

PRABODHA CHINTĀMAṆI

50 Reflections on Morals

Mahāmahopādhyāya Vidwān

K. G. Subraya Sharma, M.A.,



**Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma delivering discourse at Puttaparthi
in the august presense of Bhagavan Sri Satya Sai Baba (2006)**



**Vidwan Sharma being honoured by His Excellency
T. N. Chaturvedi the Honourable Governor of Karnataka (2006)**

Prabodha Cintāmaṇi

50 Reflections on Morals

Author

अध्यात्मविद्याप्रवीण, वेदविद्याभूषण, अद्वैतज्ञानसिंधु, विद्याविधिनिधि, वेदश्री, वेदान्तवारिधि, वेदान्तभास्कर, वेदान्तसरस्वति, वेदान्तकेसरि, वेदान्तसार्वभौम, वेदान्तकामधेनु, वेदान्तराजहंस, विवेकभास्कर, शास्त्रनिधि, अद्वैतवेदान्तकेसरि, अद्वैतज्ञानतेज, वेदान्तसागर, वेदान्त रत्न, वेदान्तचिन्तामणि, अद्वैतसारतिलक, वेदान्तचक्रवर्ति, वेदान्तप्रभाकर, अद्वैतवेदान्तवारिधि, अद्वैतवेदान्तचूडामणि, अद्वैतवेदतिलक, अद्वैतवेदान्तविचक्षण, वेदान्तसारतिलक, वेदागमविद्यासागर, सुवर्णकर्नाटक कन्नडिग, भुविवेदान्तैकश्रेष्ठरत्न, राष्ट्ररत्न, वेदान्तरत्नाकर, सुवर्णकर्नाटक सुवर्णवेदान्ति, स्वर्णभूषण, वेदान्तगङ्गाधर, अद्वैतवेदान्तवाचस्पति, अद्वैतवेदान्तशिखामणि, गोविन्दलक्ष्मी पुरस्कार, बसवनगुडिरत्न, सहुरुसेवाधुरीण, अद्वैतवेदान्तसव्यसाची
श्रीश्रीसद्गुरुहृदयभास्कर, मन्त्रालय श्रीश्रीसुशामीन्द्रतीर्थस्वामीजि
“राष्ट्रीय ज्ञान पुरस्कार”, “सुवर्ण कर्णाटक साहित्य प्रशस्ति”
सुवर्णकर्नाटक “राज्योत्सव प्रशस्ति”—२००५ पुरस्कृत

Mahāmahopādhyāya

Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma, M.A.,
(Direct Disciple of Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswathi Swamiji)

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DEDICATED

*with loving and respectful Pranams
at the holy lotus feet of
My beloved and blessed Sadgurudev
Paramapoojya Sri Sri 1008*

Satchidanandendra Saraswathi Maha Swamiji

K. G. SUBRAYA SHARMA
(Sadgurupaadarenu)

PREFACE

Vidwan Ved. Br. Sri. K. G. S. Sharma, having spent 16 long years as a disciple in 'Gurukula' system with his most revered Guruji **Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswathi of Holenarasipur** (Hassan Dist. Karnataka) has become an exponent of Vedanta (The Hindu Philosophy) '**par excellence**'. He has mastered the extremely subtle ideas in the works of Sri Shankaracharya's Brahma Sutras, Gaudapāda's Māndūkya Kārikas and as well as Dashopanishads and the allied subjects. His unparalleled '**Guru Shushrūshā**' yielded him the unique ability to make less educated and pandits to understand the intricacies of Hindu Philosophy and Vedanta equally well.

Having been at the acme of intellect and overlooking the confluence of the paths of philosophy, Vedanta and Vyavahara attracted one and all by his excellent oratory and brought them all to the virtuous path. '**Vox Populi, Vox Dei**' (L) That is, the Voice of people is the Voice of GOD. This brought him an unthinkable number of awards '**Honor Virtutis Praemium** (L) i.e the honor is the rewards of virtues.

As I could see the English version of the 50 articles published some time ago in a news daily 'Kannada Prabha' as unique, simple and intelligible by one and all with the efficient usage of appropriate words. These articles are worth reading. These are the eye-openers for all to overcome even the simple situations in our daily routine.

I am extremely happy to write these few lines about my most revered Guruji and his articles (in the book) as I had thoroughly gone through them while proof reading.

May the almighty bless him and his family with all that that is the best in the world so that many many such pearls roll out of his sacred pen.

Adieu

Gurupādareṇu

Date: 15-11-2010

Prof. T. Ashwathanarayana Rao

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Banashankari 2nd Stage, Bangalore-70

VIDWAN K. G. SUBRAYA SHARMA GURUJI THE PEERLESS VEDANTA-TEACHER

In the Katopanishad (2.7) Lord Yama Says आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा; meaning: It is wonderful (rare) indeed to find a (pristine pure) teacher of Atma Vidya. The wonder here is both the 'existence' of this sublime teacher as well as 'finding' him. Such is the greatness attached to the Guru who teaches the Brahma Vidya in our scriptures. And, we are all extremely fortunate to have in our midst our beloved Guruji, Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma the peerless teacher of traditional Vedanta.

Vedanta is traditionally taught to people who have started to focus on higher goals in life and rightly so, given up materialistic pursuits in life, leading them to take to the path of renunciation. संन्यस्य श्रवणं कुर्यात् is a famous statement. But here, we have a Guru who himself is a Gruhastha (house-holder) living a 'Vedantic' life: teaching, thinking, breathing, reading, writing Vedanta all day, seven days a week, 365 days an year, year after year uninterruptedly for more than 45 years now. One is awed by his perfect understanding of relative and absolute Truths and the way he puts it into practice to live a harmonious life amongst normal people. He is at the same time a Vedanti and a Gruhastha packed into one person. Such a person is extremely rare to find.

Guruji had the great fortune of studying the Vedanta Shastras in a traditional Gurukula way for 16 years (from 1959 to 1975) under his revered Guru **Swami Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswati.**

Swamiji was and remains one of the greatest exponents of Vedanta of modern times, and was fondly known as '**Abhinava Shankara**' for his crystal clear explanation of the Prasthanatraya Bhashyas of Adi Shankara as well as penning innumerable invaluable books and articles on Vedanta. Swamiji was declared as a **Shrotriya-Brahmanishta** by none other than the **Kanchi Mahaswami Paramacharya Sri Sri Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati**, Himself known to the world as the '**Walking GOD**'.

Never to compromise on his traditional personal life-style, Guruji is at ease and ever accepting people from all walks of life, both the traditional and the non-traditional. One cannot go away without partaking the infinite energy and universal love that Guruji radiates in every interaction. His simple life style and unassuming approach are like jewels on his crown of knowledge. An acknowledged expert of present days in the Vedanta Shastras, Guruji is extremely well versed in other darshanas, Itihasa, Purana, Meemamsa etc., and we have had the good fortune of clarifying many a doubt on multiple topics during our daily Vedanta classes. His mastery over Samskruta (especially Sanskrit grammar), Kannada and English languages enables him to explain complex topics and Shruti mantras in a lucid and simple manner that even a lay man can well understand the import and purport of the Shastras; no doubts left behind. Such is the energy of our Guruji that he has achieved improbable feats like conducting more than 15 lectures on a single day and writing 4 valuable life time collections: Extracting the essence of Vedanta, Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Subhashitas and Shankara's Teachings in a wonderful format of 'message

for each day through the year' in his books **Vedānta Samvatsara**, **Gita Samvatsara**, **Subhāshita Samvatsara** and **Shānkara Samvatsara** respectively.

As we approach 2011, Guruji would have spent more than 45 years in his relentless pursuit of teaching Vedanta not only in class rooms but also through authoring the renowned magazine 'Shankara Bhaskara', from 1988 to 2006, through which he resolutely reached out to the world of more than 15,000 life members. Not a single day would have gone by without his public acknowledgment of the greatness of his Guru, **Swami Satchidānandendra Saraswati**; such is Guruji's devotion to Swamiji! No doubt, the over 46 titles bestowed on him by various prestigious institutions from all over the country sit very lightly on him. Notable among the titles were the ones he was adorned in May 2009 '**Mahāmahopādhyāya**' from Akhila Bhāratīya Samskruta Vidvath Parishat Ayodhya of The Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, **Prayag**, and '**Vedanta Gangādhara**' from The Gandhi-Nehru Vichar Munch, **Varanasi**.

We have not had the good fortune of having darshan of Swami Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswati. But, truly, we see Swamiji himself in our Guruji. What else can we do but just bow down ourselves with utmost reverence to Guruji and Swamiji and offer our humble pranams and pray to the Lord to grant good health and prosperity to our beloved Guruji and his family.

नमः परमगुरुभ्यो, नमः परमगुरुभ्यः ।

Date: 16-11-2010
23, 6th Block, 7th Cross
Koramangala, Bangalore-560 095

Karthikeyan Natarajan
Chief Operating Office
Eka Software Solutions

A FEW LINES OF GRATITUDE

My humble and respectful Pranams at the holy lotus feet of My beloved Sadguru, His Holiness Sri Sri **Satchidanandendra Saraswati Mahaswamigal** who kept me with him, protected me, nourished me and taught me all the Prasthāna Traya Bhāshyas of Sri Shankara and has shown me the tenets of Advaita Vedanta and properly guided me in the spiritual path. I wholeheartedly revere my Sadguru as my सर्वस्व.

It is really my Sadguru's benign blessings that I have been always spending my time in the study of Vedanta and imparting knowledge to the worthy and needy students of Vedanta for more than five decades. It is my great fortune that I have served my Sadguru for 16 years of which nine years as the only blessed **Private Secretary** to my beloved SADGURUDEVA.

All the previous books of mine in Kannada were sold out in a very short period of time, being very popular. Prabodha Cintāmaṇi, a Kannada book has been translated into 9 languages including Urdu. Now this book has been published in English also. The present book contains 50 independent articles on Morals.

My grateful thanks to all well-wishers who have gone through the proof sheets and to Pro. T. Aswatha Narayana Rao in particular for his preface to this book. Sri B. N. Nataraj has taken care in printing this book. My special thanks to him. May Sadguru's blessings be showered on all the seekers of Truth.

Date: Sunday, 20-11-2010
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VIDWAN SHRI K. G. SUBRAYA SHARMA

My Beloved and Blessed Guru

It is a distinct privilege and pleasure to say a few words about my brief time with the renowned scholar of Vedanta, Vidwan Shri K. G. Subraya Sharma in Bangalore, who is my worthy Guru.

Armed only with an intense desire to understand '**Amanaska Yoga**' as expounded by Gaudapadacharya, I had approached Vidwan Shri Sharmaji for help in understanding seven verses from the Maandukya Kaarika by Gaudapadacharya. It is indicative of his remarkable kind-heartedness and dedication to Vedanta that he immediately agreed to spend an hour each day with me, a total stranger, despite his extremely busy daily schedule of teaching Vedanta all over Bangalore. Despite my obvious deficiencies in knowledge of Sanskrit and poor training in Vedanta, he taught me patiently for six weeks and showered me with affectionate attention.

