LIGHT OF SOHAM
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THE LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF SRI GAJANANA MAHARAJ OF NASHIK

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Over half a century ago I was blessed and fortunate to discover Sanatana Dharma and Yoga. Two years later I discovered India as my spiritual home. I eagerly took in everything without discrimination and in the ensuing years began sifting through all I had embraced with increasing scrutiny and discrimination.

The capstone of this process was my accidental discovery of Light On The Path of Self-Realization that had been printed in 1941, five years before the mahasamadhi of the great master Sri Gajanana Maharaj (Gajanan Murlidhar Gupte—not the famous sadhu also named Gajanana). This book was a veritable revelation to me of what a true yogi and ideal master teacher should be, shorn of so much superstition, nonsense and charlatanry that prevails today—and has for centuries in India, and now abroad. There, too, I discovered the authentic Nath Yogi tradition of Soham Yoga. (Please keep in mind while reading this book that Soham is correctly pronounced as “Sohum,” since the short “a” in Sanskrit is pronounced like our American “u” as in “up.” Also, please see the book Soham Yoga for a complete explanation and exposition of Soham Yoga meditation practice.)

Later, also by accident, I gained access to Atmaprabha, a book written by Sri Gajanana Maharaj himself in response to the request of the devotees of Sri Ramana Maharshi in the Mumbai area.

For a while I considered simply reproducing them for distribution, but quickly realized that they required editing and a glossary for readers
not conversant with the many Sanskrit terms they contained. So I have combined them into one book. In many places there are references to Sri Gajanana Maharaj as living. I have retained them as I wanted to change the words of Maharaj’s disciples as little as possible. I have sometimes given explanatory words and comments in parentheses or brackets to elucidate matters for the Western reader. I hope the Glossary at the end will be helpful in understanding unfamiliar words and expressions.

The word “cult” has come to have a negative connotation in the United States, but in India, and therefore in this book, it is used in its original English meaning: a system of religious veneration and devotion directed toward a particular figure or object. It can also simply mean an association or organization of likeminded people.

May the blessings of all the Nath Yogi masters, including Jesus Christ who as Sri Ishanath was one of their number (see The Christ of India), be with those who read this book and follow the eternal wisdom set forth so ably by Sri Gajanana Maharaj.

Swami Nirmalananda Giri
(Abbot George Burke)
PART ONE

(Compiled and edited from material in Light on the Path of Self-realization.)
Sri Gajanana Maharaj of Nashik
Chapter One

The Life and Character of Sri Gajanana Maharaj

“H"e should be called a saint who has known God, and who has
definitely ascertained what is Eternal and what is Non-Eternal”
(Samarth Ramdas). A perusal of the life of Sri Gajanana Maharaj will
convince us that he is one of these extraordinary personages.

Birth and parentage

Sri Gajanana Maharaj hails from the Inamdar-Gupte family of Pen,
Vasi and other villages in the Colaba District. Towards the middle of the
last century, the condition of the family began to deteriorate, and hence
Mr. Murlidhar Bajirao, the father of Gajanana Maharaj, left the district
and migrated to Malkapur (Berars) and sought government employment.
Finding that insufficient to maintain his family decently, he studied law,
and after qualifying himself began to practice as an attorney at Yeotmal.
He soon rose in his profession. His wife’s name was Raju Bai. This couple
gave birth to eight children, three daughters and five sons. The eldest son
was Narayanrao, who later on became famous as a poet, publishing his
Fulanchi Onjal (Handful of Flower-Poems) under the pseudonym “Bee.”
The last son was Gajanana Maharaj, who forms the subject of this treatise.

The birth name of Sri Sadguru Gajanana Maharaj was Gajanan
Murlidhar Gupte. He was born at Yeotmal, Maharashtra, in 1892. In
the third year of his age he had a very severe attack of smallpox, owing
to which his right foot became permanently crippled.
Not long after this, both of his parents died within a month or two of each other. At the time of her death, his mother asked her widowed sister, Balubai, who was living with them, to become his second mother and to take him the first chance she might have to meet a saint and lay him at the saint’s feet for a blessing so by the blessings and grace of that saint, Gajanana’s life would be happy and blessed.

**Sri Narayana Saraswati**

Gajanana Maharaj’s sacred thread ceremony (upanayanam) was performed in his ninth year. When Ganajana was ten or eleven years of age [some accounts say fourteen], his entire family went to a village named Antri to meet a famous saint, Sri Narayana Saraswati, who was staying in the forest there. This saint was renowned throughout north India, and devotees from throughout the north came there to receive darshan of the great yogi. Upon seeing Gajanana, the saint told his aunt, “This boy is a yogi of the Nath Pantha and has practiced Dhyana Yoga in his previous life.”

Before dawn of the day after arriving there, Gajanana had a vision as he was resting, being half awake and half asleep. He saw himself being carried away to a deep cave through wind and rain, torrent and storm, where he saw a beautiful samadhi adorned with flowers. He wished that the sage resting therein would bless him, a poor and wandering soul, when lo! the samadhi broke in twain and out came Lord Matsyendranath. Gajanana Maharaj saw his figure distinctly, as if with eyes wide open. Along with this darshan came the sound of the ajapa japa mantra “Soham” which reverberated into Gajanana Maharaj’s ears. When the vision ended, he found that his entire body was emitting a sweet fragrance.

Soon after waking, he related this vision to his aunt. She took him immediately to the guru Narayana Saraswati who was extremely pleased with the occurrence and declared that Gajanana was a true yogi. He then asked Gajanana to repeat the mantra which had been given to him in
The Life and Character of Sri Gajanana Maharaj

Sri Narayana Saraswati, guru of Gajanana Maharaj
his vision. Gajanana simply responded: “Soham.” The saint confirmed his experience, and said, “Oh Gajanana, you will become famous in the world, and many aspirants on the spiritual path will be benefited by you, and you will always experience great joy and peace of mind. I shall always manifest myself to you in your breath.” This incident clearly shows the high place which Gajanana Maharaj occupies in the Nath sampradaya.

During the time Gajanana and his family were there, Sri Narayana Saraswati told them: “My original name was Paramananda, and my sadguru’s name was Narayana Saraswati. When my sadguru knew that the time of his departure from this world was approaching, he called me near him as I was under his special favor and said, ‘Paramananda, I am soon going to depart from this world. The tradition of my path must be continued as before. I do not see anyone more fitted for the task than yourself. Leave therefore, your name of Paramananda and assume my name of Narayana Saraswati and carry on the tradition.’ Soon after this my sadguru left his mortal coil.”

Sri Narayana Saraswati (Paramananda) was a saint of great powers. Many miracles performed by him were witnessed by Gajanana and his other devotees. He never allowed any one to take his likeness in a photograph. One Mr. Pendharkar, a drawing-master at Akola (Berar) and a photographer, had tried to take the photo of Maharaj for about a hundred times but had failed in getting a likeness. Then he fell at the feet of Maharaj and prayed earnestly that Maharaj might be gracious enough to allow his likeness to be taken for his devotees to keep with them when away from him. Maharaj then consented and he succeeded in getting a likeness.

If any of his devotees felt a keen desire to see him, Maharaj used to manifest himself before him and ask, “Why have you called me?” Owing to such miracles his disciples were extremely delighted. He also appeared differently to different people, sometimes young, sometimes old, sometimes frail, and sometimes robust and strong. To some people his appearance was constantly changing. When told this, he said that
such things happen naturally in the case of yogis, and undue importance should not be given them.

Sri Narayana Saraswati (Paramananda) left this world in November 1910, at the age of one hundred and fourteen. He had taken up monastic life at the age of twelve, after the death of his mother.

The young Gajanana’s life after initiation

After remaining with Sri Narayana Saraswati for two months, Gajanana and his family returned to their home. Gajanana had very little schooling since he refused to continue attending school. But his real, spiritual education was continued by the miracles and teachings of many saints with whom he came in contact through the years. He looked upon them all with the same feeling of reverence which he felt for his sadguru Sri Narayana Saraswati, and succeeded in experiencing the overwhelming ecstasy of the bliss of the Self.

When living at Akola, Gajanana Maharaj would go for meditation to an abandoned fort about a quarter of a mile from the town. He found a secluded spot in the fort for meditation by day as well as by night. Nobody knew about this. Jackals came there at night and howled. Once or twice through fear of the jackals Gajanana Maharaj had to run away from there. However, he always went there for meditation.

Once while Gajanana Maharaj was sitting there in meditation he heard a voice saying, “Do not be afraid. After four or five days more you will never feel the sensation of fear in the least.” Owing to this he gained great courage and continued his daily practice. After some time the howling of jackals ceased altogether and at the time of meditation he began to be immersed in joy. Again one night four or five jackals began to howl. While returning home Gajanana Maharaj saw some jackals on the way. They, however, did not molest him in the least and allowed him to go on his way.

One friend of Gajanana Maharaj, named Shivrambhau Gupte, alone knew about Gajanana Maharaj’s place of meditation. Occasionally
Gajanana Maharaj used to sleep in the house of this friend after returning at night from that place after meditation. Shivrambhau was a near relative of Gajanana Maharaj, and had a great affection for and faith in him. When Gajanana Maharaj told him about his sitting for meditation in the fort and gave him some idea of his experiences, he advised him saying, “Child, you should not go at night to the fort.” To which Gajanana Maharaj replied, “I do not go of my own accord. A superhuman power leads me there and I feel a wave of ecstasy surging in me, and that power again brings me back safely. My sadguru is extremely kind. He guides my thoughts. As soon as the idea enters my mind, the mind itself begins to repeat, ‘Soham, Soham.’ I myself make no effort.”

Gajanana Maharaj, later on, began to sit for meditation in the house of Shivrambhau Gupte.

Miracles begin

Sometimes in Shivrambhau’s house miracles took place spontaneously at the hands of Gajanana Maharaj quite naturally and without any conscious effort on his part. They all happened among his friends and were not revealed by them. On the contrary, efforts were made to keep them secret. As Gajanana Maharaj was then quite young, a cripple and one who did not attend strictly to the prevailing detailed rules of ritual purity and caste observance, they thought that if these miracles became known abroad, people would ridicule them or think that they were tricks of ghosts and evil spirits.

Later on these miracles began to occur even in other places, when Gajanana Maharaj happened to visit the house of other acquaintances. Some people then asked Gajanana Maharaj whether they should communicate these miracles to other people and whether he would perform some miracles in the presence of other people. To this Maharaj replied, “I do not know anything about these miracles. I am not conscious of them. How can I then say anything regarding them? I do not know what these miracles are, and why they occur. You know more about them.
I just sit at one place in a state of meditation. How then can I throw light on these things?"

The members of Maharaj’s family did not know anything about these miracles, and no one had told them. When Gajanana Maharaj heard about these miracles from other people, he began to feel a sort of fear that people would entertain various doubts regarding him and would blame him and think that perhaps he was in league with evil spirits. This fear later on assumed the form of keen anxiety, and he began to feel very uneasy. He was then about eighteen or nineteen years old.

When he was sitting in meditation once, he saw a vision in which it was made clear to him that such miracles often occurred in the case of yogis unconsciously without any effort on their part and there was no reason for becoming uneasy on account of them. When this elucidation was vouchsafed to him, Gajanana Maharaj became free from anxiety and was greatly delighted.

**Shakti Puja**

Gajanana, having seen Shakti Puja [worship of a goddess according to tantrik rites] at a Mr. Karnik’s house, thought according to his boyish mood that he should also try the Shakti Puja in the manner he had seen. Mr. Karnik used to hold a pot of wine to be offered to the goddess and used to sit in meditation as if the goddess would come and take the wine from his hand.

Gajanana, taking all the puja materials, shut himself up in a room in the house of Mr. Shivrambha Gupte and started his experiment. He imitated Mr. Karnik in all his ways, solemnly offered his prayers and shut his eyes, but nothing came of this. The next night, the same experiment was repeated, but with the same result.

The third night, Gajanana persisted with the experiment and immediately went into an ecstatic condition. A thought occurred to him that his puja though offered to Shakti, should automatically reach his guru. And lo! he saw in his inner vision that the offerings were transformed,
from wine to milk and meat into rose-flowers, and the garland offered to the deity was on his own person.

When Gajanana came to ordinary consciousness, to his surprise he found that there was an actual change in the puja materials as he had seen in the state of meditation. At this moment Mr. Shivrambhau who had been peeping through the chink of the door rushed in and fell at the feet of Gajanana Maharaj, who blessed him and instructed him in the Soham mantra.

**Appearance of deities and masters**

After this Gajanana Maharaj’s practice of meditation went on smoothly and he got the darshan of Riddhi and Siddhi (goddesses, who are presiding deities of the powers acquired by yoga practice), and of several saints. All the saints heartily gave him their blessings and said, “Your yoga is now complete. You will now be in a state of meditation ceaselessly. You have now become a siddha (a perfect yogi). Whatever mantra you will give to a spiritual aspirant, it will be attended with success. If you will touch an aspirant, he will make progress on the path of yoga.” Then the saints disappeared.

One night Gajanana Maharaj sat in meditation. His sadguru appeared before him and Gajanana Maharaj worshipped him and offered him the naivedya [food offering]. His sadguru thereupon smiled and said, “All this is not required, but the real truth is yourself—your devotion and faith. You yourself are the real bliss. Enjoy this bliss!” So saying, he disappeared.

After that, at the time of meditation Sri Narayana Saraswati would sit near Gajanana Maharaj (in his inner vision), and all the materials of worship such as milk, shira [suji or halwa: a sweet made from cream of wheat], garlands of flowers, etc., which were merely mentally conceived by Gajanana Maharaj in his meditation, were actually observed by others to be lying in front of Sri Gajanana Maharaj in the physical world. People often saw a garland of flowers appear around the neck of Gajanana Maharaj without anyone placing it there.
More miracles

While Sri Gajanana Maharaj was at Akola a number of miracles occurred spontaneously at his hands. Only a few of them which were narrated by different eye-witnesses are given below. The following curious incident was reported in a letter by a gentleman named Mr. Pandit, from Mumbai, nearly thirty-four years after its occurrence.

While Gajanana Maharaj was at Akola, a wonderful miracle occurred at his hands when he was only about thirteen years old. An old lady neighbor, an aunt of one Mr. Rambhau, was one day worshipping as usual a bronze idol of Lord Krishna in her room. Gajanana in company with some other boys of his age had a whim to play a childish trick on her. He therefore, asked her what she would do if he made her Balkrishna [Child Krishna] disappear from there. The old lady did not pay any attention to this silly boy. Gajanana, therefore, gave an order, quite innocently of course, to the idol to go away from there. To the surprise of everybody the idol of Sri Krishna disappeared. The old lady was horrified at this jugglery and began to weep at the disappearance of her beloved idol. She said that she would not eat or drink until the idol was restored. At last Gajanana took pity on the old lady and asked her to spread out her palms. Gajanana then as innocently as before ordered the idol to come back. To the pleasant surprise of her and others present there, the little idol appeared in her palms. This was the first miraculous happening observed in the life of Gajanana Maharaj.

One Mrs. Dighe from Akola, a playmate of Gajanana in his boyhood, visited Gajanana Maharaj in the month of February, 1940. She narrated the following occurrences of which she was an eye-witness.

It was the month of May. Gajanana, a boy of sixteen, was then sitting in the house of Mr. Rambhau Gupte, an attorney’s clerk, which was close to the house of the attorney. Most of the inmates of Mr. Gupte’s house were assembled there. They requested Gajanana to procure for them some roses as he had obtained miraculous powers from evil spirits and they had heard of his having performed many miracles through their help.
Thereupon Gajanana remarked: “Do you wish that I should invoke evil spirits and get myself killed by them? It is all sheer nonsense to say that I am possessed by evil spirits. The miracles which appear to occur at my hands are not done by me intentionally, nor do I know at the time how they occur. They occur at the instance of some unknown higher power. I feel a strange shock, a light appears before me which then takes the form of my sadguru, and then sometimes such things occur. As they appear miraculous, people attribute them to the working of evil spirits.”

“Anyhow, do anything you like, but do get some roses for us,” was the persistent request of the people. Gajanana then went out of the room, but they could see him. Within a couple of minutes he returned to the room and threw twenty to thirty roses on the floor. The father of Mr. Gupte, an attorney, and Mr. Martandrao Gupte, who was also an attorney, preserved some of these roses in a steel safe in order to test their reality in case they were a kind of hypnotic illusion. To their surprise, however, they subsequently found the roses intact in the safe. None of them had disappeared. So their idea that they had been produced with the help of evil spirits proved to be erroneous.

[The foregoing needs some explanation. Evil spirits have an aversion to iron (and therefore steel) as it seems to burn them. Because of this many people in India wear small iron or steel bangles on a wrist to repel or neutralize any negative spirits or vibrations. If the roses had been produced by evil spirits and were either real or illusions, if put into an iron or steel receptacle they would disappear or be changed into something else. Since they remained intact, the men knew they had not been produced by any negative entities or energies.]

One day while Gajanana was bathing, the water gave off the fragrance of highly scented attar of Khus. [Khus is vetiver, a grass whose essence is used in India both as flavoring and perfume.]

When Maharaj was at Akola, a gentleman named Mr. Santuram Gupte lived in the same house as Maharaj. His wife got a serious attack
of typhoid with pneumonia. Maharaj merely asked the people of the family to burn camphor near her, and she was cured.

One Gokul Ashtami day [the birthday of Krishna], a Mr. Raje and all the members of his family were in the house. At about ten or eleven p.m., Mr. Raje went to the back part of the house where Maharaj was reclining in an easy chair on the verandah. Mr. Raje smelled the fragrance of hundreds of incense sticks. He became somewhat afraid, and looked everywhere in the house but could not find from where the fragrant smell was proceeding. He came to the place where Maharaj was reclining on the easy chair. The smell was still there. Mr. Raje then awakened Maharaj and told him of it. Maharaj then laughed loudly and only remarked that he himself had been absorbed in a feeling of joy, and that he could not explain it. [We can see from various accounts that miracles were often the result of supernormal states being experienced by Gajanana Maharaj.]

On two or three occasions at about four or five o’clock in the early morning, all of a sudden there was spread everywhere an exquisite and almost celestial fragrance of flowers. Mr. Raje also observed on some occasions Maharaj’s whole body besmeared with ashes and his forehead marked with sandal paste without any apparent physical cause. Maharaj, when asked about it, kept silent.

**Maharaja’s humility and mercy**

[This account centers around the proposed visitation of a woman to her family whom she had not seen for four or five years. For some reason, in India this matter of a woman going to her husband’s household, or returning to her parent’s household for a visit, is very often a source of conflict, mutual recrimination and all-around ill feeling, usually with no basis at all except ego.]

When Maharaj was at Mumbai, he was often asked by his brother, Mr. Narayanrao, to go to Pen and other places where their family had their landed property, to receive land-rents which amounted to about five to eight hundred rupees per year.
During one of his visits to Pen in 1920 or 1921, he stayed with one Mr. Pradhan. A friend of Gajanana Maharaj, Mr. Trimbakrao Shrikekar, went to him and requested him to accompany him to the village Nate via Roha. He said he had to bring his sister Kerubai from Roha, where her husband was living. As Maharaj was not acquainted with anyone at Roha, he hesitated to accompany him. But as Trimbakrao insisted upon Maharaj’s accompanying him, he at last consented. The next day, Trimbakrao, his friend and Maharaj started out in a bullock cart in the morning, and reached Roha in the evening.

Maharaj was at that time dressed rather shabbily, and he asked Trimbakrao to tell the people there that he was his servant. Trimbakrao was unwilling to do so, but the occasion was such that it was necessary for Maharaj to remain incognito. On arriving at Roha, Trimbakrao went to his sister and told her how Maharaj had asked himself to be represented. She did not like the idea, as she had heard about Maharaj being a saint. When she came to know that these persons had come to take her with them, she was glad, and she hoped that her husband’s people would consent to her going to visit her family.

The family consisted of Kerubai’s husband Wamanrao, who was a clerk in the Mamlatdar Kacheri, his father Narayanrao, his mother, children and other near relatives. Kerubai, however, had no child although nearly eight years had elapsed since her coming of age. Some said that she was possessed of some evil spirits, and so had no issue.

When these guests arrived, Narayanrao, Wamanrao’s father, was at home. He received the guests and, Maharaj being a stranger to him, asked him the following questions.

Narayanrao: What is your caste?
Maharaj: We people have no caste.
Narayanrao: What is your father’s name?
Maharaj: They say it is Murlidhar.
Narayanrao: What is your surname?
Maharaj: Gupte.
He asked him no further questions. [By his family name, the man knew his caste, and that he was from Maharashtra.] In the meantime, Wamanrao returned home, and without taking any notice of the guests went straight into the house. He was told in the house that the guests had come to take Kerubai with them to her father’s.

At the time of dinner in the evening, Maharaj was served outside in the verandah [and not in the dining room] as he was a servant brought by the guests for driving the cart.

After dinner, arrangements for sleeping were made for the guests. Trimbakrao asked Maharaj to open the topic regarding his sister, and if her people consented to her going with them, they would start early the next morning. Maharaj accordingly opened the topic with Wamanrao, but he did not say anything in reply. Some time later the same night, Kerubai asked her husband for permission to go with her brother. Wamanrao became so enraged that she was absolutely silenced. Maharaj tried to pacify him, but it was of no avail. Before going to sleep, Maharaj told Trimbakrao that he would see his way next morning, and that he should not yoke the bullocks till ten o’clock.

The next morning, Maharaj told Trimbakrao and his friends to go out, and said that he would again open the topic with Wamanrao. Maharaj then joined Narayanrao, the old father of Wamanrao, near the hearth. Immediately Wamanrao came out and Maharaj asked him whether he was willing to send his wife with them, as she had not seen her parents for four or five years, and her father was also then ill. Maharaj gave these reasons and assured him that she would be sent back in a week and that they would be highly obliged if she were allowed to accompany them.

Wamanrao became agitated and told them to go away, that he was not going to send his wife to her father at all. Maharaj then asked him not to lose his temper, and said that though he was a servant he had made himself bold to make those casual inquiries. Wamanrao became a little mollified at this, and after drinking some tea began to explain the reasons for not sending his wife to her father’s. He said that whenever
she went to her parents, people there blamed him as she was possessed by evil spirits and consequently had no issue. Maharaj, thereupon casting a glance at him, asked him whether he observed any fast, to which he replied in the affirmative. Wamanrao used to observe a fast every Tuesday, having been told to do so by an astrologer who had come to Roha, and of whose proficiency in that science he had been convinced. The astrologer had directed Wamanrao to observe fasts for thirty-six consecutive Tuesdays. It was then the third Tuesday.

Maharaj then asked him whether he had full faith in astrology. As this question was put, Wamanrao began to think that it was rather peculiar for a person who was merely a servant to speak in that calm, dignified and thoughtful tone. Maharaj again asked him the same question, and inquired whether he had faith in astrology and would put faith in whatever Maharaj would tell him. To this he replied that it all depended upon his being convinced about the truth of what Maharaj would tell him.

Then Wamanrao went inside and brought the Panchang [astrological almanac] and gave it to Maharaj. While he went inside, he was becoming comparatively calmer and calmer, and he began to wonder how that man, a mere servant, was influencing him in that manner.

Maharaj, looking at the Panchang, said that he did not know how to read it, but asked him to write down on a piece of paper any questions which he had a wish to ask, but without showing them to him. Maharaj made a show of counting on his fingers, and then correctly gave him the answers to all his questions. Wamanrao was extremely surprised, and he at once placed his head upon Maharaj’s feet and caught them firmly. He felt that Maharaj was not a servant or an astrologer, but a saint. He asked Maharaj to give him guru upadesh, and said that he would not leave Maharaj’s feet until he granted his request. Maharaj granted his request and asked him to meditate upon Sri Krishna. He also gave him the mantra Soham, and conferred upon him the faculty of internal sight [antardrishti]. He made Wamanrao sit in front of him for half an hour repeating Soham in his mind. As he sat there, Wamanrao saw Sri Krishna, full of radiance.
Then he asked Maharaj to tell him exactly who he was. He knew he was not a servant as he feigned to be. He did not allow Maharaj to go that day. He took a day’s leave, and remained at home to attend himself upon the guests. Maharaj told him who he was, and said that he was only a crippled child of God. Owing to the grace of his guru he was able to benefit people on the path of Self-realization.

All were delighted and begged Maharaj’s pardon for having treated him as a servant. Maharaj replied that he looked upon respect or disrespect as the same. The guests remained there for a day and started the next day, accompanied by Kerubai.

