

Sri Sathya Sai Baba on
KNOW THYSELF



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SRI SATHYA SAI
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on “Know Thyself”

Humanity has been engaged on an eternal quest of Self-discovery—How did the creation come about? What is the purpose of this creation? Why was the human being created? How and when is the goal of human life achieved? Where are we going and what happens after death? Sincere seekers of Truth have been inquiring into these and many other questions since time immemorial.

The journey to “know thyself” is deeply personal yet universally relevant. It is a path that transcends religious doctrines, cultural backgrounds and historical periods. Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Avatar of this age, has come to show us that the purpose of this life is to realize our true nature, which is to realize we are that eternal *Atma*, Brahman or Divine Love. In His writings in the *Jnana Vahini*, *Sathya Sai Vahini*, *Sutra Vahini*, *Upanishad Vahini* and *Gita Vahini*, Bhagawan Baba has described different ways to achieve *jnana* (Self-knowledge). The goal is to manifest divinity in our lives and help others realize the same.

The insights by Baba offer a comprehensive roadmap for this inner quest. Integrating these into daily life, we can transform ourselves and contribute positively to society by fostering love, understanding, and harmony.

This compilation from the Vahinis and Divine Discourses delivered by our beloved Swami has been prepared to help the spiritual seeker in each and every one of us to start early, drive slowly and reach safely the ultimate destination.

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Who is Qualified to Inquire into Brahman?

It is said that in order to be entitled to the practice of the *sadhana* for the realization of Brahman, like *japa* and *dhyana*, one must adhere strictly to certain modes of daily conduct laid down in tradition and thus attain purity. I do not agree. For medicines are essential only for the bedridden. How can they become hale and healthy without first taking a course of medicine? To say that a person must be pure and good and follow certain codes of conduct before he can tread the path of God is to say that he must be free from disease in order to deserve medical treatment! This is absurd. Purity, goodness, etc., are all the consequences of the journey towards God; they cannot be insisted upon as essential for just starting upon it.

– Jnana Vahini

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Because one knows the scriptures, one acts in a spirit of dedication to the Lord, gets mental purification thereby, and acquires renunciation (*vairagya*) and the other qualifications in increasing measure

– Jnana Vahini

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Even when one has mastered the scriptures, if one hasn't taken up spiritual exercises (*sadhana*), one cannot grasp the *Atmic* basis of existence. Of course, one who has understood the scriptures has greater chances of entering upon a course of spiritual exercises and practicing them more steadfastly.

– Jnana Vahini

Everyone, whatever the status, class or sex, can win that *jnana*. If it is stated that women are not entitled to it, why is it mentioned that Siva taught Vedanta to Parvathi? Or how did Kapilacharya, a great Yogi, teach the Sankhya system to his mother, Devahoothi? Or how did Yajnavalkya the great Rishi impart the essential principles of Vedantic philosophy to his wife, Maithreyi, as mentioned in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad? The Upanishad cannot be false. The Scriptures wherein these facts are mentioned speak only Truth. The chief qualification for the path leading to *jnana* is only *sadhana*, the *tapas* one is engaged in, not the irrelevant consideration of caste, creed or sex. Leaving all other matters aside, one should concentrate on that *sadhana* and that *tapas*.

– Jnana Vahini

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Purity (*sathwa-guna*) is steady, pure, unselfish, light, so those who have this characteristic will have no wish or want. They will be fit for knowledge of *Atma*. Those with passion (*rajoguna*) will be engaged in acts tarnished with a tinge of ego. They may have the urge to do service to others, but that urge will drive them on to win fame and take pride in their achievements. They will yearn for their own good, along with the good of others. Those who are endowed with dullness (*thamoguna*) are overcome by the darkness of ignorance, so they grope about, not knowing what is right and what is wrong. Any one of these three qualities makes one unfit for the realization of the highest Reality, which liberates the individual and merges one in the Universal.

