



# What Am I?

Translated from  
Hindi-Main Kyaa hoon?

- Pt. Shriram Sharma Acharya





**Translated by:**

Shivi Chandra, Jerry Richards,  
Shikha Saxena, Steve Schneider

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**Phone:**

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# CHAPTER ONE

*ko ham, kaachme shakti, kah desh vyay maagatau  
kah kaal kaani mitrani, eitan chintya muhurmuhuh*

*- Chanakya Neeti 4.18*

What am I? What is my source of strength; the place, time, needs, means of resources, and friends for me? These are some questions that one must try to contemplate constantly.



What Am I?



Wise men of every age have discovered the same form of absolute knowledge: the knowledge of the self. There is no need for any other kind once this is attained. Man is not able to live happily because of his entanglement in superficiality and ignorance of his true self. Within each human being is unlimited wealth, an unimaginable source of energy. The only reason for his hardships and sorrow is ignorance of this true self. When he realizes it, his sorrow will disappear and he will ask...

*naham deho janmamrityu kuto me*

*naham pranah kshutpipase kuto me*

*naham cetah shokamohau kuto me*

*naham karta bandhamoksau kuto ma ityupanishat*

*- Sarvasara Upanishad 21*

I am not the physical body, so how can I be born or die? I am not the body fire, so how can thirst and hunger control my existence? I am not the mind, so how can grief and confusion affect me? I am not the doer, so how can I be thought of as bound or liberated?

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## The Real You is not the Body

When one sees his identity as part of an eternal being, he has acquired true knowledge. Only then can he utilize the resources of the physical world in a proper manner. No matter how one looks at it, knowledge of the self is the highest and most useful knowledge of all.

When asked about himself, a person will often identify as a professional, a person of status, a follower of a religious faith, etc. Upon further inquiry, he will provide details such as his place of residence, citizenship, etc. These are far from casual; they make up what he believes to be his real self. He is so



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fixated on his body that he considers the body and the self one and the same. In actuality, heritage, race, profession, and status relate only to the physical body, and that body is only a garment, or instrument, of the real self. Illusion and ignorance cause one to identify only with the body. Consequently, one equates the welfare of this transient body with that of the eternal self, which in turn makes life a perpetual flux of turbulence, anxiety, and pain.

When the true self acquires a body, it never becomes that body. But when it departs, the now dead body begins to decay. Physically speaking, it is the same, yet without the true self it is useless. Therefore, although the self does take on a body, it continues its independent existence. That independently existent entity is called the soul, and this is what a person truly is. What am I? In truth, I am that soul.

Everyone seems to know intuitively that the soul and the body are two different things. Even in speech, people say "my body," signifying that they are the possessors of the body and

not the body itself. Hardly anyone doubts the independent existence of the soul. But although the common man may accept this principle of differentiation, his behavior reflects otherwise. He behaves as though he is inseparable from the body, as if the pains and pleasures of the body are those of the true self. Close observation of his thoughts, speech, and actions reveals that they all pertain exclusively to his identification with the body. He thinks, speaks, and acts only on its terms. When he says "I," he means his body.

The body is the home and the temple of the soul. Hence, it is both proper and necessary to look after its health, cleanliness, and maintenance. However, one must never identify exclusively with that body—that is, mistake the residence for the resident. Because of this false and mistaken identity, man loses sight of the real interests of the soul. And due to this lost sight of the true interests of self, the labyrinth of life makes him ruthless and dry.





## The interests of the Soul and Body are different

Since the soul and the body are two different entities, their interests are also different. The body is governed by the senses—the ten faculties of perception and action, along with the mind. These are perpetually focused on fulfilling one's bodily needs, causing one to act accordingly and immerse himself in pursuit of various sensory pleasures. Even concepts such as status, wealth, fame, and authority are aspirations of the mind. One's entire life can be spent in pursuit of these. But when these insatiable desires become cravings, a deluded person frantically attempts to satisfy them by any means possible. This is the primary cause of most sinful activities.

Most people spend their entire lives trying to acquire food, shelter, and sensory pleasure, centering their lives around the body and activities associated with it. If this is all there is to life,

what is the difference between humans and animals? The smallest increase in the intensity of desire prompts people to unfair means, making them reckless. People with such traits make life hellish not only for themselves, but for others as well. Lust and greed are powerful and evil traits. The more they are fed, the more desire grows, and the more worries and anxieties multiply. The momentary pleasure gained is followed by disenchantment, fatigue, and unhappiness. At some level, one knows that the present gratification will not last long; its end and the imminent sensation of loss create a vicious cycle. Such a perspective only drags one toward immorality, suffering, and turbulence. Nevertheless, he keeps attempting to find true happiness in the material world.

Real success and prosperity lies in remaining conscious of one's true identity. When man identifies with the *atma* (true self, soul), his aspirations and inclinations will naturally begin to follow the path of self-discipline that provide true contentment.



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When a person commits immoral acts such as theft, violence, adultery, and deception, he experiences a feeling of uneasiness; he shakes, and his blood pressure heightens. This happens because these actions are against the natural tendencies of the soul. The unease is the reaction from the soul.

Immorality by its very nature is contrary to the soul. On the other hand, acts of virtue involving altruism, kindheartedness, and discipline provide great inner satisfaction. Virtuous acts also provide lightheartedness, cheerfulness, and exhilaration. This signals that these acts are in accordance with the interests of the soul. Those who recognize these signals and act accordingly are not interested in gaining anything by unfair means and, consequently, cannot perform immoral acts.

These virtuous acts bring peace and joy to the soul, and, influence the course of its journey after it leaves the body. Therefore, the interests of the soul lie in living virtuously. On the other hand, the body only considers its well-being in terms of physical gratification. Unfortunately, most human beings

spend their entire lives in the pursuit of appeasing these urges, and in this process they experience moral decay as these urges are fulfilled by unfair means. No doubt such a lifestyle bestows fleeting pleasures upon the body and mind, but being against the natural tendency of the soul, it ultimately gives rise to pain in this world and the next.

It is inevitable that the body will undergo hardships in upholding virtue for the soul's welfare. Unless strictly disciplined against sensual indulgence, it cannot properly perform virtuous acts. This implies not only that the body and soul's interests are different, but that they actively work against one another. Complete focus on bodily pleasure is not what the soul wants, and in order to break away from this and act in the soul's true interests, it takes strict discipline of the body and mind.





## Self-Realization is Reflected in One's Behavior

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who are solely engrossed in the body and those who are conscious of the soul. The former do not care for the soul, and they spend their entire lives in the pursuit of material comfort. Such lives are no different than those of animals. They may discuss nobility and ethics, but their interests remain focused on self-aggrandizement, within the walls of selfish interests in both the present and the next world. At times, they use religiosity as a facade for acquiring fame, to gain public acclaim, or to prove superiority, but their minds are always preoccupied with the pursuit of physical pleasure and ego bolstering.