As a teacher, Vidwan Shri Sharma is awesome. Having spent 16 years as a youth serving his Guru **Swami Satchidanandendra Saraswathi** of Holenarasipur, he has devoted his life to spreading the wisdom of Vedanta. His mastery of the whole body of Shankara's writings on Vedanta, bolstered by a mastery of Sanskrit and a variety of ancillary disciplines such as Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, has given Vidwan Shri Sharma a unique capacity to dispel popular misunderstandings of Vedantic concepts. He is tireless in conveying to students the profound insights he has gained from a life-long devotion to Vedanta. He is

always eager to expound the deepest level of meaning in the most simple and practical ways to help the students understand Vedanta—even the extremely subtle ideas contained in works such as Gaudapadacharya’s *Maandukya Kaarika* and Shankaracharya’s *Bhashya* on the *Brahma Sutras*.

Exuding a deep reverence for the *guru parampara* that has preserved and transmitted this noble knowledge over the millennia, Vidwan Shri Sharma conveys his enthusiasm and infectious energy to his students. His life style is disarmingly simple and he maintains a staunch adherence to traditional values. At the same time, as a true Vedantin, he is perfectly at ease with people from all walks of life and all corners of the world. These enviable qualities make him an exemplar of the ability to apply Vedantic principles in the context of modern family life. The sheer joy that he himself obviously derives from the contemplation of Vedanta is a great inspiration to all those who come in contact with him.

I am deeply grateful to Vidwan Shri Sharma and his family for the overwhelming warmth and affection with which they accepted my daily intrusions into their home. Thanks to his patient instruction, I have gained immeasurably in my understanding of Vedanta. I hope and pray that I can find ways to put this understanding to good use in my own life. Like me, spiritual seekers everywhere are indeed blessed to be guided by an erudite scholar and dedicated teacher such as Vidwan Shri Sharma.

Dr. D. C. Rao

Washington D.C., USA

Date: 10-4-2009

Sri Sharma, the Blessed Disciple

The Vedanta literature of ancient India is a storehouse of wisdom and knowledge. It has a well defined purpose to remove our innate ignorance, so that our true nature can shine forth. The most advanced seekers need simply to be reminded that they are the eternal Atman, the **Supreme Brahman**. By simply hearing this truth, their misconceptions fall away. However, for the rest of us, we need to reflect and deeply meditate on what we hear and are taught before we fully grasp its meaning.

With his unique publications in Kannada 'Shānkara Samvatsara' and 'Vedānta Samvatsara', Sri K. G. Subraya Sharma has provided a wonderful way to allow us to undertake this necessary reflection and contemplation of the teachings of the Vedaanta Shastra, to allow the dawn of knowledge in us. By providing a thought for every day of the year, he has made it easy for all of us to follow and understand the ancient wisdom of Vedaanta.

I was fortunate enough to meet Sri K. G. Subraya Sharma through my Gurus from Mattur village. I fondly remember the many occasions we have conversed together in Sanskrit, discussing the works of Shankara. I have always been impressed with the ease with which he can explain the concepts of advaita with such simplicity and clarity. **Sri K. G. Subraya Sharma, the author, has truly been blessed with the grace of his Guru, Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswati Swamiji of Revered Memory of Holenarsipur.**

It is with great pleasure that we present to the public a Sanskrit edition of “**Vedānta Samvatsara**”. In this masterpiece, Sri K. G. Subraya Sharma has provided a thought for each day of the year from the ancient 14 Upanishads, which is then explained in clear and simple Sanskrit with one stanza composed by him in the simple Sanskrit. The reader may be tempted to assume that this book of Sanskrit edition may be of benefit only to scholars, and therefore may not be of relevance to the rest of us. However, the genius of this book is that it presents the profound truths of Vedanta in such straightforward, elegant, simple and lucid Sanskrit, that it is a great opportunity for anybody wishing to study Sanskrit to simultaneously study the language as well as the teachings of Vedanta. I wish I had such a book when I was learning Sanskrit in my youth! **I would encourage all teachers of Sanskrit to seriously consider using this excellent book as a READER for their students.**

There is a temptation to view Sanskrit as a “non-living” language. But books such as “**Vedānta Samvatsara**” by **Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma**, a renowned, popular and profound Sanskrit scholar and a genuine Vedantin, affirm that Sanskrit is as alive and vibrant as ever. We should continue to encourage new original works in Sanskrit for future generations. We are deeply grateful to Sri K. G. Subraya Sharma for completing this Sanskrit translation of his work “**Vedānta Samvatsara**”.

Hampshire, England
Date: 15-4-2006

Subhanu Saxena

Sri Sharmaji and Pujya Swamiji

Truly, Sri K. G. Subraya Sharma has assumed the magnificent role of a **spiritual emissary of Sri Sri Satchidanandendra Saraswathi Swamiji of revered memory just as Swami Vivekananda was of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.**

With a simple but attractive get up and contents which are highly profound and sublime, the book **“Vedaanta Samvatsara”** by Shri K. G. Subraya Sharma induced me to scan and scrutinize more than 380 tenets culled out from fourteen Upanishads. In fact, if the reader sincerely follows the directions given by the erudite and experienced scholar and imbibes the lofty spiritual teachings, he is bound to undergo a complete transformation to have a new beneficial perspective and outlook on life. The author’s judicious selection of the Upanishadic Mantras pregnant with esoteric concepts and his simple, lucid, inimitable style of elucidating even the most terse verse will not fail to create a yearning desire to study the **Prasthanā Traya Bhashyas** of Adi Shankara at the holy feet of a Sadguru who is both a “Shrotriya” and “Brahmanishta” like Sri Subraya Sharma.

I was highly elated and felt ‘honoured’. I had the pleasure, nay, the fortune, of knowing Shri Sharma right from the time he stayed at the Thyagarajanagar Karyalaya with Shri Shri Swamiji, of revered memory as soon as the building was ready for occupation in early 70’s. I have watched with all admiration his meteoric rise in the spiritual world soon after his Guru gave up his mortal coil in 1975. **It is no exaggeration**

when I say that he single-handedly enhanced the reputation of Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya as a leading seat of pristine pure Advaita Vedanta of Adi Shankara. He has trekked in the footsteps of his Guru and has successfully carried forward the task of a revival of the hoary, ancient tradition through Vedanta discourses.

I can vividly visualize memorable milestones of his spiritual achievements. For nearly four decades Sri Sharma has been giving discourses at more than half a dozen centres daily spread all over the metropolis of Bangalore and in nearby places. His physical stamina and mental will power are simply stupendous and unrivalled. His innovative genius prods and prompts helped him to come out with ever new novel devices in his relentless efforts to propagate Vedanta. He has authored many beautiful treatises, which have become very popular. **His brain-child and internationally famous quarterly, 'Shankara Bhaskara', has over 20,000 subscribers spread all over India and many Western countries.** The present venture—'**Vedanta Samvatsara'**—is a book of which more than 10,000 copies are already sold out even before publication.

May his Guru's benign blessings and Paramaatman's divine grace grant him a long, prosperous life and induce him to achieve greater objectives in the years to come!

Vyasagiri, Kerala

Date: 18-9-2004

D. B. Gangolli

An ardent follower of the Swamiji since 1965

Discourses and Interactions in Germany

Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma gave many lectures and conducted many sessions of questions and answers and a number of interactions. To mention some of the important discourses that Guruji delivered in Germany:

On 25-05-2008 in “Surya Villa” a Buddhist Centre, we had organized the first lecture “**the power of Mantras**”. Starting with the definition, Guruji highlighted the importance of proper pronunciation and pitch to derive the desired results.

“**Festivals of India**” was organized by Mr. Kretschmer with the support of Govt. of Potsdam from 30-05-2008 to 1-06-2008. At 18.00 hrs. on 30-05-2008 the highlight of the festivals was “Yajna”, which was lead by Sri Sharma. The Cultural minister of Indian embassy and two German couples participated in the Yajna. After the “Yajna”, Guruji explained the significance of it. This was a spectacular event, which kindled interest in many spectators and we were involved in answering them the rest of the evening. Many local news papers covered this event.

On 3-06-2008, we had organized a joint lecture at “Yoga Home” with Mrs. Shubraji from USA, a disciple of Swami Chinmayananda. The topic was “Power of thought” which was also well acknowledged by the participants. On 4-06-2008, Guruji gave a lecture on “Sweetness of Sanskrit in Bhagavad Gita” in the Indology department of Leipzig University.

In **Indian Embassy**, on 6-06-2008, Guruji delivered a lecture on “Brahma Sutra Bhaasya” of Sri Shankaraachaarya. There was excellent interaction with the participants. One participant a Sanskrit Professor,

even remarked that she had not heard such an interesting lecture so far. Without doubt, amongst the participants, Guruji has touched the consciousness of one and the inspired the other to acquire this knowledge thus fulfilling the very purpose of his visit to Germany.

SRI SHARMA

As we have seen him, he is quite humble and simple, unassuming Vedantin; his needs are very less. Several thousand kilometers away from home town, he still carried out his daily Pooja, 3 times Sandhya Vandana, Brahma Yajna, Surya Namaskara and regular Nithyaanusthanaas without fail. In short he maintained the same life style as at home.

During many brain storming discussions about many topics, we found that Guruji is open to other schools of thought as well.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the tour was quite successful. We are highly benefitted to a great extent in his company. Our house was everyday reverberating with Vedas from morning to night. Just for us he gave very often special discourses through which we had an opportunity to discuss in detail about many aspects of Vedanta. We are sure he has also been immensely benefitted by being here in totally a different atmosphere, amongst people with a different awareness. We also hope that being in this peaceful ambience, he had lot of time for contemplation for his future Spiritual endeavours. We would certainly look forward for his visit to Germany again and again in the future.

BERLIN, Germany
Date: 28-06-2008

**Smt. Geetha Munikoti and
Dr. Vijayendra Munikoti**

हिन्दी साहित्य सम्मेलन, प्रयाग



॥ नमोवाकं प्रशास्महे ॥

संस्कृत-संस्कृत्योः प्रतीकभूतानां, प्रतिभाधरविग्रहाणां,
शब्दब्रह्म-आराधकानां, शब्द साहित्यादि विविध शास्त्राव
गाहन कुशलानां, प्रबुद्ध शेषमुषीकाणामार्जवावर्जित निर्मल
स्वान्तःकरणानाम्

श्री के. जी. सुब्राय शर्मा

महाभागानां श्रीमदाचार्याणाम् वैशिष्ट्यमाकलयन्ती,
गुण ग्राहिणी अखिलभारतीय विद्वत्परिषद् अत्र
अयोध्यापुर्यां समायोजितेऽस्मिन् समारोहे

महामहोपाध्याय

अयोध्यापुरी
११ मई २००९


श्रीधर शास्त्री
प्रधानमंत्री

॥ काशी विश्वेश्वरः प्रसन्नः ॥

गांधी - नेहरू विचार मंच

“कृष्ण रुक्मिणी निवास”, बि 4/27, हनुमान घाट,
काशी - वारणासी - 221001. उत्तर प्रदेश
संस्थापक अध्यक्ष प्रो. मैसूर विश्वनाथ शर्मा

A happy and warm welcome was given to “Mahamahopaadhyaaya” Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma & Mrs. Rajeshwari Sharma, Bangalore. A reception was arranged to Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma on 12-05-2009 at the residence of Prof. Vishwanatha Sharma, President, Gandhi - Nehru Vichara Mancha, Varanasi.

Good Number of Vedic and Vedantic Scholars, Vidwans and professors of Varanasi attended. On this occasion Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma gave a masterly talk in Sanskrit on “Sri Shankara”.