– Gita Vahini

Four Qualifications

Mere reading of the scriptures (*sastras*) does not entitle one. Instead, the attainment of the four qualifications mentioned here is essential. The Four Qualifications for Self Knowledge (*Brahma Vidya*) are discrimination (*viveka*), nonattachment (*vairagya*), six virtues: i.e. mind control, body and sense control, withdrawal from sensory objects, forbearance, unwavering faith, equanimity (*sama, dama, uparathi, thithiksha, sraddha, and sama-dhana*), and longing for liberation (*Mumukshatwam*).

– Sutra Vahini

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Be it a *Pandit* versed in all the *sastras*, a *Vidwan* or an illiterate, a child or youth or an old person, a *Brahmachari*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha* or *Sanyasin*, a *Brahmin*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya*, or *Sudra*, or even an outcaste, man or woman, the Vedas declare: “Everyone is qualified, provided one is equipped with the *Sadhana Chathushtaya* (four spiritual practices)—so equanimity, self-control, withdrawal of the senses, steadfastness—these alone confer that title; not caste, color, or social status.”

– Jnana Vahini

But then one asks: How can these be cultivated by one who doesn’t know the scriptures? Well, why can’t they be cultivated? The merit acquired in past births appears now as a keen thirst for liberation, as a sincere endeavor to approach a guru, as a determined struggle to succeed in spiritual exercises, and it comes to fruition with the realization of the *Atma*. Success comes to those who have faith (*sraddha*) more than anything else. Without faith, the prompting to translate what has been read in the scriptures will be absent and scholarship will hang as a burden on the brain. So, to know the Self, scriptures are not indispensable; having known it, they are unnecessary. But all that is inferred from scriptures is only indirect experiences; direct perception is impossible by any means other than spiritual exercises. Direct understanding alone is spiritual wisdom (*jnana*).

– Jnana Vahini



Why Perform Inquiry?

For the reason that awareness of the Supreme, the Brahman, can be secured neither by the examination of the texts of the scriptures nor by the performance of rites and rituals nor through the study of material objects nor by the process of learning from the examples of other people.

– Sutra Vahini

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Sadhana is only one-fourth of the process; *vichara* (enquiry) is the other three-fourth.

– Discourse, March 27, 1968

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Some say that a wise person (*jnani*) must perforce suffering the consequences of action in previous births (*prarabdha-karma*); they cannot escape. This conclusion is drawn by other people; it is not the experience of the wise person. The wise person might appear to others to be reaping the fruit of past actions, but the wise person is absolutely unaffected... Wise people are supremely happy by themselves, without the need to be dependent on other things. They find action in non-action and non-action in action. They may be engaged in action but they are not affected in the least. They have no eye on the fruit.

– Gita Vahini

Activity (*karma*) and spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) are related as cause and effect, so the sections of the texts and laws that emphasized activity led to the discovery of new facets of Truth and rendered the ideas of a transcendent God clearer and nearer. So too, the discovery of clearer concepts of God through spiritual inquiry along the path of wisdom fed “activity” with better meaning and higher purpose. The benefit of activity was proportionate to the faith, and the faith in activity was proportionate to the awareness of God won through wisdom. For involving oneself in good activities, spiritual wisdom is an essential prerequisite.

– Sathya Sai Vahini



Obstacles on the Path

So long as one is dominated by sense pleasure, it cannot be said that his spiritual life has begun. Now, many clamor for the experience of spiritual bliss, but few earn it, because they find themselves too weak to reject the clamor of the senses! A little enquiry will reveal that the senses are bad masters and very inefficient sources of knowledge; the joy they bring is transitory and fraught with grief. Mere knowledge will not endow you with the well-spring of joy in the heart; only the contemplation of the might and majesty of God, as seen in the Universe, can be a never-failing source of joy.

– Discourse, November 23, 1968

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

All agitations will cease the moment one enters on the inquiry, "Who am I?" This

was the spiritual discipline that Ramana Maharshi achieved and taught to his disciples. This is also the easiest of all the disciplines.