Maharaj assured Wamanrao that he would cure his wife of her complaint, and that she would have an issue. Maharaj’s words came true and Kerubai got a child who is now a grownup lad. Wamanrao also progressed well on the path of yoga. He occasionally visited Parel (Mumbai) to see Maharaj while he was there.

**Vegetarian miracles**

In the next trip of Maharaj to his landed property for receiving rents, he happened to be at Mahad. There was a friend of Maharaj, Mr. Randive, who was of a believing nature. Mr. Randive requested Maharaj to be with them in the camp that night. Maharaj had another doctor friend, Wamanrao Mathure, who was a devotee of Sri Rama. Maharaj went to him and requested him to accompany him to the camp, as he had been invited there by Mr. Randive.

They started in the doctor’s bullock cart, and though the river Gandhari near Mahad was in flood, they reached the camp by about ten p.m. All persons in the camp were waiting for Maharaj for dinner. Among the camp there were some Brahmins and some Kayasthas also. Dishes of meat were served.

Maharaj and the doctor protested that they were unaccustomed to such food, and that they ought to have been served with vegetarian food along with the Brahmins. The Kayasthas who knew Maharaj began to mock, and
said that he, being a Kayastha, should not find anything unusual in the dishes, and accused Maharaj of making an unnecessary show. [Actually, in Maharaj’s family, even before he was born, no meat was ever eaten.] Maharaj said that if they persisted, he would partake of any dish which was given to him. Maharaj then offered the food to God and lo! The meat served to all was immediately transformed into vadas [fried dumplings made of beans or bean flour] with [vegetarian] sauce. All were struck with wonder. Some said it was jugglery and some that it was hypnotism.

Mr. Randive, who had invited Maharaj to the camp, was convinced of the greatness of Maharaj as a saint and sent the same vadas and broth as prasad to his family at Alibag. And the wonder of it was that the vadas and broth remained unspoiled for eight or ten days.

Once when Maharaj was suffering from fever, in order to keep his strength people near him decided to give him a boiled egg. When the boiled egg was broken, the internal part of it was turned into a potato, the taste and smell being exactly that of a potato. All persons present there observed this.

Mr. Saswadkar unmasked, and the miracle of the attar salesman

[In the Conversations chapter, there is an account by Mr. Saswadkar about a conversation in which he challenged Sri Gajanana Maharaj about the fragrances often smelt in his presence. We continue the matter in his own words.]

After this talk we all went home. The next day I again went to Maharaj accompanied by three or four others. At that time I had applied highly-scented attar to my hands and clothes, and had placed small pieces of cotton soaked in attar in my ears. Some other men also were then sitting with Maharaj. One of them said to me, “Well, Subregistrar Saheb, you have come besmeared with attar scent today. Do you celebrate your Diwali today?” [Diwali is the Hindu autumnal Festival of Lights celebrated everywhere in India and abroad.] I replied, “Maharaj gives out various fragrant smells. I thought I would do the same in respect of mere attar.”
Upon this, Maharaj remarked that he himself was not smelling the fragrance of attar, but on the contrary the bad smell of ordinary oil. Other persons, on being told by Maharaj to do so, actually smelt my clothes and they, too, smelled the odor of ordinary oil. Then a big laugh burst from all the people there. I keenly felt ashamed, and immediately begged the pardon of Maharaj.

All then said to me, “If at all you want to test a saint, it should be done with all humility. It is much better not to undertake such a difficult task. If we do not find our way to put faith in a saint, we should salute him from a distance, but should never find fault with him. Now this Maharaj has been here for the last eight or nine months, but very few people know about him. It does not appear proper to us that anyone should try to test this great saint. However, whatever has happened, has happened for the best.” After this all went away.

_Later Mr. Saswadkar told about a miracle he witnessed involving attar. Here are his actual words._

One morning Gajanana Maharaj came to my house, and we both sat talking with each other. A vendor of attars, who had been to Dhulia from Kanouj, came there. He had sold attars to many rich and important personages in the town, and he had made a list of them. He showed the list to me and said, “I have come to you, having heard about you. You must buy at least two or three tolas of attars.” I said that I was not fond of attars, and wanted to send him away, but somehow I had to purchase attars from him worth two or three rupees. I then went inside for taking my bath. When I came out, I heard some talk going on between the attarwalla [attar salesman] and Maharaj.

The attarwalla said, “I never give samples gratis. Pay money, and I shall give you a piece of cotton soaked in attar. My attars are not of an inferior quality costing eight or twelve annas per tola. [A tola is about half an ounce.] I take eight annas [half a rupee] for a small piece of cotton soaked in the attar.”

Maharaj thereupon said, “I am a poor man, my good sir. Just apply
a little attar to the back of my hand. I do not want a piece of cotton soaked in attar. Show me Hina [a rare fragrance whose ingredients are kept secret by the perfumers] or Mogra [Jasmine] attar.”

Still the attarwalla refused to show Maharaj samples. I then told the attarwalla to show samples to Maharaj. I had an idea that Maharaj would work some miracle. I therefore again pressed the attarwalla and said, “Do show your samples to him, he will purchase your attars.”

But the attarwalla seemed to be an obstinate fellow and said “My attars are very costly. How can this gentleman purchase them?” Ultimately, however, he applied two different kinds of attar to Maharaj’s hand. Maharaj asked him about the price of those attars. He said that it was Rs.10 per tola, but that he would give them at the same rate to him as he had given to me: at Rs.8 per tola. Maharaj then inhaled the smell of the attar and remarked that the smell was like that of ordinary oil which we use in our cooking for frying things. The attarwalla got angry and began to talk in a rambling and incoherent manner. I then said to him, “You cannot understand the real worth of persons, just as some persons cannot understand the real worth of attars.”

Maharaj then turned to me and said, “Bhausaheb, pay this man five rupees and ask him to show samples of all his attars.” Accordingly the attarwalla began showing the samples of all attars which he had with him. But every sample that was shown had the bad smell of ordinary oil. Even the costliest attars smelt likewise. The attarwalla himself and myself smelt the attars and both of us were convinced that what Maharaj said was true.

Then the attarwalla got frightened, for he began to think that the man wearing the shabby coat was some great saint. He then fell at the feet of Maharaj and prayed for pardon. We then burst into a laugh. Maharaj said to the attarwalla, “I have done nothing in this matter. For all attars you use ordinary oil. A least I have heard that you do so. Hence the attars went back to their original form of ordinary oil. What is there to wonder at?” Maharaj, however, again transformed all his attars into
their sweet-smelling state as before. That attarwalla did not come to my place again at Dhulia. He was a Mohammedan, but dressed like a Hindu.

**Maharaj’s Fever**

While Mr. Saswadkar was a Subregistrar at Niphad, Gajanana Maharaj had once visited him there in the year 1931 or 1932. Maharaj, since 1926, had been staying at Nashik with his relative Mr. Bhise, and from Nashik he had gone to Niphad. One day Dr. Karnik, a doctor in government service who was on vacation, was staying with Mr. Saswadkar. Maharaj got fever on that day after Mr. Saswadkar had gone to his office, and the doctor made use of his thermometer in order to ascertain the degree of fever. The mercury in the thermometer rose to one hundred and ten degrees. The doctor was shocked upon seeing this, and became nervous. Maharaj, however, told him not to be afraid, but the doctor immediately left the house. [He was afraid that if Sri Gajanana Maharaj died with him there, he would be blamed for Maharaj’s death.] Maharaj laughed to himself and kept quiet.

At about ten p.m. Mr. Saswadkar returned home. The conversation that had taken place earlier in his office between Mr. Saswadkar and the doctor is not known, but as soon as he came home, Mr. Saswadkar said to Maharaj, “Maharaj, you have some trick of making all doctors ridiculous.” Maharaj replied, “I do not understand what you are saying. I do not know what happened.” Maharaj returned to Nashik a day or two later.

**Restoring the Ashes**

In May, 1928, when Mr. Saswadkar was a Subregistrar at Talegaon Dhamdhere in Poona District, Maharaj, accompanied by Mr. Nana Samartha and Bala Maharaj Ramshejkar, went to visit him. There is a holy place by the name of Vithal Vadi at a distance of about ten miles from Talegaon, and one day Mr. Saswadkar took his guests there in a bullock cart. Mr. Nana Samartha washed Bala Maharaj’s zoli (a square piece of cloth with the two ends on each side tied into a knot, used by
sadhus to keep their things in) in the river without noticing what it contained. That zoli contained sacred ashes and sundry other articles belonging to Bala Maharaj. All these things had floated away into the river Bhima, and the zoli was washed, dried and handed over to Bala Maharaj, who felt very sorry for the loss of his sacred ashes as he wanted to besmear his body with ashes after his bath.

Bala Maharaj said, “Maharaj, what is this? Mr. Saswadkar and Mr. Samartha did not take the trouble to see what was in my zoli and have thrown away the things in it. I am especially sorry about the sacred ashes.”

Maharaj said, “Don’t worry, these people have no sense. I, however, ask you why you are so much upset. Why do you not ask your favorite deity, Sri Dattatreya, to give the things back to you? You have for such a long time served your god faithfully on the hill known as Ramasheja. Will he not take pity on you? And now you are actually sitting in the temple of Shiva, who is fond of these ashes. All right. Tell me how much ashes do you want? Do you want a sackful or only as much as your zoli will hold? Because that much will suffice you for about two or three months.”

In the meanwhile Messrs. Saswadkar and Samartha came to that temple of Shiva where Gajanana Maharaj and Bala Maharaj were sitting, and they heard most of this conversation. Gajanana Maharaj said, “Oh Samartha and Saswadkar, how is it that you have no sense at all? You have thrown away the sacred ashes of Bala Maharaj contained in the zoli!” Then Saswadkar and Samartha begged the pardon of Sri Gajanana Maharaj and Bala Maharaj, and fell at their feet.

Bala Maharaj said, “What is the use of all this talk? Give me ashes to besmear my body.”

Gajanana Maharaj again asked him how much he wanted, a sackful or as much as the zoli would hold. Bala Maharaj then got a little irritated and said, “You are simply talking and talking. You have not as yet produced as much ashes as can be held between two fingers. You simply talk about devotees and their gods. You have also taunted me about my tapasya and asked me to invoke my deity.”
There was a great laugh at this, and Gajanana Maharaj said, “Bala Maharaj, please do not be angry. I do not possess the merit of tapasya, I have no soul-force, I have no knowledge of spiritual or worldly matters. I am simply a sweeper at the door of saints, and my duty is to do menial work there. I only take a dose of Soham and that suffices for me. Oh, Dattatreya! Run for my assistance! Run for my assistance and give ashes to my friend Bala Maharaj here!”

With these words, Gajanana Maharaj put his hands near the pindi and took out in succession handfuls of ashes and began to besmear the bodies of Bala Maharaj, Samartha, Saswadkar and himself. Then he stopped.

Bala Maharaj fell at the feet of Sri Gajanana Maharaj and asked his pardon, saying, “I am your child, kindly pardon me for my mistakes.” Then Gajanana Maharaj and Bala Maharaj embraced each other.

**Dhyana Yoga taught by Gajanana Maharaj**

The Nath sampradaya advocates Dhyana Yoga or what is called Raja Yoga and the method advocated by Gajanana Maharaj is very simple, and is as follows.

He directs the novice or disciple to sit comfortably. If the student can sit in any asana such as padmasana, so much the better. Then the student is asked to start the japa of Soham [pronounced “Sohum”] with his breath. [That is: So when naturally inhaling and Hum when naturally exhaling.] When the student takes his position and starts to concentrate, Gajanana Maharaj will place his blessing hand on the student’s head and help him on the path to attain Self-realization. It is this grace of the guru that takes the student onward on the path, and herein lies the worth and merit of Gajanana Maharaj, as he has helped so many students. Some of them have written down their experiences.
Omniscience and a meningitis case

In 1934 in Mr. Bhise’s house at Nashik, Mr. Appasaheb Vaidya, Mr. Walawalkar and one or two others were sitting talking with Maharaj, when Maharaj suddenly exclaimed, “He is lying ill on my bedstead in my room in my house. I must go to Parel [an area of Mumbai]!” As no letter or telegram had been received from Parel regarding anybody’s illness, people were wondering about Maharaj’s sudden exclamation when to the surprise of all a telegram was received from Parel that Shankar, the nephew of Mr. Samartha, was seriously ill and requesting Maharaj to start for there immediately.

Maharaj started by the first train available, which was in the afternoon, and reached Parel in the evening. The children of the family came running to the place where Maharaj’s motor had stopped, crying aloud, “Deva Mama [Our God] has come!” Maharaj made inquiries with them regarding the illness, and then went upstairs. Shankar, being almost unconscious, did not recognize Maharaj at first, but after some time did so.

Doctor Dabholkar was the family doctor of Mr. Samartha. He was a very good man, benevolent and successful in his profession. In the beginning the case could not be properly diagnosed, as it was the first case of meningitis in Mumbai. It was four or five days after the onset of the illness, when the patient showed signs of delirium, that a proper diagnosis was arrived at. Shankar was examined by a committee of doctors consisting of Doctors Bharucha, Mulgaonkar and Mistry, all MD’s.

Neighbors and relatives and friends were coming morning and evening to see how the patient was doing. Every day about forty to fifty persons came there. Shankarrao was a store-keeper in the office of the “Times of India,” and people from his office also used to come to make inquiries regarding him.

Nearly a month passed, during which doctors were paying their visits. Religious ceremonies such as japa and other things were also performed. Whatever was suggested by anyone was done.
Maharaj saw Shankar only twice or thrice in the beginning, and last when his critical time came. Outsiders began to ask the members of the Samartha family, “What has your Maharaj to say about the illness?” To which they replied, “We only know that everything depends upon his grace.”

In this manner two months passed, and still there were no signs of any improvement in the patient’s condition. His eyes became swollen, there was pus in his ears, and he began to stammer incoherently in English, Urdu and Gujarati. His fever was between one hundred and three or one hundred and four degrees continuously. Shankar’s superior officer had told all clerks to make inquiries regarding his health every evening and give him a detailed report next morning. The officer had sent a message to Nana Samartha, Shankar’s uncle, that he would be willing to have Shankar taken to a hospital and arrange for his special treatment there. The officer himself then came with his wife to see Shankar, but Shankar could not recognize him. The officer felt very sad, and after seeing Shankar’s condition was convinced that Shankar would not live for more than five or six days. He therefore left thinking that it was useless to move him to a hospital.

The next day Shankar saw a vision which he afterwards described as follows: “I saw a black Yama Duta (Messenger of Death) putting his noose around my neck. There was a funeral pyre burning nearby, and a widow was ceaselessly crying. I myself was also crying loudly and shouting, ‘O Deva Mama, Deva Mama, save me, save me!’ Then somebody went and brought Sri Gajanana Maharaj near me. He saw me crying and said, ‘Do not cry; from tomorrow you will feel better.’ Still I could not be consoled. Then he told me to repeat Soham continuously. I began to do so with my eyes shut.”

At this time almost all people had gone away. Only four or five persons were sitting near Shankar and were continuously burning camphor near the head of the bed. That night camphor worth two or three rupees was burnt. Shankar began to speak and said, “Have all run away? I see
here a big snake, and Sri Krishna upon it, who has placed his hand upon my head. See, they have gone.” All felt glad at hearing this. After that night, Shankar’s fever began to subside slowly. Three months later he became all right and regained his former strength. He then resumed his employment.

Sea rescue

One day Gajanana Maharaj was sitting quietly without speaking. Suddenly all his clothing became soaking wet and those present thought he was having abnormally profuse perspiration. One or two days after this incident, a letter was received containing the information that some person while about to be drowned in the sea had been saved by meditating upon Maharaj.

Paralysis Case of Mrs. Gupte

Rao Saheb Shankar Sitaram Gupte has been connected with Maharaj since 1926, when he received initiation from Maharaj at Dhulia. His wife, Mrs. Anandibai Gupte, also received initiation from Maharaj. Recently Mrs. Anandibai Gupte was suffering from paralysis for about six or seven months and was confined to bed.

Raosaheb Gupte had been staying at Nashik since 1927 with the object of getting the benefit of Maharaj’s company. But somehow or other he never thought of taking Maharaj to his house, as perhaps he did not like to give trouble to Maharaj regarding his worldly affairs, and thought that one must try to bear one’s own afflictions sent by fate. Medical treatment by his family doctor, Mr. Mauskar, was going on.

One day, however, Raosaheb Gupte casually said to Maharaj, “I am tired of giving doctor’s medicines to my wife. It would be better if you would kindly come over to my house and give her your blessing.” Maharaj replied, “Only doctors can cure such diseases. You ignorant people wish them to be cured by the blessings of saints. Of course the blessings of saints can accomplish anything. But I am not a saint of that
sort. If I could cure diseases, why should I not be able to cure my own? As you know, in a month I am generally ill and suffering for nearly twenty days. Your wife is now about sixty years of age. Such ills of the body are quite natural.”

Although Maharaj said this and Raosaheb Gupte thought that the matter would rest there, Maharaj suddenly changed his mind and agreed to accompany Raosaheb to his house.

Maharaj then went to Raosaheb Gupte’s house and told his wife to stand up. He held her hand and made her stand up and said, “Meditate, while standing, upon that upon which you meditate every day. Direct your mind upon all your senses and carry on the japa.” Mrs. Anandibai Gupte thereupon felt greatly delighted as she had not gotten the darshan of Maharaj for eight months although he was staying in the same town. She felt that the Great God himself had brought about this meeting with Maharaj. She did as she was told by Maharaj, and then could move a few steps. This was repeated two or three times during a period of two or three hours. She then could go into the inner house and again come out. Maharaj returned home. In a day or two she became all right as if she had never suffered from paralysis. When the doctor who was treating her, came to know about this, he was also very glad and surprised.

**Nagesh Wasudeo Gunaji’s account**

I came in contact with Gajanana Maharaj in this wise. Early in 1938 I happened to see *Guru Shishya Vijnyana Deepika*, a small Marathi pamphlet describing the life of Gajanana Maharaj and experiences of his devotees, in the hands of my friend Mr. R. K. Kamat. I casually turned over some pages of the book and found it very interesting. I then wrote to Mr. V. G. Vaidya, a disciple of Gajanana Maharaj and publisher of the book. I got the book for myself and read and reread it. I then corresponded with the disciple and the master and became closely acquainted with them. I wrote also an appreciative article in Marathi regarding Gajanana Maharaj in the weekly Marathi newspaper “Gorakshan” of Poona.
Early this year, my friend Mr. Kamat saw Gajanana Maharaj, who expressed a wish that I should also see him. That a yogi like Gajanana Maharaj should express such a wish was in my opinion a great compliment which I hardly deserved. Towards the middle of last July (1939), I went to Thana for some business and thence I went to Nashik on the weekend and saw Gajanana Maharaj and prostrated at his feet. I was most cordially received and welcomed by Gajanana Maharaj and all the disciples, for which I thank them all most heartily.

As Gajanana Maharaj has not the least paraphernalia of a yogi or saint, and as he dresses well, wearing a shirt, coat and necktie, and looks more or less stylish, many people mistake him for an ordinary man. But on closer contact with him, his due worth and merit stand out prominently and are recognized.

Gajanana Maharaj looks very simple and unostentatious, but he is original and full of wit and humor. He always talks freely and without any reserve with all. But with regard to his disciples, he criticizes them openly and does not spare them in the least. If his jokes and criticisms are closely observed they are seen to have a truly positive effect on the persons to whom they are addressed.

As Gajanana Maharaj is perfectly egoless and guileless, he soon endears himself to all, who when they come to know his real worth hold him in high esteem. He styles himself and signs letters as Kersuni (broom), and his principal mission in life is therefore to sweep the minds of his disciples clean and render them fit for Self-realization.

His life habits are very simple. He takes meals very rarely. Whenever there is a guest with him, he sits down with him for meals when any special dish is prepared, but he partakes very little of the things served. Otherwise he goes without food for days altogether. He drinks tea many times a day. Like a true yogi he is not fond of wealth, women or fame. If any coins are offered, he tosses them back. He is a true bachelor, as he does not care a jot for the fair sex. He has got very few women disciples. As he is by nature selfless and unassuming, he shuns
the limelight of fame and publicity and likes to work out his mission in secret.

He is himself enjoying the bliss of the Self and is teaching his disciples and aspirants how to make progress in the spiritual path without leaving worldly life, in a natural and easy manner without tribulations to the body, only following a course of practice suitable to every one’s capacity.

Maharaj is passing his days in joy and peace. He is calm, witty, affectionate and acts towards all like a friend. He does not give any sign of his greatness. He has no sense of pride and acts equally with all, young and old, rich and poor, of high or low caste. He acts towards an individual in consonance with the mentality of that individual. Just as we see our own face in a mirror, similarly Maharaj is, as it were, a mirror reflecting the ideas of those who go to him. Only after great and minute observation for a long time can one come to know Maharaj and to realize that he is not what he seems.

Maharaj says, “I have never up to this time worn the garb of a sadhu or asked any one to be my disciple. On the contrary, I tell people not to come to me unless I call them. I am always taking the wine of Soham and thus I have been spoilt. You people should not spoil your lives by following me. If at all any one wants to spoil his life as I have spoiled mine, he should with open eyes and confidence in himself accept this dose of the Soham wine and then live in the bliss of his own Self.

There is a song composed by a well-known saint (Devanath) to the following effect:

“I alone know that I have obtained the collyrium of the guru’s grace (i.e. obtained the gift of inner sight);

“I alone know that I have been made to drink of the cup of immortality;

“I alone know that all form has become submerged in my own Self, and

“I alone know that I myself am the guru and also the disciple.”
Experiences of Mr. Vishwanath Gopal Vaidya of Nashik

The real fruit of all my tapasya of the last forty years is the darshan of my master, Sri Gajanana Maharaj, and the bestowal of his grace upon me, since which I am becoming engrossed in meditation and am almost swimming continuously in an ocean of joy for the last five years.

On the 15th of December 1929, I dreamed about a crippled man who seemed to be a saint. He took a piece of paper, wrote upon it Rupees Seven and gave the paper to me. I saw what was written upon it, then looked into my pocket, but saw that I had not got seven rupees. The saint said that it did not matter but that I should not forget to give that amount when the time would come. I bowed to him, and the dream ended. After I awoke I wrote down the dream in my diary. Four years later I found the dream realized as I will relate.

In 1933 I learned of a saint called Gajanana Maharaj, and after much inquiry found where he lived. I went on the 4th of May 1933 to Sri Gajanana Maharaj, and having given him information regarding myself, had a talk with him for some time, and then I returned home. Even in the short time that I was in his company, I could see his child-like innocence, his absolute lack of egotism, his even-mindedness and his extremely keen desire to uplift other human souls. I found that he was as if absolutely unconscious of the ego, and I was greatly delighted to see this.

I began to go every day for darshan. On Wednesday the 10th of May 1933, when I went for his darshan, he said, “I shall show you the unextinguishable flame of the Self. Come to me tomorrow in the morning.” Accordingly on the next day in the morning, I went to him. It was Thursday the 11th of May 1933. He gave me the mantra Soham and asked me to repeat it. He said to me, “You will get the darshan of the Supreme Self by going into the Brahmarandhra (the center of the brain).”

A short while later Maharaj was going to Niphad, and he asked me for money. I had then with me a currency note of Rs.5/-, which I handed over to him. Upon this he said, “Now only two rupees are due
from you.” At that time I did not understand the meaning and context of what he said. On the next Guru Purnima day, on Friday the 7th of July 1933, although Maharaj was not at Nashik, I went to his house, garlanded his photo and placed two rupees as dakshina before it. A few days later while I was lying down on a chair and had shut my eyes, I suddenly remembered the dream which I had in the December of 1929. The saint whom I saw in the dream was lame just as Maharaj is lame. The saint had written Rupees Seven on a piece of paper. When Maharaj asked for money and I gave Rs. 5, he had remarked that Rs. 2 had remained. I happened also to put Rs. 2 before his photo on the Guru Purnima day.

All these things tallied with the dream which I had four years before foretelling that I would meet Sri Gajanana Maharaj. I was greatly delighted and also greatly amused to see this divine arrangement of things. When next saw Maharaj, I told him the whole thing regarding the dream, and how the account of Rs.7 tallied. He merely smiled at this. I was greatly delighted and felt myself blessed in that Sri Gajanana Maharaj was guiding me in the path of yoga.

The character of Sri Gajanana Maharaj

All people who have seen Maharaj or observed miracles performed by him, even though they may be his worst enemies, can be sure in their minds that Maharaj has never taken even a single pice from others, and that he has no wish to do so. Then what would be the purpose of displaying false miracles?

