hi-tech laboratory of suffering! And how it can cause blatant contradictions, yet be the only means to surmise the Reality underlying the chaos it itself hallucinates! And to realize the benefit gained by coming to terms with, befriending and embracing such contradiction-which the mind so abhors-is to break the formidable spell of its living nightmare.

Yes, Swamiji, now I well understand the snake in the rope metaphor, and how perfect a symbol it is: it's so clear how, to have suffered a whole night (lifetime) of terror because a snake was thought seen in the twilight of dusk, only to have the dawn (Self-realization) reveal but a harmless coiled rope! And this in essence is what we put ourselves through when we allow the snake of the Mind to thwart us with its neurotic speculations about the nature of reality as It applies to the relative world, invariably fabricating visions, vicious circles of disappointments and the perpetual breeding of paradox and confusion.

That this aspect within the Relativity Setup-rooted in the self/not-self dynamic of the ego-folly adventure-reveals the identical key to the metaphor of the Serpent in Eden, who tempted man with the fruit of the desire for the knowledge of Good and Evil: symbolic of the attraction inherent in the Mind-game of Relativity which, once engaged, breeds only chaos, alienation and hence suffering.

(he again falls silent....resumes speaking after an hour...)

I am more clearly seeing the dropping away of the personal past, the memory images, the thought process-they simply don't condition what is present.

I am seeing the presentness of the nondual Reality.

I am seeing that thought is time and time is thought-time and thought drop away. The body and its sensations are empty, yet free to continue with no impediment.

Duration or nonduration is an empty question, as is materiality or immateriality.

The dream of time-space is a bubble floating in stillness.

These words don't transfer any information from here to there.
There is no movement. The rest is silence.

(falls silent for another half hour, and then starts....)

This much I will offer by way of advice in the form of a hint to those embarking on this awesome journey: "feel yourself Being beyond thinking." For everyone is always intimately having that feeling of 'I' within. Just follow it without judging, without embellishing, without diverting your attention-which means without letting the Mind's Thought Program distract you! This is practicing the ART OF BEING.

Moreover, I see now why it was necessary to tackle the problem from so many angles! For, the mind in manifestation is the product of such an elaborately planned design, forged over countless lifetimes of the soul, that to inject even a reasonable doubt into the perceptive faculty of such a colossal masterpiece requires an ingenious depth of insight applied from multiple vantage points.

Whereupon, gradually and systematically, this ego-Mind has been punctured and wounded sufficiently by its very own ally: scientific logic. Thus until, a moment ago, it somehow surrendered long enough to allow a sustained glimpse of my true state of Being. This, consequently, precipitated my unexpectantly reaching a point of no return; for, having formerly tasted Reality and finally now feasting on It, I have no more use or desire for the exclusively transient imagery of the world. Suddenly my measured steps on the Path start to lose their bearing...as the Path itself begins to crumble...and the Door I reach for fades away...and my extended arm now disappears, along with this entire body...as there's nothing left to witness, to know or think on, within or without. Verily, my journey has finally ended, along with this ego and its Mind, neither of which ever existed apart from their source in Brahman.

Empty and awake, I am simply BE-ing Consciousness.
Existence is the I AM THAT I AM.
This is Silence. This is Bliss.
This is moksha and samadhi.
Peace beyond reflection.
The plenum of nirvana.
The end of the Mind.
The end of the road.
The end of all.

OM SHAANTHI SHAANTHI SHAANTHIH