– Jnana Vahini

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Over-feeding, exhaustion through too much of moving about, want of sufficient sleep at night, these too cause sleepiness and drowsiness. So, it is advisable to sleep a little during noon on those days when you wake up after a sleepless night, though generally all those who engage in *dhyanam* should avoid sleep during daytime. Do not eat until you feel proper hunger. Practice the art of moderate eating. When you feel three-fourths full, desist from further eating; that is to say, you will have to stop even when you feel you can take a little more. The stomach can be educated in this way to behave properly.

– Jnana Vahini

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Trying to control the mind without a clear understanding of the nature of the sensory world is a vain, valueless effort; attachment will not end, and agitation will not cease so easily. Attachments and agitations sprout at the first chance. What has to be done is to develop the inertness of the mind during the deep sleep stage into a stage of permanent ineffectiveness. When the conviction that all sensory experiences are unreal is well and truly stabilized, the mind will no longer function as a distracting agency; it will lie powerless, as a defunct limb. However hungry people are, they certainly won't crave to eat excreta, will they?

– Upanishad Vahini

What are You Inquiring Into?

Knowledge is acquired by uninterrupted inquiry. One should constantly be engaged in the inquiry of the nature of Brahman—the Reality of the I, the transformations that occur to the individual at birth and at death, and other such matters. Just as you remove the husk that covers up the rice, so too you have to remove the ignorance that adheres to the mind, by frequent application of incisive *Atmic* inquiry.

– Jnana Vahini

Knowledge of the *Atma* (*Atma-jnana*) can be won only by the triple path of (1) giving up impulses (*vasanas*), (2) uprooting the mind, and (3) analyzing experience in order to grasp the Reality. Without these three, the knowledge of the *Atma* will not dawn. The instincts and impulses prod the mind on, toward the sensory world and bind the individual to joy and misery. So, the impulses must be put down. This can be achieved by means of discrimination, meditation on the *Atma*, inquiry, control of the senses, control of desires, renunciation (*viveka*, *Atma-chin-thana*, *vicharana*, *sama*, *dama*, *vairagya*), and other such disciplines.

– Jnana Vahini



Reflections Which Help

Death

You should not run away from the problem, imagining that death happens only to others and that it will not happen to you. Neither should you postpone reflections on death, judging that they are inappropriate now, and profitless, for inquiry into death is really inquiry into one's own Reality. This truth has to be recognized.

– Sathya Sai Vahini

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Every mystery latent in human existence is entwined with inquiry into death. The glory and majesty of the Divine are fully revealed only when death is investigated. According to the Katha Upanishad, among the three boons requested by Nachiketas from Yama, the God of Death, the chief was the one relating to death. "Do people exist after death? Some declare that they do; others, that they don't. Each argues as their fancy leads. Which of these opinions is true? Solve this problem for me," pleaded Nachiketas. He insisted on an answer.

– Sathya Sai Vahini

What is Temporary vs Evanescent?

This world (*jagat*), taken as true by the deluded, is just a jumble of names and forms; it is devoid of the permanence that only *Atma* can have. Hence, it breeds disgust and discontent and causes renunciation to grow. The mind is soon free from attachment to the objects of sensory pleasure, and it moves along its natural bent to Brahman itself. All sounds are names; voice is the cause for its emergence. Form is the result of vision or sight; it emerges from the eye. Karma similarly has the body as its source; the body is just a context for speech and other instruments. Contemplation on such truths helps the process of inquiry into the *Atma* to start and progress.

This universe itself is a superstructure, the basis being the Godhead; this is apparent, the other is the real. People ignore the basis and crave for the "based." They do not stop to inquire how the "based" can exist without a base! This too is an example of faulty vision. When this faulty vision is set right, the author of this universe can be cognized.

– Upanishad Vahini

Inquiry is Perfect Only After Developing These Qualities

Arjuna asked, "Oh Lord! You said that twenty virtues are essential for becoming entitled to wisdom. What are they? Please describe them to me in some detail." "Arjuna! I am delighted at your earnestness," said Krishna. "Listen."