In the august presence of Prof. Ramachandra Singh of Kashi Vidya Peetha, Dr. Vinod Kumar Singh, Dr. Vinod Rao Pathak, Prof. Govinda Saptharshi Sha, Prof. Hara Swaroop Choubey, prof N. K. Guru Raja Rao, Vidwan Krishna Murthy Ghanapathi, now this Manch at Varanasi confers on K.G. Subraya Sharma, the title

Vedanta Gangaadhara

for his continuous and long Vedanta Seva & Prachara since 1959 till today all over the Globe.

May Lord Almighty Kashi Vishwanatha, Patita Paavane Holy Ganga Matha & Sri Shankara Bhagavatpaadaacharya shower their choicest blessings on Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma and his Family with all prosperites.

We request Vidwan K.G. Subraya Sharma to revisit Varanasi with his family.

Date : 12-05-2009
Varanasi

President, Vishwanatha Sharma
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1. Humanity

The Vedas proclaim that the entire universe is God's creation. The Universe of beings can be classified as sentient and insentient. Our scriptures say that there are 8.4 million species of sentient beings.

As a result of good, bad or mixed actions, species are born as gods, demons or humans. According to the Purāṇas, gods are fully accomplished beings that dwell in heaven; demons are engaged in selfish and violent actions and dwell in the nether regions; and humans are captive of greed and live on earth.

As human-beings, we need not concern ourselves with the affairs of gods and demons. It is enough if we understand ourselves.

Well, who are we? We are humans and we must learn to live as true humans. What does that mean? Gods' lives are full of pleasure and demons' lives are full of violence. Human life is full of love. Humanity means mutual love, sympathy, compassion, trust, friendliness, brotherliness, being simple and straightforward.

The power of speech is an incredible divine gift for humans! Speech can bring both happiness and sorrow, lead to heaven or hell. Speech can cause liberation or death. Loving speech can make our world divine and bring joy to all of us.

लक्ष्मीर्वसति जिह्वाग्रे जिह्वाग्रे मित्रबंधवाः ।

जिह्वाग्रे बंधनं प्राप्तं जिह्वाग्रे मरणं ध्रुवम् ॥

Resting on our tongue is prosperity, friendship and Relationship. Our tongue can bring misery and death.

God has blessed us with speech. May our speech be sweet and not hurtful. Isn't this what humanity is about?

2. We Create Our Own Sorrows

Those around us are often eager to tell us of their woes and share their misery with us. Many curse God, saying “All my life I have suffered. God has sent me only sorrow, never any joy”.

As we age, it is inevitable that we experience the travails of old age and anxiety. It is foolish to blame God for the troubles that we have brought on ourselves by our own foolishness. If we use the power of discrimination that God has given us, there is no reason for us to be miserable. The series of troubles we experience is caused by our selfishness, false expectations, foolish decisions or our pride.

If we ignore our own limitations, try to emulate the life style of those who are wealthier than us, borrow too much and are unable to pay even the interest on our loans, who is responsible for the resulting misery? Is it God? Not at all. We are ourselves responsible for the misery we experience.

If we consider how so many are worse off than us, we can be happy with what we have. If we focus on those who are better off than us, we are miserable even if we are ourselves quite rich and prosperous. Such a person is always poor!

अथोऽथः पश्यतः कस्य महिमा नोपचीयते ।

उपर्युपरि पश्यन्तः सर्व एव दरिद्रति ॥

We make ourselves happy or sad, rich or poor. If we use the power of discrimination that God has given us, could we not make ourselves happy and spread happiness to those around us?

3. Tapas is Necessary

The very mention of Tapas scares some people. They think of Tapas being related to the body alone, involving fasting, austere living in a forest, silence, abstinence, non-violence etc. In the comfort of contemporary life, who wants these ancient forms of Tapas?

Those who speak about Tapas are few, those who are prepared to listen are fewer and those who are committed to its practice are even fewer. No wonder so many are scared by this word, because they do not understand its true meaning.

Tapas is not only for saṁnyāsis or spiritual seekers. It is for everyone, necessary to ensure peace and happiness in daily life. Whether learned or students, saṁnyāsis or householders, young or old, all should practice tapas. A life without tapas is no life at all.

So what really is tapas? “That which burns is tapas.” Tapas destroys the flaws in our character. Tapas destroys all the sins committed by us in our actions, speech or thoughts. There is no greater tapas than adhering to the truth; or repenting one’s bad actions; or showing our love and compassion for others; or being straightforward in our dealings with others; or following scriptural injunctions. Tapas is really the human qualities of purity, friendship, love, fulfilling one’s duty, being straightforward, serving one’s Guru, being one-pointed. All human beings can easily strive to do tapas in this way.

By tapas, man can create a blissful world. Wealth, fame, wisdom and freedom are all possible with tapas. Anything is possible with tapas. Who would be reluctant to practice this kind of tapas?

4. Vedic Invocations for Universal Peace

Vedas contain oceans of knowledge and bring us a Divine message of love. They teach peace, happiness and contentment for all human beings.

In the Vedas are hundreds of hymns that speak of peace, known as “**Śānti Mantras**”. Peace, contentment, happiness and bliss are synonyms. The peace that is taught in the Vedas is not merely peace for me alone or for my family, my village and so on. They speak of peace for the whole world.

Among the many “**Śānti Mantras**” in the Vedas, the following one is particularly well-known.

ओम् ॥ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै । ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

This mantra from the Yajurveda is well-known and much loved by all. Its meaning is profound and beautiful: “May we all live in contentment. May we enjoy life and share its fruit equally among all. May we work together to strengthen our country and work purposefully and skillfully. May we never fight each other. May we love each other.” This **Śānti Mantra** teaches universal love. There are numerous such **Śānti Mantras** in the vedas. May we protect these wonderful vedas. May we embrace its teachings and shed the poison of attraction and aversion.

May we proceed on the magnificent path to world peace as taught by the vedas. Although we differ in our appearance, behaviour, language, ideas etc., are we not all human beings? There is no doubt that world peace will emerge if we all study and practice the message of such **Śānti Mantras**.

5. Unruly Horses

God has equipped humans with ten sense organs: eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin are the five organs of perception; speech, hands, feet, anus and genitals are the five organs of action. Using these ten sense organs, humans interact with the world and experience joy or sorrow. Each sense organ has its own special capability and together they enable us to experience sound, touch, form, taste and smell.

The Upaniṣads compare the sense organs to unruly horses. Even when the chariot is strong, the charioteer skillful and the road smooth, unruly horses that are out of control can lead to disaster.

Our sense organs are like untrained horses. Just as unrestrained horses can wreck a chariot, when our sense organs operate as they choose without restraint born of proper study of the scriptures, instructions from the guru and our own reflections, the consequence is disaster. So Wake up! Be vigilant!

God has given us the power to discriminate and the power to choose between right and wrong. By using these powers we can surely train our sense organs appropriately.

Just as trained horses can make our journey smooth, sense organs that are properly restrained can fill our lives with joy. So let us train our sense organs by proper reflection, good actions, devotion to the scriptures and the Guru, keeping good company, studying and reflecting on the scriptures and systematic spiritual practice. By making our sense organs sāt̥tvic in nature, we can enjoy lasting bliss and make our society peaceful, just and joyful.

6. Our Body is a Divine Vehicle

A human body is a great gift of the Divine. Based on the good actions in our previous lives and the grace of Īśvara, we have a divine vehicle called the human body. This body cannot be purchased anywhere, nor can it be manufactured by any factory like modern appliances such as TVs, cars, refrigerators, telephones or computers.

So this human body is priceless and very hard to obtain. We should never forget that it is an extraordinary vehicle, extremely pure, most auspicious and highly useful. All human beings are greatly blessed and fortunate to have such a wonderful body.

The Kaṭhōpaniṣat says: आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि, शरीरं रथमेव तु। Consider the Soul as the owner of the body, and the body as the chariot.

The Vedas and Upaniṣads compare the human body to a chariot—an ancient vehicle drawn by horses. Modern vehicles have wheels and are most useful in reaching our destinations easily and rapidly.

By using our bodies skillfully, we can reach our real destination that is Liberation, which brings us close to God. If this divine gift i.e., the human body is used by us properly, we can enjoy eternal bliss.

The human body is an instrument for our use, and we are not our bodies. A wise person uses the body to good purpose; a foolish person identifies himself with the body. Therefore, we should learn how to make best use of our bodies to create a better destiny for ourselves, and ultimately to be liberated.

7. Dharma's Three Aspects

Dharma is “That which sustains.” **Dharma** sustains the universe and all of humanity. **Dharma** is matter of practice, nor mere words. Dry discourses and study of **Dharma** are of little value. **Dharma** is upheld only when it is practiced in all its three aspects.

सत्यं वद, धर्मं चर, स्वाध्यायात् मा प्रमदः।

This is a famous mantra from the Taittirīya Upaniṣad that explains the three faces of **Dharma**: Speak truth; Practice **Dharma**; do not neglect study of holy scriptures. All human beings must follow this teaching.

Speak Truth is the first aspect of the practice of **Dharma**, and applies to our speech. There is no **Dharma** more important than this. The gift of speech is without purpose unless we speak truth. Truth is the essence of **Dharma**. So we should speak only truth.

Practice of Dharma is the path of justice that brings happiness to us and to others. We should diligently tread the path of **Dharma** at all times and be at pains to avoid non-dhārmic actions. Actions that cause fear in our minds are non-dhārmic; and those that we can do fearlessly, with joy, are dhārmic actions. Helping others is **Dharma**; hurting others violates **Dharma**. The practice of **Dharma** in our daily actions is thus the second aspect of **Dharma**.

Vedic study is the third aspect of **Dharma**. The study of the scriptures related to **Dharma** is स्वाध्याय. Each group defines what scriptures are to be studied.

All human beings can practice **Dharma** in these three aspects without any hindrance. Those who practice **Dharma** earn the grace of God and enjoy happiness.

8. I am the Supreme Light

There is a famous śloka composed by Jagadguru Śrī Śaṅkarācārya that summarises the essence of Vedānta:

किं ज्योतिस्तव भानुमान् अहनि मे रात्रौ प्रदीपादिकम्
स्यादेवं रविदीपदर्शनविधौ किं ज्योतिराख्याहि मे ।
चक्षुस्तस्य निमीलनादिसमये किं धीर्धियो दर्शने
किं तत्राहमतो भवान् परमकं ज्योतिस्तदस्मि प्रभो ॥

The meaning of this śloka is explained in the following conversation between the Guru and the disciple on the self-luminous nature of the Self.

Guru : O disciple! What is your “light”?

Student: O Guru! During the day, the Sun is my light.

Guru : OK. At night what is your light?

Student: At night, my light is the Moon, a lamp or the stars.

Guru : Well, what is the light that illumines the Sun, Moon and stars?

Student: The “eye”. The eye is the light by which the Sun etc., are seen.

Guru : And when the eye is shut, what is your light?

Student: Then the mind is, which illumines all.

Guru : And what is the light that illumines the mind?

Student: That light is Me, O Guru!

Guru : Then you alone are the Supreme Light!

Student: O Guru! That is true. I am indeed the Supreme Light.

Thus the student of Sadguru Śrī Śaṅkara understood that he himself was the supreme light and thereby transcended all sorrows.

9. Eyes and Ears

God in His wisdom has given us two eyes and two ears—the eyes to see shapes and the ears to hear sounds. Although a deaf person may somehow manage to survive, a blind person may face a great deal of difficulty.