Maharaj has visited several places. Not a single individual in all these places could ever say that Maharaj has in any instance deceived anyone or obtained money from him. It is true that he has no learning of Vedanta and does not perform worship of gods with flowers and other outward materials. Whatever he says in his simple words is his Vedanta which is based on atomic experience and not on books. This Vedanta is such that ordinary people can understand and appreciate it.
Although there are some of Maharaj’s disciples staying at Nashik, Maharaj generally does not go to their houses for years unless there is some special reason. However it depends upon his will. He never goes to some at all, while he goes to others of his own accord without being called.

Sri Gajanana Maharaj is at present staying at Nashik and a small number of persons who are aspirants on the spiritual path are his disciples. To these persons who have attained actual experiences in Dhyana Yoga, the publication of this life sketch is a matter of indifference. Without putting blind faith in anyone, these persons have got actual experiences, and they are enjoying peace of mind and joy.

Maharaj’s personality is very genial and witty, and by his affectionate dealings with all who come in contact with him he attracts people to himself. Aspirants are sure to be benefited by the company of such a saint.

We shall conclude this life-sketch of Sri Gajanana Maharaj with a brief description of his personality. He is one of the most unostentatious persons, such as one so rarely meets with in these days of reckless egoism and spiritual bankruptcy. Though a cripple and lame in the right leg, and rather lean and emaciated in his general constitution, one never finds him gloomy or morose in his dealings with the world and the people in it.

In fact, he has an inexhaustible fund of sparkling humor on his lips, which is innocent and healthy, never sarcastic or hurtful. He is a bachelor in the strict sense of the term, and looks upon all women as his mothers or sisters. He has all the appearance of a worldly man about himself. He likes to dress well, is clean and tidy, and his stiff collar, golden pin and white speckled tie are rather typical of him. His food habits are of the simplest kind. He takes food only once or twice in a week and it consists of merely a piece of bread with some unspiced vegetables. Usually he takes tea five or six times daily.

In his external appearance and mode of life, there is thus very little in him which would indicate a great yogi hidden within. In fact, nearly all those who come in contact with him receive the first impression of
his being an ordinary person with worldly habits and earthly ideas. It is only more intimate contact with him that convinces others of the presence of a mighty Self residing in that frail body. Not that there is any dubiousness about him, but it is all due to his instinctive virtue of self-effacement so characteristic of him since his childhood. No wonder, then, that some of his disciples have likened him to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Bengal in this particular trait in his nature.

It is noteworthy to mention here that whenever he writes to others he invariably styles himself as “Your humble sweeper or broom.” Curiously enough, that word broom is very significant. It unmistakably indicates this man’s mission in this life. It appears he has been charged by destiny to serve as a sweeper of the minds of men who happen to come to him. The human mind often gets clouded and eclipsed by a false and deceitful valuation of material things. It becomes dirty and unclean, and cannot therefore see the beacon light within. In the absence of a guiding star it becomes miserable, despondent and diseased. Modern medical science may cure physical disabilities and alleviate bodily sufferings, but it is absolutely helpless in regard to mental disorders, particularly of the type mentioned above. The only science that will render an effective and lasting cure to the human mind under such conditions is the science of Dhyana Yoga.

Sri Gajanana Maharaj, by continuous practice in his previous births and by the grace of his guru in this life, is an adept in that science. He often says that he has yet to climb many a step, but that whatever he has learned so far, it is his bounden duty to give it to others in the name of his guru and thus help deserving humanity to see and realize the divine light inside each and every individual. His principal mission, therefore, is to sweep the human mind of its dirt, render it an effective reflector of the Inner Light and thus establish harmony or equilibrium between spirit and matter. One fact however needs special mention here.

Though his mission has a positive background, Sri Gajanana Maharaj, being by nature a strictly non-advertising person, has never allowed
himself to be brought into the limelight of this world like so many other contemporary saints. He has, in fact, left it to the seekers of truth first to seek him out in obscurity, and then to attain their salvation through his guidance. This is exactly in keeping with his tendency towards self-effacement and absolute humility.

In this connection we give below a translation of an extract from Mr. Nagesh Wasudeo Gunaji’s review of Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika, which appeared in the Poona Newspaper “Gorakshana.”

“In this quality of humility and absence of egotism Sri Gajanana Maharaj stands on a very high level. His disciple Mr. Vaidya writes in his Guru-Kripadhyaya: ‘Maharaj said to me that in the outward world I should behave towards him as if I was his elder and he (Maharaj) was a youngster.’

“The following lines from Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika will give an idea as to how he behaves towards his other disciples: ‘Sri Guru Gajanana Maharaj is a great personality and knows worldly as well as spiritual matters thoroughly well. If any one bows to him as a sadguru he bows to him in return. He addresses old men as fathers, young men as brothers and women as mothers or sisters calling himself their child. His words are full of affection. He does not treat anyone as his disciple and does not accept service from anyone but loves one and all.’

“Sri Gajanana Maharaj stayed at Parel with one of his relatives for sixteen years. He remained there unknown. Nobody had the least idea that he was a yogi or a Maharaj. At present he is staying at Nashik, where too he is known to very few persons and there are no signs that he will come into celebrity.”

**A bow to that broom always**

“There is one more wonderful thing which we have to relate to readers. Although we have used the words ‘Sri Gajanana Maharaj’ in designating the saint, he addresses himself as ‘Your Broom,’ whenever he writes to any of his disciples. This throws a wonderful light upon his
humility as well as his skill in choosing the epithet. We often hear of some person being called a broom in the sense that he is absolutely an insignificant person. Thus when Maharaj styles himself as ‘Your Broom,’ he shows his great humility and his desire that he should be considered as entirely insignificant and of no consequence. The real work of a broom is, however, to sweep off all rubbish and dirt and to make a place clean and then to lie unnoticed in a corner.

“Sri Ramakrishna used to sweep the place clean in the Kali-Wadi and also the courtyards of the houses of untouchables. But Sri Gajanana Maharaj sweeps the minds of his disciples clean by his spiritual power. Mr. Vaidya describes his own experience in this connection in his Guru-Kripadhyaya in the following words:

“One day I was sitting near the feet of my sadguru and was making strenuous efforts to curb my mind. I, however, could not succeed in the least. Seeing me in this pitiable condition, Maharaj said to me that I should leave my mind free to wander anywhere it liked, that he himself had taken my mind in his hands and that no thoughts would arise at all. To my surprise I found that my mind became entirely absorbed and the flow of ideas stopped altogether.’

“Similar experiences of various disciples have been described in the third and fourth chapters of Guru Shishya Vijnana Deepika. It appears that the real work of this holy broom is to purify the mind and to make an aspirant worthy of reaching the state of moksha.

“Disciples of Sri Gajanana Maharaj used to be wondering why he took to himself such a name, but one of his devotees understood the real object of the choice of that epithet, and he has described the real meaning of the term in a short hymn addressed to Maharaj entitled, ‘A Bow To That Broom Always.’

“We also bow our head before this ‘broom.’”

In consonance with the mission stated above, Sri Gajanana Maharaj has initiated aspirants into the science of Dhyana Yoga. Some of these people were arta [people with troubles they wanted relieved], while others
were real jijnasus [seekers for true knowledge]. Whatever their nature, whosoever approached him with a sincerity of heart and firmness of purpose was gladly shown the way to spiritual realization and eternal bliss.

The experiences of some of these aspirants in the process of their spiritual enlightenment have been given in this book about this great, though unassuming, saint of Nashik. It may be that these experiences, though varied in their exposition according to the mental make-up of each individual aspirant, will induce other seekers of truth to find a source of solace and a way to salvation in this holy city of Maharashtra.

**The Nath Sampradaya**

Sri Gajanana Maharaj, the subject of this treatise, belongs to the celebrated Nath sampradaya. The early history of this sampradaya, as well as the later history, is shrouded in mystery. Therefore definite information regarding the luminaries (important personages) of this sampradaya and other particulars, is lacking. Still, we get here and there a few glimpses which throw a flood of light on the glory, grandeur, superiority, nobility and utility of the Nath sampradaya. To quote an instance: Jnaneshwar, the premier poet-saint and prophet of Maharashtra and the author of two most important works: (1) *Bhavarthadeepika (Jnaneshwari)*, the unique and rare commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, and (2) *Amritanubhava*, an independent philosophical work of real merit, was a ripe and mature product of this Nath sampradaya. He gives in his epilogue to the *Jnaneshwari* or *Bhavarthadeepika*, the early history or origin of this sampradaya.

Very briefly stated, it is this. Once, we do not know exactly when, Adinath (considered an incarnation of Shiva) was imparting spiritual wisdom to his disciples. This was overheard by Matsyendranath who was concealed in the nearby river, and then became a disciple of Adinath. After leaving his teacher’s ashram, Matsyendranath first met the deformed-limbed Chauranginath on the Saptashringi mountains (about twenty-five miles from Nashik), and imparted the spiritual treasure to
the latter, upon which he became whole. Then in order to withdraw and enjoy the undisturbed peace of samadhi, he gave the spiritual secret to Gorakshanath [Gorakhnath] (a towering personality in this sampradaya), from whom this spiritual lore descended to Gahininath, who communicated it to Nivrittinath, who in his turn passed it on to Jnaneshwara.

Several sampradayas have developed from the Nath Sampradaya, but while they are quite public and have become formal sects or denominations within Hinduism, the original Nath sampradaya is working in secret. The later successors of this sampradaya are not known and we cannot therefore trace the unbroken line down to Sri Gajanana Maharaj, the subject of this sketch.

**The place of Gajanana Maharaj in the Nath Sampradaya**

The spiritual guru of Gajanana Maharaj is Sri Paramananda and that of Sri Paramananda is Sri Narayana Saraswati. When Sri Narayana Saraswati was passing away, he called his disciple Sri Paramananda and bade him continue the line and spread the teachings of the Nath sampradaya, assuming his own name–Narayana Saraswati–as they both were one. So Sri Paramananda is also called Narayana Saraswati. The name of the guru of Narayana Saraswati is not known to us, so we cannot trace the spiritual genealogy of Gajanana Maharaj to the earlier Nath teachers named above.

There was another branch of the Nath sampradaya named Jalandarnath Branch (so named from Jalandarnath who received initiation from Sri Dattatreya) in addition to the Matsyendranath branch described above. Of these two branches, we know for certain that Gajanana Maharaj belongs to the Matsyendranath branch, and he seems to be an incarnation of Chauranginath. Firstly, because Gajanana Maharaj is defective in his limbs, being lame as Chauranginath was, and secondly and mainly, Gajanana Maharaj, like Chauranginath, received initiation directly from Matsyendranath.
Chapter Two

Teachings and Conversations With Sri Gajanana Maharaj

Basic Teachings recorded by an unnamed disciple

Maharaj is used to saying, “If a person has any defects, the responsibility for them lies upon him. You may come to me or not as you like. I do not insist on your listening to my advice and acting according to it. It is a matter which should be left to everybody’s conscience. Really, people like you should not associate with persons like me. You will thereby render yourselves objects of censure and obloquy. Of course I have no objection to your coming to me. The world will naturally censure things which appear bad to it. If people will censure, you must be prepared to listen to it with equanimity. The only thing to be remembered is that appearances are not always true and are not permanent. Real saints are beyond all censure.”

In short, one should not form one’s opinion without experience of long standing and should never put blind faith in anyone. The only thing Maharaj persistently lays stress upon is that a person should day and night repeat Soham in his mind and direct all his senses towards it. He will then become one with it.

He sometimes says, “I have not made any efforts to obtain the siddhi of speech (the power which is gained by a saint by which whatever words
come out of his mouth prove to be true, and events occur accordingly). I have also no great merit acquired in previous births. There are many learned and meritorious saints and mahatmas whose words carry influence with people, and hence people flock to them. Such saints are highly esteemed, and they will be able to effect cures and other things. I am a simple man like yourselves; only owing to keeping company with good men I have acquired the qualities of a real human being. I am always trying to take a lesson from whatever good I find in others. I am an ignorant child in the universal family. I am just like water which takes on the color of the thing with which it comes in contact.”

Sometimes when Maharaj is in a joyous mood, he gives discourses useful to a person practicing meditation, and illustrates his remarks by apt worldly illustrations and stories. Once he said, “Varkaries [members of a Vaishnava sect] often say that the body is the temple and the Self is Panduranga. But only those will know the truth of this statement who try to get inner spiritual experience. If anybody would ask me as to my experience regarding the above, I would say that I am not merely quoting the sayings of saints. Merely giving quotations is the business of learned men who explain to others without having any real experience themselves. If a person has really experienced these things in himself, and he says that he has done so, he should not be blamed as showing pride. There is nothing blameable in such a sattwic ahankar [ego]. If a person is rich, is the master of thousands of rupees, and he actually gives you one thousand rupees at the time of your need and then says to somebody else that he has given you one thousand rupees, will you blame him for being proud of his wealth? No.

“If, however, a man having nothing says that he will give a thousand rupees to anyone, then he deserves censure. Similarly, a saint who instead of merely saying that he has found God and known him, has really realized him in his Self; then only is he a fitting guide to all aspirants on the spiritual path. The mantra Soham tells [reveals] the same principle. He alone is a true saint who has thoroughly realized the truth of Soham
(I am He). His mind, intellect and his senses, and even the hair on his body, are full of the true meaning of Soham. He may or may not do any outward actions. Even though he may do certain actions, he is detached from them. He is videhi (apart from the body), like King Janaka. He looks upon worldly and spiritual things equally, and goes beyond the states of pain and pleasure. He knows the only true Being, and is always experiencing the state of unlimited joy. Some people say that meditating upon the Nirakara (Formless) is difficult. But in my opinion it is very easy and in addition it is natural.

“A man easily gets into the state of samadhi by meditating upon the Nirakara. The path of doing so is, however, concealed and secret. Once you are established in it, you can be in that state although outwardly you may be talking, laughing, playing, or sleeping. This power is concealed like the river Saraswati. [The sacred Saraswati river which once flowed above ground, has for centuries been only flowing underground.] Since some people have not understood this secret path, therefore they [mistakenly] say that it is difficult and that it would require the passing of many lives to obtain success in it. Not to see anything in dhyana shows a state of concentration. When seeing is turned into non-seeing, then there is the real state of samadhi. The state of complete samadhi is like the state of death, but it is a state of life after having conquered death. The state of sleep is also a kind of death, and he really knows the secret of Dhyana Yoga whose sleep is nothing but samadhi.

“I therefore, say that if you have learnt Dhyana Yoga it is all well with you. If not, try to learn it. Stop learning shastras and do not entangle yourselves in discussions. If you merely learn shastras and try to acquire mere learning, you will spend lives after lives uselessly. You might get a reputation for saintliness and deceive others and yourselves, but in your innermost Self you will know your real worth, and will have to wander through cycles of births and deaths. Strictly speaking, God is none else than our own Self. Every one should try to see this Self by the torch of Soham, and obtain the internal sight. Saints have said, ‘People who have
obtained the internal vision are saved, while those who have only the external vision are drowned.’ I do not say that you should not meditate upon a deity. I only say that you should obtain the internal vision. Do not meditate merely upon the form, but upon the internal power [shakti] which pervades that form. If you really enter inside, your true guru who is inside will automatically lead you to the right path. Otherwise you will not be able to understand clearly who is leading you on.

“Kabir has said, ‘If you want to know the Eternal, you will not find Him in the Vedas, the shastras or in the Koran, in the temples or in the mosques. Tapasya, pilgrimage, breath-control, or only living on neem leaves will not lead you to him. You can find him only in your breath (Soham: So when naturally and spontaneously breathing in, and Ham when naturally and spontaneously breathing out).’

“All human beings on this earth are really gods, but only those who know themselves enjoy peace and joy. I only wish to warn false saints that they should not represent themselves to be incarnations of Rama, Krishna, Dattatreya or the Goddess, and deceive ignorant people. If your life is not pure, what can soap do? Your mind must be internally merged in the divine joy. Do not put on merely the outward dress of a saint, such as orange-colored robes or garlands of rudraksha beads, and deceive others as well as yourselves.

“Do not entertain evil thoughts. If, however they arise in your mind, check them then and there by the mantra Soham. Then your mind gradually will become void of thoughts. But you must be very careful then. Because siddhis will then tempt you. Do not succumb to them, but disregard and discard them, and go straight to your goal and be one with your Self. Then duality will disappear, and you will enjoy the real bliss of the Self.

“The real mission of great saints is to teach ignorant persons how to turn inside towards their real Self. They make the human being realize that he is not insignificant and worthless, but he is really the beloved child of God.”
**Conversation One**

When Gajanana Maharaj was staying in the home of a Mr. Raje who had published several books on astrology, many educated men used to visit Mr. Raje. These persons found Maharaj sitting on a cot in the outer apartment. One day some of them asked Mr. Raje who the lame man was. It is not known what Mr. Raje told them. Next day, some of these persons said to Maharaj, “Maharaj, where do you generally stay?”

To this Maharaj replied, “I am neither a saint nor a Maharaj. I am just like a member of Mr. Raje’s family, and have come to him as a guest. I am only a poor ignorant member of the universal family of human beings. Some people call me Maharaj. This name has been given to me by others. My real name is Gajanana. I am a resident of Akola. For the present I am staying at Mumbai with Mr. Nana Samartha, who is a friend and relative of mine. I am returning to Mumbai in a week or so.”

These persons, however, thought that Maharaj was purposely giving them evasive replies and said, “We have perfectly understood that you are a saint.” Upon this Maharaj said, “I do not know what has been told to you about me and by whom. I do not know anything else except the two letters which have been granted to me by my sadguru. [The Soham mantra is considered as having two letters: that is, syllables.] I have not the ability and worthiness to initiate any one. I myself am still a student. What would be the use of such a guru to you?” But the people were not convinced by this reasoning and persisted in their request that he should initiate them. Maharaj, therefore, granted to them the Soham mantra, which had been given to him by his sadguru Sri Narayana Saraswati.

**Conversation Two**

A Mr. Saswadkar has narrated the following:

It was the month of Bhadrapada and the day was Anant Chaturdashi day, the last day of the Ganapati Festival. All of us had gone to the house of Mr. Sule, an attorney, at about six p.m. After seeing the Melas [dioramas] and Ganapatis there, we went to the place of Mr. Pradhan and sat
there casually talking about various matters. Sri Gajanana Maharaj was there, and I said to Maharaj, “Why do not you say anything?” Maharaj said, “I am an ignorant person. I do not do anything. I do not know Vedanta, or its principles. I have no knowledge of books. There is, however, One Thing (the Supreme Brahman) which is beyond all these things. Old saints like Tukarama, Ramadas and Ekanatha, and modern saints like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Sri Gulabrao Maharaj and Sri Rama Maruti, have pointed out the path to reach that Supreme Being, Brahman, and of realizing It within oneself.

“My Sadguru Mother has pointed out the same path to me and has given me the shining torch of the mantra of Soham. If you ask me anything about it, I might be able to say something. All real saints have said that the source of real joy is in our Selves. If once you know the real path leading to this Self-experience, you can enjoy the bliss of the Self even though you may be leading a worldly life.”

Conversation Three

Mr. Nanasaheb Gandekar witnessed the miracle of meat being turned into vadas, as related elsewhere, and from the next day began to come every day to Maharaj, and to request that he should initiate him. In this manner seven or eight days passed. One afternoon he came and, finding Maharaj alone, pressed earnestly for being initiated. Taking into consideration Nanasaheb’s respectability, advanced age and urgent desire, Maharaj conferred his grace upon him and later on also told him how to practice Dhyana Yoga. The conversation which took place sometime later is briefly narrated below:

Nanasaheb: I am really an ignorant man. However, I know one thing: that since I began the practice of meditation as directed by you, I am beginning to feel peace of mind. I shall relate to you one incident which will serve as a proof of your greatness. I went with four or five of my friends to Pandharpur. At that time there lived a saint there on the bank of the Chandrabhaga River named Tapkiri Buwa. He was very
strong and stout in appearance. He had a long beard and he had no clothes except a piece of sack-cloth round his waist. He carried a zoli (a square piece of cloth with the two ends on each side tied into a knot) hanging over his shoulder and armpit, and had a tin pot in his hand for drinking water. He observed silence and never talked with any one. When I saw him and bowed to him, however, he said to me, “A saint will come to your place, Dhulia, but it will not be possible to recognize him as a saint. I myself will come there in that saint’s form and will show you the right path and fulfill the desire of your heart.” Hearing these words I was struck with awe and became as it were dumb, and a feeling of great joy pervaded my heart.

Maharaj was very glad to hear this.

Maharaj: I had seen Tapkiri Buwa even before you saw him. I had gone to Pandharpur. On the next day I was going to the river Chandrabhaga to bathe. On the bank there was an old dilapidated temple and a peepul tree near it. Tapkiri Buwa was sitting there. I was going barefooted, and as it was the month of May, my feet felt a burning sensation. Mr. Raje had told me about him, and I felt that he must be a saint, and entertained a keen desire to meet him. This desire of mine was fulfilled when I saw him sitting under the peepul tree. I was very thirsty at the time, and was feeling very uneasy. Tapkiri Buwa got up suddenly, ran to the river and brought back his tin pot full of dirty water and said to me, “Drink, child.” But I saw that the water was dirty, and doubts assailed my mind. Then Tapkiri Buwa himself began to drink that water. What was my surprise when I saw milk trickling down his beard! There was an instant revelation in my heart, and I began to feel sorry that I had not accepted the drink. Tapkiri Maharaj then again gave me the same water which I drank, and I embraced the feet of that revered saint in an excess of devotion. He caught and pressed me to his breast, and having strenuously rubbed the surface of my feet with his hand for a long time, said to me, “Now, child, go away.” It was a wonderful thing: I found that the burning sensation in my feet had altogether disappeared. He
then ran away, and was never seen by me again. I did not get any food to eat on that day, and I did not feel any sensation of hunger because Tapkiri Maharaj had given me nectar [amrit] to drink. Well, are you now convinced in your heart?

Nanasaheb: There could not be the slightest doubt that Tapkiri Maharaj was a great saint.

Maharaj: I, however, am not Tapkiri Maharaj. I am the slave of the feet of all saints, and of you all. I do not wish to mislead anyone. My path or method is different, but all paths in the end merge into one. My sadguru conferred his grace upon me although I was unworthy, and gave me the Soham mantra. You should repeat that very Soham mantra. You will, owing to it, obtain internal sight. You will then have your object accomplished.

**Conversation Four**

One day a man who was very proud of his shastric learning, which was only superficial, came to Maharaj and began with the words:

Shastri: Maharaj, having heard about your great renown, I have come to you with the full hope that all my doubts and difficulties will be dispelled and solved by you. I have firm faith in you. Two or three days ago I had come here, but on that day you were ill. Hence I have come today.

Maharaj intently looked at his face and at once understood that the man must have been directed to him by someone with the object of making him non-plussed and an object of ridicule.

Maharaj: This is my candid opinion, which I have arrived at through the grace of my guru and of my own inner Self. A person gets pleasures and pains in this world according to the good or bad actions of his previous lives. Though saints and mahatmas have all powers, still everyone has to suffer the results of his own previous karma. Saints do not interfere with the working of this law. Their mission in this world is to point out the way leading to everlasting happiness and thus to make
persons going to them blessed in the real sense of the term. They pay very little heed to worldly pleasures and pains which are after all of an ephemeral nature. The great saint Tukaram, who had realized God, has proclaimed with a loud voice in words worth their weight in gold, his great anxiety regarding worldly people who are groping in the darkness of ignorance. He says with deep feelings of love and care: “I cannot bear to see all these people floundering in the mire of ignorance and hence my heart overflows with pity. I shall try to save all these souls.”

Oh, my good sir, you are learned in the shastras. I request you to stop the reading of the shastras and giving dry advice to others, and especially to stop trying to ridicule saints who should be approached with feelings of reverence and docility. You appear to be about sixty years old. Merely performing sandhya, worshipping gods with flowers and garlands and marking your forehead with sandal will be of no real use to you. You must have a real feeling of devotion and learn to see the one God in all these various external objects. My earnest request to you is that you should go to a real saint and learn how to obtain this kind of devotion at his feet.

These words of Maharaj had a great effect on that man’s mind.