On the other hand, one sees a great difference in the attitude of a person who recognizes and wants to act in accordance with the true interests of the soul. Sensory indulgence is like child's

play to him, and loses its charm. As self-awareness dawns, he realizes that the body is merely a garment, an instrument for self-expression in the visible world. He realizes that human life should not be wasted in the trivialities of self-glorification or indulgence in comfort. He identifies only with the *atma*, and all his endeavors are directed towards its joy. He single-mindedly uses every moment of his life to cultivate the soul's attributes. Whereas a bodily obsessed person leads a miserable existence, a soul-conscious person follows a life path conforming to the highest ethical and spiritual standards, standards that lead to abiding peace and joy.

## The Rewards of Self-Realization

One does not become unduly influenced or agitated by the routine ups and downs of life when he is aware of the immortal soul. The extremes of profit and loss, life and death, union and separation, respect and humiliation, attachment and aversion, produce only negligible reactions in a soul-conscious person.





He takes these as routine, natural fluctuations of the ever-changing world. The man of awakened awareness knows that events proceed according to an ultimate plan and not individual desires and dislikes. He views the passing of incidents like a detached spectator and is neither elated by pleasant events nor distressed by unpleasant ones. By doing this he escapes the strains of bodily conscious life, which under intense pressure may drive a lesser man to even commit suicide.

It is clear that the key to living a life of nobility and dignity is to rise above bodily obsession and awaken to the reality of the soul. This gives one's life purpose, which is why spiritual masters have always given the utmost priority to the disciplines of self-realization. Upon contemplation of the question "What am I?" the only reasonable answer is "I am an immortal soul." And the more one believes in this, the purer his thoughts and actions become. The disciplines in this book are meant to inspire a sincere *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) on this path to self-realization.

A person is neither his body or mind, both of which are only instruments of the soul. When he realizes this, he is freed from their bondage. A fable explains this:

A monkey happens to come across a pitcher full of nuts. It puts its paw in and grabs a fistful, but is now unable to extract its paw from the narrow mouth of the pitcher. The monkey begins to cry in panic, believing that the nuts are holding its paw. It is only able to remove its paw when it realizes the truth and releases the nuts. Likewise, a man suffers when he clings to the carnal weaknesses of lust and anger. The moment he exercises his conscious willpower, he is freed from the bondage of ignorance. Another story relates the same principle: A lion cub is brought up among lambs and assumes their natural timidity, until he sees his reflection in a pond and is able to assume his true qualities of confidence and strength. This is precisely what occurs when a person discovers that his true identity is the immortal soul.





This discovery brings complete relief from the ego-inflicted sufferings and desires that torment us at every moment. There are numerous fields of knowledge in this world, but the one that transcends all others is known as *atma-gyan*, or the knowledge of the self. This can be said to unravel all the mysteries of life.

It is true that through the study of science, man has found great sources of power, such as electricity and nuclear reaction. But by delving into the innermost spirit, the source of universal power, wise men have discovered the nectar of *atma* which transcends the limitations of the material world. Experiencing this nectar makes man truly wise, bestowing him with mastery over mental and material force and energy.

Because of this, it can be concluded that it is essential for a person to know his true self. He must repeatedly ask himself: "What am I?" and discover the answer through analysis, contemplation, and introspection. Upon knowing the true self, he will gain the judgment to discriminate between what is

beneficial for his well-being and what is not. When one is aware of the soul, things that seemed beneficial to the former, hedonistic mindset are now seen as useless and harmful. And likewise, pursuits that once seemed pointless and tedious become a source of joy, leading one closer to the goal of self-realization and truth.

## The Goal of Spiritual Disciplines

Many people wish for spiritual progress, but are not able to reach it because of deficient or incorrect training. The goal of spiritual disciplines is to jolt man out of his materialistic slumber so that he can awaken to his true identity as an immortal soul. Just as holistic treatment is necessary to attack a disease at its roots, spiritual disciplines must treat a person at several levels. Conventional practices such as philanthropy, fasting, chanting, *anusthana*, and *yagya* are good initial steps, but they are not the whole of spiritual disciplines. Such rituals enhance virtue and purity of mind, but they do not lead to true





enlightenment. True enlightenment is realizing the nature of the material world as illusory and transient. The purpose of this book is to awaken the reader to a consciousness of his true self. There is no other road or shortcut to *mukti* (liberation). A person cognizant of his spirit lives a virtuous life, and vice and sorrow do not trouble him.

It is hoped that with the help of these spiritual disciplines, a person can rise to a higher level of self-realization. Once this paradigm shift is accomplished, his standard definitions of what he is and what belongs to him will expand to encompass the entire universe. He will feel that he has a greater responsibility to bear than simple care for himself and his family. As he continues his spiritual ascent, his sense of belonging will expand until—as if he is looking down from a great height—he understands that he is one with all existence. Everything will seem to be under his care. Just as one's field of vision broadens as one climbs a hill, so does his perspective upon self-realization. Bodily confines of egocentric I-ness will vanish from his sense of self.

This concept can be understood better with an analogy. The air in a balloon can be considered the limited sense of self. If more air is blown into it, the balloon bursts and the air returns to the normal body of air in the atmosphere. In the same fashion, the expansion of the identity ultimately leads to the realization that it is connected with all creation. It was only the body—or the balloon—which was creating the illusion of an isolated existence. This is the vision of self-realization, and the basic tenet of spirituality.

Once a person glimpses this truth, he can never go back to the limited sense of self. Who would leave a cool river to return to a desert where he was dying of thirst? In verse 15.6 of the Gita, it is proclaimed: "To which having gone, they do not return—that is my supreme abode." Having experienced the joy of self-realization, who would return to a worldly abode? Who would turn back from a journey once the destination has been reached?





In the following chapters, simple exercises for rising to a higher level of self-realization will be presented. As mentioned earlier, the expansion of the limited sense of self will eventually burst the balloon, and the seeker will know his unity with the supreme spirit.

Some readers, disappointed by this meaning, may interpret self-realization as the goal of the recluse, considering it a path only for those seeking union with God. They may argue that spiritual disciplines are only for those interested in the afterlife; that a regular person's life is focused only on the current one; that the daily routine is filled with work and education and has no time or purpose allotted for any other such concerns. These readers may wonder how all of this assists one's current, physical life.

Such questions inevitably arise in today's world. Many treat the well-being of the self in this world and the next as two different considerations. In reality, they cannot be compartmentalized like this, for what pertains to one is

intrinsically related to the other. These realms are inseparable, like two sides of the same coin.

In short: Self-realization is the most effective method for success in both this world and the next. All progress in this world goes hand-in-hand with its development, and a person in possession of this inner strength is capable of success in any area of human life. This is what is known as communion with God: knowing one's true self, appreciating the dignity of human life, and functioning in accordance with these principles.

With this in mind, it makes sense to set self-realization as an active and worthwhile goal. It is a commonly known truth that there are two factors which are responsible for success in any endeavor known to man: honest appraisal of one's capacities, and knowledge of the resources both available and required to complete the task. Nothing can be achieved without understanding these two variables.