It is with the eyes that we see all forms and enjoy seeing the Sun, Moon and stars, rivers and oceans. In modern cities there is feast for the eyes everywhere. Blind person is deprived of seeing much beauty. That is why it is said that the eye is the chief among the senses, सर्वेन्द्रियाणां नयनं प्रधानम्। Well, then what is the role of the ears? We can receive the teachings of Vedānta only by our ears, not by our eyes. Thus ears are the primary means of gaining spiritual knowledge. Students gain knowledge through listening to the teachers. That is how the Vedas, Purāṇas and other scriptures are taught. There is nothing to be “seen” here.

That is why the Vedic mantra says:

“भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः”

“O gods! May we always hear auspicious words” is our prayer. It is only when we hear auspicious advice from great souls that our ears are used to good purpose. And why is it that it is impossible to close one’s ears? It is to ensure that we are always open to hearing the sacred words of our scriptures. Note that it is possible to close one’s eyes. Why? So that we can see pure objects only and avoid seeing harmful sights. Thus, ears are a means of gaining knowledge, not eyes. Through our ears we gain the knowledge that dispels our ignorance and leads us to liberation. May we always listen to the wise words of our holy scriptures.

10. The Mind is the Cause of Both

The mind is truly extra-ordinary! While itself remaining unknowable, it can bring much sorrow and anxiety to us. The mind is indeed our “inner-instrument.” We have difficulty in accessing our own mind, let alone the minds of others. The mind is our true wealth and the master of all the other sense organs.

It is the quality of our mind that determines whether or not we have discriminating, whether or not we are bound by **saṁsāra**, likes and dislikes, pain and pleasure. It is said: **मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः**—the mind alone is the cause of man’s bondage and liberation.

Because of the mind Rāvaṇa was arrogant and Rāma was equanimous; Duryodhana was selfish and Yudhiṣṭhira was self-sacrificing. Our minds determine whether we are demons or divine. The mind is capable of drowning us in the ocean of **saṁsāra** and also of rescuing us from it. Where we go and what we attain is all up to our minds.

A mind that is fickle, turbulent, strong and obstinate needs to be trained. By spiritual practices, eating right and acting right we can discipline the mind and make it our saviour. If not, the mind can be our nemesis. The uncultured, uneducated, unspiritualised MIND becomes **M**ischievous, **I**ndustrious (interfering), **N**otorious (negative) and **D**angerous. This same MIND when spiritually refined and properly trained up becomes **M**oral, **I**ntrovert, **N**oble and **D**ivine.

By diligent practice of the teachings of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, we can purify our minds and transform ourselves, bringing divinity to our lives.

11. The Three Goals of Students

Being a student is a key phase of one's life. It is meant for gaining knowledge, learning to control one's senses and designing the goals of one's life. If one uses this time to establish the right goals, one can find happiness in the rest of one's life.

What ought to be the goals of a student? A student is one who seeks knowledge. So a student ought to devote himself completely to the gaining of knowledge and not be distracted by other activities.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has given his valuable advice in *Bhagavad Gīta* (4.39)

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।

ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिम् अचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥

A student gains knowledge if he is endowed with faith and has controlled his senses. A successful student gains everlasting peace and happiness in life. Therefore, a student should endeavor to accomplish these three goals:

1. **Faith:** A student should have faith in the Guru and his teachings. By faith, one gains knowledge.
2. **Focus:** A student should be single-pointed. He should listen intently and with faith to the teacher's instructions and not get involved in irrelevant activities such as politics and pastimes that are opposed to learning.
3. **Controlling the senses:** a student should stay far away from destructive behavior and misconduct.

One who is endowed with these qualities becomes a successful student. This accomplishment will definitely help the student gain peace and contentment and spread them to the world around him.

12. Grace of the Sadguru

The Sadguru has a very special place in this wide world. It is our tradition in India to worship our Guru, our parents and our gods. Of them, the Sadguru deserves the highest regard.

गुकारस्त्वन्धकारश्च रुकारस्तनिरोधकः ।

अन्धकारनिरोधित्वात् गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥

“Gu” signifies darkness of ignorance; and “ru” signifies its remover. Thus, “guru” means the one who dispels the darkness of ignorance.

Ignorance is a mortal flaw that leads to all kinds of undesirable consequences. It is the root of all our sorrows. It is the Sadguru alone who is the treasure house of knowledge who can dispel such ignorance. Knowledge alone can lead us to happiness; and the source of knowledge is the Sadguru. Without knowledge, a human being is no more than a two-legged animal.

गुरवो बहवः सन्ति शिष्यवित्तापहारकाः ।

गुरवो विरलाः सन्ति शिष्यहत्तापहारकाः ॥

These days, everyone wants to be a guru and no one wants to be a disciple and serve a guru! A true guru is one who takes away the heart-felt pain of his students; not one who merely robs them of their wealth.

Lord Kṛṣṇa has emphasized in Gīta (4-34) the need to serve one’s guru with devotion and gain knowledge:

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।

उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनः तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

Serving the guru with devotion and asking all relevant questions are the means by which a student earns the grace of the guru, gains knowledge that leads to supreme peace.

13. The Importance of Eating Right

What we consume has an enormous impact on our bodies, sense organs and mind. Ancient Ṛṣis ate roots, fruits, vegetables and grains and were healthy, intelligent, happy and long-lived. Isn't that a testimony to the importance of eating right?

Now what is life like in modern cities? It is common to see persons suffering from many ailments as early as middle age. Various treatments are needed even to ensure the health of a fetus in the mother's womb. And everyone seems to suffer from chronic tension in his life.

Why does this happen? A major reason is the food we eat. Grains, fruits and vegetables grown with the use of fertilizers are devoid of flavour and lose their purity and essence. This has an impact on our thinking as well.

A mantra in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad says:

आहारशुद्धौ सत्त्वशुद्धिः, सत्त्वशुद्धौ ध्रुवा स्मृतिः,
स्मृतिलम्भे सर्वग्रन्थीनां विप्रमोक्षः।

If we consume pure things, our mind is pure; if the mind is pure we gain knowledge of the Self; and Self-knowledge destroys the vāsanās that bring us sorrow.

What we consume may take many forms: sound, touch, form, taste or smell. If all that we consume is healthy, natural and in modest quantities, we can be free from diseases. The foods we eat should be conducive to our health. We should eat at the right time and we must not overeat. One who follows these principles is healthy in body and spirit. By eating right, we can all live healthy and happy lives.

14. Ideal Marriage

The vows taken by the bride and bridegroom with Agni Deva as the witness, and in the presence of elders, constitute the sacrament of marriage. For the rest of their lives, the married couple should share their joys and sorrows fully, without conflict and without allowing any cause for a breakdown of their marriage.

The marriage ritual includes the promise: “I will not pursue any of the goals of life—duties, prosperity or pleasure—without full participation of my spouse.” This promise leaves no room for divorce. The marriage vows are for ever, not for temporary pleasure. The goals of marriage are to have pious children, continue the lineage and engage in good works.

Both the wheels of a bicycle are equally important. Similarly, both husband and wife are equally important in a family. Any feeling of hierarchy is quite wrong.

Joys and sorrows are a natural part of everyone’s life. They should not cause unnecessary anguish. Joys and sorrows will come and go; the love and regard that a married couple have for each other remains untarnished.

The desire for a golden deer brought misfortune to Sīta and also so much agony to Rāma. By following his father’s orders to retire to the forest, Rāma endured hardship and also imposed the same hardship on Sīta. Nevertheless, Rāma and Sīta were an exemplary couple who maintained their devotion to each other to a unique degree. Indeed, they are an ideal for all married couples. If all Indian married couples followed this example, would this not bring great joy in their lives?

15. The Guru is the Saviour

The Hindu (sanātana) tradition in India gives the highest status to parents and the Guru. We owe our birth as human beings to the grace of our parents. No one can ever possibly discharge the debt owed to one's parents. The Vedas instruct us to worship our parents. It is quite wrong to have any enmity toward one's parents or to cheat them in any way. We should serve and worship our parents.

The status of the Guru is even higher. The Sadguru is one who shows us the right path and purifies our minds by removing the stain of desire, anger and greed. It is the Guru alone who can show us what salvation means and can put us on the right path to achieve it.

By giving birth to us, our parents have put us into worldly bondage; it is the guru who can release us from this bondage. Our parents have dropped us into the ocean of delusion and it is the guru who liberates us from the false notions of "I" and "mine". That is why it is said that there is nothing higher than Guru. Even Lord Rāma and Lord Kṛṣṇa each served their Guru, demonstrating the supreme importance of the Guru in our lives.

The Praśnopaniṣad tells the story of six disciples approaching the Sadguru Pippalāda, serving him and gaining Realization. They bow to the guru with the words; You are indeed our father for having destroyed our ignorance and saved us. त्वं हि नः पिता योऽस्माकम् अविद्यायाः परं परं तारयसि। See the greatness of the Guru! He is greater than the father, he is the source of life, the teacher, the inspiration...he is the all-in-all. The Guru is our saviour.

16. The Glory of Satsaṅg

There are many skills and disciplines in the contemporary world, each with its own power and glory. Even so, politicians, businessmen, professors and others fall under the spell of so-called mahātmas or mahā-tapasvis.

Let us not concern ourselves with such phenomena. Let us focus on the glory of **Satsaṅg**. “**Sat-saṅg**” means the company of सत्, the eternal Truth, those who have realized this Truth, or those who are sincere devotees of God. **Satsaṅg** means keeping the company of truthful and good persons, who live simple and pious lives.

Such **Satsaṅg** can totally transform our lives. It dispels our sins and flaws in our character. The story of the great Ṛṣi Vālmīki illustrates the glory of **Satsaṅg**. He was a cruel dacoit called Ratnākar who lived by taking the lives of others. Such a wicked person was completely transformed by following the advice of great sages who told him to chant “marā marā” which spelt out the name Rāma, Rāma. Doing so, he became a renowned devotee of Rāma.

Thus **Satsaṅg** puts us on the right path. Have we not seen those who are wicked being transformed into pious persons? **Satsaṅg** brings meaning to our lives and spreads peace, contentment and joy. As Śaṅkarācārya has said in his famous “Bhaja Govindam”

सत्संगत्वे निःसंगत्वं निःसंगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम्।
निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्त्वं निश्चलतत्त्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

Satsaṅg cultivates true detachment in our minds, helping us realize the divinity within each of us.

17. May Speech be a Mantra

Speech is often said to be golden; words are said to be gems. Speech is a unique power of humans, not shared by animals, birds or other forms of life. Tigers, Lions, Wolves or Camels have no capacity to speak. Only man does. By the power of speech, man has conquered the world and has the capacity of transforming this world into paradise. The great works such as **Rāmāyaṇa**, **Mahābhārata**, **Śrīmad Bhāgavatam**, the **Purāṇas**, the **Bhagavad Gīta** and the **Vedic texts** are all testimony to the glory of speech.

Speech can be both blissful and deadly. Speech that is thoughtless, inconsiderate, out of context, spoken in anger can cause so much misery to all. A single word spoken inappropriately can cause regret the rest of one's life. So Beware! As a **subhāṣita** says: simply uttering a word can be as ruinous as breaking a pearl.