Shastri: Maharaj, you have really swept off all dirt from my mind with your broom of Soham and I am now thoroughly satisfied. I had indeed come to make you non-plussed and then to ridicule you. I had once before seen you and then formed an unfavorable opinion about you. Hence I had come today with the fixed object of putting you to ridicule. But you understood this state of my mind and gave me this sincere, excellent and disinterested advice, for which I am deeply grateful to you. I accept your advice with bowed head. What is the use of advanced age? I am sure that you will be a real guru and will save many people like me by initiating them into the path of spiritual knowledge.

Maharaj: You are a learned Brahmin. It is my duty to pay you respect. You are like a guru to me.
Whenever a person, big or small, male or female, feels the need of anything, whether worldly or spiritual, he approaches God and begs Him for granting his desire. We go to a temple. The idol there is of stone. But we, through faith, attribute to it the divine powers of Sri Rama or Sri Krishna and pray to the idol to grant our desires, and we get the fruit of these prayers at some time or other. This is true in the case of all human beings. Whenever a person entertains a desire to obtain some worldly object or to attain spiritual progress, he obtains the fruit of his desire as a result of his efforts in this life or of his karma in previous lives, or owing to fate or destiny, call it anything you like. No astrologer or saint or God is required for that. Men and women go to a saint, whether a true one or a false one, for getting their desires fulfilled. Some want employment, some are in want of progeny and some want the curing of their diseases. An aspirant on the spiritual path desires to obtain the bliss of the Self or the vision of God.

I wish to say with all the earnestness at my command that every person should internally repeat the mantra Soham and should bear in mind that he himself will be able to fulfill his desires. Only it must be borne in mind that he must keep his conduct pure, should have at least a little vairagya and should have firm faith in Soham. When once a person obtains this self-confidence, he is sure to get experience of the Self. Evil thoughts will then cease to rise.

One thing regarding this japa must be remembered. This japa of Soham must be repeated continuously in the mind. It should not be allowed to be known to others that you are repeating the japa. This japa should be so continuously and incessantly repeated that it must be heard internally even in our sleep. When this stage is reached a person may, even when in sound sleep, get an internal shock urging him to get up and begin the practice. If he then prays to this God of internal light to grant his desires, he should be absolutely sure of his prayers being granted.

This method is a hundred times superior to that of praying for favors to God who is outside ourselves. Not only will the desires be granted, but either in this or in the next birth according to the person’s present
efforts and previous karma, a person is sure to attain the highest bliss of the Self. If all my brothers and sisters will do as I have just told you, they will be able to enjoy real happiness and will never fall into the clutches of false saints.

Well, my good sir, I wish that you will spread the knowledge of what I have just now told you among others and to make the lives of many families happy and contented.

**Conversation Five**

Conversation between Maharaj and Mr. Ambadas Gopal Paithankar of Nashik at the time of and after his initiation as narrated by Mr. Paithankar.

Owing to a particular incident I was convinced of the greatness of Sri Gajanana Maharaj and then came into familiar contact with him.

One day at about nine a.m. I went to Maharaj’s house. He was then ill and was lying down. He looked at me and asked me whom I wanted to see. I replied, “Yourself.”

Maharaj: What is your business with me?

Myself: I have not any particular business. I only wanted to have your darshana. Although I cannot account for it exactly, I have come to you and I earnestly request you to confer your grace upon me. I have not come to you through mere blind faith because it is not in my nature to put such blind faith in anyone. I have tested my feelings on the touchstone of deep thought and only when I was fully confident of myself that I ventured to come to you.

Maharaj, I am now thoroughly convinced that a knowledge of the shastras only teaches a man to enter into endless discussions and to raise innumerable doubts. I now firmly believe that the only true shastra is that of atmic experience.

Maharaj, will you grant me the vision of God?

Maharaj: Just see. Suppose you have a lighted lantern in your house and I ask you to bring and show its light to me here. Will you be able to bring the light here and show it to me?
Myself: No. The light cannot be brought here.

Maharaj: Then you would say to me, “I shall at the most be able to tell you what particular means are required and what particular action is to be done in order to generate the light.” You would ask me to purchase a lantern, fix a wick in it, put kerosene oil in it, to strike a match, to ignite the wick, etc. Then there would be light. Paithankar, similarly it is not an easy thing to show God. I may tell you in what way you should conduct yourself. When you will be endowed with all the four sadhanas [sadhana-chatushtaya], or when your desires have vanished, or when you are full of devotion or when your mind is fully detached from all worldly objects and you get knowledge of spiritual matters, you will be able to realize the presence of God who is really without form. You will then be able to see the light of the Self and be one with that Being which is self-existent, which is Life and which is Bliss. That is the real God.

God is not an external object which can be shown by simply pointing a finger towards it. When someone gets the internal sight, he can behold God—not by the physical eyes, but by this internal sight which is known as the eye of knowledge. A person’s egoism must entirely disappear, his desires must all vanish, he must have complete vairagya (detachment) and he must feel that he is one with God. Then quite naturally he attains everlasting peace and joy. His whole worldly life will be nothing but Brahman. He will go beyond pain and pleasure.

I shall give you an everyday illustration. Suppose some night you get very sound sleep. When you get up next morning you say to others, “For the last month or so I did not get good sleep. But last night I got such a sound and deep [dreamless] sleep that I was greatly delighted.” Now just see. If you were in deep sleep, how can you say that you got sound sleep? Who was awake in that state? Had you seen who was awake in that state? Who enjoyed the bliss of sleep and who is now describing his feelings in that state?

Myself: I myself.
Maharaj: This “I” is present in each and everything, even in the minutest atom of dust. It is your Self. Know it. Through continuous meditation on Soham be one with that Self which itself is the Supreme Self. I cannot tell you anything beyond this. This God is in my heart, similarly he is in your heart also. When through the japa of Soham you will get the internal sight, you will be able to understand everything.

Myself: Maharaj, I see in you what I have never seen before and I hear things explained by you in a manner never heard by me before.

Maharaj: What you say is true. Move aside the curtain of fear. Leave off all doubts and misgivings. If an ignorant and uneducated man goes to a saint of Self-realization, he quietly turns towards him and becomes one with him. That means that his jiva quickly merges in Shiva. He recognizes that his own Self is nothing but the Supreme Self by continuous practice of meditation and experiences unlimited bliss and joy. The case of a learned and educated man, on the other hand, is different. There are many doubts and arguments warring in his mind, and he takes a long time in becoming one with Shiva. He is doubtful whether this is true or that is true. His mind is, therefore, fickle. If, however, he leaves off all doubts and practices with intensity, he also without difficulty will attain everlasting happiness. In that stage all distinction between an educated and an uneducated man disappears. This distinction is there as long as doubts and misgivings are there.

Myself: I have got a keen desire that you should confer your grace upon me and initiate me and take me under your protection.

Maharaj: Through the grace of my guru I got the Soham mantra and I am at present in the sadhaka state. I am not authorized to advise Brahmins like you. But my guru speaks through my mouth. The words that I utter are not really mine.

My sadguru told me to repeat Soham internally and then to get the thought [sound] of Soham merged into the Supreme Self and enjoy eternal peace and joy. If this was done, I myself would become one with the self-existent, eternal and blissful principle and experience the
presence of that Supreme Self everywhere. I would then become perfect, abandon all egoism and realize the real “I.” In the end even this would be forgotten.

I have been ordered by my guru to initiate anyone, educated or ignorant, rich or poor, fit or unfit, who happens to come to me, to preach openly in the presence of all and at any time. He told me that I would meet different kinds of souls having different desires and different impressions of previous lives [samskaras], but all would be benefited by me in the spiritual or worldly matters according to their attitude and their faith in me, without any conscious efforts on my part.

Even if I know everything, I have been ordered by him not to allow my thoughts to dwell upon the knowledge, but to keep myself entirely detached. I have, therefore, laid all pain and pleasure at the feet of my guru. I, however, tell what I know to those who come to me, and I do that according to the orders of my guru. If a sadhaka practices Dhyana Yoga with intensity, I am sure in this very life he will reach the state of perfection through the power of the Soham mantra.

Mr. Paithankar continues:

I was listening to these nectar-like words of Maharaj with avidity and rapt attention. My mind experienced a feeling of deep calm. Two days later Maharaj granted me the Soham mantra and took me under his protection. Since then I go for Maharaj’s darshana almost every day. Having a curiosity to know many things, I have asked Maharaj various questions and he has given very lucid explanations regarding them. Some of these discourses are given here as I found them very instructive.

Myself: We many a time see people calling themselves Raja Yogis. My idea of a Raja Yogi is that his mind has turned inwards and he is full of bliss in every state, whether he is in a state of contemplation or is doing external worldly and physical actions. Please tell me your ideas about this point.

Maharaj: What you say is quite correct. At present, however, Raja Yoga has been given an altogether different meaning. This is a typical
instance of how things are misinterpreted. Present day saints obtain vast amounts of money from ignorant people through various pretexts, build bungalows for themselves, acquire estates, wear costly clothes, eat sumptuous dishes, are surrounded by groups of beautiful female devotees—in short, indulge in unrestrained behavior and call themselves raja yogis. I can only say that it is a sad misfortune of the people that such persons of reprehensible conduct pass off as Raja Yogis.

Myself: Maharaj, I am thoroughly satisfied with the explanation given by you. I wish to ask a question regarding the practice of meditation. Any person who brings before his mind’s eye the form of a particular deity and contemplates upon it, will be able to see that deity with his eyes shut. Similarly rivers, hills, seas can be brought before the mind’s eye. I want to know what sort of benefit will be gotten from such practices. Books propounding methods of the practice of meditation lay down that an aspirant should bring before his mind’s eye Sri Krishna or Om or a small point and worship it mentally.

Maharaj: What you say is true. Great saints have laid down that in the beginning one must try to bring the form of a deity, etc., before the mind’s eye; in other words to imagine that the form is before one. But this direction is given to mere beginners. I have explained this subject to many of my friends up to this time and the topic is not a new one. Still I must satisfy you and solve your doubts. Many non-believers used to ask the same sort of questions to some of my friends who, not being well read, could not answer the questions satisfactorily. My friends had real experiences but got rather non-plussed by such questions and used to come to me for the solution of the difficulty. I told them that if any one asked them such questions they should keep quiet saying that they did not know anything, or should leave the place, but that they should not allow their minds to be disturbed or confounded by such questions.

Now the real answer to such a question is this. It is true, no doubt, that deities which have been imagined are perishable. They would disappear after some time. But if a person’s internal sight is opened these
very deities become full of light. Although all these visions, even though seen by the internal sight, are after all a play of ideas, still when they ultimately disappear they leave behind the Light of Brahman, and the aspirant enters into the state of nirvikalpa samadhi. All ideas are absent in that state and the object of Dhyana Yoga is to acquire this state in which ideas or thoughts are entirely absent. When all ideas stop, Brahman is experienced. There is then no necessity of making any further conscious efforts, but this state is automatically reached.

The following illustration will give you a clear idea of what I say. As long as the musk-deer does not know that the musk is in its own navel, it runs here and there trying to find the source of the fragrant smell. If the deer would meet someone who would point out that the source of the smell is in the deer’s own navel, would the deer then run here and there? Similarly, saints tell an aspirant in the beginning to imagine these things, then later on grant him the internal sight, and when ultimately the internal visions also disappear the aspirant gets the experience that he himself is Brahman and becomes merged in the bliss of the Self.

The ignorant human Self takes its birth and questions, “Who am I?” But originally this human Self was full of knowledge and was one with the Supreme Self. The answer to the human Self’s question, “Who am I?” is the mantra Soham (“I am He”) that is one with the Supreme Self and takes the human Self back to its original state of knowledge and bliss.

Myself: Maharaj, all my doubts have now been solved.

Maharaj: Paithankar, now go on practicing meditation as told. Do not, like the musk-deer, wander about seeking outside for what is really in yourself. Do not ask any further questions. You have now only to get atmic experience by carrying on the practice of meditation steadily. If, however, after practicing meditation as taught by me you do not get any experience, you may go to any other guru who might be able to give you proper guidance and make you attain the goal of human life. I only want to urge that you should now abandon all doubts and begin to practice meditation.
Mlahoma: Maharaj, on the very day on which I came to you I decided to make you my guru. That decision still holds and is not likely to be changed.

Maharaj: Paithankar, I have firm faith in my sadguru, and I have got full experience in this very body of the power of Soham. I, therefore, never tell any of my friends to bring the forms of deities before their mind's eye, but give them the mantra Soham and turn their minds inwards, owing to which all ideas become merged in the Sahasradala. While going towards the Sahasradala, some visions in the form of light do manifest themselves and the mental worship which is then performed is not the imaginary one, but actually seen by the internal sight. All these visions appear without any effort and they are full of light. After some time all these visions merge into the Self, and the aspirant gets for a short time into the state of samadhi and experiences great joy. Saints of old like Jnaneshwar, Eknath, Tukaram and others, and comparatively modern saints like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa or Vivekananda who had all realized the Self, enjoyed the state of sahaja samadhi even while carrying on worldly actions.

My friends experience the same state of sahaja samadhi, though for a short time, for a minute or two. As the practice of meditation increases in intensity, this state of samadhi lasts longer and longer, and ultimately becomes continuous without any limitation of time or space.

Mlahoma: Do all your disciples to whom you have given the mantra of Soham see visions of light?

Maharaj: Some do see them, while some do not. Those who repeat Soham with very great intensity become at once merged in the sound. Hence they are unconscious of any visions of light. Some of my friends, therefore, who get merged in sound do not see any visions. If you do not see any visions, you should not on that account entertain any doubts regarding the efficacy of Soham. For this purpose I have made this point clear.

Mlahoma: Among all your disciples, who are the best?
Maharaj: Paithankar, I can only say that as I do not consider myself as anybody’s guru, I do not look upon anyone as my disciple. Some of my young and old friends, owing to their merit acquired in previous lives and owing to the practice of meditation, have reached the state of samadhi. But I do not consider any of them as my disciples. I simply give the mantra of Soham to my friends and ask them to practice meditation.

Myself: Supposing that through the reading of religious books or through some other cause a person gets the actual darshana of Sri Krishna, or of the Goddess or of any other deity, is it of any benefit to him?

Maharaj: It is not of any real use. As long as the mind is not turned inwards and as long as desires have not entirely vanished, these external appearances are of very little use. All these appearances are illusory like a mirage. Similarly if a person actually sees Sri Krishna or any other deity, it is merely an appearance and not of much use.

Myself: What is meant by Shabda Brahman?

Maharaj: The reason why Shabda (Sound) is called Brahman is that Shabda is a means leading to Brahman, and hence it is desirable to look upon Shabda as Brahman. Paithankar, carry on the repetition of Soham. It will be sufficient for you.

Myself: I know that concentration is absolutely necessary for spiritual progress. Will you kindly tell me how a sadhaka should try to get the habit of concentration?

Maharaj: Although the mind has always a tendency to leave the object of meditation and run away to other things, the only remedy is to bring it back again and to fix it on the object of meditation. If we try to give a bend to the branch of a tree, in the beginning as soon as we remove our hand from it, it again becomes straight and assumes its original position. But by continuous efforts of bending it and also by tying the bent parts by means of a rope, etc., we succeed in giving it a permanent bend. Similarly, if a person while repeating his japa finds that his mind has wandered away towards work in a court of law, the only remedy is to forcibly bring it back and to fix it again on the japa.
Hence it has been said by Sri Krishna in the sixth chapter of the Gita: “Wherever the fickle and unsteady mind runs away, it should be brought back from there and made to fix itself on the Self” (Verse 26).

Myself: Saints, persons well-versed in the shastras and pundits say that woman and wealth are the two great stumbling blocks on the path of spiritual progress, that they lead to the ruin of a sadhaka. I also agree with this view. But I should very much like to hear your views regarding them so that I might understand the matter correctly. Your words will produce a lasting effect on my mind.

Maharaj: No. They are not stumbling blocks. On the contrary they are helpful to a sadhaka. It however depends upon what use you make of them and upon the way in which you look upon them. Every person has two kinds of minds. One is the considerate mind and the other the inconsiderate mind. If the considerate mind prevails, these things will be turned to a good use. If the inconsiderate mind gets the upper hand, these very things will certainly lead to ruin.

The real meaning of the words of saints cannot be understood unless a person attains the state of a saint or unless the saints themselves explain their meaning clearly. Although I do not pride myself upon understanding the real meaning, still I say what I say as I am prompted by my inner Self, and I feel that must be what is really meant by saints. If a sadhaka looks upon all women except his own wife as mothers, and practices meditation and gets the internal sight, I am sure he will get the real sight of knowledge and will see all women even with his physical eyes as if they were goddesses. This attitude, however, can only be obtained by Self-experience gained by the firm practice of Dhyana Yoga. The mind which gets this attitude is what is known as the considerate mind.

Similarly, if wealth is used for bringing about the well-being of others, it is sure to be helpful to a sadhaka. If wealth is used to relieve the miserable and the oppressed, it will surely give great delight to the soul. Just see. If we make a good use of fire, we can have very good food
prepared. If on the other hand we place it on the house of some other person the house will be burnt down and ruin and misery will be the result. This will show that woman and wealth are not bad in themselves, but everything depends upon the nature and the actions of a person in making use of them.

If a sadhaka finds that he will not be able to lead a life of celibacy, he should marry. But he should never entertain any evil desire regarding the wives of others, who should be looked upon as mothers or sisters. If a sadhaka looks upon all other women as mothers or sisters, I think that he would in time become fit to be the recipient of spiritual knowledge.

Myself: If through the force of some karma in the previous life a sadhaka commits a sinful act in this life, what would be the result in his case?

Maharaj: If a sadhaka commits a sinful act once, in a way it might be explained away as the result of his karma in previous life or lives designated as prarabdha or sanchita. But if such sinful acts are committed over and over again, and he tries to explain them away by attributing them to his prarabdha, he should certainly be considered as a base man. Just take a homely illustration. Suppose there is a live charcoal. You see it, and although you are warned by your friend not to place your foot upon it, you out of a feeling of pride and arrogance do not heed the warning and place your foot upon it. You are sure to suffer pain. This is something like prarabdha. But would you ever again place your foot upon a fire even if you are asked to do so by a friend? No. Where has prarabdha gone now? That means that when a person is full of repentance, he does not commit the sin again, nor does he quote shastras and the doctrines of prarabdha and sanchita for justifying the commission of the sin.

A sadhaka, therefore, should exercise his powers of reasoning and discrimination at the time of doing acts. Gradually all his fetters will fall off as he progresses in the practice of meditation.
Conversation Six

This conversation of Gajanana Maharaj and Mr. Mathure took place in Mumbai.

Maharaj: In Raja Yoga, otherwise known as Dhyana Yoga, one who wishes to attain the spiritual goal must practice a good deal and that, too, regularly. Besides, one must to a certain extent be disgusted with worldly existence. Blind faith is harmful in Raja Yoga and is contrary to its principles. If a guru or a saint merely asks you to put your faith in him, and he does not enable you to realize some experience of your Self, you should tell him plainly that there is nothing secret in Raja Yoga, which is not a mysterious science. All its practices are open. Those who merely rely on their guru without trying to get any atmic experience, weaken the power of their self and will find themselves deluded in the end. Those who say that yoga is a secret lore are either deceivers and cheats or imperfect yogis, and it is better to keep at a distance from them because they bring a stigma on that celestial science and contribute to its decadence. Thousands of years have elapsed since the birth of the Yoga Shastra in this blessed land of India. Since then various sages have dived deep into it and given it the form of a definite science and explained it openly to various aspirants.

In comparatively modern times, various modern learned men have written commentaries on the Yoga Shastra, but I have heard that they have committed many mistakes. Old commentators were much better because their commentaries were based more upon solid reasoning calculated to satisfy the intellect. But these later commentators have covered the yoga lore with mystery and created an atmosphere of difficulty about it. These later commentators, instead of explaining all things more openly and on a scientific basis, have made the Yoga Shastra a bogey and rendered it more incomprehensible. The only advantage they got from doing so was the absolute power which they could exercise over their disciples in their capacity as so called “gurus.”
Mathure then said to Maharaj, “Kindly take me under your protection, bless me and lead me to the right path.” He then immediately garlanded Maharaj and placed his head on Maharaj’s feet.

Observing his keen desire, Maharaj told him the mantra Soham. Maharaj then told him that if he would practice meditation daily in the way shown, he would soon get Self-realization and attain the highest goal of human life. Maharaj then added, “This path of meditation has been shown to you by me through my guru’s grace and inspiration. I have up to this time shown this path to some of my friends, and I shall show it to others in the future, only through the grace and by the order of my guru. But the result or success will depend upon everyone’s keenness in practicing, and his faith in the Self. Consider atmic experience as your real sadguru. Then there will be no necessity of relying upon the words of others, however great they be. Hence I say there is nothing secret in this path. What little I have told you has been told freely and with frankness. You should not pay any attention to miracles because they are absolutely useless.

“Every step in this path of yoga should be minutely scrutinized by the inner sight and tested by experience and reasoning. Where you cannot understand, shastras may be referred to. I would never tell you to place your blind faith in anyone, as I consider that to do so leads to self-ruin. Awaken your discriminating power, test everything in the light of your experience as you test gold in fire and on the touchstone. If you think that there is some sense in what I say, try to realize it in your experience. There is no cause of fear in this path. Truth can be proclaimed in broad daylight to thousands of people. There is no danger to it. You should, however, keep away from pseudo-saints.”

Mathure: “Maharaj, shall I be able to see my Self in the state of meditation? It has been said that the human Self is also the same as God.”

Maharaj: “You will be able to see your Self. I say so because I myself have some experience of it. When your meditation will become ripe and developed, you will be able to see how the Self slowly enters the
sushumna and is seen like a streak of lightning for a time before it enters the Brahmarandhra (the center of the brain). Only the attention must be quite alert. Otherwise it passes off so quickly that it is not noticed at all. All right. I have told you this particular sign. If you observe minutely with close attention, you will be able to see it. You should now carry on the practice of meditation vigorously. If you do so, you will obtain real peace although you may be leading a worldly life.”

After this, Maharaj took leave of Mathure.

Mr. Mathure died at the age of 58. He had reached the stage of samadhi.

Conversation Seven

Mr. D. D. Bhave of Nashik recounted the following:

On 10-12-37, Sri Gajanana Maharaj conferred his grace upon me by giving me the mantra Soham.

One day when I had been to Maharaj in the evening as usual for his darshan, Maharaj said that one must worship Shakti. Then one gets all the siddhis (powers) of the yoga path. Only care must be taken of not utilizing those powers for oneself. There must not be a single thing in the yoga path which one does not understand.

Next day when I sat for meditation early in the morning, the goddess having six arms, whom I had once seen before, stood before me and told me to make japa of the stotra beginning “Namo Devyai, Mahadevyai....” [This is a hymn to the Goddess, part of the Sri Durga Saptasati, also known as the Chandi.] She said that by that japa one can acquire the whole power of the universe in oneself, and saying which she disappeared. After I had repeated the japa for about a week or fortnight, the goddess again appeared before me and said, “I have not got six arms, I have only two. But I showed six arms to you as I had to put down your six enemies (the six passions) and for that purpose I had equipped myself with six arms. But now there is no necessity for me to put down your six enemies as they are being slowly conquered by you without effort by the japa of the mantra Soham. I have originally only two arms and one
should meditate upon me in that form because my form of two arms represent dwaita (duality) and through this dwaita you have to go into adwaita (oneness).”

[In Hindu theology, the Six Passions, Arishadvarga, are the six enemies of the mind, which are: kama (lust), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusive, often emotional, attachment or temptation), mada (pride), and matsarya (jealousy): the negative characteristics of which prevent man from attaining moksha or salvation.

The two syllables of Soham are the two “arms” of the devi which take the sadhaka from duality to non-duality.]

I narrated this incident to Sri Gajanana Maharaj. He said “Through the grace of my guru you have acquired so much power that the goddess has of her own accord given you her grace although you had not asked or begged for it. Among all these different stages of the powers of Shakti, the power of Soham is the most exalted.”

**Conversation Eight**

Mr. Vaman Keshav Mahegaonkar of Nashik recounted the following:

Sri Gajanana Maharaj taught me how to repeat the Soham japa in coordination with the breath. He then said:

“My master has allotted this work to me. Whoever comes to me with a sincere desire, I give him this mantra, through the power of my master. I look upon all human beings as being equal. All living creatures bear a spark of the Divine Spirit, and hence every human being is fitted to follow the spiritual path. I do not look upon any one as wicked or unfit to follow the spiritual path. Whoever comes to me, I tell him what I know.