### **Spiritual teachings say:**

The soul in you is indestructible. You are not ordinary, you are a magnificent creation of God. Do not feel weak in any respect nor beg for anything. You are immensely powerful. There are no limitations to what you can do. You have appeared in this world with potential that can undoubtedly overcome all obstacles on your way to success. Your capabilities are more powerful than the obstructions to be overcome. Success and happiness are your birthrights.

Wake up! Identify your true self. Assess your means and resources and wisely go ahead towards the set goal. You will find that there is nothing you aspire to that is beyond your reach. You are the kalpa-vriksha (the wish-fulfilling tree) and the kamadhenu (the wish-fulfilling cow) of heaven. Not a bit of fear or disappointment was used in your pure creation. You are success personified. Come forward and take charge of what is rightfully yours.

This book tells you that you are not merely a body, nor are you like any other species on earth. Instead, you are a manifestation of the attributes of God. The body and the mind are your tools. You are not a slave of your sensory desires or old habits. All these are yours, but they are not you. After learning this, you will recognize your true identity and will act in accordance with its natural tendencies. You will understand that the body is an instrument of the soul—the true self. Understand this distinction clearly and unambiguously. When man regards his body as the self, the soul cannot use the body effectively. The distinction between body and soul enables the soul to make use of the body as an instrument of self-growth. This is the task before man, a task that can be successfully accomplished by one who has clarity of vision and purpose. In Bhagavad Gita 2.50 this is called *yoga karmasu kaushalam*, discipline in actions with ease, or in other words, perfect skill in works. Diligently aspire to be such a *yogi*. The purpose of this writing is to motivate you to realize the true





place for yourself in this world and in the world beyond, and to make contributions which will lead you to the supreme goal of self-realization. This alone is the purpose of this instrument, this body.

May God inspire you on this path.



# CHAPTER TWO

*nayam atma pravachanena labhyo na  
medhaya na bahuna shrutena*

- Katha Upanishad 1.2.23

- Mundaka Upanishad 3.2.3

The soul cannot be perceived by sermons,  
or through intellectual pursuit,  
or by listening to discourses on spirituality.



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The previous chapter may have inflamed your desire to learn about the entity we call the soul, after knowing which nothing else remains to be known. This is only natural.

The body and soul are tied together. The former is composed of gross physical elements, but the latter is subtle beyond all imagination. When oil is added to water, it will always float to the top, for the molecules of oil are lighter than those of water. Hot air stays above cold air for the same reason. Flames rise; the gravitational pull of the earth does not stop them from rising. Similarly, in spite of its containment within the body, the soul, instead of becoming one with the body, strives to rise to a higher level of consciousness, as it is so much more subtle than the physical body.

People say that they are pulled in all directions by sensory pleasures. This is simply not true. Without wisdom regarding how to attain true happiness, man quenches his thirst for happiness by throwing himself into sensory pleasures. If he experienced even a taste of the bliss inherent in the true self, would he run here and there chasing the mirage of happiness?

As mentioned earlier, the soul can never exist as a mere constituent of the body, despite being contained within it. A person realizes something is missing, but cannot tell what it is. He is actually in search of his true self, but wanders through the material world in vain, without the knowledge of how to find it. His feeling of emptiness saddens him, but because he lives in an illusion, he cannot find the truth.

People constantly complain about the fickle nature of the mind, but no one is able to explain it. In truth, the mind is this way because it is always searching for happiness, in the manner of a musk deer chasing an elusive scent. Imagine the peace it could gain if it realized that the scent is emitted from its own body! The mind is the same way: if one can only learn that everything he needs for happiness is within himself, he can attain peace, and his mind will be at rest.

Self-realization requires a clear understanding of the true nature of the self, the physical body, and the resources available to one's own mind, and the integration of this understanding fully into the mind so it is never forgotten.





It takes little effort to read a piece of literature and then talk endlessly about its theoretical aspects. One may claim to know more about the subject of this book than is written, and also put forth forceful arguments in favor of his view, pointing out myriad scriptural discrepancies. Mere reading does not make one a scholar. The scriptures themselves state that one cannot connect with the soul through machinations of the intellect. The purpose here is not to get into a debate on this subject. One who appreciates the subject and is interested in learning the true nature of self is welcome to try the exercises in this book; otherwise it is suggested that he not spend more of his valuable time reading further in it.

## Begin with a Clean Slate

To climb to the peak of a mountain, one first has to reach the foot. Self-realization is an uphill task that follows a similar pattern. Imagine yourself at the threshold of the entranceway, and forget all the progress that you may have made before.

Start as a beginner. What you have learned so far is not incorrect or untrue, but in order to learn a new language, you cannot begin with its advanced writings—you must begin with its alphabet. Take a few steps back. By starting at the first steps, you will be able to climb that much faster.

First ask yourself: "What do I mean when I say 'I'?" After all, animals, birds, and other species do not have this concept other than in relation to their body. Like human beings, they feel pleasure, pain, and other sensations of the physical world, but their minds do not transcend the physical requirements of the body. For example, a donkey knows nothing about its load, why it bears a load, what its relationship is to the person driving it—it simply bears discomfort when overloaded and is satisfied when given food—but it does not react as a human being would. The body is the sole reality for the donkey, and many other such species.

Human beings have indeed acquired superior intellect in the course of evolution, but how many are aware of the reality of





the self? Many do claim to be familiar with it, but there is a world of difference between actual awareness and simple discourse. Such people mechanically remember what they hear about the soul and repeat it in various discussions from time to time. There are also those who have never heard of any such thing as the soul, and concentrate all their energy on temporary physical matters. Among such people, the dull become satisfied with crude means of enjoyment, while the so-called intelligent ones simply refine their methods of sensory indulgence. A poor laborer enjoys driving his animal-driven cart just as much as a rich person enjoys his expensive car; the only difference is the refinement of the sensory pleasure. The reality is that whatever progress human intelligence has made is predominantly utilized to enable further sensory indulgence. For most 'civilized' people today, the body is the reality of the self.

Another obstacle to self-realization is that of false religion. Many people perfunctorily observe traditional rituals which provide only superficial satisfaction and have no relevance in

the quest for self-realization. Acts such as philanthropy are regarded as virtuous, but do not actually lead to spiritual progress when there are expectations for fame and glory. Other rituals, such as *yagya* (sacrifice) and *tapas* (austerity) are considered an essential duty of all human beings, regardless of faith, but they do not in themselves bring about any sort of spiritual progress. These rituals do not, by themselves, take one any closer to the discovery of the indwelling soul. The *atma* is so infinitesimally rarefied that it cannot directly interact with any material object. The soul is beyond the reach of rituals, empty philanthropy, or pilgrimage.

## Access to Atma is Through the Mind

The means available to us for approaching *atma* include the memory, mind, intellect, and heart. These need to be trained and developed into tools through spiritual disciplines for attaining self knowledge. The soul is present through the entire body and has no fixed location which would enable one





to physically reach it. As only the faculties of the mind are capable of revealing the stages of growth of the soul in evolution, the exploration of the secrets of the inner world of the mind is an essential aspect of spiritual searching. Just like the mind, intellect, etc. are the means to reach the *atma*, the inner mental world is used to actually envision the true nature of it.