A wise person is calm and collected even in situations that are desperate and catastrophic. A person's demeanour is known by his words. Soft words can pacify even a violent person. Why be miserly in our speech? To speak sweet and soothing words, it does not matter what your age, gender, lineage, bank balance or education is.

प्रियवाक्यप्रदानेन सर्वे तुष्यन्ति जन्तवः ।

तस्माद् तदेव वक्तव्यं वचने का दरिद्रता ॥

All beings are pleased by sweet words. Therefore, a smart person always speaks sweetly. Why be miserly in speech? Our sweet speech can be like a mantra. Good words can bring world peace and welfare.

18. Three Pointers for Good Health

Good Health is the greatest asset of every human being. Without good health, a person cannot find peace and happiness even in his dreams. That is why it is said: "Health is wealth". Everyone prays for good health and few achieve this great good fortune. These days, people seem to spend a third of their income on medicines etc., in support of their health. In a little future it is possible that people will spend more on medications than on food! This is a terrible consequence of modern urban life and an indication of how bad the health environment has become.

Is there a remedy for this? Have our ancient sages provided any guidance on how to avoid deterioration in our health? Indeed they have. Lord kṛṣṇa, who is the ultimate physician for both physical and mental illnesses, the primordial Guru, has said in the Gīta:

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥

This śloka has three important pointers on health:

1. **Eat right:** Eat modest quantities of food that is appropriate and sāttvic in nature.
2. **Exercise right:** Daily exercise, yogāsana and prāṇāyāma are a must. Do not engage in activity that is too strenuous relative to your capacity.
3. **Sleep well:** for a maximum of six hours a night. If you are not anxious, your sleep will be sound. Sound sleep is essential for good health.

By following these three guidelines, one can avoid diseases and maintain good health.

19. Vedic Prayers for World Peace

Prayers to the Almighty take two forms: prayers for personal happiness, peace and other desirable things; and prayers for universal peace, and well-being of all in the world. Universal prayers have much more power than selfish prayers for individual gain. It is through such universal prayers that one can hope for universal love, brotherhood and friendship. There are hundreds of such prayers in the **Vedas**. Here is an example of such universal prayers in the Vedas:

ॐ ॥ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येम अक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तनूभिः । व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः । स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो
वृद्धश्रवाः । स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः । स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः ।
स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥ ॥ ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

The purport of this mantra is this: O Gods! May we humans always hear good, auspicious things; may we always see auspicious things; may we always be healthy and praise You in every way; may we use the life-span You have given us to live in joy and contentment. May Indra, Pūṣā, Garuḍa and Bṛhaspati always bless us.

Notice that this mantra uses the plural as शृणुयाम (May **we** hear), पश्येम (May **we** see), तुष्टुवांसः (May **we** praise), व्यशेम (May **we** spend), नः इन्द्रः स्वस्ति दधातु May Indra bless us with happiness and joy. May **we** spend our life-span happily; and does not use the singular form of expression. It does not say: may I see good things etc. It says: may we see good things etc.

By chanting this mantra sincerely would the world-peace not be realized?

20. Without “Him” there is nothing

In the whole wide world, everything is God’s creation, all beings rely on divine energy and all humans are like incarnations of God. There is nothing useless in the world; and no human is without purpose. Whatever special skills a person might have is a gift of God. One may be clever, the other healthy. A dull-witted person may be devoted to the truth. A pauper may be free of disease. One who has only a short life may be exceptionally brilliant. One without learning may be a good orator. All these are seen.

Being aware of one’s own special gifts, one may become proud and arrogant, thinking there is no one as brilliant or articulate or healthy or brave as I am. Such arrogance is a great affliction. Saṁnyāsis, tapasvis, or great spiritual teachers and students may indeed suffer this affliction more than ordinary people.

What is the remedy for this affliction? Remember always: without Him, not a blade of grass moves. The whole world is sustained by His Grace. Even the greatest of men are His servants. Their work gets done only by the force of His will. **Without Him, there is nothing.**

The Kenopaniṣad tells this story: A great battle between the Devas and Asuras was won by the Devas with the grace of Īśvara. The victorious Devas thought they had gained victory by their own prowess and forgot Īśvara. Noticing this, God withdrew their power. Becoming weak and powerless, the Devas realized their mistake and dropped their false arrogance. Remembering that **without Him there is nothing**, they lived happily thereafter.

21. Victory Over the “Monkey-mind”

An untrained mind is powerful and fickle, causing sorrow to all men. How true is the saying: “Attention and wealth both last only an instant.” Even tapasvins and spiritual seekers are brought to misery by the mind also called intellect, citta, ahankāra etc.

Even a great warrior like Arjuna was made to forget his duty by his errant mind. Thus Arjuna, in all humility, poses this bold question to Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवत् दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥

Being so fickle, the mind is known as a monkey. When the mind has been trained, the whole world is at one’s feet. Indeed, controlling the mind is no easy task. It is often preached, but rarely practiced. But controlling the mind is not totally impossible. The means for doing so are mentioned by the great teacher Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself in the Gīta 6-35.

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that controlling the mind is not easy, but possible by the practice of “**abhyāsa**” and “**vairāgya**”. By “**abhyāsa**” He means developing the qualities such as calmness and restraint that are prerequisites for the spiritual seeker; and by “**vairāgya**” He means the absence of craving for pleasures. Victory over the monkey-mind can be achieved by the regular practice of devotion, good company, spiritual practices such as japa, and the study of the Upaniṣads etc. When this is achieved, the peace and happiness that is ever present within us blossoms.

22. All Women are Like Mothers

The traditional culture of India is undoubtedly the very best in the world in defining the ideals of utmost purity. There is no equivalent anywhere else in the world. Here is an illustration:

Our tradition requires us to treat all women with as much respect as we do our mothers. It is natural that a man and woman are attracted to each other. When a beautiful woman passes before a man, it is natural that his mind is affected by lust. However, our tradition regards such lustful feelings are condemned and should be avoided. One should look at another woman as if she is one's own mother.

मातृवत् परदारेषु परद्रव्येषु लोष्टवत् ।

आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

A wise person is one who views other women as mothers and others' wealth as mud while viewing all other beings as one's own Self.

The Rāmāyaṇa illustrates this point beautifully. As Sītā was being carried away by Rāvaṇa, she removed her ornaments and having tied them in a piece of cloth, dropped them to the ground. Monkeys found this parcel of ornaments and gave it to Sugrīva. Sugrīva showed the ornaments to Lakṣmaṇa and asked him to identify whether they belonged to Sītā. Lakṣmaṇa replies:

नाहं जानामि केयूरे नाहं जानामि कुण्डले ।

नूपुरे त्वभिजानामि नित्यं पादाभिवन्दनात् ॥

I cannot recognize the armllet or the ear-rings; however I know very well the anklets as I served her feet daily. All our men should view women as if they were their own mothers.

23. These Two Fruits are Like Nectar

Saṁsāra is a word often cited in Vedānta, referring to the flow of repeated births and deaths. It is characterized by the experience of joy and sorrow, gain and loss, honour and insult, attachment and aversion, misery and delusion. In his poem **Mohamudgara**, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya has described **Saṁsāra** as follows:

पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं पुनरपि जननीजठरे शयनम् ।
इह संसारे बहुदुस्तारे कृपयापारे पाहि मुरारे ॥

Saṁsāra has been compared to an ocean, a forest, or to a tree. The tree of **Saṁsāra** has been said to be poisonous, **viṣa**, arising out of attachment to objects, **viṣaya**. The seeds, the sprouts, the branches, leaves and flowers of this tree of **Saṁsāra** are all full of poison.

Nevertheless, it is surprisingly also said that this tree of **Saṁsāra** bears two fruits that are like nectar. These two fruits are sweet and capable of being eaten only by persons of wisdom and discrimination. What are these two fruits? One is wise words and the other is company of the good. It is well said:

संसारविषवृक्षस्य द्वे फले ह्यमृतोपमे ।
सुभाषितरसास्वादः सङ्गतिः सुजनैः सह ॥

With the exception of these two fruits, the entire tree of **Saṁsāra** is poison. It is god's grace that such a poisonous tree also bears these two nectar-like fruits. The first **subhāṣita** means "That which is well said, is wise advice." Such advice is contained in the **Rāmāyaṇa** etc. **Satsang** means the company of the good. The true sweetness of these two sweet fruits, wise advice and the company of the good, can be discovered and experienced only by sincere devotion.

24. Truthfulness is the Supreme Tapas

The greatest gift that God has bestowed on man is the power of speech. This is a unique gift, far exceeding the capacity of other species. The full measure of this gift of speech is realized only when our speech, our lives and all our dealings are firmly based on truth alone. Not even in our dreams should one entertain falsehood. Only then, would God feel that His gift to mankind of the power of speech was being properly used. Are not humans the children of God who is the very embodiment of truth?

But isn't it strange that falsehood reigns in all walks of life? In daily life, in politics, in medicine, in science, in the judiciary, in temples, in schools or in restaurants, in every aspect of our lives, lies seem to prevail all around. Everywhere, falsehoods are welcomed and even respected. This is not good. Falsehood should be banished far from us.

Speaking the truth, associating with truth, being established in truth, being devoted to truth are indicators of divinity. Speaking the truth comes naturally; lying requires an effort. Truth alone is supreme tapas, it is our **Dharma** and truth alone is supreme consciousness. The true wealth of humanity is truth. The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad says: "Let Truthfulness alone prevail, not falsehood." The Mahābhārata says:

अश्वमेधसहस्रं च सत्यं च तुलया धृतम्।

अश्वमेधसहस्राच्च सत्यमेव विशिष्यते ॥

Truth is greater than a 1000 grand *aśvamedha* yajñas. May all mankind respect truth. Truthfulness alone is the supreme tapas.

25. Action and the Yoga of Action

Action refers to the activities of the body, its limbs, speech and mind. Everyone is necessarily engaged in some action at all times. Not only humans, but all living beings are always doing something. None can stay even for a moment without action. This is what the Bhagavad Gīta (3-5) says: न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठति अकर्मकृत्।

There is no need to advise anyone to perform action. What is needed is advice on **how** to act. How to act in such a way as not to create bondage for the future. How to act so that actions can help us cross the ocean of saṁsāra and realize our own true nature.

This is what **Karmayoga**, the Yoga of Action, is all about. Yoga means union; so **Karmayoga** is that which helps unite us with God. **Karmayoga** is action that is performed in the spirit of surrender to God. As it is said: करोमि यद्यत् सकलं परस्मै नारायणायेति समर्पयामि।

Actions performed with the idea that “I am the doer” and in search of fruits of the action create bondage. Actions performed in the spirit of surrender to God help liberate us from bondage. This is **Karmayoga**. In action there is burden; in **Karmayoga** there is lightness. Actions performed with devotion, without craving for the fruit and without a sense of doer-ship constitute **Karmayoga**.

Ordinary actions as well as actions performed as **Karmayoga** involve effort, time and decay. Ordinary actions are associated with desire and aversion and lead to sorrow and delusion. **Karmayoga**, on the other hand, purifies our minds and brings joy and peace.

26. No One is Destitute

Human beings are normally classified as male and female. This is God's creation. Those born as men or women live their whole lives as men or women. Each person lives and dies as per his predetermined destiny; there is no one avoiding that.