“My sadguru had me drink the nectar of Nama (Name of God) and I give you the same Nama, being told by my sadguru to do so. I am practicing how to go beyond Nama and am approaching the stage of perfection. If you also wish to come with me, you should repeat that Nama, Soham, in your heart with firm faith. Your deep-rooted mental tendencies will vanish and the dirt of desire accumulated in previous
births and in this birth will be washed away, and your individual soul will be merged into the Universal Soul and you will always remain in your real original state and thus attain everlasting peace. The advice that I give to others is not given in the capacity of a guru, but in that of a friend. I give this advice through the inspiration of my guru Sri Narayana Saraswati and almost in his words. I, too, am still a student and I am sure that in some birth, either this or future, I shall attain the state of perfect union with Brahman (the Supreme Spirit).”
PART TWO

(Compiled and edited from material in Atmaprabha—Light of the Soul.)
Atma Prabha
(Light of the Self)

Inspired Thoughts of Sri Gajanana Maharaj of Nashik, collected, arranged and translated by D. L. Nirokhekar, B.A., LL.B., M.B.E.
In the month of November 1943, Sri Gajanana Maharaj received a letter from the secretary of the Sri Ramana Maharshi Jayanti Utsav Committee of Matunga, Mumbai, inviting him to grace the occasion by his presence or to send a message in case he could not be present personally. Accordingly, a message was sent which was printed in the pamphlet published by the Committee of the Utsav Celebrations. In continuation of the thoughts contained in the message, Sri Gajanana Maharaj expressed later on from time to time certain thoughts connected with the subjects touched in the message. These thoughts were jotted down at the time and later were collected, arranged and translated by me into English. They are incorporated in Part One of this book.

In November 1945, a similar invitation was received by Sri Gajanana Maharaj and at that time also a message was sent which was similarly published in the pamphlet issued by the committee. In continuation of the topics treated in the message, Sri Gajanana Maharaj gave expression to various thoughts regarding spiritual matters from time to time. These thoughts were also jotted down at the time and later on collected, arranged and translated into English by me. This second series of thoughts forms the subject matter of Part Two of this book.

From his life it appears that Sri Gajanana Maharaj is a born Siddha. He has had no school or university education in the modern sense of the term. And yet he has a fund of intuitive knowledge which even the modern scholars in philosophy and religion rarely possess. Not being
a man of science, it is not expressed in scientific language. It could not be. Nevertheless truth remains truth, even though it is expressed in ordinary language; and we are only concerned with truth, reality and the Spirit-Self—not its trappings.

The Majaraj speaks from his own experiences. He got those experiences through the grace of his guru, Sri Narayana Saraswati, who had told him to meditate on the Soham mantra. And as there can be no higher authority than Self-experience, his thoughts must command due respect.

The book is not a systematically written thesis. The Maharaj had expressed certain thoughts on different occasions, and they are collected in this book. Hence, the reader finds some repetitions. The Maharaj urges upon all his disciples the importance of following the method of meditation which he has practiced, and asks them to wait for the results which, he says, are sure to follow as day follows the night.

The quintessence of his teaching is the japa of the Soham mantra. He is not, however, averse to the japa of any other mantra in which the sadhaka has implicit faith. But the charm of the Soham mantra lies in its ease, simplicity, and naturalness, and hence his preference for it. Besides, it reminds the follower of the universal truth Aham Brahmasmi [I am Brahman] or Tattwamasi [Thou Art That], as Soham means “I am He.”

In matters spiritual, reason is a broken reed. One cannot rely totally upon it. It is superseded by faith, and as William James has put it, “Faith is a matter of faith in someone else’s faith.” This someone is none other than the sadguru or an expert in spiritual science. Even in worldly matters we have often to consult our elders, superiors or experts. The same necessity is more acutely felt in matters spiritual, where reason falls short and we are left without a guide. Hence the inevitable need of following an expert in this line.

But it is extremely difficult to find such an expert sadguru in this difficult journey. However, the law of supply and demand applies equally well in spiritual economics. As a mother silently but surely cares for her child while doing all her duties and is inevitably drawn towards it, so
the sadguru follows in the wake of the ardent devotee and satisfies his aspirations. That has been the experience of all true devotees. So a true devotee need not be pessimistic about finding an expert guide. The crux of the whole matter is that very few are true bhaktas (devotees). But the inexorable spiritual law does bring the two together, however long the journey may be. Intense faith and devoted action are sure to be rewarded in the end with brilliant results. Meditation on any mantra—preferably Soham—is the only simple activity demanded of the sadhaka in this field.

It is very difficult for a rational man to believe that mere repetition of a mantra leads to Self-realization. But I have already said that in spiritual matters reason does not help us much. There we have to depend upon other and higher faculties as intuition, inspiration or insight. Science cannot account for knowledge gained through them. And yet that knowledge is as exact and precise as scientific knowledge can be, if not more. Hence we must realize that there are some higher faculties in spiritually gifted men which can lead us into spiritual realms undreamt of by science. Some, at least, can peep into these higher regions and can guide others qualified to enter there. These gifted men experience some things which ordinary mortals cannot even imagine. They read the past, the present and the future as an open book. If such extraordinary men can be found amongst us, how can we possibly deny their Self-experiences? And what better authority can be found beyond Self-experience which is not tainted by any possible error? Moreover, if such gifted men are absolutely disinterested and are working for the good of others, what possible motives can there be for them to lead their admirers astray? We are therefore compelled to rely upon their word of honor and trust them fully in what they say and do for us.

The Maharaj has proved his bonafides in this field beyond any shadow of doubt, and therefore his words based upon his own experiences must be relied on till the contrary is proved. The Maharaj says that he is always open to correction. He simply wishes that his simple method may be given a trial. There is absolutely no harm in it. His follower is not asked
to renounce the world. His simple advice is, “Concentrate upon the mantra and the result will inevitably follow.” What can be simpler than this method?

“The proof of the pudding lies in its eating,” so says the proverb. Some of the Maharaja’s followers have tasted this pudding by eating it. They confirm what he has said. I pray, therefore: let others try this for their benefit.

I myself found these thoughts very stimulating and useful. The general topic, of course, is the contemplation and japa of Soham, which mantra Sri Gajanana Maharaj gives to all his disciples. But these thoughts also explain how to overcome various difficulties which beset an aspirant on the spiritual path and also solve many doubts which assail the minds of sadhakas and also those of ordinary people who are desirous of getting a knowledge of spiritual matters. Very deep and searching light has been thrown on various doubts and the answers given will be found to clear the fog surrounding spiritual matters and carry conviction to the hearts of at least believing persons. Non-believers also will find something useful in these thoughts, which will at least make them think.

With this hope and trust I have ventured to offer them in an English garb to all persons who are interested in spiritual topics.

D. L. Nirokhekar
Nashik City: 23rd May, 1945.

Since Then…

Sri Gajanana Maharaja left the mortal coil of his physical body and entered into mahasamadhi at Nashik on the 28th of September, 1946. An attempt was made to get this book printed and published during Sri Gajanana Maharaja’s life-time, but owing to various difficulties of obtaining paper, etc., the attempt was not successful. His disciples and admirers keenly felt that his inspired and invaluable thoughts regarding the power and efficacy of the Soham mantra which he gave to all who
came to him for initiation, should be published and made known to all aspirants of the spiritual path. This book, therefore, has been published now for the benefit of all souls who have a desire to be liberated from the troubles and tribulations of worldly existence and of entering into the everlasting peace of the Supreme Lord of the Universe.

D. L. Nirokhekar
Mumbai, 23rd October, 1948
Pseudo-saint worship is a kind of disease ever and anon attacking the people of India. This disease is constantly carrying away such a vast number of the Indian population that even plague and cholera together have never done it so far. Particularly our moral and economic exploitation has never been carried out in such a ruthlessly alarming proportion as is done by the following of false sadhus. Illiteracy campaigns alone will never be able to eradicate this evil, as even many of the literate, educated and intelligent people have been found falling an easy prey to false sadhus. The angle of vision towards life itself must be changed, and the inner life must be made morally stronger than what it is today.

The market-monks that we often come across are in fact void of that selflessness which is the prime factor of saintliness. In a crore [ten million] of ascetics, perhaps only one may be found worth the worship which the great soul Sri Gajanana Maharaj of Nashik deserves. He can be easily approached by those who wish to do so with a pure and sincere
heart, without which he cannot at all be found even after a good deal of effort on the part of the seeker!

There are Hindus, Muslims and Christians amongst those who hold Sri Gajanana Maharaj in high esteem and respect and take delight in paying homage to him.

For more than twenty years Sri Gajanana Maharaj has been continuously staying at Nashik and yet, out of those who annually spend their summer or even of those who live throughout their lives there, not even a score of men know him! People living within the radius of a couple of homes around his residence cannot tell his correct address to a newcomer. This shows how he avoids publicity. Yet his friends and admirers outside the city and belonging to other religions joined together in publishing his life sketch [*Light on the Path of Self-realization*] in May of 1941. That book also included his instructions, advice and discourses on yoga or union with God. The reader could afterwards approach him if he liked, or he could follow its practical portion and have experiences of the sadhana on his own.

Sri Gajanana Maharaj never calls any one his disciple, but calls all his “friends.” Such is the degree of his humility.

Today, in 1946, Sri Gajanana Maharaj is about fifty-five. Schooling he had barely for one year or two and yet he can best the most intellectual man in talks on any subject, all the while complaining that he himself is an ignorant man! By nature he is as simple and innocent as a baby! His dress and needs are of a more simple standard that that of a middle class Indian gentleman. A sip or two of tea is enough to sustain him for the whole day, while rarely during some weeks he takes a morsel of dry bread. He never needs a square meal. He never shows miracles to order or by previous intimation and intention. Sometimes miracles do take place in his presence, but he at once declares that their origin is not himself but his Master, Sri Narayana Saraswati. He says they take place without his efforts and knowledge.

Healing physical pains, foretelling births or deaths or increments of pay and wealth, are subjects outside the domain of his discussions and
discourses. He never asks for even a farthing, nor does he accept anything offered without sincerity. On rare occasions he has asked some people to do something for him or bring him certain articles. But those who brought something at his request in this way found that somebody else had already supplied the same to him. Thus, by the grace of the great God, he has no wants whatsoever, and it is only to give an aspirant a chance of selfless service that he may request someone to do something for him. His personal expenses do not exceed the amount of ten or twelve rupees per month.

This demonstrates that Sri Gajanana Maharaj belongs to a higher rank of saints than we ordinarily come across in everyday life. He has no tricks and paraphernalia that deceive masses. Hundreds of people never find his abode unless he so wills it, and this alone is saying enough. One day the writer observed the servant of a well-known Nashik merchant searching for his house for not less than an hour just in the neighborhood, with coconuts sent for the marriage ceremony of his own niece.

How could he reach such a high order of spiritual grace? Only because he is an adept in the science and art of yoga or spiritual union with God. He is one with Him. This science of yoga is far superior to ordinary jugglery which so many of the so-called monks make use of to squeeze out others’ money and weaken their minds. Yoga is a science well-established in society by the rishis of olden times. They have taken the utmost pains to put it in the most scientific and practical form for the generations that followed them and that are still to follow. Anyone can practice it and get one’s self lifted high up to God! Sri Gajanana Maharaj is here to help men in realizing the highest goal of life, to distribute amongst us freely the everlasting joy that he himself has acquired through the grace of his guru.

While still a boy, Sri Gajanana Maharaj was directed by his guru to guide aspirants on this path. He selects them and freely gives them the Soham mantra. Some approach him intentionally, others come accidentally in contact with him, and yet there is not the least doubt about the
fact that it is a sheer impossibility for souls that seek only materialism to meet with such an eminent director on this path. Only one who is earnest can obtain his grace. His followers, though not materially very prosperous, have all the same acquired profound spiritual experiences by practice.

The man of the world is generally in need of that mental peace and tranquility which lead to an equilibrium of mind in pleasure and pain. Without that peace many cannot even bear to live in this world. The saints of old have shown the way of repetition of mantra: the name of someone or some principle. Concentration is another step further. Then comes meditation and lastly realization. Sri Gajanana Maharaj directs his friends with his divine love. In this book his methods are described and explained to help pilgrims progress. The book shows the reader his undoubted ability to do it.

His everyday life is absolutely simple and methodical. Images and ceremonies exhibiting unnecessary show have no place in his room. He has nothing of decorations belonging to any religion, caste or cult. All are welcome to him and can meet him as man to man. He directs all who approach him in the simplest way and language through the spiritual realm without performing any miracles or practicing any deceptions. No selfishness, no snobbery. To lead the soul onward is the only mission of his life. He explains things so convincingly and in such a masterly manner that even the most intelligent man that goes to him is entirely satisfied. Anyone can have this experience of peace and satisfaction from him in the first, or at the most the second, visit and keep it for life.

There is not even the idea of any dependence on him. Rather he makes us independent and free. It is the raising of the Self [Atman] through self-effort.

At the feet of this Master soul, who is a self-sacrificing, developed being of authority and intelligence and who is a fine jewel in our land, we beg to lay our heads with deep devotion and love.

Om Peace! Peace!! Peace!!!
O my mind, be always repeating the japa of Soham.
Through faith in Soham external worship has been left behind. The soul has been realized in the form of Soham. Through the sound of Soham the guru has been beheld—that guru who saves people by the principle of Soham.

Mad Broom

Sri Ramdas has said, “Oh mind, you yourself have accumulated sin and merit in previous lives, and hence you have to endure the resulting good and evil in this life.” Every creature has to endure the effects of his sins and good actions done in previous lives, and there is no escaping them.

Although I am continuously suffering from bodily ailments I enjoy bliss in the contemplation of the Self [Atman], and also whenever I
contemplate upon some living saint. The joy that I then experience is beyond description in words. The nature of every experience is such. If you want to realize the sweetness of sugar or the bitterness of quinine, you must taste it yourself. Any amount of description in words will never make you realize it. Self-realization is similarly a matter of experience, and firm faith alone will enable one to get that experience.

I am merely a broom in the durbar of my sadguru. [This is why Sri Gajanana Maharaj called himself “Mad Broom.”] To speak the truth, I am neither a learned man nor a man of philosophical knowledge. But owing to some merit acquired in previous lives I have been enveloped with the shawl of his grace by my sadguru, and I firmly believe that the thoughts I give expression to are not my own but the self-inspired thoughts of my guru who is, as it were, making me his mouthpiece and giving expression to them.

I consider that all saints are one with my sadguru.

Saints appear to be different but are all one

Although saints appear to be different, they are all one as they have all become merged in the one Paramatman. Remembering this principle, I consider that all saints are as worthy of reverence as my own guru. Wherever my mind goes, I find my guru’s form there. Such has been my angle of vision since my childhood, and owing to this even the idea of knowing “Who am I?” never arises in my mind.

My guru showered his grace upon me and gave me the ajapa japa mantra of Soham. This grace has deeply entered the innermost recesses of my heart. Most of my time is spent in the company of my friends and companions. I can only say that I am enjoying complete rest in the shade of my guru’s grace.

I have above described in short the state of supreme peace that I have been enjoying. Naturally, all my actions are directed in creating as many sharers in this my state as possible. A description of my experiences is merely a part of these activities, and I try to see that others also get similar
experiences. It would not, therefore, be out of place if I describe some of my experiences and other matters incidentally connected with them.

**Every human being is ceaselessly trying to acquire happiness**

Every human being is ceaselessly trying to acquire happiness or to increase his share in it and to avoid pain, or at least to lessen it as much as possible. But the experience is just the contrary. He is ever feeling the lack of something and is always plunged in misery. Things which are pleasant in the beginning end in sorrow, and misery is always on the increase and gets the upper hand. As man does not really understand wherein lies his happiness, he passes his days in the vain hope of securing happiness some time or other. Death catches him in its grip while his search for happiness is still going on. People do not profit by the example of their companions and fellow-beings, and so continue the same search and follow the same path. They, however, do not stop to think wherein lies real and lasting happiness. A man, if he thinks deeply about this, will come to know that all things in this world which appear pleasant are perishable and false like a mirage. They either cause pain or increase the pain which is already there. No one, however, acquires this insight. On the contrary, everyone is entangled more and more in this snare of misery and finds it difficult to see a way out of the maze.

It is therefore necessary that some royal road should be pointed out so that people going by that path might root out this unending sorrow and pain and reach the destination where there is everlasting peace and happiness. I am putting before the world my experiences in order that people might find an easy, short and sure way of reaching this goal of everlasting happiness. When you get experience for yourself, you will be sure that you are on the right path. You will yourself enjoy full, complete and everlasting happiness and also lead other forlorn and miserable fellow-beings to the same path. It is the grace of my guru that prompts me to show this easy and royal road to the people who are engaged in worldly pursuits.
A simple and royal road to real happiness and bliss

There is a simple and royal road to obtain real happiness and bliss, a road which does not require the abandoning of worldly life and of our usual worldly activities. This path is known as Dhyana Yoga or Raja Yoga or Karma Marga.

If you follow this path you are sure to reach the goal. The series of difficulties which a person has to undergo in this worldly life, in due course awakens a desire in him to find out this path leading to unchanging and everlasting happiness. He then tries his utmost to discover this path, but he is almost always groping in the dark. The main object in writing this is to shed light in this darkness, and to illumine the path for the sake of these struggling human souls.

The goal of human life and steps to attain it

To thoroughly understand the “I,” to seek for It and to catch hold of It, is the goal of this path. For a human being, whether man or woman, this is not an easy task. A keen desire to find out this “I,” a firm determination to carry on the search for It and great perseverance in sticking to this pursuit: these are the steps which an aspirant has to ascend if he wants to reach the goal. Once you reach the high pinnacle you can sit and cast a glance on the panorama of worldly existence spreading out below you. A person who feels this urge to find out the “I” and thus to enjoy this unrivalled empire of complete and unchanging bliss, is known as a mumukshu [a seeker after liberation—moksha]. To complete this search and to be in the enjoyment of this everlasting happiness is known as obtaining moksha. The path which leads to this moksha is known as yoga. This yoga is merely a means leading to the end. There are different paths leading to moksha which are the different yogas and are known by different names. But the paths other than the one described here are difficult to follow.
Things necessary to find out the “I”

To find out the “I,” the following things are necessary. First, a person must obtain the grace of a sadguru. Without giving the least scope to doubts and misgivings he must have firm, unswerving faith. Then he will be able to see clearly the path before him. This is known as Anugraha. When this Anugraha is obtained, he must carry on the japa of the mantra. This mantra is Soham, which is the answer to the question “Who am I?” The meaning of the mantra is: “I am He,” “I am God.” Keeping this meaning of the mantra in mind, the sadhaka must carry on the japa with firm faith.

The continuous repetition and meditation of this mantra, Soham, is known as abhyasa (practice). This japa will not interfere with any of your worldly duties. As the contemplation proceeds, the broom of Soham will sweep off the dirt of the innumerable desires entertained through the course of previous lives from the heart, and the heart will then become pure. Owing to this, a sense of detachment will grow and the mind will be entirely free from desires. As soon as you reach this stage, you will be immersed in the bliss of the Self, and then there will be no further necessity of carrying on the search for the “I.” Then you will reach the summit and attain your goal.

Supposing all these things happen: you try to keep your mind pure and by continuous contemplation a feeling of detachment grows up in your mind. Still the question remains whether you, the sadhaka, can be said to have progressed. You can get a very satisfactory answer to this question.

To understand this clearly, let us take the very familiar instance of university and other examinations. There is a fixed curriculum and the question paper is the same for all candidates. We find thousands of students appearing for these examinations. All these students have completed their studies and have answered the question papers. Then why should there be the necessity of looking to the results of these examinations? All the candidates do not pass. Not only that, but several of them have
to appear again and again and continue the same studies till their efforts are crowned with success. This is a matter of common experience. We see that the various candidates get marks according to their preparation and that many get failed and have to appear again. The same analogy holds good in the case of spiritual matters. Every aspirant must, with perseverance and firm faith, carry on the abhyasa (practice) until he becomes fit to be the recipient of the final experience. His progress will depend upon his practice in this life. But it goes without saying that he is sure to attain the goal sooner or later.

The next question is, “How far has the sadhaka progressed and has his aptitude for getting the ultimate experience increased or not?” There is a very easy method to find out the answer to this question. Just look back retrospectively. Consider what was the tendency of your thoughts before you began your practice, what were your defects and what were your merits then, and observe the tendency of your thoughts now. See whether your good qualities have increased and your defects have become less. If you observe these things minutely you will get an answer to the above question.

The following are some of the characteristics that accompany the stage of the realization of the final experience. Desire, hate, attachment and fondness for sensual enjoyments are conspicuously absent. A feeling of complete detachment reigns. The mind is, as it were, nullified. All disturbing waves of thought subside and the deep calm ocean of peace pervades everywhere. The real object of getting this human life is fulfilled. The real nature of “I” is thoroughly understood. The continuous practice of dhyana and japa leads to this stage. In that stage, the dhyata, dhyana and the dhyeya—the contemplator, contemplation and the object of contemplation—become one, and thereby the real object of devotion is fulfilled.

As the sadhaka progresses, he gets certain powers (siddhis) in the natural course. He, however, must not be attracted towards those powers, but must carry on the practice with firmness. If he allows himself to
be attracted by them, he becomes their prey and various obstacles then arise in the path of his progress, which sometimes is altogether stopped.

Now there is another question: Whether there is any use of carrying on the japa of Soham if we have no faith in its efficacy.

**Is there any use in carrying on the japa of Soham without faith in its efficacy?**

The answer to that is that the repetition of the japa will always be useful, even though done without faith. It will never do you any harm. No doubt all the shastras and saints lay stress on faith, and hence the above statement will appear contrary to their teachings. However, if you go deep into the matter and observe minutely, you will easily be able to reconcile the two statements. Without having faith—although it may be in the subconscious mind—no one will be induced to practice the japa. As soon as a person begins to repeat the japa, faith is there accompanying the japa like its shadow. If we carefully follow this argument the seeming contradiction will cease to trouble us. A real mumukshu or devotee will never be deceived by the seeming contradiction, and will never allow his mind to be disturbed and turned away from the path.

**Comparing Dhyana Yoga with other yogas**

As an illustration of comparing Dhyana Yoga with other yogas, let us take the case of the nine-fold path of Bhakti (Devotion). In this all the organs [jnanendriyas and karmendriyas] have to be utilized in the service of God. In the repetition of mantra or the contemplation of God, however, only the mind is utilized. It is not necessary to make a comparison with all the other yogas. This illustration will convince anyone why Dhyana Yoga is by far the easiest. In the Yoga Sutras we find: “Its japa and fixing one's attention on its meaning.” Patanjali makes clear the method to be followed. Once you get accustomed to the continuous repetition of the Soham mantra, ajapa japa will necessarily follow. This japa of the mantra is the sadhana (means) and ajapa japa is the goal to be reached.
The aim of all yogas is the realization of the Godhead. The state is known by various names such as Sayujyata, Soham, Aham Brahmaasi, or Sakshatkar. To reach this goal, persevering effort, complete devotedness, concentration and a capacity to persevere are necessary. If a sadhaka carries on practice in the manner mentioned above, he is sure to reach the goal of Self-realization sooner or later, according to the merit acquired by him in previous lives. If a sadhaka does not carry on the practice for a sufficiently long time with firm faith, but leaves it in the middle, being tired of waiting, he will never attain Self-realization.

The sadhaka alone, who has gained this aptitude for spiritual knowledge in his previous life, will develop a liking for this practice leading to oneness with Brahman, and he alone will ultimately enjoy everlasting bliss. All dross is sure to be swept away from the heart of such a sadhaka by the constant japa of Soham. If the seed of Soham is sown in such a field, it is sure to sprout into a beautiful tree which will be laden with the fruit of the bliss of Self-realization. Such sadhakas will be enjoying unchanging bliss and will very easily cross the river of worldly existence. When a sadhaka reaches this stage he can very easily control his mind, intellect and ahamkar. The power generated by the constant repetition of the Soham mantra is sure to lead to the complete deliverance of the sadhaka.

**How can Soham japa be turned into ajapa japa?**

“Maharaj, you tell us to repeat the japa mentally. If we do it by the mouth, it will be doing it by means of words. If we do it mentally, still it will be nothing but the production of sound internally instead of externally. You, however, say that when the japa goes on constantly and automatically without any conscious effort on our part, then it is called ajapa japa. How can these two contrary things be one? Please explain this riddle.” Such was the question addressed to me by one of my friends. I replied, “I can give the answer to this question in vedantic and shastric ways, but I think that if I answer it by way of referring to
everybody’s experience it will very easy to understand and at the same
time will dispel all your doubts.”