The domain of the mind functions according to its own underlying principles just like the external material world. Within moments thoughts travel from New York to Switzerland. New York and Switzerland in mental imagery do not have a physical presence within the mind, nevertheless these mental impressions represent actualities which exist elsewhere. A shadow is as much a reality as the object of which it is a representation. The mind can imagine everything that can actually exist in substance and more. Hence the realm of mind should not always be taken as an illusory world.

A subtle consciousness (*sukshma chetana*) that controls all activities of the universe is present in the mind. An

industrialist who wishes to expand to a foreign country makes the trip there first in his mind, gathering information, imagining his travel there, and envisioning the problems that might occur. He makes his plans based on this mental trip. Messages of the consciousness arise as intuitions in the mind. By entering its domain and reading body language, facial expressions, psychoanalyzing, and using polygraph testing, we can determine almost anything about the emotional state and reflex response of a person. However, such things are only the surface of the mind's conscious layers. Under these layers lie the hidden subconscious, subliminal, and super conscious domains which hold even greater capacities. For example, knowledge of the past, predictions about future, etc. come from these domains. All inspiration and guidance for a spiritual quest comes through a receptive, peaceful, and pure mind. A pure mind is one that receives its directives as intuitions. In the absence of these mental faculties, man would function like a robot! It is the mind that serves as the channel for access to the consciousness and the soul of man encased in the body.





## The Use of Yogic Practices for the Control of Body and Mind

Now let us endeavor to enter the domain of the mind, examine the nature of the soul, and experience it firsthand with the help of powers that are inherent in the intellect. Every seeker throughout the world has had a similar outlook: Higher knowledge can only be experienced upon entering the realm of the mind, with the help of the intellect. No one has been able to discover another path. The various types of yoga have all been developed to keep the body healthy, an essential first step before mind control exercises can be undertaken.

I will advise you maintain good health with only simple exercises. In today's environment it is neither advisable nor necessary to follow traditional ancient yogic practices. It would not be wise to ask you to do *pranayama* (intense breathing practices) if the surroundings are polluted. These

worked for seekers of the past who lived in unpolluted environments, ate only fresh fruit, used unpolluted water, and observed celibacy. I would be committing a sin if I asked you to carry out these intense yogic practices. Today, there is a separate set of generally accepted norms for healthy living, all of which should be strictly adhered to, and a medical expert should be consulted if there is an illness that requires attention. For the present purpose, there is no need for prolonged treatment or training. Normal health and a relaxed, happy attitude are the only prerequisites.

## Preparation for Spiritual Disciplines

Choose a quiet place, free of distractions. This is not always possible, but choose the best approximation, preferably the same place every day. Ideal places are forests, hills, and riverbanks, but if none of these are possible, select a small room without distractions. Sit comfortably, making sure not to strain yourself in any way. You do not need to stiffen your





torso or cross your legs, as these may induce discomfort and disturb your mental peace. Relax your muscles. Let each part of your body remain loose, tension-free, peaceful and at rest. A comfortable chair is suited for this, but lying flat on a bed with your head slightly raised will also do. You can even sit with your back resting on a wall, with a cushion behind it. Whatever the posture, keep your body as loose as a ball of cotton, so that the need to change positions does not arise. However, be careful to remain in a posture in which there is no likelihood of falling over while in a state of deep meditation.

Sit this way for some time. In the initial stages, it will require a greater effort, but later, with practice, you will find it easier to relax regardless of your environment.

This exercise is not meant to create a state of relaxation in which one becomes drowsy, daydreams, or becomes lost in imagination. This preparation for meditation has a specific purpose. Therefore, it must be practiced as directed. Later, this state of consciousness will become an integral part of the mind

and will not require any willful effort. In difficult situations which give rise to fear, misery, pain, and stress, this equanimity of mind will become active without effort, and you will be able to pass through these crises with confidence and peace.

## The Soul as the Nucleus of Your World

In the meditative state described above, focus your thoughts on the nature of "I." Try not to think about any external person, place, thing, or event. Conceptualize that your soul is an actual, independent entity, infinitely powerful, indestructible, and indivisible—the star around which your personal world continuously revolves, in motion as planets around their sun. Hold this image of a solar system in your mind. Establish your soul as the sun. Assure yourself that the objects around you are dependent on you, but you are not dependent on them, and, although you provide the energy for their motions, they are not you. In a few days, such an awareness will become second nature.





Do not think this picture is mere imagination! It is an exercise to help you understand that the laws of motion in nature apply to everything, from inert matter to human beings. The planets in the solar system revolve around the sun, and this entire system in turn moves about the galaxy. Even your heart uses its consciousness and moves your blood in a circulation. All tangible things follow the laws of motion; sound, force, thought, and atoms all have their particular trajectories.

Your soul is a nucleus of the energy and elements related to you, all of which revolve around you. When you fully understand this fact, you will notice a transformation in your outlook. You will clearly perceive yourself as a center of consciousness acting on everything related to you. You will find that your world, including all the material objects in it, are not an integral part of you—that although you live among them, they are completely separate from you.

## The Rewards of Discovering the Soul

A person who has truly discovered his inner self as the center of consciousness understands that he is related to the physical world, but does not lose himself in it. He is like a lotus flower which grows in the water but remains above it and unaffected by it. And when man considers himself a source of energy and consciousness, rather than a helpless creature, nature provides him with the tools to realize this image. If you regard yourself as a good-for-nothing physical being who takes pleasure only in the cravings of the flesh, your psyche will remain a cesspool of unholy tendencies. But when you become aware of the immense potential of your soul, you will display the attributes of your omnipotent heritage. Just as an adult outgrows the clothing of his childhood, you will outgrow the influence of vice. Your behavior and temperament will undergo dramatic changes.



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A small child does not mind soiling his clothes, but an adult hates to do so and feels embarrassed when it happens, even during sickness. Likewise, when a person becomes more spiritually aware, lower tendencies such as hatred, greed, and anger fall away from his nature like dry leaves. His higher attributes, such as philanthropy and compassion, grow in proportion to his spiritual progress.

## Evidence of Self-Realization: Personal Experience

In order to experience oneself as a center of consciousness, one cannot rely on reasoning and logic alone, because our conjectures are often blind. Through reasoning alone one cannot prove that the person who is being respectfully addressed as "father" is actually the father of the concerned person; this must be confirmed through tests. Similarly, to practice this divine undertaking, one has to set aside all

arguments to get started, and instead, successively adopt the traditionally established and tested practices of *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (absorption). To ensure that the doubts that arise from logic do not interfere with the objective of experiencing the inner self, temporarily hold your objections. Rest assured, it is not my purpose to confuse you with meaningless abstractions. I have full confidence, and say with solemn promise to you who is trusting me in this endeavor that this path is safe. It has been tested by me; I have been there. Come, follow me, you will not be pushed anywhere; you will be slowly led to the destination. Practice the exercises given in this book, and through meditation and contemplation explore the hidden domain of your mind.