There is a similar distinction established by man: The distinction between those who are rich and strong versus those who are poor and weak. Some are endowed with grand mansions, vehicles etc., others are destitute. Unlike God's creation, however, those who are rich today may become poor tomorrow; those poor today may be rich tomorrow. Therefore, in Vedānta, all human beings are seen as well-endowed. None is a destitute.

Being well-endowed is not a matter of possessing gold or property or vehicles only. Some may have wealth, others have health, or learning or intelligence. From a spiritual viewpoint, all humans are well-endowed.

Isn't the body itself a great wealth for humans? Compare the capacities of a human body with that of an animal!

There was once a poor person in a town who went begging from house to house, saying "I am destitute; I am a sinner; I am helpless; please give me some food and money". When he went to a house of a rich person, he was told; "You are not at all destitute. See how healthy and well-built you are! You are better endowed than I am." This opened the eyes of the poor person to his own capacity to better himself.

All human beings are endowed with fine bodies, or minds or energies. No human being is destitute.

27. Three Gates to Hell

Our scriptures tell us that meritorious actions lead to heaven, sinful actions to hell and a mixture of both types of actions leads us to be born as human beings. Heaven and hell are said to lie beyond death and no one has actually seen them. So why bother about them? Why not focus our attention on the experience of heaven and hell in our daily lives here and now?

Those who strive for heaven are indeed resolute people; and those who are determined to avoid hellish experience are even more resolute. What do we mean by hell? A place where we experience all kinds of sorrow; where we do not see any contentment or joy or happiness; where we suffer from anxiety and purposelessness. The Bhagavad Gīta (16.21) tells us that there are three main gateways to this kind of hellish experience.

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः।

कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभः तस्मादेतत् त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥

Desire, anger and greed: these vices are the three gates to hell. A wise spiritual seeker would definitely wish to eliminate these vices from his personality.

Desire is the force of craving, and all-consuming as a forest fire, born out of ignorance of our real nature.

Anger is the all-destroying force that takes away our good sense and brings untold sorrows and misery to ourselves and others.

Greed is a force that knows no contentment, the acme of selfishness and the sign of narrow-mindedness.

These are the three gates to hell. By avoiding them we can live happy and contented lives.

28. Sacrifice Gives Bliss

The very word “Sacrifice” invokes fear. Many people are allergic to sacrifice, charity or duty. They are unwilling to part with their hard-earned wealth by giving to others. They question why it is desirable to give in charity.

Instead of attempting to answer them, let us consult the scriptures. Their message is clear: It is by sacrifice alone that one can gain peace, happiness, immortality.

त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वम् आनशुः ; तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथाः ; त्यागात् शान्तिः ;
नास्ति त्यागसमं सुखम् ; त्यागादेव परा शान्तिः ; त्यागो हि परमं सुखम् ।

Sacrifice involves letting go, sharing, giving away. These are natural tendencies not only among humans but also animals and birds. It is well known that birds and animals share their food with their young ones. Trees scatter their flowers and fruits. Plants offer grains.

Then why is it that sacrifice creates fear in the hearts of humans? Isn't sacrifice one way of helping others? Wouldn't such sacrifice actually make one happier? As Swami Vivekananda has said: It is rather the giver who is more blessed than the taker.

परोपकाराय फलन्ति वृक्षाः परोपकाराय वहन्ति नद्यः ।
परोपकाराय दुहन्ति गावः परोपकाराय सतां विभूतयः ॥

Trees flower to serve others; rivers flow to serve others; cows yield milk to serve others; the talents of good people are indeed meant for the service of others.

It is through sacrifice alone that one can gain bliss, peace and contentment.

29. No Wealth Beats Knowledge

There are hundreds of kinds of wealth in this world, and all of them are worth striving for; knowledge, intelligence, health, long life, property, beauty, power, fame, home, spouse, children, etc. etc. Which of these is undesirable? All are welcome, although no one person is accomplished enough to have all of them.

One form of wealth, however, deserves a special effort on our part: That is knowledge. By the grace of Īśvara and the Sadguru, gaining knowledge should be our highest priority.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the all-knowing Guru of the entire world says in the Bhagavad Gīta (4.38):

न हि ज्ञानेन सदृशं पवित्रमिह विद्यते ।

This means that there is nothing more valuable than knowledge in all the fourteen worlds of the universe. What a striking statement it is!

The purpose of human birth is to gain knowledge. It is through knowledge alone that everything else can be achieved. Without knowledge, man is no more than a two-legged animal. A life lacking knowledge is dry and purposeless.

स्वगृहे पूज्यते मूर्खः स्वग्रामे पूज्यते प्रभुः ।

स्वराष्ट्रे पूज्यते राजा विद्वान् सर्वत्र पूज्यते ॥

A man of knowledge gains the highest respect all over the world. So let us master knowledge and the art of living. With knowledge, we find peace and happiness. There is no wealth that beats knowledge.

30. Greed Brings Misery

All living beings need some basic necessities to sustain life. For humans, this includes some food to eat, clothes to protect the body and shelter. These are basic needs and wanting them is quite understandable.

However, there is another category of wants, those based on greed that are impossible to fill. Although the basic needs are met, wanting more and more is a sign of greed. Needs automatically have a limit; but greed has no limit at all. Excessive wants bring a train of sorrows and leave no room for happiness even in one's dreams.

There was once a poor person who did severe tapas and meditated on Īśvara. Pleased with his meditation, Īśvara appeared before him and offered him a boon. The aspirant asked to be granted more wealth. Īśvara agreed and sent him to a devotee who was very rich. The rich man welcomed the poor man with open arms and took him to his treasury which contained piles of valuable coins.

The rich person invited him to pick up and leave with anything he liked, but set a time limit of sixty minutes, after which he had to leave. The poor person picked up a pile of coins, only to be attracted to another pile that was more valuable. This happened repeatedly and he could not resist the temptation to abandon the pile he had and draw from another pile that was more valuable. All of a sudden, the time was up bell rang and the man was still empty-handed. He left with nothing, feeling sorry that he was cheated by his own greed.

31. Use Life Well

Of all the 8.4 million species of beings, human birth is the most fortunate, endowed with great strength and intelligence. This two-legged animal has conquered land, sea and air; can cross vast oceans to reach distant lands; can extract minerals from the depths of the seas.

Such an extra-ordinary being can surely transform the earth. By studying the scriptures and practicing spiritual disciplines, he can master the universe. He can eradicate poverty and disease. He can create heaven on earth. There is absolutely nothing impossible for him to attain. After all, he is the child of Almighty God. Isn't it?

All that is true. But one must remember that whatever man wants to do, he must do while he is still alive. Death brings a sudden end to all ambition and all achievement. A human corpse is banished from its own home. A dead chicken, goat or fish can be sold by weight; the skin of dead wild animals has value; dry tree-branches are collected. But a human corpse has no use whatsoever.

Therefore, a wise person does not postpone the practice of dharma and charity, and embarks on spiritual study while he is still living. Kenopaniṣat warns thus:

इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति ।

If one understands the true nature in this very life, then one's being born as a human becomes meaningful. Self-improvement must happen before death calls. One can serve society only while one is alive. A wise person recognizes the need to use life well.

32. Happiness is Within

Happiness, bliss, peace, tranquillity, ease, rest, calmness—these are such delightful words. In Sanskrit, the word for happiness is “**sukham**”, which means that state in which our senses are joyful, peaceful and content. Who does not wish for such a delightful state of mind? From morning to night, from youth to old age, all our actions are aimed at securing happiness. It is only in search of happiness that we acquire wealth, houses, ornaments, power, vehicles, medicines, spouse and children. All through life there is a search for happiness.

But.... Which rich and powerful person has found real happiness? We believe that although we have not yet found happiness, we will soon do so. Isn't this a great puzzle? What has gone wrong? What kind of “Māyā” is this? We do not really have even a vestige of happiness. It is worth remembering that happiness is not for sale.

Then how is happiness to be found? It is to be found within ourselves, by right understanding.

Happiness is a state of MIND. It is within us. Happiness cannot be purchased in shops. Happiness can easily be experienced by one and all. Happiness is a natural state of mind. Happiness is in our minds, within us. It is our nature. With right understanding, each person is an embodiment of happiness, a treasure house of bliss.

With the right attitude, happiness is entirely in our control. By Self-knowledge one can gain supreme happiness. There is no other way.

33. Be Simple to become happy

Everyone seeks happiness. People strive hard for it, acquiring property, designer clothes, traveling in fine vehicles and so on. Despite all these efforts, we all know that happiness is rarely found.

Then what is the solution?

This is a valid question to which there is a beautifully simple answer:

Only through simplicity can one find happiness. The simpler our lives are, the closer we are to happiness. It is very simple to become very happy. But, alas, it is very very difficult for people to become very simple!!

Modern urban existence is filled with artificiality, hypocrisy, show, pretence, insincerity, dishonesty and so on. What people show to others is very different to what they really are. Think one thing and say another. Such is the hypocrisy!

To be artificial or hypocritical requires much preparation. One has to plan what image to project! Not so in being natural and simple, without pretence or hypocrisy. In simplicity and straightforwardness there is peace and natural bliss. This is true happiness.

By living life simply, following one's destiny, it is possible to experience natural happiness all our lives.

All the realised and enlightened noble Personalities lived extremely happy through their simplest style of life. 'Simplest living and highest thinking' makes every human ever happy and joyful.

34. Mother Nature is Our Teacher

Curiosity is part of man's nature. Even a learned person remains a student all his life. There are so many topics to learn about and there are schools and universities everywhere. To become a student in some universities one has to pay large sums of money and expend huge effort. The result is an ability to earn big incomes but such education rarely yields much real satisfaction.

To master knowledge that has commercial value requires many prerequisites: right preparation, right environment, adequate funds, adequate time etc. Not everyone can afford these. Not everyone can excel and earn a Nobel prize either. Each is subject to his own destiny.

Since only a rare few are fortunate enough to succeed in modern educational institutions, what is to become of the rest of humanity? Where should the less intelligent and poorer segments of society learn? Who will teach them? For them, one needs an entirely different approach:

Universe is the University, Nature is the teacher, man is the student, teaching is free, experience is the examination and eternal happiness is the result. We can learn so many lessons from the nature that surrounds us: The sun, moon, stars, rivers, seas, mountains, forests, day and night, the elements, plants, trees, etc. etc. In this university of nature, there are no barriers to admission based on caste or creed. All can participate and benefit. By learning these lessons well, we can make our lives full of happiness and joy.

35. This Too is Worship

Worshipping God or Guru in temples and āśramas is a common practice, shared by all religious traditions including Hindu, Christian, Buddhist, Islam, Jain, Zoroastrian, Sikh etc. Each of the traditions has its own particular form of worship. That is fine.

The One God who is almighty and all-knowing is worshipped in many forms, as the Vedas proclaim:

एकं सद्विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति ।

In the Hindu tradition, worship is given much importance. We think of worship as requiring a bath and clean clothes, applying ash or kumkum, reciting Vedic mantras in chaste Sanskrit and making the prescribed offerings to a sanctified image of God.

This is not the only way to worship God. It is wrong to think that worship necessarily requires Vedic mantras or offerings to an image of God. The Sanskrit word for God, **deva**, literally means “that which shines”. So any object that brings light and joy to our eyes and mind can be regarded as “Deva”. Plants and trees, sun and moon, rivers and lakes, children and saṁnyāsis, all these are particular manifestations of God. Our love and service towards them is itself a form of worship.