Having replied thus, I continued the topic in the following manner.
“We often see people repeating the name of Rama by means of words uttered so as to be heard by others. Very few know how to repeat the japa mentally. Even though at first you may feel that the japa done mentally is nothing but the production of the sound internally, still if the practice is carried on continuously for a long time you will get the experience that you hear the japa although you are not consciously repeating it in the mind.

“A sadhaka will reach this stage sooner or later according to his merit from previous lives. Some may reach this stage in a few days, others will take weeks and some others years. This is known as ajapa japa. When this stage is reached, real peace of mind is experienced and powers (siddhis) also necessarily follow. While engaged in doing worldly actions, such a sadhaka is internally immersed in everlasting bliss. He naturally gets the experience of the bliss of samadhi. When this stage is reached, kundalini and the six chakras (plexuses) all disappear.

**Why should not the method of scientific experiments be followed?**

Modern rationalists say, “The present is the age of experiments. We shall put our faith only in those things which will be proved by experiments. In schools and colleges at present every day experiments are made by teachers and professors, and students are also coached in making them. The age of blind faith is gone. There is a method in making these scientific experiments. Why should not the same method be followed in the spiritual field?”

The following reply may be given to this sort of reasoning.

There were saints in the past, there are saints at present and there will be saints in the future. No saint in the past made such experiments. No saint at present makes them and no saint in the future will make them. There is a world of difference between material sciences and spiritual
matters. The region of spiritual matters lies beyond mind, intellect and ahamkar (egoism). Owing to this, no saint can demonstrate by actual experiments matters pertaining to the spirit as modern scientists do in the case of matter. Similarly, saints do not get these experiments performed by others.

There has been no instance in history of such experiments being performed by any saint. Cast a glance at past history. Take the case of great saints like Sri Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, Ekanath, Janardhan Swami, Matsyendranath and others. They had many disciples. Out of these they showered their grace only on the select few who were found to have a special aptitude to receive it. These chosen few alone reached perfection and became famous in the world and carried on the tradition in their turn by making disciples of their own. Why should these great saints do so? Why did they not establish universities for conferring the Degree of “Saint” and open coaching classes in which experiments were performed and ocular demonstrations were made? Why did they select only a few for showering their grace? Answers to all such questions can be had from illustrations with which we are all familiar.

At present many examinations are held every year. We also read about the results of these examinations. Many candidates appear for these examinations. The results show that some of them have passed while others have failed and have to prepare themselves again. Only one or two of those that have passed get scholarships or prizes. All candidates who have passed did not get an equal number of marks. Their marks differ and they get their rank according to the number of marks secured by them. This shows that scholarships or prizes are not given to all, but only to the select few. That is because they alone are found deserving.

Let us take another example. Suppose everyone persistently prays to God to be made an emperor. It would be ridiculous to expect God to fulfill the desires of all. If everybody becomes an emperor, who would be tutelary princes or subjects? God, therefore, only selects the best who is found deserving and makes him the emperor.
When we clearly see such examples in the world, to raise such questions on the strength of argumentative powers is nothing but a waste of time and energy. It only shows that these people who do so are not really desirous to ascertain the truth, but only to carry on discussions and to indulge in intellectual subtleties. If these rationalists would only think sincerely on the matter, they would easily get answers to such questions. I am neither a shastri nor a pandit, nor a modern educated man with university degrees. I have given answers to such questions in my humble way. I leave it to those rationalists to see whether they fit in or not.

**My own experiments**

My guru has ordered me to describe my own experiences in these matters in order that various doubts which assail the minds of people may be dispelled and the secret of these matters be easily grasped by them. I shall therefore describe how I pray to God, how I was favored by the grace of my guru and the actual experiences which I have got through his grace. Please ponder upon them sincerely, and with an open and independent mind choose things of which you approve, bring them into practice, obtain the knowledge of the real nature of the Self, become immersed in the bliss of the Self and be favorites of fortune.

I think that I must have made preparations in my previous life and that I must have been favored with the grace of the guru. I must also have carried on the practice of yoga. To these things the little practice that I did in this life was added. In this life I put firm faith in the words of my guru and considered that my guru’s words were more valuable than all the shastras put together. By constant practice this firm faith reached its climax.

I firmly believe that I never did anything with my will power. I did all actions as naturally as a child. Owing to this attitude of my mind, my guru became pleased with me and showered his grace upon me. He blessed me by giving me the mantra of Soham. This mantra is the inner, subtle sound produced by the incoming and outgoing breaths. Everyone
is breathing and producing this sound, but no one is conscious of it. Hence no one practices this japa. But if anyone carries on the practice by fixing his attention upon this japa, he will be sure to obtain its fruit. After being graced by my guru I carried on the japa with perseverance and firm faith, and later this practice became my nature. Now I do not repeat the japa, but it is being carried on automatically in my mind. Sometimes I casually direct my attention towards it. Ordinarily I pass most of my time in the company of my friends, enjoying it as innocently and joyously as a child.

Sometimes my friends say to me, “Maharaj, you are now more than fifty years old; why do you act as a child? Have some gravity and seriousness.” At this I do nothing but laugh. When I look to this lila (sportive working) of God, I am impelled to say, “Oh God, you are not seen by my physical eye. I cannot even conceive about you in my mind.” Although such is the real case, some people say: “Gajanana Maharaj (myself) is a great yogi. He has great will power. He is a saint, he is an adept. He mixes with all. He becomes small in the company of the small and great in the company of the great, poor in the company of the poor and rich in the company of the rich. In fact he considers himself as one with all. Notwithstanding all this, he has no feeling of caste or relationship and no sense of honor or dishonor.”

Some people with devotion in their hearts come to me and persist in asking me to be their guru and favor them with my grace. They later on tell me that they had sakshatkar (realization). I listen to all things and also observe them. Oh God, all these things come to pass through your grace alone. There is not the slightest doubt about this. You yourself gave me the mantra of Soham. I give them the same mantra. Through the power of this mantra you shower your grace upon them and bless them with real knowledge. I am only sorry that you have all along kept me an ignoramus. I, however, have determined to serve my guru to the end of my life, having fixed my firm faith in him. If you wish, keep me the same sort of ignoramus in all my future lives also. But I only pray to
you to save all those who put their faith in the mantra of Soham, each according to his aptitude. According to your will the cycle of worldly existence will be carried on. Only let me never be separated from your feet.

My brothers and sisters. If you also carry on the practice with firm faith and assiduity, you too will get experience in a greater or lesser degree. From amongst all who thus try, only those whose practice reaches perfection will get Self-realization. Faith, perseverance and continuous effort lead to success and realization of the Self. If your efforts are weak, or if you abandon the practice in the middle and ask why you do not get experiences which others get, it will be a senseless question not deserving any answer. “There is no firm conviction and the mind is wandering everywhere.” If such is the state, abhyasa (practice) will be useless and will be of no avail. Hence you must have firm faith and realize your oneness with Brahman through the power of the mantra.

**Different kinds of “I,” their extent and mutual relation**

Let us now consider the different kinds of “I,” their extent and their mutual relation. The word “I” is used in two senses. The first is “mind,” and the second is that principle or element inside our bodies which is very subtle, which is all-pervading and which is the seer and knower of all things. This means that in worldly parlance it is used in the sense of the vital principle of Brahman. That ever-present witness inside who knows both these kinds of minds and who himself is beyond all sense perception, is the real “I.”

As described above, the “I” is of two kinds. That “I” which is devoid of ahamkar feels that it pervades everywhere. It knows no distinction between a learned man and a dunce. It is always immersed in joy. While doing worldly actions, although the actions are correctly and methodically done, it all along is enjoying atmic bliss. In order to attain this attitude it is necessary that the principle of Self-realization or renunciation must be firmly and thoroughly assimilated. This does not mean that actions are to be abandoned. Only the desire of obtaining
the fruit of those actions is to be renounced. All actions must be done quite naturally.

A person should always try to read his mind and see how far this tendency of renunciation has developed. If he finds that while doing various actions his mind does not cast any glance towards the good or bad result of those actions, but actions are done solely from a sense of duty, he should be sure that he is progressing and rendering himself more and more fit. In the Gita the word tyaga (renunciation) has been used in this very sense. If the letters in the word Gita are reversed we get tagi, which is the same as tyagi.

A mumukshu is terribly afraid of this panorama of worldly existence and, not being able to know who he really is, becomes full of bewilderment and misery. Then Soham is shown to him. His bewilderment disappears, he begins to enjoy constant and everlasting peace and ultimately obtains moksha.

If a sadhaka has recourse to Vedanta or the other different kinds of yoga, he gets confused. The Dhyana Yoga of the Nath Pantha which has been handed down from Matsyendranath acts like a light which clearly shows the right path. I say this from my own experience. As the sadhaka has to repeat the japa and also to meditate, this path is known as Dhyana Yoga. With firm faith, having turned back the course of thoughts from the outward world to inside himself, a sadhaka has to carry on the japa and meditation for a long time. As he progresses, he gradually reaches perfection and realizes that his own soul has been his sadguru. This stage is known as oneness of jiva (the individual soul) and Shiva (the Supreme Soul). It is also called Sakshatkara. A sadhaka then naturally enjoys the bliss of the Self and becomes devoid of desire for anything else. This path is also known as Dhyana Yoga or Karma Marga, because a sadhaka gets Sakshatkar after progressing through many steps. He also attains complete knowledge, hence it is called Jnana Yoga. I therefore again and again say that people should have recourse to this simple path of self-deliverance.
How to act in worldly life to aid spiritual progress

Now let us see how a man should act in worldly life so that he may progress spiritually while leading a life of the world. It must be admitted that it is very difficult for an ordinary person to leave the worldly life. He thinks that there is a great responsibility upon him in this world. He is always putting forward excuses such as that he has a large family and that he alone is its supporter; he has, therefore, no time for the present to devote to spiritual matters; he will see about them later on when his responsibilities become less. To him I will say, “My good friend, do not leave your family. Continue to do your worldly duties as you are doing now. Only begin the practice of Dhyana Yoga and carry it on and stick to it with perseverance. You can thus kill two birds with one stone. You will be able to lead a worthy worldly life and also to progress spiritually. Try it and you will be convinced of the truth of what is said above from your own experience.”

Now let us see how this can be accomplished. No human being can ever escape from the necessity of doing actions. There are, however, two different ways of doing these actions. In the one, we do all actions with the desire of achieving some object as a consequence of those actions. If our object is fulfilled, we become happy and full of joy. If, on the contrary, we fail in achieving our object and are unsuccessful, we are cast down and we become full of sorrow. Thus we see that the real cause of our happiness or sorrow is not the actions themselves, but the object or motive behind them. If we then abandon the object and do not pay any attention at all to the consequences of our actions, but do them from a sense of duty only, we shall never fall into the clutches of sorrow and our peace of mind will never be disturbed. Actions done with the desire of achieving some object are known as sakama and those done merely from a sense of duty without any object in view are known as nishkama.

Now if we cast a glance at the worldly experiences of our own and of others, what do we see? Do we find that all our actions are successful and that our desires are in every case fulfilled? Do the actual results of our
actions correspond to the expectations entertained in our mind regarding them? No. On the contrary, we find that in the majority of cases we are unsuccessful and have to swallow the bitter pill of disappointment. There are various obstacles which intervene and frustrate our desires. We sometimes overcome some expected obstacles and triumph over the difficulties. But almost always we succumb before unexpected obstacles and difficulties. In such circumstances we get confounded, and getting submerged in the slough of despondency are completely at a loss to know what to do. We are sometimes quite tired with our life and wish that it were ended. Why is it so? It is because when we do actions with some object in view, all our attention is directed towards the object, and once that is frustrated the equanimity of the mind is entirely disturbed and we become a prey to sorrow.

If on the other hand we do actions merely from a sense of duty without paying any attention to the result, and taste the fruit of those actions quite naturally as it comes, we shall not be affected either by joy or sorrow and our peace of mind will never be disturbed. This is because vasana (desire) which is the root cause of all sorrow is nullified. To do actions in this manner is known as Nishkama Karma Yoga. If a person follows this method while leading his life in the world he will surely attain Self-realization. Such a person need not renounce the world. Only he must follow this method with great perseverance and firm determination. He must only have the will to do so, and his efforts will surely be crowned with success. Let us take a few illustrations to make the above points clear.

Suppose I am a big official. I can misuse my power and give great trouble to others and humiliate them. I can also through the exercise of the same power reach the summit of material prosperity by benefitting myself in various ways. There cannot be two opinions regarding the reprehensible nature of my conduct. All people will condemn it. I can also make good use of my power and be of good service to many people. Suppose I take the opportunity afforded by the power vested in
me and try to be useful to other people as far as I can, quite naturally and without any ulterior object of any benefit to myself. I therefore pay no heed to what people say about me, whether they praise me or censure me. I do these things from a sense of duty; I am not overjoyed if people praise me. I simply taste the natural fruit of my actions and my peace of mind is not disturbed. I might perhaps get involved in great troubles like Saint Damaji [who risked his life for the sake of others by distributing grain from the royal granaries to the people in famine]. In that case, I shall not allow my peace of mind to be disturbed, but bow to the will of God with due reverence and submission and calmly endure the result of my action.

Take another illustration. Suppose I am a merchant. In trade we cannot definitely say when and how much profit we shall get. Suppose fortune favors me and I get a huge profit which was not even dreamt of by me and I am, at a single bound, raised to the status of a millionaire from the position of a poor man. I could spend all this unexpected money in various items of luxury, licentiousness and dancing and music parties. But I, however, spend the money in opening hospitals, building dharmashalas, feeding the poor, improving agriculture and founding educational institutions. I thus am greatly useful to society. Yet suppose no one praises me. I am not garlanded in public meetings, my name does not appear in the newspapers and celebrated as that of a great generous donor. No one ever acknowledges his obligations to me. Still I do not feel sorry or get disappointed with the ingratitude of men. I feel that I unexpectedly got the huge profit and naturally spent it in doing these useful deeds. All this happened quite naturally at my hands. If such are my feelings, I can be said to follow the method of Nishkama Karma Yoga.

Take a third illustration. Suppose I am devoted to the study of medical science. I make various experiments and discover remedies for various diseases. I give my advice and treatment to patients free of charge and many ailments are cured and suffering humanity is greatly benefitted. The number of my patients is vastly increasing and my name is in everybody's
The divine Message of Sri Gajanana Maharaj of Nashik

mouth. The ruler of a great state honors me and offers me the present of a big sum of money. I never resorted to all these activities with the object of getting money or fame. I simply wanted to be useful to my fellow-beings to the best of my abilities. In these circumstances, if I get fame or a big sum of money as mentioned above, I cannot deserve blame in any way because when I did those actions my mind was absolutely disinterested. The fame and the money naturally came to me. This is also Nishkama Karma on my part.

All actions, therefore, which are done by us without any desire of obtaining the fruit, and simply from a sense of duty, are nishkama. Such a person is known as a Nishkama Karma Yogi. He easily achieves success in spiritual matters, and in course of time attains the bliss of the Self.

While practicing Nishkama Karma Yoga or Raja Yoga, many a time various miracles take place at our hands. This stage is known as the stage of siddhis (powers). There is a danger at this time of our becoming either afraid or triumphant or proud. Very great care must be taken at this time. Otherwise we shall become as blank as we were at the beginning of our spiritual career. If we make use of these powers for obtaining fame or wealth, our spiritual progress will be entirely stopped and we shall stray away far from our goal of acquiring the knowledge and realization of the Self. If we however consistently maintain the attitude that we are not the authors of these miracles, we are not responsible for them and they happened naturally, these siddhis will not operate as obstacles on our path and we shall easily attain our goal and gain complete peace and happiness.

I therefore humbly request you all: Think of all things with an independent and unbiased mind, through practice root out all likes and dislikes and acquire a sense of complete detachment. With Nishkama Karma Yoga carry on your worldly duties and through meditation and practice become one with the universe and enjoy everlasting bliss.
A special characteristic of Dhyana Yoga

I shall conclude by dealing with a special characteristic of Dhyana Yoga as compared with other yogas. In all yogas there are experiences culminating in samadhi. In the state of samadhi or a state resembling it, visions of various deities and great saints are seen and conversations held with them. So these things are common. But sadhakas following the path of Dhyana Yoga say they have experiences of the kind mentioned below. We shall later on see what inference is to be drawn from such experiences.

A sadhaka is sitting in meditation. A person not at all acquainted with the sadhaka is living at a distance of many miles from the sadhaka. The sadhaka sees that person’s house in his vision. That house was never seen by the sadhaka before. He sees a storeroom in the house and in that room a box in which he sees some volumes of Yoga Vashishtha. This sadhaka is of a curious disposition. He mentions the things seen by him in the vision to a few of his acquaintances who have no faith in yoga and other spiritual topics. The sadhaka, accompanied by these acquaintances, goes to that person’s house in order to test whether the vision corresponds to actual facts or was merely a dream. To the wonder of these acquaintances and of the sadhaka himself (although to a slightly less degree), the house corresponded with that seen in the vision. They tell the owner of the house their object in visiting him. He says that there is a box in the storeroom but it does not contain any volumes of Yoga Vashishtha. But he does not like to send away these persons with a feeling that they had come on a fool’s errand. He therefore takes the trouble of opening the box in their presence and begins to take out of it one thing after another, and lo! the volumes of Yoga Vashishtha are found in the box. The sadhaka then begins to think that the things seen in meditation are not merely creatures of imagination, but are actually true. He begins to ask himself why and how this could be so. While he is engrossed in pondering the answer to his question, Sri Jnaneshwar’s following line suddenly flashes before him and gives a complete answer to this question. The line runs thus: “If we look to this (Brahman or
Atmarama) carefully, it is neither outside nor inside. It alone is sporting everywhere.” This completely satisfies him.

The process of reasoning which thus solves his doubts and silences his questions may be briefly summarized as follows: We say that we are the body and also mean it. The mover inside the body, who undoubtedly exists, cannot be actually seen nor can anyone demonstrate his existence by actual experiments, nor can anyone say what are his attributes. This element inside is known as the Ego or Chaitanya (Consciousness) or by some other name. The same element is pervading all things outside our body. It cannot be seen by the physical eye. Those who have studied modern science know that in the atmosphere surrounding us there are various gases whose existence is not perceived easily. Similarly, heat and electricity cannot actually be seen. After performing experiments we come to know about the nature of these elements. Then we become sure about their existence.

Similarly, there is one element which is inside our body and outside it, pervading everywhere. We have to infer its existence. We find space around us and say that it is empty. But it is not so. It is filled with the atmosphere which is full of air and its component gases. The air inside a bottle and in the atmosphere outside the bottle is of the same kind. Similarly, the Chaitanya which dwells in the body is the same as the Chaitanya which pervades everywhere outside. Even in the things which we call inanimate, there is Chaitanya. Only its existence can be experienced under certain circumstances. Similarly, the existence of the Chaitanya is felt or experienced when the eye of knowledge is opened by means of yoga.

The vital force or energy in nature is one and the same. We can never create it nor can we destroy it. Only we convert one kind of energy into another. This law of the conservation of energy has been accepted by all, and all have faith in it. Similarly, Chaitanya cannot be increased or decreased. It assumes different forms of material things, and its existence is then perceived.
If we consider these laws of material science and apply their principles to the understanding of the all-pervading Chaitanya, we shall be intellectually convinced of its existence and we can get its actual experience by means of yoga. If we follow this process of reasoning, the idea that Brahman is a vague and nebulous conception of speculative philosophers will, I think, entirely disappear.

If a sadhaka again and again gets such experiences and if he follows the process of reasoning indicated above, he will be convinced that one and the same Self is sporting everywhere, inside him as well as outside him. By deep and constant pondering upon this principle, he will clearly realize the all-pervading nature of the Self. This, I think, should be called Atma-Sakshatkara.
My dear brothers and sisters,

I am deeply thankful to you for the kind and affectionate invitation you sent to me for the Jayanti Utsav of Sri Ramana Maharshi. You have also asked me to send a message if I am unable to attend personally. I cannot personally be present amongst you although I would have very much liked to be there. But your pure affection has prompted some thoughts in my mind, which I herewith send to you.

Saguna is the Manifestation of the Unmanifested

Let us take the subject of the Unmanifested (Avyakta). We have to designate all things by some word. This necessity of using some word to designate things is felt by all, whether saints, learned persons or ignorant people. When a child is born, it does not say that it should be called by a particular name such as Govinda or Gopal; but people give it some name. The same is the case with the Unmanifested. A child was born from the Unmanifested and the saints called it Maya. From time immemorial saints have come out of the Unmanifested, assuming a saguna form and having bodies—embodiments of light—in order to teach human beings and to spread spiritual knowledge in the world.

Every human being is sent into this world for the purpose of enjoying the bliss of the Self, while doing worldly actions in a detached spirit, and of realizing the Godhead.

We must not to get entangled in the nets of sex and money [lust and greed: materialism]. Thus, our ahamkar will be sattwic and not tamasic. It is the tamasic ahamkar that makes the world so full of misery. If we
want to make our whole worldly life full of bliss, we must meditate on the Self through the mantra of Soham.

Such has been my own experience. I have reached this stage entirely through the grace of my sadguru and through meditating on Soham. I cannot say that I have attained this stage through my own efforts. This Soham which has come out of the Avyakta (the Unmanifested) has brought the shakti (power) of the Avyakta with it, and owing to this shakti everything of mine has become Krishnarpana (one with the Godhead). Hence, Maya does not trouble me. I have become one with Soham and I have realized my Self by meditating on it. I am enjoying unchanging bliss.

The mantra Soham is the sole savior

Every religion has got its own saints and prophets. If a person of whatever religion has firm faith and meditates on the Self, he is sure to go beyond pleasure and pain and to attain everlasting bliss. The mantra Soham is the sole savior. I am absolutely sure of this, not merely intellectually but through experience of the Self. This does not mean that I have become a saint or that I deserve to take my seat along with the great saints. I only say that all saints have resorted to this very mantra, and when their thoughts become entirely merged in the Supreme Self they become one with Brahman and shine forth in this world. I have not reached that stage as yet, but I am sure that through their grace and through meditation on Soham I am enjoying the same bliss which they enjoy. I have not as yet arrived at the stage of such great saints as Jnaneshwar, Tukaram, or Ramdas. But I am following in their footsteps and taking draughts of the supreme bliss. These saints have boldly declared in their imperishable words that they have been saved by Soham, and that others will also be saved by the same mantra. Future saints also will preach the same principle.

Any act (karma) which happens automatically is really nishkama although it may appear to be sakama. This is what my Self-experience tells me. In saying this I am not in any way criticizing other saints. I
consider all saints who have attained Self-realization as incarnations of my sadguru. It is they who handed over to me the mantra Soham which was hidden in the Avyakta in the deep recesses of my own soul. This treasure was with me but I had forgotten the place where it was hidden. The saints pointed out to me that place and from that time I have been continuously contemplating on the Self.

This Soham which has come out of the Avyakta is ever present in the hearts of men. Saints become one with this Soham which is in their own hearts and then the Soham merges itself again into the Avyakta.

I therefore think that Soham is the real Karma [action leading to liberation], it is the “I” and the saints have made me realize this “I.” This Soham is the real secret. It is God, it is Karma, that makes us realize this through their grace. Through continuous practice and meditation on the Self a person attains a stage in which actions become automatic. Such actions may be called sakama or nishkama. Just as saguna and nirguna are one, similarly in that stage sakama and nishkama are one. He does not look to the result and is indifferent whether the actions result in loss or gain. He is ready to endure both. He is sure that the body, this earthly tenement, is not his own. Hence he does not not care whether pleasure or pain is the result of that action.

To trouble a saint regarding our worldly affairs is detrimental to our spiritual progress

To trouble a saint regarding our worldly affairs is detrimental to our spiritual progress, because this shows that we attach undue importance to them. And when our worldly desires are not fulfilled, our faith in the saint becomes shaky. Some persons come to me and ask me to remove their worldly troubles. “I have incurred a debt of four thousand rupees. This makes my mind uneasy. Kindly shower your grace upon me and make me free from care.” Such are some of the complaints which are often brought to me by people. They desire that I should ward off their difficulties and troubles.
It is quite true that adversity is good for a man as it often leads to his spiritual advancement. A person who is extremely troubled by adverse circumstances and has lost his peace of mind many a time goes to a saint. If the merit acquired by him in his previous life is of a high order, and he comes in contact with a real saint who has attained Self-realization, the emotional state of his mind then is such that he naturally puts his faith in what the saint tells him and accepts it with full reverence and submission. He then carries on the practice of the japa of the mantra given to him and is greatly befitted. It however does not follow that the saint will remove that person’s worldly difficulties and troubles. A real saint will never do this.