Conceptualize yourself as a central star shining like the sun, around which you experience your entire world revolving. Repeat this exercise again and again until the impression becomes so deep that whenever you pronounce "I", there is a flash in your mind of a comprehensive image comprising your



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thoughts, strengths and talents, along with your central star. Whenever you look at the world, everything in it should appear as though revolving around you as the center.

Here is another method for speeding up the process of self-realization: When meditating, repeat your own name, slowly and deliberately. You will find your mind becoming concentrated on your true form.

While trying to conceptualize the soul, many people become distracted and confuse the soul with the limited sense of self related to the physical body. This false identification provides only petty material benefits, increasing a mistaken sense of confidence in the limited self. Identification with the true, inner self requires complete freedom from bodily identification.

## Dissociate From Body-Consciousness

To overcome this hurdle, visualize in the state of meditation that you and your body are two different entities entirely. You are only using your body as a garment or tool, so try to relate to it that way. Imagine your "I" continuing to exist even after your body has been discarded. Imagine leaving your body, observing it from a higher level, as a nest in which you live and can easily depart. You are responsible for making this hollow body healthy, steadfast, and useful. You are its master. You can use it according to your own free will. Tell yourself:

- I am not this body. It is a tool, a rest house.
- This body is made up of elements which my true self has collected and utilized for its purpose.

During meditation, completely forget your body. Concentrate your thoughts and emotions on "I," a separate,





conscious entity. You will then realize that the soul is independent of the body. After developing this awareness, the concept of your body will have an entirely new meaning for you.

However, this should not imply that you must ignore your body in day-to-day life. That would be disastrous. The body is the temple of the soul, and it is your duty to protect it in every way and keep it healthy and strong.

## Extrasensory Experiences

In the initial stages of this spiritual discipline the foregoing practice of dissociation from body-consciousness remains an entertaining and relaxing exercise, but as this imagery begins to take root the practitioner may feel as though he had actually died. There may be flashes of *paroksha darshana*, extrasensory images of things not visible at the place of meditation through normal sight. Hazy images of an extrasensory world (*sukshma*

*jagat* ) may be seen, and other-worldly forms and heavenly scenes may appear. This may frighten the beginner, but one should understand that there is nothing to be afraid of. Sometimes such an acceleration in the process of spiritual practice occurs when virtuous traits brought forward from previous births or latent memories stored in the deeper levels of the mind from this life or previous births are suddenly activated and present these images. However, when progress is made carefully and slowly, such sights do not create any surprise. With steady progress, the seeker acquires the ability to dissociate the soul from the body at will and, rising beyond the body, he becomes aware of phenomena beyond physical sense perception. In this state, however, the soul of the practitioner does not actually leave the body, but, like a person sticking his neck out of a window to look outside and then withdrawing it at will, is able to transcend the limits of the body without severing his connection with it. Beginners are advised not to seek out such experiences; doing that will violate the natural gradual process. This passing reference to such experiences is made so that the *sadhaka* knows not to





become frightened or nervous if any such visions do appear on their own.

## Immortality of the Soul

People generally accept the concept of immortality of the soul on the basis of inherited faith, but one must also consider that this idea could also prove to be an imagination. Let us not accept this concept blindly and without reason, for it could be hearsay. If you are told to sit in meditation and conceive of your own death, it may not appear to be a simple proposition, but it is not difficult for those who have been practicing the exercises of visualization described in the previous pages. When you actually do it, you will say it is not possible that the real I could die. You can imagine the dead body, but there will be a simultaneous awareness that you have not died, but are standing beside the dead body and looking at it. This will help you realize that you cannot actually imagine the death of the

real I in any way. The analytical faculty of one's intellect insists that the soul—the I that is the seer—is immortal. In this way we recognize that we are imbued with an unwavering faith in the immortality of the soul that is deep within the human psyche. This belief is an intrinsic one. It is based on numerous past experiences of the death of the body in earlier births, and beyond which the soul has continued to exist.

The body is said by some to be composed of five basic elements: water, air, earth, fire, and space. During meditation, visualize your true self as independent of this form, unconstrained by any of these elements—free of the body, not confined by it. Tell yourself:

I now have independence from the physical body. I can fly like a bird wherever I will, and air cannot obstruct my movement or speed in any way; nor can it dehydrate me. I am now passing through a huge column of fire without feeling any pain. The





effects of the heat are limited to the heat-sensitive organs of a material body, so how can I, the *atma*, be burnt? And being likewise free from all the effects of earth and water, there remains no element of the physical world that can touch me, or create the least obstruction to my freedom.

The above visual exercise not only elevates the status of the soul above that of the body, it perpetuates the belief that it is beyond the influence even of those elements that constrain the body. The true self becomes aware that it not only has far greater potentialities than the body, but transcends the elements of its physiology as well. This will cause you to feel reborn. You will realize again that things you were formerly afraid of cannot actually harm you, and their reach ends at the physical level. Through knowledge, and with willpower, these fears can be removed at the physical level as well.

## The identification of "I" as the Soul is the Key to Lasting Joy

Always remind yourself that the key to self-realization is the proper identification of "I". Only after developing this capacity can you progress towards total self-realization. You must realize that the immortal soul is independent of the mortal body, that the soul is a star around which your entire world revolves like the planets around the sun. This perception will endow you with vitality and vibrance that will be reflected in your actions. You will feel an unshakable peace, and discover that you cannot be disturbed by the trials of this world.

This is not all. As you make progress you will find yourself gaining skills which will enable you to remain calm during the greatest calamities of life, to quiet them and rule them. A self-realized person always smiles, even during such times. He laughingly bids farewell to worldly problems, saying



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"Goodbye! Go away! Get lost in the darkness and illusion that created you!"

Seekers! Begin practicing these primary lessons in self-realization. Do not despair for quick results if your progress seems slow. Do not be disappointed if you slip backwards as you move forward. You will make up that loss. If you are serious, sincere, single-minded, and steadfast, you will attain self-realization. Remember, even the farthest journeys begin with a single step. Get started, and continue with patience.

#### **Affirmations of this lesson**

- I am a powerhouse of talent and energy.
- I am the inexhaustible source of divine thoughts & vigor.
- My world is revolving around my inner self and I am independent of the physical body.
- I am indestructible.
- I am indivisible. No one and nothing can harm the real me.



# CHAPTER THREE

*indriyani paranyahurindriyebhyah param manah  
manasastu para buddhiryo buddheh partastu sah*

*- Bhagavad Gita 3.42*

The senses, they say, are great;  
Greater than the senses is the mind;  
Greater than the mind is the intellect;  
But greater than the intellect is he (the self).



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In a human being, the body, the senses, the mind, and the soul grow progressively more rarefied, in that order. In order to clearly perceive the soul, one must understand the differences between the body and its senses, between the senses and the mind, and finally, between the mind and the soul. In the preceding chapter, exercises for realizing the soul as an entity apart from the mortal body were provided. In this chapter, the faculties of the mind will be analyzed.

The ancient sages described the mind and intellect as two separate entities. Contemporary philosophers, however, describe the intellect as a faculty of the mind. Both regard intellect as the more subtle component, either as a distinct entity or as part of the mind itself. In this chapter intellect will be taken to mean a more refined state of the mind.