1. Humility

The first virtue is humility, the absence of pride. As long as you have pride, you cannot earn wisdom. A person's behavior should be like the behavior of water; whatever color you pour into water, it absorbs it and never asserts its own color. It is humble without conceit. But now the behavior of people is quite contrary. When they do the smallest service or donate the slightest amount, they are anxious for people to know about it. For this, they go about prattling or arranging to get it published. The absence of such pride and ambition is what is recommended as humility.

2. Absence of Vanity

The second is absence of vanity. This is a very great virtue in people. It means the absence of pretense, pompousness, boasting that one is great when one is not, claiming that one has power when one has nothing, that one has authority when one has no such title. Here, readers will note one point. The world today is full of this false pretense, this hypocrisy. Whichever field of activity you watch, whomever you observe, you discover this dire defect. The governments of nations

are in the hands of people who are pretenders to power, authority, and capacity. Those with no knowledge claim to know everything. Those with no one even to help them at home claim that they have a huge following.

In every activity, this hypocrisy is the very first step. It ruins people in every field, like a pest that destroys the crop. If this hypocrisy is wiped away, the world will be saved from disaster. Pretense will make you lose this world and the next. It is harmful at all times and places. It does not suit ordinary people; how can it then be beneficial to the spiritual aspirant?

3. Nonviolence

The third virtue is nonviolence (*ahimsa*). This also is an important virtue. Violence is not simply physical; it means even more: the mental pain that is inflicted, the anxiety and worry that are caused to others by your actions and words. If you desist from causing physical pain to others, you cannot claim to have nonviolence. Your activities must not cause pain and must be unselfish. Your thoughts, words, and deeds must all be free from any motive to cause such pain.

4. Patience, fortitude

The fourth is patience or fortitude (*kshama*, also called *sahana* or *forbearance*). It means that you should consider as unreal the evil others do unto you, the loss you suffer through them, the hatred they evince

toward you. Treat these as you treat a mirage. That is to say, you must develop that degree of patience or fortitude. It is not the helplessness putting up with the evil that others do because you are powerless to retaliate. It is the expression of the peace that reigns in the heart, this outer behavior. It is true that many people put up with the injury that others inflict because they lack physical, economic, or popular support; this suffering cannot be honored as real fortitude.

5. Integrity

Next, let us consider the fifth: straightforwardness, integrity, sincerity. It means the agreement of action, speech, and thought; this applies to secular and spiritual activity. This is a facet of the second virtue, absence of vanity.

6. Reverential service rendered to the spiritual teacher

The sixth is reverential service rendered to the spiritual teacher. This virtue will promote affection for the pupil, so one will benefit a great deal. But the guru who has no goal will only mislead the disciple into perdition. The guru must shower grace on the disciple as freely and as spontaneously as the mother cow feeds the young calf with milk. The teaching of the guru is the source and sustenance for attaining God and acquiring liberation.

7. Cleanliness

The seventh virtue is cleanliness (*soucham*)—not merely outer cleanliness but inner cleanliness. And what is inner cleanliness? The absence of affection and hatred, of desire and discontent, of lust and anger; and the presence of good, i.e. godly, qualities. Water cleans the body; truth cleans the mind. Knowledge cleans the reasoning faculty; penance and discipline cleans the individual.

8. Steadfastness

The eighth virtue is called steadfastness (*sthairyam*), fixity of faith, the absence of fickleness or waywardness. Aspirants must hold fast to what they have once fixed their faith upon as conducive to their spiritual progress. They should not flit from one ideal to another, changing their goal from day to day. This is also referred to as dedication. Fickleness, the product of weakness, has to be scrupulously avoided.

9. Control of the senses

The ninth is control of the senses. Be convinced that the senses have to subserve your best interests, not that you should subserve the interests of the senses. Do not be the slave of the senses; rather make them your slaves.