Meditating on the forms of God with a pure mind is even better than ostentatious worship of images of God. Demonstrating our love to those who are sick or in distress is true worship. Using our wealth, talents or authority to help others is true worship. Instead of offering flowers we offer love, compassion, sympathy. No one is barred from practicing these forms of worship. It is by such worship that God is truly pleased.

36. The Ten-fold Dharma

Our scriptures are unanimous that our actions should be guided by our Dharma. Dharma is God Himself and it is only by Dharma that the universe is sustained. Dharma has ten features.

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।

धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधः दशकं धर्मलक्षणम् ॥

1. **Dhṛti**: Courage and fortitude. The ability to face with courage the ups and downs of life such as happiness and sorrow, honour and insult, gain and loss.
2. **Kṣamā**: Forgiveness. The ability to easily forgive those who criticize us, accuse us falsely, insult us.
3. **Dama**: Restraint. Maintaining mental poise in all circumstances; being peaceful and contented.
4. **Asteyam**: Non-stealing. Viewing the possessions of others without envy or covetousness.
5. **Śaucam**: Purity. Maintaining a clean body, senses, clothes, mind, behavior, thoughts.
6. **Indriyanigrahaḥ**: Sense restraint. Cultivating a sāttvic attitude to all things and restraining our senses.
7. **Dhīḥ**: Clear thinking. Living with discrimination and equipoise.
8. **Vidyā**: Learning. Study of scriptures and gaining knowledge from the holy teachers.
9. **Satyam**: Truth. Never uttering falsehood.
10. **Akrodhaḥ**: No anger. Restraining anger that arises. Avoiding expressions of anger that are dysfunctional. These are the ten faces of Dharma.

37. To Rise is Hard, To Fall is Easy

Accomplishing anything in life is hardly easy. Talking about it is not enough; one has to do what is necessary. There are many avenues of accomplishment in the world, but all of them require much effort.

Without *tapas* no accomplishment is possible. Anyone wishing to be a famous scientist or a doctor, a popular politician, a powerful minister or a skilled sculptor needs to put in a lot of effort.

To become a noble person skilled in Vedic recitation, a pleasing orator or an erudite teacher of Vedānta requires a lot of preparation. Any skill does not come easily. Even birth as a human being must have involved a lot of prior work!

But it is so easy to fall from a high place. To gain fame is hard, to gain notoriety is easy. To climb a mountain is hard; to slip down is easy. To carry water to a height is hard; to let it flow down is easy. To earn wealth is hard; to spend it is easy. This is a universal law.

We should learn from this and avoid any action that would cause us to fall. We should not act in ways that would stop us from being born again as humans. Once we slip, the path becomes increasingly slippery. May our path always progress upwards. To live a life of truth is hard; to live a life of falsehood is relatively easy. To emulate Lord Rāma is hard; to emulate Rāvaṇa is easy. May we always follow the example of Rāma and not Rāvaṇa. To rise is hard, to fall is easy.

38. Do we Live as Human Beings?

Birth as a human being requires that we live as human beings too.

God has given a special power of discrimination to humans. Not exercising this power means that we live only as two-legged animals. As children of God, man must honour the Creator; only then would God be happy with His creation.

What does it mean to live as a human being? Can one compare human life with the lives of animals or birds? What a mistake that would be! We sometimes praise humans by comparing them to animals or birds; sing like a cuckoo; dance like a peacock; swim like a fish; run like a horse; fly like a bird etc.

Likewise, we use such comparisons also to criticize humans: stupid as a donkey; eats like a pig; slogs like a bullock. How sad are such comparisons. These tendencies come naturally to those animals; but are laboriously acquired by humans!

This is not a way for humans to live. As Swami Vivekananda lamented a century ago, man can fly like birds, sing like cuckoos, dance like peacocks, swim like fish; but alas! man cannot live like a man. This is a bitter truth.

Only by speaking sweetly, loving others, helping each other, worshipping God, being straightforward and truthful, restraining one's senses, serving society, and knowing our true nature does one live as a human being.

We are humans; why do we not live as human beings?

39. Victory Over the Mind is Victory Over All

It is extraordinary that men wish to establish victory over all things. Everyone wants to be the winner. Husbands wish to dominate their wives, wives their husbands; parents wish to dominate their children and *vice versa*. Similarly teachers over students, rulers over subjects, and relatives over each other. However, these are all hollow victories. Why? Because by these external victories the enemies inside are not vanquished. Are there really enemies who reside within us? Who are they? None other than our own untrained mind. The untrained mind is the acme of fickleness. The mind is the king of the ten most ever-changing things.

मनो मधुकरो मेघो मानिनी मदनो मरुत्।

मा मदो मर्कटो मत्स्यः मकारा दश चञ्चलाः ॥

The mind, bee, cloud, woman, lust, wind, money, intoxication, monkey, fish are the ten words starting with “**ma**” that signify the most fickle things.

Of all these ten things that are well-known to be fickle, the mind is the leader. When the fickle mind has not been conquered, of what use is victory over all else? Beings that are slaves to their own mind, be they human or celestial beings, cannot escape disaster. Men who are slaves to their mind are like slaves to the whole world. The untrained mind is the home of attachment and aversion, desire, anger, greed, envy, pride and delusion. The first task of a human being is to cast away these flaws from the mind and thoroughly purify the mind. When the mind has been purified and trained, victory over the whole world follows. A person whose mind is pure finds the whole world at his feet.

40. Let the Mind be a Temple

Those suffering the agonies of life need to take refuge in a place that is peaceful and joyful. That is the temple of God, where one feels close to God, which is pure and purifying. Even as one enters the temple, one feels one's sorrows drop away and the mind is filled with love, devotion, self-sacrifice and friendship to all. In such a temple, people abandon their dislikes and prejudices and experience universal goodwill and happiness. This indeed is a true temple of God, where God Himself resides.

One wonders whether such an environment really exists in today's temples and āśrams. One wonders whether there is really any merit in leaving one's home to go to a temple. When temples and āśrams become places for politics and business, what room is there for devotees? Does God like to live in the midst of political and business discussions. Definitely not.

Then what is the fate of a devotee? No worry. Why not worship God where He does reside? And where is that? **Īśvara** lives as a Witness in the hearts of all beings. So He lives in our hearts too. The name **Īśvara** does not refer to the One who has matted locks, adorned with snakes, with the moon on his crown, carrying skulls and living in a cremation ground. Kṛṣṇa is referring to the One who is all-pervasive, ever-Pure, Consciousness who is known as Pure Existence, Pure Awareness and Pure Bliss. This Consciousness is everywhere, hence is also in our minds. The one who sees **Īśvara** in the temple of his own mind, also sees **Īśvara** everywhere. May our minds be pure and become like pure temples where **Īśvara** constantly resides.

41. Wake Up!

It is not unusual to give or receive a cautionary “wake up!” call: rulers to subjects, doctors to patients, teachers to students, parents to children and so on. Responding to the call leads to peace, contentment and good health; ignoring it leads to problems.

India’s ancient sages in the thousands have sounded a caution based on their own scriptural understanding and personal experience. They say:

अनित्यानि शरीराणि विभवा नैव शाश्वताः।

नित्यं संनिहितो मृत्युः तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत॥

Addressing all mankind, they say that human life is inevitably short, death lies round the corner. All our worldly accomplishments are short-lived. Therefore, one should focus attention on living a life of Dharma and understanding our own true nature.

This three-fold message of the sages is definitely worth reflecting on in depth. This physical body of ours is nothing but an assemblage of physical matter and is necessarily subject to decay and death. Thus, we ought not to rely on it as something permanent in which we invest ourselves. This is the first message. The second message is that none of our possessions is permanent either. Wealth, relationships, youth, learning, beauty, authority are all temporary and may disappear at any time. It is foolish to make them a source of pride. And the third message is all beings inevitably die. Death follows us as a shadow. Thus anyone who thinks of himself as eternal in any way is a fool. These are the three messages of the sages. By understanding these messages we can attain natural and eternal bliss.

42. Science and Vedaanta

This is a scientific era. Our lives are filled with science and technology. The use of technology has meant better communication, transport, electronic gadgetry, computers, air-conditioning and so on. And there seems to be no shortage of money either. Money buys all goods, fine clothes, ornaments, food and many luxuries. These are the contributions of Modern Science and Technologies: This is modern civilization.

All this is perfectly true. But have science and technologies brought real peace and eternal happiness? Not at all. Modernization and ostentation do not bring contentment or peace. The modern science and technologies have made our life just comfortable and easy, but not at all happy or peaceful or blissful.

Then how does Vedānta help? Vedānta teaches us that man can attain peace and contentment by practicing simplicity, contentment, brotherliness, sense-restraint, reflecting on the scriptures and meditating on God. The joy that comes from contentment far exceeds the enjoyment of sense-pleasures. Our lives are afflicted by restlessness, greed, anger, desire, selfishness, conceit etc. The panacea that banishes all these afflictions is knowledge of our own nature.

The Kāthopaniṣat boldly proclaims तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम्। the eternal Bliss is available only for those that are having Self-enlightenment. तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम्। Those that are enlightened alone can get real and permanent peace. Reflecting on the messages of Vedānta alone can lead the world to peace and happiness. There is no other way.

43. The Glory of Self-knowledge

There are so many fields of knowledge to master in the world. Each field of knowledge has so many divisions and specializations. It is impossible for one person to master all of them in one lifetime. The fields are vast while time and intellectual capacity are limited.

अनन्तशास्त्रम् बहु वेदितव्यम्
अल्पश्च कालो बहवश्च विघ्नाः ।
यत् सारभूतं तदुपासितव्यम्
हंसो यथा क्षीरमिवाम्बुमिश्रम् ॥

There are many fields of knowledge, man's life is short and the obstacles to learning are many. Therefore, one needs to focus on that which is the most important and useful. Just as a swan separates milk from water, even the wise man must learn to separate the essence of life from the useless things.

The Vedas, Upaniṣads and other holy scriptures teach us the supreme knowledge: Knowledge of the Self. Self-Knowledge is itself liberation, and it is the essence of all knowledge. Muṇḍaka Upaniṣat says:

ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठाम्

knowledge of Supreme Brahman is the very base and substratum of all kinds of knowledge.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gīta (9.2) has lavishly praised Self-Knowledge.

राजविद्या राजगुह्यं पवित्रमिदमुत्तमम् ।
प्रत्यक्षावगमं धर्म्यं सुसुखं कर्तुमव्ययम् ॥

Let us all strive to attain Self-Knowledge and supreme bliss.

44. The Message is “Da”

The Vedas are the roots of our spiritual traditions in India. The essence of the Vedas is presented in the Upaniṣads. The message of the Upaniṣads is self-Knowledge. Along with Self-knowledge, the Upaniṣads also convey messages related to law, dharma, obligatory duties, humor and so on. These are universal messages.

Here is a charming story from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣat that belongs to the **śukla-yajurveda** branch of the Vedas. The Creator had three sons of differing personalities: gods, humans and demons. All three approached their father and reverently asked him to give them his teaching for living life well. They followed his instructions for strict tapas for a year. Thereupon, he instructed each of them with “द”, “Da”.

Having given them some time to reflect on his teaching of “Da”, the father asked each of his sons whether they had properly understood his message. Yes, they answered, we have understood it well. He asked them to explain what they had understood by “Da”.