So far, you have learned about the physical covering of the self. This chapter will help you differentiate your true self from the common notion of "I" that is associated with the mind. This is a very subtle distinction, much harder to make than

distinguishing from the physical body. Separating the true self from the faculties of the mind requires a deeper level of perception and sensitivity. Even after extricating the self from its physical coverings, the mind remains and consequently creates confusion. In reality, the mind is the conscious entity that serves as a link between the body and soul. For the sake of convenience, it can be divided into three levels.

## The Three Levels of the Mind

### *Pravratti* Mind

The *pravratti* mind is responsible for the formation of habits. It does not adopt or discard them easily. The experiences of countless years of evolution are all stored in this subconscious layer of the mind. Before assuming their current form, human beings went through countless lower life forms that lacked a developed intellectual capacity, and as such acquired many of the more primitive traits such as anger, aggression, and animosity. Further traits, such as jealousy and anxiety, were also acquired when man himself was not an evolved creature.





Traits like these, when not consciously eliminated through disciplined effort in an earlier birth, accumulate in this level of the mind. It is a unique museum with an odd assortment of antiques. Among them are a few good, worthwhile, and even invaluable instinctive urges, but many others are perverse and frightening. The seeds of all impulses such as greed, violence, cruelty, rage, and impatience which are common in crude people and animals are also stored in a subtle form in this part of the mind. These traits are kept under control by a higher level of mind by some people, whereas others are less able to control them. The basic impulses of the two lower modes of nature, *tamas* (ignorance, dullness, and passivity) and *rajas* (arrogance, sensuality, greed, anger) are all stored in seed form in subconscious layers of the *pravritti* mind.

### *Prabuddha* Mind

Above the *pravritti* mind, there is a subtler level known as the *prabuddha* mind, the intelligent, conscious level that you are using as you read this book. The functions of this layer include analysis, judgment, and discrimination. Logical thinking,

conceptualizing and decision-making also part of this level of mind. One must remember that neither this nor the *pravritti* mind are the soul. With a little more consideration, it will become easier to differentiate between these. This layer of the mind can be further explored through psychology, but for the time being, it is sufficient to understand it as a covering, and not the soul itself.

### *Adhyatma* Mind

The third and most refined level of the mind is known as the *adhyatma* mind, a distinctive characteristic of a spiritually awakened person. In the majority of people it remains inactive. It can be safely concluded that it has begun to awaken in you, as you are reading this and have taken an interest in the subject. This attribute of the mind is manifested in one's self-inspiration, conscience, and talents. Noble urges and emotions such as love and virtue originate here alone. Mercy, empathy, justice, sensitivity, and integrity are all attributes of this level of mind.





But remember! This level of mind is also a garment for the soul, albeit a magnificent one. It is not the soul itself. Nevertheless, the soul can only be reached and experienced through the *adhyatma*.

## The Mind as a tool for Self-Realization

No one level of the mind is an obstruction in itself. In reality, the entire mind is always bringing you closer to the reality of your immortal identity. Each level, provided that it is used properly, has its own specific role in helping the seeker move towards self-realization.

The ordinary person uses only the lowest reaches of his mind. He is unaware that its different realms have unexplored, miraculous potentials. People tend to attribute their failures to the insufficiency of their mind, but instead of doing this, they should strive to properly activate their dormant potentials. These lessons can be put into practice through the mind, just as all activities leading to success. This book is addressing your

mind directly, after all, saying "Open the door and receive wisdom from your higher faculties! Please pay attention. Please do not create obstacles! The messages of your intuition can only be received through your *adhyatma* mind, which has the capacity to perceive the truth. Do not stop it when it opens itself to enlightenment."

## Differentiating the Soul from the Products of the Mind

Seat yourself in a calm and relaxed state of mind. Open yourself to the wisdom your *adhyatma* mind can give you. In the previous lessons, you have come to understand that your "I" is an immortal entity, and that it can control your thoughts, emotions, and qualities. Now you will proceed further, to the realization that all objective and subjective thoughts are products of the mind and are, therefore, not the soul. In other words, the soul is an entity independent of the mind.





Now, examine how the soul exists independent of the mind. Numerous emotional impulses such as love, anger, hatred, and joy constantly rise and fall in the mind. Believe that the soul can differentiate, examine, analyze, and discard each of these. It can also observe the stages of their beginning, intensifying, and ending. All these impulses are part of an ongoing observation. Their nature can be dissected and their impact assessed. When you picture it in this way, the observer—the soul—is a different entity from the observed objects, which are the body and mind. Visualizing the inner self this way will make it easier to comprehend. After a while, you will become so adept at this that it will seem as if the object of observation were another person entirely.

The fact that the creations of the mind can be observed as separate objects is an indication that they are not part of your real self. With practice, this perception of separation will become stronger and stronger—until ultimately it is an abiding, uninterrupted experience.

## Inherent Human Traits and the Soul

The purpose of these lessons is not to make you indifferent to emotion, although it would be a pleasure if you developed an ability to rise above downgrading tendencies. For now, however, ignore all traits, both good and bad. Leave them as they are. Realize that an overarching, independent entity is beyond all of them. Once the immensity of that entity is understood, you may look back at those traits again and utilize them as their rightful owner. You will not be afraid to abandon unwanted traits once you realize that you are in charge. By thinking this, you will be able to utilize your traits according to your will. There is no need to worry that a particular trait has become so strong it cannot be discarded. Your soul existed before the trait, and if it is able to perceive it objectively and independently, why would it not be able to discard it? Remember! The "I" considers the mind and its powers as its tools. It is the master of the mind.



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Inspirations arising from the *adhyatma* mind are also separate from the self, and can be observed in the same manner as the traits from the *pravritti* mind. You may believe that inspirations from the *adhyatma* are a part of the self, but they are not; the *adhyatma* is simply a higher stage on the road to getting in touch with your soul. The reflection of the soul in the *adhyatma* mind is like the image of the sun seen in water. The first experience of it creates the illusion that it is itself the soul, but in reality it is not. The soul is like a glittering jewel wrapped under several layers of cloth. As the coverings are removed one by one, the filtered light seems to become brighter, but the inherent brilliance of the jewel is always the same. It is not determined by the layers that cover it.

The sole purpose of trying to reach the *adhyatma* mind is to create the highest possible awareness of the soul, so that you are convinced of its competence and can utilize its instruments properly. This understanding will empower you to discard the old garments of regressive traits and illusions, and don the new ones of virtue. Then you will be able to carry out the duties and

responsibilities of your life effectively, thus becoming a role model for others.

After attaining this level of perception through persistent practice, the seeker may be eager to know what remains to be experienced beyond the soul. Transcending the soul is the *vishuddha atma*, the pure, ultimate, immutable supreme soul of which the individual soul is only a spark. The conviction of this transcendental being comes through personal realization. By separating the soul from the body, the mind, and everything else related to it, and by successively discarding ever subtler layers of consciousness, the seeker is ultimately left with the immortal, immutable soul, beyond which nothing remains to be discerned. The logic is simple. The thinker, the analyst, and the object being deliberated upon, or being analyzed, can never be the same. The sun is self-luminous, it does not shine on itself as a separate object. In the same manner, "you" are not an object of deliberation, yet your consciousness tells you "I am." This is proof that your soul exists.