10. Detachment

Next, the tenth virtue: detachment or renunciation (*vairagya*)—the loss of appetite for sound, touch, form, taste, smell, etc. The senses run after these things because they titillate and give them temporary joy. However, the senses are not interested in the goals virtue-wealth-desire-liberation of the sublime type. The *Atma* can be discovered only through pursuit of the sublime.

11. Absence of egotism

The eleventh virtue is absence of egotism—the breeding ground of all vices and faults. The ego-centric individual pays no regard to right and wrong, good and bad, godly and wicked. That person doesn't care for them, doesn't even know about them. That person is completely ignorant of *dharma* and morals and will not conform to justice. To be devoid of this poisonous quality is to be endowed with absence of egotism. Egotism is a foe in the guise of a friend.

12. Awareness of birth-death-senility-illness-grief

The next virtue is called *janma-mrithyu-jaraa-vyadhidukha-dhoshha-anudarsanam*, meaning only this: awareness of the inevitable cycle of birth and death, of senility and disease, of grief and evil, and of other signs of the temporariness of this created world and life in it. Although people see these things happening to them as well as others, they do not investigate the reasons for them and the methods of escaping from them. That is the greatest mystery, the wonder.

If only you go to the root of the problem, you will realize that whatever else you may escape, you cannot escape death. What people conceive as happiness now is, in Reality, only misery in the guise of happiness. So understand the truth of these things; reflect upon the flaws in the reasoning that delude you. Then, as a result, detachment is strengthened, and through that, you attain wisdom. Therefore, Oh Arjuna! liberate yourself from birth, death, senility, illness, and grief (*janma, mrithyu, jaraa, vyadhi, dukha*). Thus spoke Krishna, exhorting Arjuna with a great deal of affection.

13. Detachment

Then Krishna spoke of the withdrawal of desire from objects. The greed to possess things that you see is caused by egotism. "I must have this," "I must be the proud owner of this valuable thing," this is how egotism prompts. It is a strong cord that binds you to objects. Withdraw the mind and treat all as manifestations of the Lord's glory. Love all things as expressions of His glory, but do not delude yourself into the belief that possessing them will make you happy. That is an illusion. Do not dedicate your life for their sake; use them for your needs, as and when necessary, that is all. That kind of impulse activating you will be a great handicap in your progress toward liberation. Whatever you may acquire as property will have to be given up some day. On that last journey, you

cannot take with you even a blade of grass or a pinch of dust. Keep this fact ever before the mind's eye and then you can realize Reality.

14. Absence of clinging to family and home

Before birth, one has no relationship with this world and its material objects. After death, they and all kith and kin disappear. This sojourn is just a game played in the interval. Getting fascinated with this three-day fair is foolish indeed. Desire tarnishes the mind and makes people unfit for higher pursuits. Aspirants who seek liberation and realization must rid themselves of desire, for, like grease, once contacted it sticks and is difficult to remove.

15. Equanimity

After this, attention has to be paid also to another virtue, the state of equanimity, of undisturbed peace during joy and grief, prosperity and adversity, happiness and misery. This is the fifteenth virtue of a wise one (*jnani*). Being elevated or depressed by success and defeat, profit and loss, honor and dishonor is a futile activity. Accept all equally as the grace of God, His consecrated food (*prasada*). Just as you wear shoes to tread over thorny places, or hold an umbrella to escape getting wet in rain, or sleep inside a mosquito curtain to escape the stings of insects, so too, arm yourself with an unshaken mind that is confident of the Lord's grace and bear praise or blame, defeat or victory, pleasure or pain with equanimity. To live bravely through life, this equanimity is declared essential.

16. Devotion

Next is devotion without any other feeling or thought. When grief overtakes you, you run to God. When difficulty overpowers, you take refuge in the Lord of Venkata. When joy is restored, you throw Him overboard. When you are down with fever and your taste is ruined and your tongue is bitter, you crave for some hot pickle; but when the fever

subsides and you are normal again, you do not relish the same pickle. Devotion is not a temporary salve. It is the unbroken contemplation of God without any other interposing thought or feeling.