Therefore when people come to me for the redress of their worldly troubles I plainly tell them that every person must patiently bear the troubles sent to him by his fate, and that the best way of solving worldly difficulties is to follow worldly and practical methods. They however argue as follows: “A saint is like a mother to his disciples and other people who come to him for shelter. A child is full of frolic and joy and is engaged in various games and playthings. But when it becomes hungry, it comes crying to its mother. Does not the mother then see to its wants and pacify its hunger? Similarly, we are leading our lives pleasantly in this world as long as our circumstances are good. Our mind is then at ease. When, however, troubles arise and our peace of mind is lost, if we go and fall at the feet of a saint, should not that saint shower his grace upon us and ward off our difficulties like a good mother?”

My answer to such sort of arguments is this. There are some persons who come to me solely with the object of achieving their worldly objects. They have nothing to ask in spiritual matters. To such I say, “This is not my business. You should go to those saints who happen to possess such powers.” It is the mission of real saints to point out the path which leads to sure and everlasting peace and happiness to persons who, being extremely harassed by worldly troubles, are in urgent need of finding out a way which will take them out of all troubles and establish them
in everlasting peace. Real saints have this power of granting boundless happiness and complete peace of mind. My sadguru has put this very responsibility upon me. He, through me, shows this path with ardent love to spiritual aspirants. He takes into consideration all the obstacles and difficulties that beset this path, and removes them. If the removing of a worldly difficulty or the fulfilling of a worldly desire is necessary for the further spiritual progress of the disciple, and positively helpful to him, he will fulfill that desire also. But it must be remembered that in such cases there is no opposition between the fulfillment of that desire and the decree of fate or karma—i.e., the will of God. This means such a fulfillment is in consonance with the law of karma.

I therefore say that people should pay careful attention to what I have said above and keep firm faith in their guru and in the mantra given by him. This faith should be such as the child has in its mother. Just as the child never has any doubt that she is its mother and that she will fulfill all its desires, similarly they should have firm faith in their sadguru who is none other than Soham, and have not the least doubt that this mother Soham will deliver them from all troubles.

My dear brothers and sisters, devote all your energies to acquire this love which is pervading the whole world but of which we are not conscious. By the japa of Soham you will establish this love in your hearts and become blessed. This Soham japa is like an ocean which is full of unlimited bliss.

The repetition of Soham may be sakama, or nishkama

The repetition of Soham may be sakama, or nishkama. As Soham is based on the workings of nature, its japa, though it may be carried on with the object of fulfilling earthly desires, will ultimately be united with the real Soham which is enshrined in the innermost core of our being, and thus bring into awakening the power of the Paramatman. Objects of earthly desires are not permanent. The joy which is felt in their attainment is evanescent. But the effect of even the sakama japa is not altogether lost. It retains its force and awakens the power of the Self.
The japa of Soham should be repeated in as natural a manner as possible. There is no necessity of assuming any particular posture (asana). It should be carried on even while doing worldly actions. No misgiving should be entertained regarding its effect even though there may be absence of concentration. Such doubts are groundless. Even when we feel that our mind is concentrated, that state of concentration is only apparently so. The mind is in its very nature extremely fickle, and we cannot be sure when it will dart away and throw us into a whirlpool of thoughts. Everyone knows that this state of concentration is generally momentary. It is no doubt true that in the state of samadhi the mind is concentrated for a longer duration, but that state of samadhi also is not permanent; it lasts only for some time. After that the person again descends into consciousness of surrounding worldly objects, the play of good and bad desires generating pleasure or pain is resumed, and the body carries on its usual activities.

The state of samadhi or concentration can be compared to that of sleep. In the state of sleep there is real concentration. When we get up we say that we had very good sleep, that we were entirely unconscious of the world and that our mind was completely merged in the Self. Our Self alone was present as the Seer. Still we often see that sometimes even in sleep we dream and find ourselves taking part in the dream world. That is to say, we leave the state of concentration and again enter into the world of thoughts. If this is so even in the state of sleep, then how much more difficult would it be to go into a state of concentration in our waking state? Hence it would not be proper to abandon the japa on the ground that one cannot concentrate upon it.

Some people think that if they carry on the japa they may get into a state of [continual indrawn or abstract] concentration, and then it would be difficult for them to carry on their worldly duties easily. This idea also is false. Soham is our real nature. If we become one with it we will, on the contrary, be able to carry on our usual worldly duties more efficiently.
“Who am I?”

An atheist might say, “I cannot understand all this. God and the Paramatman are all ideas and guesses. What have I to do with them?” Let us for the sake of argument admit that what he says is true, that these are all ideas. Now let him answer the following question: “You know that these are all ideas. Who is it that knows about these ideas and is conscious of their being mere ideas?” A person sometimes says, “I am ignorant.” Let him consider who is the knower of his ignorance. A person sometimes says, “I do not want this, I do not want that.” Even though he might say that he does not want anything, still the “I” would always remain. This “I” is Soham, and eternal peace is its nature. A person might say that he does not want all this bother about God, dhyana, devotion, faith and concentration. All right; but let him say whether he wants peace, calmness and happiness or not. Even if he thinks that these ideas about God, etc., are false and illusory, still he must admit that there is somebody inside him who thinks them false and illusory. This knower inside us is the “I” and that “I” is Soham.

As long as the breath goes on, life goes on, and the activities of the body go on. The saints have explained the meaning of the incoming and outgoing breath, and Soham is the sound which is produced by the incoming and outgoing breath. This Soham sound is ceaselessly being repeated in our body whether we are conscious of it or not. If we become conscious of this internal Soham, we shall experience peace of mind. If we fully understand this Soham, we shall attain complete bliss, which is the real nature of Soham, and become one with it.

The difference between meditation and concentration

Some persons do not understand the difference between meditation (dhyana), and concentration (ekagrata). Suppose a sadguru asks a person to sit before him and repeat the Soham mantra mentally. A few minutes later the guru asks him, “How did you feel? Had you any thoughts? Was the flow of thoughts going on as usual, or was there any difference? How
was the japa going on?” When such questions are asked the aspirant appears to be a little confused, and is usually found to answer in the following manner: “Maharaj, my mind was quite calm. Not a single idea arose in my mind. The japa was going on in an undisturbed manner. I was enjoying peace. But, Maharaj, my mind was not concentrated. I could hear the sounds and movements taking place about me.”

It is a common idea with ordinary aspirants that as soon as they hear the mantra Soham pronounced by the sadguru their mind should become concentrated and they should enter into the state of samadhi. It is a laudable wish, no doubt, but it is out of place at the time. Because when the sadguru tells the aspirant to meditate upon Soham, he does not tell him to get concentrated at once. He tells him to repeat the japa of Soham in order that he may be able to meditate properly. The main idea in meditation is that while the japa is going on there should not be the flow of other thoughts disturbing the repetition of the mantra. Our mind is naturally fickle. It is very difficult for it to concentrate itself upon one idea. The guru tries to bring the aspirant to experience a state in which, although he is not consciously repeating the mantra, the mantra appears to be going on while his mind is entirely at repose. At such a time the guru through his own power gets this done, even though the disciple by himself has not been accustomed to it and is not in a position to keep his mind absolutely calm. The experience is, of course, only temporary.

In the case of some aspirants, however, owing to some practice done in the previous life they get concentrated as soon as they begin meditation according to the instructions of the guru. They also see some visions. But this only shows that they must have practiced to some extent in their previous life. They therefore get all those experiences almost at once. But this does not mean that they have, owing to this, got everything which is to be obtained from a sadguru. They too must not stop there, but carry on further practice until they reach the final goal of human life.

“All possible troubles beset the worldly life.” Keeping this truth firmly in mind, it is necessary to get deliverance from samsara (worldly
existence) by the internal repetition of Soham. The seeing of many visions is not a sure sign of progress. Real progress lies in the continuous meditation on the sound of Soham going on without a break after the visions have stopped. If a person carries on the continuous practice of the Soham japa, his mind will in course of time get concentrated upon it, and he will then experience the state of samadhi. In this stage, though he may not be conscious of it, the sound of Soham is going on even more intensely than before.

**Attaining the state of samadhi is not the final goal of our life**

In the state of samadhi there is no consciousness of the external world, and there is experience of bliss. But this state lasts only for a short time. As soon as the normal consciousness is gained, the world makes its presence felt as before and the old play of desires, full of pleasure and pain, commences. Thus it will be seen that it is a mistake to suppose that we have reached our final goal when we reach the state of samadhi. What is necessary in this stage, is that even while we are conscious of worldly objects our meditation on Soham must be ceaselessly going on, and the worldly objects and events should produce no reaction on our mind, making it unsteady. Hence it is necessary to carry on the meditation of Soham ceaselessly. When this practice is carried on continuously, a state is reached when the presence of Pandurang (the Paramatman) is felt in all the three states: the waking, the dreaming and the sleeping. Then we get the experience described by Kabir: “Rama does my japa. I am sitting at ease.” Thus, the stage of ajapa-japa is reached, and when this is reached we experience the state of samadhi even while we are doing worldly activities. The mind itself becomes one with Soham and the truth of the following words is realized: “The mind has become fixed and motionless in one place. Atmic bliss has, therefore, been realized to the full. Nothing remains lacking.”

Many aspirants go to a guru taking their stand on Sri Tukaram’s lines, “The sadguru makes his disciple like himself at once. No time is
required for him to do this.” They however, should also remember the words of the same saint to the following effect: “Tuka says that haste is of no use. Unless the proper time of acquisition has arrived, nothing can be achieved.” They would thus not be deceived in their expectations.

The object of the above-mentioned discussion is not to make aspirants despondent and abandon the practice through a sense of frustration if they find that their efforts are not crowned with success in a short time. They are sure to realize the real power of Soham after some days if they carry on the practice continuously, with great intensity. There is absolutely no doubt about this. I say this from my own experience. The aspirant should have the firm determination that he will carry on the practice of Soham intensely in the future, although he might have failed to do so in the past. He should always remember that his sadguru is always there to back his efforts.

**Continuous meditation on the sound of Soham at the time of death leads one to sadgati (high status after death)**

If an aspirant carries on the continuous meditation on the sound of Soham, he will become one with Soham. If he happens to die in this stage he can be sure of attaining sadgati (high status) after his death. It is very difficult to bring our mind to bear upon the contemplation of God at the time of our death. The force of desires is very great at that time, a person becomes a prey to them, and owing to this has to go through the cycle of various lives. If, however, he gets himself accustomed to the continuous intense contemplation of the sound of Soham, his mind at the time of death will not be entangled in the meshes of worldly desires, but will be merged in Soham and hence he will be sure to go to a higher state after his death. I therefore say to you all: commence the japa of Soham and carry it on ceaselessly. Later on you will reach a stage when you will not be able to know whether japa is going on or not. You will only know that you passed some moments in deep ecstasy. Remember that during all this time the Soham japa was going on at all times without break.
What is necessary is that we must devote our attention to this Soham. The more your attention is directed towards Soham the greater will be the change in your mind and thoughts. Your kama and krodha will not altogether be destroyed or obliterated. They may be there, but the sting of hatred will be entirely absent. When someone does us an evil turn we keep it in our mind and feed the grudge and when an opportunity arises we try to return the evil, perhaps tenfold. This attitude of mind is what is known as hatred. This hatred will be entirely obliterated. The flow of thoughts will be full of love.

Soham is the real nature of the “I” in the body, and this Soham is ceaselessly going on: the “I,” the Soham inside. The speaker, doer, the action itself and in fact everything will be one with Soham. I am at present experiencing to some extent the bliss of such a state, and anyone else who will do as I have done will attain similar bliss. As long as the “I” dwells in this body, we must get into the habit of repeating Soham. Ceaseless repetition will make the trend of all thoughts full of Soham.

One should not give any thought as to when the japa will lead to the final attainment of the goal

This “I” inside the body may be called by any name. It may be called God or Nature or any other name. The knowledge of this “I” leads to peace and happiness. Is there anyone who does not want this peace and happiness? Our mind is like a mirror. Various thoughts are always arising and having their play in the mind. According to the different thoughts, the mind is plunged in sorrow or in joy. We should think about the “I” inside, who is the witness of all these thoughts. That is Soham.

If we sit quiet and at ease divesting the mind of all disturbing thoughts, we shall get a glimpse of this witness inside. The mirror of our mind has been covered over with the dirt of innumerable impressions left by bad thoughts entertained through the course of innumerable previous lives. The dark soot of kama and krodha is lying in thick layers on the surface
of this mirror. It is our duty to try to wash away all this dirt and soot by means of good desires, and by increasing the flow of good thoughts.

Various doubts and misgivings assail the mind. This is the natural result of evil impressions left on our mind by bad thoughts in previous lives. But there is no reason why we should feel discouraged. Our present duty is to get ourselves accustomed to the entertaining of good thoughts.

Every mumukshu should ceaselessly put up strong efforts to meditate upon Soham. It does not matter even if the japa is sakama. He should not give any thought as to when the japa will lead to the final attainment of the goal. His efforts should be directed towards trying to keep his attention fixed on the sound of Soham. He should try to fix his attention on Soham even while doing worldly actions. This Soham will in course of time remove the dirt of bad thoughts and make the mirror of the mind clean. As soon as the mirror becomes clean, the blissful nature of Soham will be realized. Hence we should direct all our efforts towards keeping our attention fixed on Soham without any break. If we do so we shall surely attain complete peace and happiness and life will be full of bliss.

Sri Tukaram says, “Wherever I go you are always with me to bear me company.” The companion here referred to is none other than Soham. Wherever you may be, in whatever condition you may be, this Soham, this witness, this Paramatman, is always your companion. You have never been or will ever be separated from Him because you and He are one. Only you are not conscious of His nearness and presence. You must first become fully conscious of His nearness and presence and then lose the sense of this consciousness also by becoming one with Him. Then you will be bliss incarnate, everlasting, unchanging bliss.

I am telling all this from my own experience. If you put forth strong efforts in the direction I have mentioned above, you are sure to attain success.

The mind must be internally immersed in Soham and become full of bliss. If my mind is absolutely clean and full of the bliss of Soham, entirely devoid of egotism and concentrated in the internal sound of
Soham even when outwardly doing worldly actions, I shall consider myself as extremely fortunate. Through the grace of my sadguru, my practice is going on in the direction of obtaining this eternal bliss and I can say from experience that I feel that I have ascended some steps on the steep path leading to the temple where eternal peace and happiness have been enshrined.

**Soham is always present as a witness in everybody’s mind**

About a fortnight ago a learned shastri came to visit me. He had read some of the letters sent by me to my friends, and also the messages which I had given to some religious institutions, and owing to it a sort of respect had been created in his mind for me. He said to me, “Maharaj, the thoughts expressed by you are of a very high order. They receive much support from the Upanishads and treatises on Vedanta.”

I replied, “Punditji, you have considered the thoughts expressed by me from the shastric points of view and called them sound. This does not give me any very great pleasure. The reason is that I do not attach any importance to the delight obtained from high and beautiful thoughts of others. If you had expressed your agreement with at least one of these thoughts, having felt the truth of it from your own experience of the state mentioned in it, I would have felt highly delighted.

“If a person comes to me and tells me his own thoughts, the truth of which has been tested by his own experience, I will pay more respect to him than to a person who repeats like a parrot the thoughts, however high they may be, of great men like Sri Shankaracharya, Jnaneshwar or Tukaram. It does not matter whether the thoughts of the first-mentioned person are highly developed or not.

“I understand the minds of the various persons who come to me and ask me questions, because I have gone through those various stages and hence can identify myself with the stage of the questioner. I therefore never get irritated with any person for asking questions, however absurd they may be. The only thing required is that he must be thoroughly
honest and sincere. I then answer his questions according to what my inner Soham suggests to me. The answer given by me will, I am sure, necessarily remove the doubts of the questioner, and he will see the clear path of truth before him.”

When that shastri heard this reply given by me, he was overcome with emotion and requested me to explain how Soham is always present as a witness in everybody’s mind. An ordinary man of the world is not conscious of this “I” which is always awake. As soon as a man gains consciousness of the ever-existing presence of this “I” he attains the goal of human life. This stage is known as sakshi avastha (the state where the “I” is consciously felt to be the ever-present witness). This Soham is ever present in every being in the form of his own Self. This Soham is continuously going on, it never stops. This Soham which is seen in all animate and inanimate things is my Jani Janardan (God present in all human beings), and wherever I use the word “Jani Janardan,” I mean by it this Soham, present in all.

I therefore tell you with all the emphasis I can command that you should at once begin to repeat the japa of Soham with firm faith. It does not matter if you place no faith in me. Have firm faith in Soham and you will attain the same bliss that I am enjoying.

**Pure and simple words of advice**

I shall now give you an illustration from everybody’s experience. When we sleep, we sometimes dream and after that go into complete unconsciousness. In that state nothing is felt, we go into the Avyakta. When we awake, if somebody asks us, “How did you sleep?” we reply, “I got very good sleep and was full of bliss.” Thus, when a person awakes, he begins to speak about his experience in words. That is, when he comes out of the Avyakta he begins to describe his experiences in words. Every person, be he learned or ignorant, saint or an ordinary person, is required to have recourse to words in order to express his ideas.

Saints like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa have given the illustration of a doll made of salt. They say if a salt doll enters water it is turned
into water. Can it then describe its experience of water? If it wants to describe the experience, it must keep one foot in water and the other on land. Hence, saints who have been one with the Avyakta come out of the Avyakta by assuming bodies full of light, and are born into this world for the deliverance of other human beings. By their own acts and advice they teach the world how to make this Maya full of bliss, how to go beyond pleasure and pain and how to obtain eternal peace and happiness. They say to the people in the world, “Your treasure (of bliss) is with you; only you have forgotten the place where it is hidden.” The saints neither give anything to the world nor do they take anything from the world. They carry out their mission and remain aloof and at peace with themselves.

If the mumukshus follow implicitly the advice of the saints without entertaining the least doubt, with full faith and real love, by continued practice they will succeed in curbing all evil tendencies and in resisting all temptations of lust and greed. They will then get realization of the bliss of the Self, and attain the stage which was attained by such immortal saints as Sri Jnaneshwar or Sri Tukaram. There is not the least doubt about this.

I have given expression to these ideas which have arisen in my innermost heart, and as such they are not my words but the words of the Paramatman dwelling in my heart. Whether they are true or false, I leave it to the world to judge. Those who have some Self-experience will understand that these words are not mine, but my guru’s. If anything appears to be false, consider it to be mine. You know that I am absolutely uneducated and ignorant. I have no learning. My presumption in undertaking to write to people like you is like that of a crow trying to emulate an eagle on the ground, that the crow, too, can soar high in the sky. Although I am the abode of all possible bad qualities, still my attempts to fly into the sky like an eagle are not altogether condemnable.

Brothers and sisters, I have told you what I had to say in as simple a manner as possible by taking illustrations from everyday life. Still I would like to say a few words more in conclusion before closing the subject.
Jivatma, Shivatma and Paramatma

Those who have read some religious books and those who have listened to religious discourses must have often heard the words: Jivatma, Shivatma, and Paramatman. Jivatma is the individual soul who experiences pleasure and pain in this worldly life. Shivatma is the Paramatman who is the root cause of all the activities in the Universe. The absolute Being who pervades all things and is also beyond them is the Paramatman, otherwise known as Brahman. One and the same Being has been given these different names according to the different aspects in which He has been looked at.

Thus there is one absolute principle on which the ideas of Jivatma, Shivatma, and Paramatman have been superimposed. We get superficial, wordy knowledge of these terms from religious books and discourses, and our mind is confused. Now, where is he located who gives these different names and utters these words? He is located in this body, in the heart. This “I” located in the heart of all human beings, conceives these different aspects and gives utterance to these different names. If you search for this “I,” you will come to know it is an absolute principle having no form, no attributes, and which cannot be described in words. If it is without attributes and without form, can it ever be perceived by the eye? No.

Then if you ask about the nature of this principle, for an answer you should see what all saints have said about it. They say that the real nature of this “I” is unchangeable bliss. The everlasting bliss residing in our heart is the sign by which the absolute truth can be traced. Every human being is ceaselessly trying to get happiness. Nobody is needed to tell him to do so. The reason why every human being ceaselessly tries to find happiness is because unchanging bliss is the real nature of the “I” inside him. When a person realizes the nature of this bliss, he has nothing more to do. All his activities stop.

When the “I” has been seen by the “I,” that is, the real “I” has been realized by the egoistic “I,” the duality between the seer and the seen
disappears and now nothing further remains to be seen. When this stage is reached one realizes that the “I” pervades everywhere, and that nothing has existence except this all-pervading Self. In this stage the phenomenal world has no existence. Referring to this stage, Sri Ramdas has said, “Why are you asking about the cause, etc., of this world, which, in fact, has no existence and was never born?” This state is indescribable in words. All words, therefore, are meaningless, and silence is the only eloquence regarding it.

**The practice is the most important means of controlling the mind**

In order to attain this natural stage, saints have prescribed a certain practice. The Soham which is in the hearts of all saints who have obtained Self-realization has manifested itself in the various kinds of mantras of Rama, Shankar, Pandurang, etc., and helps the saints to realize the blissful nature of the Self. In this connection Sri Tukaram has said that the body is the real Pandharpur and the soul is the real Vithal.

I, too, told myself, my mind, to contemplate ceaselessly on Soham. The mind is pliable and turns towards that to which it is made to turn. When the mind, therefore, was made accustomed to the japa of Soham, the mind became one with Soham, and thus became merged in the Paramatman. Through the ceaseless contemplation of Soham, the mind became one with the Paramatman, and began to enjoy the everlasting and unchanging bliss which is the nature of the Self.

All actions that one does in this stage naturally become dedicated to God (Krishnarpana), and therefore are nishkama. There being absolutely no egotism, the idea that “I am doing the actions” is altogether absent, and therefore the karma becomes nishkama, and the apparent doer is all the while immersed in his natural bliss, and is thus absolutely detached, although leading a worldly life. I therefore request you all to carry on the practice of japa continuously.

Do not care to see whether your actions are sakama or nishkama; only take care to see that your attention is continuously directed to the
japa. It does not in the least matter if you do not have recourse to any other sadhana. You are sure to be successful in the end.

Lord Krishna has said in the Gita that the mind, which by nature is fickle and hence difficult to be controlled, can be brought under control by constant practice (abhyasa). Thus, practice is the most important means of controlling the mind.

If we carry on the japa with firm faith, we clearly realize after some time the power of the mantra. If we train our mind to entertain only good thoughts, not only are we ourselves benefitted, but our conduct produces good effects upon others also. This light of Soham inside us sheds its luster on our whole life and makes it full of happiness. Its beneficial influence is also felt by the whole external atmosphere around us. The first thing required is firm faith without any doubts and misgivings, and the second is the continuous practice of the mantra japa.

If therefore you continue the practice steadily, the tendency of the mind towards good thoughts and actions will be more and more increased, and owing to the ceaseless contemplation of Soham there will gradually be the realization of your own inherent blissful nature, and the mind will be enjoying complete peace and happiness.

Brothers and sisters, if you carry on the practice of japa with full faith, and ultimately realize your oneness with Soham you too will become full of bliss like myself. Be assured that the blessings of my sadguru will accompany you all along in your practice.

**Signs of spiritual progress**

While carrying on the contemplation of Soham, an aspirant should always be carefully observing whether his worldly desires are gradually dropping off. The gradual dropping of worldly desires, and the capability to perform worldly actions solely from a sense of duty and not with a view to achieve some object, are sure signs of spiritual progress. If an aspirant makes it a point to see that his attention is continuously fixed on Soham, that his mind is growing more and more detached, and that
he is continuously carrying on the practice with firm faith in the path
prescribed to him by his sadguru, I am sure that he will certainly reach
the goal. Whether a person is a mumukshu (aspirant), sadhaka, or a
siddha (a person who has obtained siddhi or power), if all his desires
have completely disappeared and he has attained a complete sense of
detachment, then he attains a stage in which Pandharpur is always with
him wherever he stays. There is no necessity for him to go anywhere.

As I am not educated, the words which I use may not be clear.
They may express the meaning only indistinctly. But these words are
the expressions of my internal intuition. The expressions used may not
be polished and beautiful, but I humbly request that on that account
people should not be indifferent to what I say. I have first practiced what
I preach. Hence people should also translate these precepts into practice,
and then see whether they are true or not. I therefore urge all people,
whether ignorant or learned, mumukshus or sadhakas, to carry on the
japa of Soham with their attention continuously directed towards it.