## The Soul as an Ever Present Witness

The "I," the soul, is a drop of the absolute ocean of consciousness people know as God. It is one spark of that sun of the spirit. Seeker! Perceive the existence of the soul in yourself, and appreciate that man is a deity in deep slumber, unaware of his potential. Within a human being, this potential is dormant, awaiting discovery and seeking an outlet to manifest itself. Initially its progress is slow, but after rising to the plane of the *adhyatma* mind, its vision becomes clear, and its path easy. After that, progress is steady and effortless.

In the next chapter, you shall see that the soul, too, does not have an independent existence of its own and always remains an integral part of the supreme spirit. However, before exploring this, you must attain realization of the soul within yourself. Do not take these words as rambling and discard them; the elaborations here may not be as explicit as needed for this complex subject. Nevertheless, through these words, a great truth is being revealed. As you read these lines, your soul

waits to proceed towards enlightenment. Take refuge in its leadership, and step forward.

For the explanation of such a great subject, thoughts and words seem weak. But the subject pertains to intangible realms of consciousness, which are beyond the reach of words and expressions, just as the taste of a favorite food can not be explained in word, it must be personally tasted. This book is to help you cultivate an interest in the subject. Until you have personally experienced it, knowledge remains a mere theoretical statement. But once you have, these truths will never disappear from sight and no argument will be capable of shaking your trust in it.

## The Inner Self as the Master of Mind and Body

Consider your soul to be the master of your body and mind. The mind and body are your subjects. So far, they have



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enslaved and exploited you. They dictated their own terms to you. But now, shatter their influence with one mighty blow! They cannot torment you any longer, so free yourself from their slavery! You are now being offered the throne of your kingdom. Order your subjects—your temperament, your thoughts, your intellect, your desires—to work under your direction. They must now obey your orders with complete loyalty, and never show the least carelessness in maintaining your kingdom.

There is a general belief that the mind is the cause of all downfalls, that it drags a person from one adversity to another. With the help of the contemplative exercises here, you will be free of such troubles, because you will have learned their origin and developed the confidence to control them.

The sight of a large factory with hundreds of machines may overwhelm an inexperienced person, but the engineer who is familiar with it feels perfectly at ease. He can make each section of the plant work as he desires, like an experienced

mahout controlling his elephant, or a snake charmer directing his viper to sway to his tune. The engineer has no fear; he takes pride in assuming responsibility of such a complex factory. He watches the production with great joy and records the accomplishments made under his supervision.

One who has properly understood the nature and workings of the soul is like that engineer. Even the subconscious mind is responsive to his will. When his conscious mind is engaged in other activities, the subconscious mind works quietly towards the completion of its assignments. When it reveals its work, it often takes the new seeker by surprise, as if it were some kind of paranormal phenomenon. But the advanced seeker knows that it is simply the manifestation of his latent potentialities.

Be patient. The task is difficult, but the results are greatly rewarding. Even if it takes years of practice, the endeavor of self-realization should never be abandoned. Do not remain simply intellectually satisfied by reading this. Study, contemplate, have faith, and move forward on the path of self-realization.





### Affirmations of this Lesson

- I am the master. My mind is an instrument for my expression.
- I am not the mind. I am not dependent on the authority of the mind.
- I am not a slave of my mind, I am the master of it.
- I am capable of separating the self from intellect, temperament, desires, and all other faculties and activities of mind. Leaving all these aside, what is left, is I.
- I am indestructible, eternal, immortal, ever-pure, immutable and undifferentiated bliss.



# CHAPTER FOUR

*isha vasyam idam sarvam yat kincha jagatyam jagat*

*- Isa Upanishad*

Whatever exists in this world is pervaded by his omnipresence.



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## So 'ham — I Am That

The intent of the previous chapters was to introduce the reader to the inner self and the layers that cover it. This chapter endeavors to explain the relationship between the soul and the supreme spirit, the *paramatma*. The power of the soul is even greater than described by the previous chapters, for it is a part of the supreme spirit. There is no difference between the two.

You must now realize that what you have perceived yourself to be is actually far greater than you can imagine. The jurisdiction of the soul reaches far beyond that. It is cared for and nourished by the supreme spirit like a fetus in the mother's womb. It is made of that supreme spirit, and spiritual practice ultimately results in a union of that individual soul (*aham*) and the supreme spirit itself. Then ensues a state of awareness which the yogis describe as "So '*aham*,'" or "I am that."

## Man as a Tortoise in a River

Now practice this meditation: let your imagination expand to include everything you have ever seen, thought of, and heard about. Your mental imagery will show you an unimaginable, immense expanse of matter. This is how man perceives the world. What he overlooks is that there is also an endless ocean of consciousness that coexists with this material world. Every drop of this consciousness is moving forward in its own space. The elements of matter that make up the physiology of life are constantly undergoing physical and chemical changes.

Take your body, for example. Chemicals that compose various types of organic matter today will enter your body tomorrow and leave it the day after. Science tells us that the body's infinite cells are constantly being replaced by new ones. In this way, although it may not appear to be so, the body undergoes complete renewal!





In this ocean of matter and energy, human beings and other life forms live like tortoises in a flowing river. A tortoise is only aware that he is surrounded by water. He is ignorant of the water's renewal and the movement of the current. Similarly, we are hardly aware of the perpetual movement of natural currents of matter around us, although these currents are constantly going through all beings. Everything in this world is undergoing change. This is the absolute, immutable law of nature, both material and spiritual.

"The world is fleeting," sang the sages. This must have explained all of its perpetual movement. The same applies to mental energies, which are also constantly moving about the world. Thoughts, words, and philosophies all travel through the atmosphere, and sometimes identical ideas arise in many minds simultaneously. Mass thinking by groups of immoral people pollutes the environment, and a more refined person feels suffocated at such places. On the other hand, one feels relaxed at a place of healthier entertainment, and peaceful at a place of worship.

Sound waves are now within the reach of scientific instruments. Radio waves are proof of invisible currents as carriers of information around the world. Polygraphs can produce displays of various emotional states. Like clouds, currents of thought hover around people, and they constantly interact with them. People can attract or repel specific ideas with the power of their minds.

Each of the three levels of the mind has its own independent flow, and as the older elements of the body are replaced, so too are the constituents of the mind. They are always in a state of flux. An individual pledged to detachment until yesterday could be found infatuated with sensory desires today. The most hated enemy of yesterday becomes the loved one of today. The money-monger suddenly becomes a *sannyasi*, a person who has renounced all earthly concerns. There are so many examples of such transformations, and it is because old thoughts and ideologies are perpetually being replaced by new ones.