Whatever the activity, recreation, or talk, it must be saturated with the Love of God. That is undivided, undistracted devotion.

17. Dwelling in solitude

Thereafter comes dwelling in solitude (*ekantha-vasam*). One must be fond of being alone. This does not mean keeping the body in some solitary place, far from the haunts of humanity. There must be solitude and silence in the mind; all its occupants must be forced or persuaded to quit. The mind should be contentless (*nir-vishaya*), turned away from the objective world.

18. Absence of interest in the company of others

The eighteenth virtue that helps to promote wisdom is mentioned as absence of interest in the company of people, that is to say, absence of the desire to mix with people engrossed in affairs that concern the objective world. One can attain equanimity even in the midst of wild animals, but it is difficult to win it while among worldly minded ones. Spiritual discipline will be affected by the company you keep. Good people keep you good; bad people drag you away into badness.

Of course, it is hard to find out who are good and who are bad and then settle among the good. So, it is advisable to avoid people and concentrate on spiritual discipline. The human mind is like iron; if it falls into mud, it rusts and disintegrates; if it falls into fire, it loses dross and becomes pure. Therefore, joining the company of wise people is better than being in solitude. Note how Narada, who was the son of a housemaid, became a sage because he fell in the company of god people; Rathnakara, who was a cruel hunter, got the company of the seven sages, so he

was transformed into the First Among Poets, the *adi-kavi* (the first poet). Evil company is highly detrimental. A red-hot iron ball is capable of causing more damage than a flame of fire; a sinful one is more to be avoided than sin itself. Aspirants have to be vigilant about the company they keep.

19. Awareness of the distinction between *Atma* and non-*Atma*

The nineteenth virtue is “awareness of the distinction between *Atma* and non-*Atma*.” Fix your consciousness always on the *Atmic* Reality and discard the body and senses as unreal and impermanent. *Atma* is the Eternal, so establish yourself only in that and not in the transient non-*Atmic* illusions or objects. Life is a struggle to achieve victory over the illusion that haunts: I am the eternal *Atma* in you and in all. So fix the mind on Me and engage yourself in the struggle, confident of victory.

20. Vision of the true nature of That

The twentieth and last qualification one has to earn is “vision of the true nature of ‘That (*Thath*)’ (*Thathwa-jnana-darsanam*),” the universal principle of which the particular is but a shadow. It means that the spiritual aspirant should have a keen desire to visualize the universal.

Of the above-mentioned twenty virtues, if honest efforts are made to earn even two or three, the rest will come naturally to the seeker. No special effort is needed to earn them. As progress is made on the path, one acquires not only the twenty, but even a larger number of virtues. The twenty are mentioned here because they are the outstanding ones, that is all. Spiritual discipline based on these virtues takes one easily to the goal. That is why Krishna emphasized these.

Equipped with these, one can realize the Self.

– Gita Vahini

Bhakti (Devotion) and *Jnana* (Enlightenment)

To acquire this *Jnana*, there are many paths, and the supreme of them is the path of *Bhakti*, the path adopted by Vasishtha, Narada, Vyasa, Gouranga and other great persons. What the oil is to the flame in the lamp, *Bhakti* is to the Flame of *Jnana*. The Heavenly Tree of the Joy of *Jnana* thrives on the refreshing waters of *Bhakti*. Understand this well. It is for this reason that Krishna, who is the Personification of Prema, and who is saturated with the quality of Mercy, declared in the Gita: "I am known by

means of *Bhakti*," "*Bhakthya mam abhijanathi*"...

...To realize that the Self is beyond all these subordinate categories, *Bhakti* is the first requisite. *Bhakti* merges in *Jnana* and becomes identified with it. *Bhakti* ripens into *Jnana*; so do not speak of them as different. At one stage it is called *Bhakti*, at a later stage we refer to it as *Jnana*. Once it is cane, later it is sugar.