The gods, who are inclined toward sense-enjoyment, answered that “Da” meant to practice “Dama” i.e., sense-restraint. The humans, who are prone to greed and selfishness answered that “Da” meant to practice “Dāna” i.e., charity. The demons who were by nature very cruel and violent answered that the word “Da” meant to practice “Daya” i.e., compassion. The Creator was very happy that they had each understood his message well. Reflecting their own natural tendencies, they had each given the word “Da” a different meaning. We too should practice sense-restraint, charity and compassion.

45. Why Teachings are Aimed Only at Humans?

There are many religions and religious sects in the world, each with its own texts explaining various philosophical and moral teachings. Followers of these groups do their best to live according to their teachings. All this is well-known to us.

The question arises, why all these teachings are aimed only at humans and not also to animals and birds. There are animals that are larger than humans, such as elephants and camels, lions and tigers. Reptiles, pet animals and so on are also plentiful. But there are no attempts to convey moral advice to them. Only humans are taught not to lie or steal or hurt others. Why is that?

There is a simple answer to this question. It is only humans, who are intent to pleasureseeking that indulge in these objectionable practices such as stealing, cheating, hurting others in order to satisfy some selfish desire or seeking physical comfort. Animals do not engage in selfishness or falsehood even in their dreams.

Animals live their lives relying only on god-given sources of food, without indulging in cheating or lying. They do not covet the food that men eat. However, humans do deprive animals of their food and even eat the animals themselves. Men will stoop to any level to satisfy their selfishness and greed. For their own pleasure, humans will resort to injustice, hatred, falsehood and immoral practices. Hence, it is only humans that need the advice given in the moral scriptures.

46. Five Meanings of “Brahmacarya”

Great Ṛṣis have proclaimed from their personal experience the wonderful accomplishments that accompany **Brahmacarya**.

Brahmacarya literally means ब्रह्मणि चर्यम् “Walking in Brahman”. The Amarakośa gives five meanings to the word “**Brahman**”: वेदस्तत्त्वं तपो ब्रह्म, ब्रह्मा विप्रः प्रजापतिः। In the neuter gender, the word “**Brahman**” has three meanings: The Vedas, Paramātman and Tapas. In the masculine gender, the word **Brahman** has two meanings: Brāhmaṇas and Hiranyagarbha. Hence, brahmacarya has the following five interpretations:

1. **Walking in the Vedas** i.e., studying and teaching the Vedas. Being devoted to the study of the Vedas.
2. **Walking in Paramātman** i.e., established devotion in supreme Consciousness; living in the conviction that “I am Brahman”.
3. **Practice of Tapas** i.e., cultivating the qualities of calmness of mind, non-attachment, forbearance, faith and devotion.
4. **Living as a Brāhmaṇa** i.e., cultivating the qualities of a Brāhmaṇa i.e., study and teaching of scriptures, performing worship and helping others do so, practicing charity and living on charity, being firm in these practices.
5. **Worship of Hiranyagarbha** i.e., living a life of detachment, constant remembrance of and worship of the primordial source of the universe.

All men can practice these qualities of **Brahmacarya**. If students today practice these virtues and live healthy lives devoted to study and learning, would not the world be a much better place?

47. Seven “Wake-up” Calls

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya has proclaimed five “Wake-up” calls to caution spiritual aspirants:

माता नास्ति पिता नास्ति नास्ति बन्धुः सहोदरः ।

अर्थं नास्ति गृहं नास्ति तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥ १ ॥

In ultimate Reality, relationships such as mother, father etc., are meaningless; wealth, house etc., are illusory possessions. Therefore, O Men, Wake Up! Wake Up!

जन्म दुःखं जरा दुःखं जाया दुःखं पुनः पुनः ।

संसारसागरं दुःखं तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥ २ ॥

Birth, death, spouse, all of life is full of sorrow. Therefore, O Men, Wake Up! Wake Up!

कामः क्रोधश्च लोभश्च देहे तिष्ठन्ति तस्कराः ।

ज्ञानरत्नापहाराय तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥ ३ ॥

Desire, anger and greed are like thieves living in us who aim to steal the jewel of knowledge from our minds.

आशया बध्यते लोकः कर्मणा बहुचिन्तया ।

आयुः क्षीणं न जानाति तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥ ४ ॥

Desire, actions and anxiety bind all humans making them unaware that their lives are slipping away.

सम्पदः स्वप्नसङ्काशाः यौवनं कुसुमोपमम् ।

विद्युच्चञ्चलमायुष्यम् तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥ ५ ॥

Wealth is like a dream. Youth is as short-lived as a flower. Life is like a flash of lightning.

क्षणं वित्तं क्षणं चित्तं क्षणं जीवितमेव च ।

यमस्य करुणा नास्ति तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥ ६ ॥

Wealth, mental attention and life itself last barely a moment. Death has no mercy.

अनित्यानि शरीराणि विभवा नैव शाश्वताः ।

नित्यम् संनिहितो मृत्युः तस्मात् जाग्रत जाग्रत ॥ ७ ॥

Our bodies are short-lived. Our glories are passing. Death is always close at hand. Therefore, Wake Up!

48. Why Fear Death?

Modern man fears little. He is sure of his capacity to overcome all obstacles by the use of his wealth, authority, intellect, technology or occult knowledge. There is some truth to that.

But there is one fear that grips all humans, the fear of death. People make every effort to escape death. But inevitably they do die. And, indeed, they should. As the sages have said, all those who are born are surely going to die.

Why do people fear death? Why is it that even those who are infirm, sick, weak and poverty-stricken, all wish to live longer and cling to life? The sages have a striking explanation:

प्रायेणाकृतकृत्यत्वात् मृत्योरुद्विजते जनः ।
कृतकृत्याः प्रतीक्षन्ते मृत्युं प्रियमिवातिथिम् ॥

Death agitates those who have not achieved their life's ambitions. Those whose lives have been fulfilled welcome death as a dear guest. They do not fear death.

मृत्योर्बिभेषि किं मूढ? जातं मुञ्चति किं यमः?
अजातं नैव गृह्णाति कुरु यत्नम् अजन्मनि ॥

We are born to fear death. So how do we overcome this fear? Is there a way of escaping death? Great enlightened souls give this advice:

O Fool! Why do you fear death? Has death ever spared anyone who has been born? Not at all. But death can hardly catch someone who is not born! So why not gain the supreme knowledge of the birthless Pure Consciousness and know ourselves to be birthless and immortal? Then we are no longer afflicted by the fear of death.

49. Beyond Reach of the Sun

The Divine as indicated in the Upaniṣads is known as “**Para Brahman**”, the Supreme Brahman.

In the Purāṇas, the supreme Self is presented in a variety of names and forms, known as “**Paurāṇic**” **Gods** such as Indra, Candra, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara, Mitra, Varuṇa, Aryama, Agni, Vāk, Gaurī, Lakṣmī, Durgā etc. etc. Each of these gods have their own gender, spouse, sons, glories, realms, weapons, limbs, ornaments and special forms. Each one has its own unique personality.

Not so with Supreme Brahman. **Para Brahman** is neither male nor female; neither girl nor boy; and has neither mother nor father. While being the essential Self of all beings, **Para Brahman** is not cognizable by any of the standard means of cognition.

The Sun illuminates all the physical worlds but is unable to reach or illuminate **Para Brahman**. Brahman is the very source of the light of the Sun itself. Hence it is said in the Bhagavad Gīta (15-6):

न तद्भासयते सूर्यो न शशाङ्को न पावकः ।

And the Kāṭhopeniṣad (2-2-15) says:

न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकम् । नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।
तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

Not even the Sun can add light to the **Supreme Brahman**, the Self of all, which is itself of the nature of Pure Existence, Pure Consciousness and Pure Bliss. The one who realizes the supreme Brahman as not different from his own self is beyond all worldly sorrows.

50. Is Wealth More Important than Peace of Mind?

Wealth seems to be the supreme goal of modern man. Education, power, fame or industry all seem to be directed towards the accumulation of wealth. Men are prepared to go to any lengths to become rich, and devote their whole lives to this one purpose. As it is said, at the mention of wealth, even a corpse will open its eyes!

Is there a limit to this desire for wealth? How much wealth is ever enough? Is any rich person ever contented with the wealth he possesses? What we have is never enough, we always wish for more and there is no such thing as contentment.

Does unlimited wealth bring peace or happiness? Not at all. If wealth could buy happiness, there would be a long line of customers. The sad and blatant truth is that we cannot purchase happiness or bliss by money in markets or bazaars.

If peace and happiness is what we really desire, should we not make an effort to achieve these goals? It is knowledge alone that can bring us peace and happiness. Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of peace and happiness, gives this advice in the Gīta (4-39)

श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।
ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिम् अचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥

If peace of mind is our goal, we should acquire knowledge of our true Self; we should become seekers of the truth expounded in the Bhagavad Gīta. Peace of mind comes only with Self-knowledge, by the grace of the Guru. Liberation is no different from Peace.

**‘गौरवसन्मानप्रशस्ति’मालाभिः समलङ्कृताः विद्वद्वरिष्ठाः
महामहोपाध्यायाः के. जी. सुब्रायशर्माणः**

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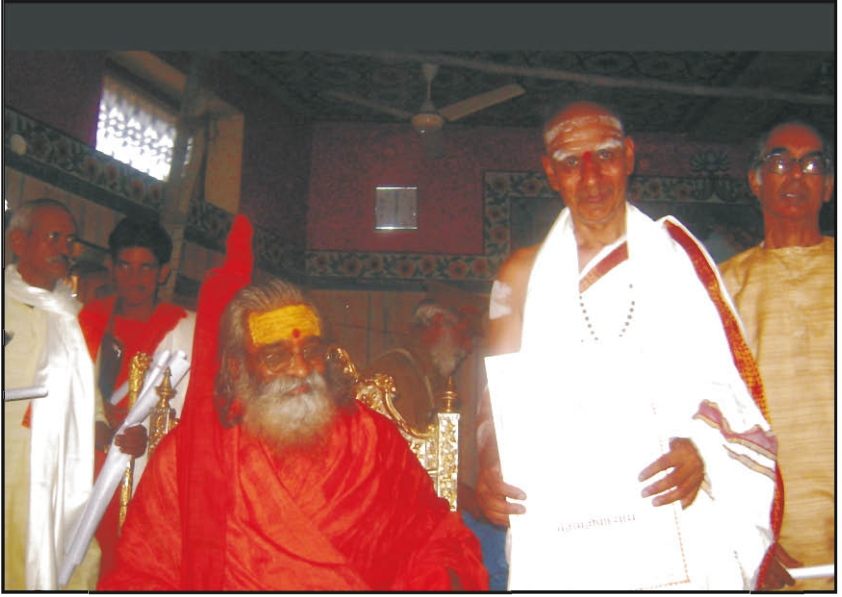
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Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma being conferred the Mahāmahopādhyāya Title in Ayodhya (2009)



Vidwan Sharmaji being honoured and given the Title Advaita Vedanta Savyasāchi by Sri Shankara Jayanthi Mandali, Bangalore, 14-5-2010

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mahamahopādhyāya

Vidwan K. G. Subraya Sharma is the most beloved, blessed and worthy direct disciple of Paramapoojya **Sri Satchidānandendra Saraswathi Mahaswamiji** of the *Adhyatma Prakasha Karyālaya*, **Holenarasipur**, Karnataka State.

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