The belief that everything in this world, both visible and invisible, is constantly moving can help us understand that this entire world is one. The basis of creation is its unity. Everything is related and interdependent. Saying "nothing in this world belongs to me" or "everything in this world belongs to me" is the same, because in such a unified state, everything belongs to everyone. Let us compare this unified field with a river. Standing in a flowing river, which molecules of its water will you claim to be related to your person? Consider the situation. The current of water is continuously flowing. The molecules of water that are touching your body at this particular moment will, in the next moment, go far away from you, but you are constantly in contact with the flowing current. As such, you have two options. Either accept the entire stream as yours or say that no part of it is in contact with you. Obviously, you cannot claim a relationship to a part while disowning the whole.

The world is an ocean of life and energy in which the soul is progressively evolving, taking what is necessary and discarding

what is not. Nature is not dead. Each particle of what we call physical matter is also living and has intelligence of its own. All its molecules are alive and in motion, following universal laws. Each particle is being sustained, activated, and made to act intelligently within a particular paradigm in its own fields of life and energy. All people, like fish in water, are dependent for their very survival on this ocean of life. The force of consciousness activates infinite systems, forms, and forces of this cosmos.

You must realize that all embodied beings, whatever their form, are part of your own self. The same energy which animates you is present in each of them. The rigid fences with which you limit what belongs to you must be broken down. The perception that only a few drops of this ocean of consciousness belong to you personally is an illusion.

Visualize that being part of the supreme spirit, your soul encompasses the entire world. This process expands your individual self to the dimension of the supreme self. When the



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balloon bursts, so to speak, the seeker becomes a *yogi*, one whose individuality has been consciously united with the cosmic self. To do this, one must cultivate a sense of unity with all beings.

The Gita says:

*sarvabhutastham atmanam sarvabhutani ca 'tmani  
ikshate yogayuktatma sarvatra samadarshanah*

- *Bhagavad Gita* 6.29

He whose self is disciplined in yoga sees the self in all beings and all beings in the self; everywhere he sees the same.

Realizing that all beings are part of that unified existence, the yogi interacts with them without discrimination, and perceives his own self as intrinsically related to all. Such an individual, by expanding the limits of his thoughts and feelings to include everyone in the world, feels connect to all living beings regardless of their external appearance. And in

addition to being linked with one another, the souls of all beings are also individual linked to the supreme spirit. This is the truth behind the concept of universal brotherhood. The experience of it cannot be described in words. In yogic language, this indescribable bliss is known as *samadhi*. It brings with it freedom from bondage to the world, independence, self-reliance, and total liberation.

## Meditation for Awareness of the Unified Field

Enter a state of meditation and concentrate on the life force flowing through all beings. Believe that there is only one cosmic consciousness vibrating through the universe, and that this force has differentiated into the five basic elements that constitute all beings. All perceptions and sensations are chemical reactions produced as a consequence of interactions between these elements and the mind; each sensory





perception is like a frequency of sound from an instrument. The primordial source of energy is one, and it sustains your life in the same manner as it sustains other organisms. The children of nature are sitting together, sharing one quilt of cosmic consciousness. Let your mind, heart, and intellect understand this truth without reservation. Let it become a matter of deep faith for you.

## Unification with the Universal Mind

You have learnt about the unity of all creation. Now, turn your mind to the way that the cosmic energy manifests itself in various beings. Your individual mind is only a drop in this ocean of minds, all working with hundreds of mental processes, all composing a universal field of knowledge and perception. The mind of an individual acquires knowledge through books, people, or direct interaction with the universal mental plane. Like the life force which sustains all living beings, the ocean of knowledge is also an active force, and it

can be utilized. As a tortoise can drink from the river it is in and discard its waste into the same, man can also use and discard the thoughts from this universal field.

When one becomes convinced of the universality of body and mind, nothing appears personal or individual. The enlightened person becomes free of the illusion that the sheaths of his body and mind exist in isolation. With the relationship between all things throughout the universe, each individual can be considered an integral part of the whole. Then, nothing in the world appears alien. The two aforementioned statements, "everything in the world belongs to me" and "nothing in this world belongs to me," mean the same to him.

Now, understand that the soul knows this. It views all things—inanimate matter, lower orders of beings, the constellations and planets—with happiness and a sense of unity. To the soul, nothing appears alien, ugly, despicable, or unworthy of intimacy. It does not consider the nests of the





birds less significant than its own residence. This level of enlightened empathy is not only essential for individual spiritual progress, but necessary for the well-being of the entire world. From this level of consciousness, the world is revealed in its true perspective, and the awakened seer will know how to act with equanimity in all circumstances. Once a seeker reaches this stage, he no longer needs to seek any virtues. They become part of his personality, and evil impulses fall away like dry autumn leaves before the onset of spring.

## The Attitude of a Steadfast, Wise Person

One who attains steadfast wisdom (*sthitapragya*, Gita 2.55–72) realizes that although all beings seem to have their independent individuality, they are parts of one supreme reality, that the water in all of these vessels reflects the image of the same sun. Even though the child has a separate existence,

his own body is made with parts from both his mother and father. The soul also has its immortal existence, but it is so in relation to the supreme soul. This is the ultimate state of unity, of self-realization, in which the individual soul declares, "*so 'aham asmi*"—I am that absolute spirit! At this time, he realizes that in the multitude of shapes and forms in the world there is the hidden reality of one life, one force, and one truth.

Seekers of truth, strive for this level of attainment. The quest for absolute truth ends with the answer to "What am I?" This is the highest wisdom, beyond which nothing remains to be known. The life of one who has learned this by heart will be full of love and compassion. This is the fulfillment of the aim of human life.





### Affirmations of this lesson

- My body and mind, and associated people, places, and things, are only momentary manifestations of the all-pervading universal matter.
- All products of my mind—information, thoughts, ideologies, and resolutions—are particles of an undifferentiated universal field of intelligence in the mental element.
- The elements of matter and mind are perpetually in motion. Therefore, there are no limitations to the number of things belonging to me. Everything in all the planetary systems of the cosmos belongs to me.
- My immortal soul is an inseparable and indivisible portion of the absolute spirit (*paramatman*) in its ultimate state.
- I have attained the at-one-ment with the supreme spirit and am even now experiencing the unity of my soul with the absolute spirit.
- *So 'aham asmi*—I am that.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shriram Sharma was a scholar, philosopher and a visionary. He believed that the problems of the world stemmed from our lack of spiritual outlook, and that all of them could be solved by changing our individual mindset. To this end, he authored many books relating to topics such as scientific spirituality, anti-consumerism, social service, and other subjects for which he saw a prominent need in today's world.

What Am I, written in 1940, was his first book. It was intended to give his readers a sense of their own identity, based on the Vedic idea of the soul and its potential.

He explained that each spiritual activity is based on the science of auto-suggestion, creating necessary changes in one's personality and thinking.

He established several institutions, including a unique Research Institute for scientific spirituality, the Dev Sanskriti Vishwavidyalaya (Divine Culture University), and Shantikunj, a spiritual guidance center and headquarters for All World Gayatri Pariwar (AWGP). His organization, the Gayatri Pariwar, is composed of millions of members worldwide and runs like a family.