– Gita Vahini



Tips For Those on the Path of Inquiry

You may ask Me how this wisdom can be acquired. Those anxious to get it have to go to realized souls, win their grace, study well their moods and manners, and await the chance to ask them for help. When doubts arise, they should approach the realized souls calmly and courageously. Studying bundles of books, delivering hours-long discourses, and wearing the ochre robe do not make a genuine wise one. Wisdom can be won only from and through elders who have experienced the Absolute. You have to serve them and win their love.

You must try to please the guru and win favor by obeying orders and serving lovingly. You should have no other thought than the guru's welfare and happiness. Give up all else and win the guru's grace; then, wisdom is yours. Instead, if you are disobedient and critical through egotism and want of faith, you cannot be blessed by the vision of the Truth, and you will be plunged into gloom. Just as the cow takes her calf near upon seeing it, so the guru will draw the disciple to their presence and give the disciple the milk of grace. The disciple ought to be of sterling character; then, just as a clean piece of iron will be attracted by the magnet, the disciple will receive the immediate attention of the teacher.

– Gita Vahini

Besides, the aspirant for wisdom must have not only devotion and faith; they should also be simple and pure. They should not grow impatient and irritate the teacher.

– Gita Vahini

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(1) attention to spiritual progress, (2) steady faith, (3) devotion, and (4) the grace of God. Even if one of these four is absent, people cannot experience the highest bliss of the Absolute.

Our inquiry should not be directed to the obvious and the superficial. This line of inquiry will only mislead us into believing what is not the cosmos. It makes us forget that it is our mind that has generated this panorama of cosmic proportions and presented it to us as Truth. When the rope is seen in darkness, by mistake, by ignorance, the serpent arises and appears in its place, displacing the truth of the rope. For some reason, when the truth is known and the onlooker feels, "This is no serpent; it is a rope," the serpent disappears, for it was mere "falsehood." So, feeling or thinking is able to create the serpent and also to destroy it.

– Sathya Sai Vahini

The mind can be turned towards Brahman and the constant contemplation of Brahman by the study of the Upanishads, the adoption of regular prayer, the sharing with others of the ecstasy of *bhajan* and the adherence to Truth. Very often, with the progress of *dhyana*, new desires and new resolutions arise in the mind. But one need not despair: the mind can be broken, provided one takes up the task in right earnest and follows a regular routine of training. The final result of this training is *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* or the Unlimited, Unmodified Bliss-Consciousness.

– Jnana Vahini

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

– Jnana Vahini



What is the End Result of the Inquiry?

Destruction of Illusion

The idea of the snake, which is an illusion (*maya*), flourishes on the ignorance of the real nature of the rope; it grows and becomes deeper the more one forgets the rope, which is the base. The ignorance that prevents and postpones inquiry into the nature of the *Atma* makes illusion flourish; illusion fostered by this attitude becomes as thick as darkness. When the flame of spiritual wisdom (*jnana*) illuminates, the darkness is dispelled, along with the illusion of the individual soul (*jiva*), the Supreme Being (*Iswara*), and the world (*jagat*).

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

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

– Jnana Vahini

Supreme Peace (*Prasanthi*)

Absence of mere anger cannot be taken as peace. The winning of a desired object and the satisfaction one then gets should not be confused with peace. The peace that has pervaded the heart must not be shaken subsequently for any reason; only that type of peace (*santhi*) deserves to be called supreme peace (*prasanthi*). Supreme peace has no ups and downs; it cannot be partial in adversity and complete in prosperity. It cannot be one thing today and another tomorrow. Always maintaining the same even flow of bliss (*ananda*), that is supreme peace.

This “Stream of Supreme Peace” (*Prasanthi Vahini*) tells you what supreme peace is and makes you understand how to earn it, how it can be utilized, and what its attributes are. Every single aspirant has the legitimate right to earn this supreme peace but must learn the path by which it can be earned.

– Prasanthi Vahini

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Peace is the very nature of the *Atma*. It coexists only with a pure heart; it is never associated with a greedy heart full of desires. Peace is the distinguishing mark of yogis, sages (*rishis*), and wise men. It doesn’t depend on external conditions. It will flee away from the selfish and the sensual. It hates the company of such persons. It is the characteristic of the inner *Atma*—wonderful, unshakeable, and permanent.

– Prasanthi Vahini

Bliss

While teaching Bhrigu the Brahman phenomenon, Varuna (the guru and father of Bhrigu) says, "Son! Brahman cannot be seen through the eyes. Know that Brahman is that which enables the eyes to see and the ears to hear. He can be known only through extreme yearning in a cleansed mind and concentrated thought. No other means can help."

He added, "Dear Bhrigu! Know that everything in the universe originates from Brahman, exists in Brahman, unfolds through Brahman, and merges in Brahman alone. Discover it yourself through concentrated spiritual practice." The father gave him only these indications, before directing him to enter upon spiritual exercises that would ultimately reveal the Truth.

With full faith in the words of his father, Bhrigu engaged in concentrated spiritual practice. The process of self-control and Self-inquiry raised his consciousness, and he believed what he understood at that stage as Brahman and decided that food was Brahman! When he declared what he had come to know, his father, Varuna, told him that his answer was not right.

So, Bhrigu continued the spiritual practices and found out that vital air (*prana*) was Brahman, since without vital air, other things are vain. Vital air causes life, promotes life, and puts an end to life. But his father also pronounced this inference wrong and sent him again for further spiritual practice. In this manner, Bhrigu had a third period of austerity when he came upon mind (*manas*) as Brahman, and later a fourth, when he revised that conclusion and believed that it was spiritual wisdom (*vijnana*). At last, after undergoing a fifth course of spiritual practices, he became aware that spiritual bliss (*ananda*) was Brahman. He stayed in the bliss of that awareness and never more proceeded to his father. The father sought

Bhrigu and congratulated him, who had cast the world away from his memory. He said "Son! You have merged in that vision."

– Sutra Vahini

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This aphorism, "Brahman is the main purport of the Vedanta texts (*Thath Thu Samanva-yaath*)," makes known that spiritual inquiry involves the journey from the food sheath as the basis to the bliss-sheath.

– Sutra Vahini

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Transcending Body Consciousness and the Mind

Arjuna! You have described the mind and known its nature very well. But it is not an impossible task. The mind can be mastered, however difficult the task might be. By systematic practice, relentless inquiry, and detachment (*vairagya*), the mind can be mastered. There is no task that cannot be accomplished by steady practice. Place faith in the Lord and practice with the certainty that you have the power and the grace, and all tasks become easy.

– Gita Vahini

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Experience Unity in Diversity

That ONE is the *Atma*, which through ignorance is mistaken as I. As long as this truth is not won, one cannot release oneself from the hold of multiplicity and change. The scriptures communicate to us this Reality and exhort us to realize it. What is it that, if known, everything else can be known? When the *Atma* is known, declare the revealed scriptures (*sruthi*), everything can be known. The cosmos (*jagat*) is only relatively real; it is partly false. Knowing it is unprofitable and unnecessary. It is not a legitimate purpose of life. Life is best spent and human effort best directed when awareness of the *Atma* principle is sought to be attained. The revealed scriptures warn people against other vain pursuits. The revealed texts and allied sacred

literature, like the law texts (*smritis*), historical legends (*ithihasas*) and Puranas, don't teach us how the cosmos was created or advise us to study and understand its origins and the process. They don't declare the absence of that knowledge as calamitous; they even assert that the task is impossible. "Why worry how the cosmos was born or when it will die? Worry rather about yourself." That is the lesson emphasized by the scriptures. "Know Thyself." Once you know yourself, everything else will automatically be clear.

– Sathya Sai Vahini

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Equanimity

The state of equanimity, of undisturbed peace during joy and grief, prosperity and adversity, happiness and misery. Accept all equally as the grace of God, His consecrated food (*prasadha*). To live bravely through life, this equanimity is declared essential.

– Gita Vahini

Self-realization

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

– Jnana Vahini





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