**External conditions are almost the same in all Yugas**

Some people say that the present age is the age of material happiness.
The present Yuga is Kali Yuga. In this Yuga it is extremely difficult to
attain the highest goal of Self-realization. Naturally, men in general will
be always striving to obtain material happiness. I, however, think that
it is not proper to be complaining about external conditions. A little
consideration will, on the contrary, convince us that external conditions
are almost the same in all Yugas. The change lies in the mind, the attitude
it adopts. According to the attitude of your mind you will feel that the
age is Satya Yuga or Kali Yuga. Everything thus depends on your mind.
Hence I say that you should get your mind immersed in the ceaseless
contemplation of Soham and then you will find that the difficulties
created by troublesome external conditions will automatically disappear.
A few words of advice on abhyasa (practice)

Now, I shall say a few words regarding abhyasa (practice). Some persons carry on the japa for some time, but owing to want of intensity on their part, when they find that they are not making marked progress, or when they do not see any visions, they give up the practice, thinking that fate is against them. Or if they carry on the japa, they do it merely mechanically without any heart in the matter.

If our mind is unsteady, if it does not feel any joy in the contemplation of Soham, we should ask ourselves the question: Why do we not enjoy pleasure in doing the japa? The obvious answer is that it is our own lack of faith that comes in the way, and bars us from getting this joy. There is also another thing. Thousands of bad impressions have been accumulated in our mind through the course of previous births. How can all these impressions disappear at once?

In the case of those whose bad impressions have been cleared away to an appreciable extent, if they carry on the practice they will get some spiritual experiences sooner or later according to their merit. If any bad desires have beset their mind in this life, the continuous contemplation of Soham will gradually destroy all those desires in this very life. In the next life the remaining bad impressions and bad desires, and kama, krodha (anger) and lobha (avarice), generating them or generated by them, will surely disappear. You should have no doubt regarding this in your mind. You may have no faith in me, but you must have faith in Soham.

Soham is the real path of knowledge (Jnana Marga). Owing to this, egotism disappears. In the path of knowledge, the sadhaka’s consciousness becomes more and more comprehensive, until it becomes all-pervading. But all this is nothing but the play of the “I,” and Soham teaches this very principle.

Thus, in the path of knowledge one becomes all-pervading and one with the universal Being.
The real power lies in the mantra and this power is also centered in everyone

I therefore say again and again, that the real power lies in the mantra, Soham. This power is also centered in you. If you thoroughly realize this power, and become one with it, you will easily attain atmic bliss, even though you may be leading a worldly life. You will be thoroughly happy internally, as well as in your worldly life. Soham awakens the power in you which is lying dormant.

My brothers and sisters should remember that a liking for and devotion to God is the result of the accumulation of great merit in previous lives. If you have this liking, God in the form of Soham who has His dwelling in the outgoing and incoming breath of every human being, will be realized by you. I say this from my own experience. You may have no faith in me but you should have faith in this Soham.

Do not allow your faith to be shaken although in the beginning you do not get any experiences. If you give this consideration to the matter of Soham, you will find that having faith in Soham is a matter solely depending upon your own mind. Even if owing to bad impressions of past lives doubts assail your mind, it lies with you to drive away these doubts with assiduous efforts, remembering that therein lies the successful fruition of your life. If persistent and continuous practice is carried on, the mind is concentrated and becomes one with the mantra, and all thoughts disappear. Only you must have a true and firm determination. We can be said to have a true and firm determination only when we are able to translate our ideas into action. Hence saints have said, “God grants the fulfillment of true and firm determination, and the desires entertained by the devotees are crowned with success” (Tukaram).

Hence, it is clearly your duty to have firm faith in the mantra. If you have this absolute faith, you will surely attain your goal. About that there is no doubt. There is no room for doubt in the case of real affection, which is absolutely free from any doubts and misgivings.
The real meaning of Paramartha (spiritual realization) and its means

The real “I” which dwells in the heart of everyone is the sole abode of this unchanging happiness and bliss. He who becomes one with this “I” gets hold of this sole source of happiness, and therefore feels no need of any pleasure which is derived from the enjoyment of external objects.

The path which leads to the true knowledge of this “I” and to the realization of oneness with it, is the path of spiritual progress. He who desires to go by this path must naturally practice self-restraint and keep himself detached from material pleasures. Abandoning of material pleasures outwardly, or abandoning them by merely forcibly curbing the mind, is of very little use. The renunciation must be mental: the mind must gradually develop a dislike for these material pleasures. If you will try to immerse your mind in the continuous contemplation of the sound of Soham, this renunciation becomes easy. The mind becomes one with Soham, and then the ajapa japa begins. In this stage our whole worldly existence becomes full of happiness. The mind of a person who attains this stage goes beyond pleasure and pain. It becomes full of universal love, and he feels nothing but love in this material world which to others is full of pleasure and pain.

Only saints like Jnaneshwar and Tukaram obtained Paramartha. When this state of everlasting joy is reached, this world, the next world, heaven or hell—which to an ordinary person appears to be full of contrasts of pleasure and pain—becomes nothing but universal, all-pervading joy and bliss incarnate. This stage is what is known as Paramartha.

To obtain this Paramartha is the goal of human life, and you can obtain it by your own persistent and honest effort. Efforts are necessary to obtain any object in the world. Are we not required to put up strong efforts to obtain money or learning? And are our efforts always crowned with success? But do we on that account abandon efforts to obtain these things? Similarly, we must continually make strong efforts to obtain the realization of the real “I.” The various difficulties and obstacles which arise in this path must be removed, just as we do in worldly matters.
The necessity of having strong sense and intelligence

Various qualities are necessary to carry on worldly transactions efficiently. But there is one thing which far surpasses all these qualities taken together, and that is strong good sense which is natural and not acquired. By reading we can at the most obtain useful and varied information, but to make proper use of that information at the proper time requires natural good sense and intelligence. I here remember a saying: “God should be known through good sense and intelligence.”

This is a simple statement, but it illustrates a very important principle. It shows that real intelligence is a very important qualification. If a person possesses this intelligence, he will not need to read various books. He would be able to solve all his difficulties by the exercise of his keen intelligence. Wisdom acquired from books is, after all, one-sided. This keen intelligence is useful in worldly as well as spiritual matters.

When…?

When will a sadhaka reach the ultimate goal of human life? My friends, such doubts are bound to assail the mind. To entertain various doubts and misgivings is quite natural to the mind. As long as a person is alive, his mind will always be full of thoughts, good or bad. Hence it is futile to wait till the mind abandons all mistaken thoughts and doubts. People who think that they will not be able to make any progress in spiritual matters until this inflow of thoughts is stopped should pay particular attention to the following illustration.

There are bound to be innumerable waves on the sea. If a person thinks that he will swim in the sea when all these waves are stopped, will he ever be able to swim in the sea? He will surely come to know that the waves will never stop and he will never be able to swim. Similarly, every person who wants to follow the spiritual path should not wait for the disappearance of all thoughts, but should start the contemplation of Soham and try to keep his mind fixed upon it. He should not allow his mind to be diverted from it by the waves of thoughts.
As long as a person identifies himself with this body these doubts and thoughts are sure to assail him and cause disturbance. A sure way to escape from the clutches of these thoughts is to develop a feeling that we are not the body. It is the nature of mind to carry on the continuous play of thoughts. The mind (manas), the intellect (buddhi), and the chitta are all inside us. Buddhi is the power which enables us to determine. The mind is always fickle and moving from one idea to another, and when the mind concentrates upon something it is called chitta. A sadhaka, therefore, should concentrate upon Soham and thus turn his mind into chitta. If he continues this practice for some time, his mind will gradually gain in calmness and ultimately will become one with Soham and with the inherent, everlasting bliss which is the real nature of Soham, and thus his chitta will become chit (consciousness). Once this stage is attained, that person will experience unlimited joy. Such a person is easily able to identify himself with all persons with whom he comes into contact, and with all circumstances in which he finds himself placed. His peace of mind is never disturbed, and he is always immersed in everlasting and unchanging bliss. He attains the goal, and the real purpose of human life is fulfilled.

The difference between the mind of an ordinary person and that of a person who is immersed in Soham

If the body falls in the gutter, it can be washed and cleaned by water, but if the mind is dirty, full of doubts and full of desires for many objects, how can it be washed and purged of its impurities? The only way of cleansing the mind is to immerse it in the contemplation of Soham. All the impurities are then washed away. Sri Tukaram has said, ‘If your life is impure, what can soap do?’ The mind is purified, and all the dirt from it is swept away by the broom of Soham.

He who has burnt away all avarice and destroyed the very roots of evil desires and thus completely purified and cleansed his mind by the continuous contemplation of Soham will never be attracted by the glitter of the worthless things of this world.
There is a great difference between an ordinary mind and a mind immersed in the contemplation of Soham. The most important principle is that he who wants to obtain spiritual knowledge must discard all material pleasures. It must be remembered that only when a person becomes entirely devoid of any desire of obtaining prosperity in this world or the next, does he attain the goal of human life. He who wants to tread the path of spiritual progress must gradually acquire a sense of detachment.

The sphere of spiritual progress lies beyond reason and intellect. The question of pain or pleasure in this world or the next is absolutely irrelevant in this connection. By entertaining ideas of pleasure or pain, the mind gets entangled in the meshes of sankalpa or vikalpa (desire or doubts). Instead of wasting valuable time like this, you should utilize it in the contemplation of Soham.

My brothers and sisters: The current of love flowing in the form of Soham from my heart has gone on taking various turnings through various topics, and you have allowed it to flow on, having spent your valuable time in following it. This has filled me with unlimited joy and happiness.

**The power of Soham**

One must remember that the Siddha Name of Soham alone will be useful in easily crossing this ocean of worldly existence and ending the cycle of births and deaths. This Siddha Nama is a power; it is like a mother to the universe, and it is the entity that is calling itself “I” in the body. It is a flame of love.

**The power of the Avyakta is such that it will more than suffice for solving all possible difficulties in your worldly life**

If you repeat the Soham mantra in your mind, by continuous practice your mind gets concentrated upon it. The concentration may be called dhyana. If this force is uninterruptedly stored up in your heart, be sure that you have obtained the goal of human life.
Somebody might say, “We have carefully listened to what you have told us. But what would be the use of all this for solving the practical difficulties of our actual life in this world?” No doubt this question is very important.

If your difficulties remain as they are, all this effort of japa and concentration would be useless and good for nothing. But I say this with all emphasis, that once you get the experience of the Avyakta, in any way or by any method, the power of the Avyakta is such that it will more than suffice for solving all possible difficulties in your worldly life. There is no necessity of your trying anything else for that purpose. You should only try your best to obtain the experience of the Avyakta by any method you like. Once that is done, you will get such a power that it will either drive away all possible difficulties which beset you, or all difficulties will automatically disappear.

If you once fix your abode in Avyakta the distance between you and any other thing or person becomes nil. As the ideas of “mine” and “thine” are absolutely absent in the Avyakta, all the wealth in the world becomes your own. You will feel it to be so. You yourself may not be very learned or wise. But there must be someone in the world who is so. You will feel that you are one with him and that his learning and wisdom are your own.

True karma lies in remaining absolutely calm and undisturbed by fixing your abode in the all-pervading Chaitanya. I have said something about karma before. Here I put it in the shortest way and the fewest words: To remain indifferent to pleasure and pain, and to perform actions from a sense of duty supported by the basis of Self-knowledge, is the real karma. Lord Krishna describes himself as “Aham,” that is, “Soham,” which is the real power of Avyakta.

Kabir says, “Rama Nama is repeated by almost all people—by thieves, by licentious people, and by rich people. But that Nama by which Dhruva and Prahlada were saved was something different.” I boldly tell you with firm assurance that the “different” Nama referred to by Kabir in these lines is none other than Soham. He who makes that Nama his
own becomes one with the universal power. His words acquire the force of truth, and hence are full of power.

The ultimate responsibility of obtaining success in worldly or spiritual matters rests upon ourselves. It is through intense devotion and persistent efforts that we have to achieve success. As we progress, we shall ourselves come to know the stage we have acquired in our previous life. Through incessant practice, desires for sensual pleasures slowly become less and less and ultimately disappear, and the aspirant reaches the final goal of everlasting happiness. Only you must have the lighted torch of Soham with you, and must try to obtain peace in its light. I have said what I know from my own experience. Everybody should try to realize it by his own experience. Soham is the soul, and there is everlasting peace in the soul. That itself is the Avyakta, the Unmanifested, in which everything lives, moves and has its being. Obtain everlasting peace by the mantra of Soham. This simple method surely and certainly leads to the goal.

The world is like a big jail, and people are born into it to serve out their sentences. Have therefore a wholesome fear of this jail, and try to purge away your sins and evil desires by the japa and contemplation of Soham. You need not do anything else for the purpose of your deliv-
erance. Keep firm control over your mind, and then you will easily get control over your prana (breath).

**The Manifest (Vyakta) and the Unmanifest (Avyakta) are not really different from each other**

Pleasure and pain come out of the Avyakta. That is, their source lies hidden in the Supreme Being, which has no form and which is beyond comprehension. To say that the Avyakta can be seen, is meaningless. Then how can the experience of it be described in words?

Pay, therefore, no heed to the pains and pleasures which befall you, but carry on the practice of Soham with a heart full of faith and determination. The manifest (Vyakta) and the unmanifest (Avyakta) are not really different from each other. The manifest is nothing but the
unmanifest assuming form, and has the unmanifest as its basis. Persons who have attained Self-realization will tell you that what we call karma is nothing but the manifestation of the unmanifest.

The real use of shastric treatises is to train and prepare the mind and the intellect in such a manner that they can grasp the ultimate truth. The discourses of pundits well-versed in shastras may be very interesting to hear, but they will be of no use in getting the real experience, and the everlasting peace which dwells in Soham. All sense of past, present and future is absolutely absent in that stage. That is the Avyakta. There is no past and present in it. It only exists. As to the Sun there is no night and day, similarly, there is no past and present in the Avyakta.

Karma is the manifestation of Avyakta. Along with the idea of karma, naturally comes the ideas of time and motion. These also are really unmanifest. Still, as we can conceive of them, they can also be considered as manifest or pratyaksha. They are, however, eternal and indivisible. Therefore how can we find in them the past, the present and the future, which are the creations of the mind? Similarly, in karma how can there be the distinction of akarma (lack of action), kukarma (bad action) and sukarma (good action) which are created by the mind of man? Similarly, the distinctions between holy and unholy, beautiful and ugly, also cannot be present there.

But how can people who have merely acquired learning, and thereby consider themselves as superior to others, ever experience the bliss of this sort of experience? In this experience shastras have no place, while these learned men base all their opinions on the shastras.

There cannot be karma without time and motion. These three together (karma, time and motion) are the manifestation of the Avyakta, and only in the stage of manifestation arises the necessity of being alert and careful.

This topic has taken a vast and comprehensive turn. But I had referred to the topics of Avyakta and karma before, and hence I have tried to elucidate them here. I had read of these things somewhere, and some
ideas came of themselves into my mind regarding them. I have merely put them together here. Otherwise learned men would begin asking me questions about them. I would not be able to answer them to their satisfaction. I have got only the experience of Soham, and nothing else. I do not know anything about Vedanta or the shastras. My knowledge regarding them can be described by a big zero.

Hence I say that everyone should repeat Soham. It surely and certainly leads to the knowledge of the Self, and the attainment of everlasting peace. One’s actions then in the worldly life are automatically done, and one is absolutely detached from them, just as a lotus leaf is from water.

**Three kinds of great men in the world**

In my opinion, there are three kinds of great men in the world. I do not say that there are no real saints at present. Some perform miracles by making use of their siddhis. People take them to be great saints and bow before them. These saints obtain some powers by the practice of hatha yoga and perform miracles. As ordinary people in the world want the fulfillment of some desires, or the averting of some calamities, they naturally go to such saints and become their followers. These great men, if they are at all great, are of the lowest order of the three kinds mentioned above. Just as in a village where all other people are illiterate, a person who has learnt to read and write is considered wise and learned, similarly these saints are respected by worldly people who themselves know nothing about real spiritual matters. The happiness obtained through such siddhis is transitory. These siddhis merely create a false show of happiness for a time, and then disappear leaving the saint completely bankrupt.

The second kind of great men are those who being filled with the desire to serve mankind, shine as great leaders of men and patriots. Their ambition is to make all their fellow beings or fellow-countrymen prosperous and happy. They sacrifice their personal comfort, and sometimes even their lives, in trying to achieve the good of their fellow men. They
try to weld all their countrymen into one homogenous whole, preach to the people the good which is derived from unity, arouse the consciousness of their rights as subjects, and make them worthy of putting up a fight for their rights and for the redress of their wrongs. Their lives serve as an ideal for ordinary people to follow, and they represent in their lives the sum total of the good qualities of the world. These great men at least do not mislead people by exhibiting miracles by means of siddhis. But these great men are of no use to a human soul striving to attain Self-realization. It does not lie in their power to grace human beings and to lead them to the path of realizing the highest bliss.

The great men who can do this are different. They are the great saints who take pity on all troubled souls who are floundering in the mire of worldly pains and pleasures, and who are at a loss to find a way out. They call such persons their own. They do not lead them to the search of worldly happiness which is illusory, but show them the path which will ultimately take them to the source of all happiness, the path which will clearly show to them the real nature of their Self, and illumine their whole being with the all-pervading light of Self-knowledge. They say to the human soul: “The source of happiness is within you. The treasure is hidden within you. Only you have forgotten the place where it is hidden,” and they point out that place, and show the way to reach it. Such great men are the real mahatmas, and they are the best of all great men. Sometimes miracles happen at the hands of such mahatmas also, but they happen naturally. They themselves are not conscious of having wrought them. They are always immersed in the atmic bliss, and whatever actions happen at their hands are natural and automatic.

**What is Atmajnana?**

Once a gentleman who had a long conversation with me, said, “Maharaj, you have explained to me the meanings of avyakta, samadhi, dhyana, prarabdha, sanchita, and kriyamana. I have been enlightened on these subjects, and have clearly understood them. I know Sri Jnaneshwar
has said that all skill and all arts are useless. There is only one thing: that is jnana (knowledge of the Self).

“I have not clearly understood what is really meant by Atmajnana (knowledge of the Self), Atma Sakshatkara (realization of the Self), and spiritual progress. You generally explain by using homely illustrations, and hence I am able to follow your explanations very easily. I know that all things cannot be properly explained by mere words, or wordy explanations so as to carry conviction beyond doubt. Still, words seem to give at least an approximate idea of the thing, though they may fall short of carrying absolute conviction with them. Lord Sri Krishna has said, ‘Oh Arjuna, all actions are useless without the knowledge of the Self.’ Please explain the matter in a way that I can easily understand it.”

Myself: “You have put a very nice question. I like your questions. I shall try to explain the matter as best as I can. But why should I take the trouble for nothing?”

The gentleman: “If I understand the matter thoroughly, I shall consider you as my sadguru, and by continuous repetition of the Soham mantra I shall, with your grace, obtain the knowledge of the Self. Will this satisfy you?”

Myself: “All right. Just see. If a sadhaka thinks that seeing of divine visions is the ultimate goal, that it is Self-realization, that he has attained the highest stage, and nothing further remains to be done or achieved, it is sheer ignorance on his part. Because as long as there is duality, the flow of pain and pleasure continues unabated, and everlasting happiness is as far away as ever. If you think carefully, you will see that whatever is seen and heard is bound to disappear. But the knowledge of the Self is permanent and imperishable. This argument, I think, will appeal to all, whether they are theists or atheists. Seeing of lights or visions and hearing of divine sounds, do not indicate the achieving of Atma Sakshatkara. To realize that the One Eternal Being on which these visions and sounds play and move is none other than our own Self, is the real Atma Sakshatkara. To be one with the everlasting Being is the real Sakshatkara.
“When a person attains this oneness, his mind entirely becomes devoid of sankalpa (desire) and vikalpa (doubts), and it becomes absolutely indifferent. It goes beyond pleasure and pain. Actions are then automatically performed according to the prakriti dharma (promptings of nature). He becomes absolutely fearless, and is entirely devoid of egotism. When this state of mind is attained, then only can it be said that there is Atma Sakshatkara or Atmajnana. He is, as it were, merely sporting as a child while doing any actions. He is entirely detached from them. This is what is known as Sakshi Awastha (the state of being merely a witness of one’s actions). Progress means the gradual attainment of this state of mind. We can ourselves get a clear idea of our progress. There is no necessity to ask anyone else about it.

“In that state, although passions may be there according to the original nature of the aspirant, still the passions come and go automatically, without taking effect in the form of wrong actions. Right actions are naturally and automatically done. This state is known as Atmajnana. When this stage is reached, never-ending bliss and peace are attained. This is what is known as the sahaja state. This is merely another word expressing the same idea as Atmajnana. Merely defining Atmajnana, Brahmajnana, bliss, or samadhi is of very little use.

**Characteristics of an Atmajnani**

“In short, I wish to emphasize that he who has no attachment for worldly objects, who is perfect, has completely controlled his senses, and whose mind is entirely devoid of any desire of sensual pleasures, who remains in the world but is, as it were, out of it—because of his entire detachment—he alone obtains the sovereign kingdom of everlasting atmic bliss. He becomes one with Soham, and obtains the real grace of his sadguru. His mind is pure like the water of the Ganges, which moves in its course purifying all who come in contact with it. All bad thoughts entirely disappear, and his actions are quite naturally done. He is externally, as well as internally, quite calm and at peace.
In this stage, it is difficult to distinguish him from other ordinary persons. In this stage, he naturally attains the power of knowing the past, present and future. He becomes a Trikalajna. With all that, he never tells others of what is to happen, nor does he make use of this knowledge for his own benefit. It may happen that his words may at times be prophetic, but this takes place automatically. Never, never does the Atma Sakshatkari (i.e. one who has realized his soul) tell others of their past or future on his own initiative. In this stage he sees Brahman in all things; in other words, he is entirely immersed in the experience that everywhere there is nothing but all-pervading joy and bliss. His joy and peace are not dependent upon anything else, and hence they are everlasting. They are not disturbed under any circumstances, however adverse. His experience tells him that he himself has taken the form of the biggest as well as the minutest things. This is the real meaning of Soham. This is the real Atmajnana. Without this Atmajnana, all actions are useless. This is the meaning of Sri Krishna’s words.

“I do not know whence these words come out of my mouth. You have kindly listened to them with favorable attention. I am thereby filled with extreme joy. There might have been mistakes committed by me through ignorance, or there might have been unpleasant expressions used by me inadvertently. You should kindly pardon me for them.

“My vani (speech) advises me in this manner, and it also tells the same thing to other people’ (Tukaram). You should understand and appreciate the underlying meaning of the above lines of Sri Tukaram. With these words I stop and enter into the deep and changeless love and joy of the ajapa japa of Soham.”

OM PEACE: OM PEACE: OM PEACE

SOHAM
Appendix One

Soham Meditation: An Introduction

By Abbot George Burke (Swami Nirmalananda Giri)

Some history

Yoga is an eternal science intended to reveal and manifest the Eternal. Although the identity of the Supreme Self (Paramatma) and the individual Self (jivatma) with Soham is indicated in the Isha Upanishad (16) and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1.4.1) respectively, no one knows exactly when it was that the knowledge of Soham Yoga was revealed in the world, but the following we do know.

A young man was wandering in the mountains somewhere in India—most likely in the Western Himalayas. He had seen no one else for a very long time, but one day he heard the faint sound of a human voice. Following it, he saw from a distance some people seated together near a river. Slipping into the water, he began swimming toward them. All along the river on that side thick reeds were growing so he was not seen as he stealthily made his way closer.

Soon he began to understand what was being said. Fascinated by the speaker’s words he came as close as he dared and for a long time remained absorbed in the amazing things being spoken. For the science
of yoga was being expounded by a master to his disciples. Then he heard the master say: “There is a ‘fish’ in the reeds over there, listening to everything I am saying. Why doesn’t he come out and join us?” He did as suggested and became a resident of the master’s ashram and learned both philosophy and Soham Yoga.

After diligent practice of meditation for quite some time, the master asked him to return to the plains and teach that yoga to whomever would listen. He was given a new name, Matsuendranath. (Matsuendra means Indra Among Fish and Nath means Master. Indra is king of the gods.) We have no knowledge of what the master’s name was. Matsyendranath and his disciples only referred to him as Adi Nath—Original/First Master. Some believe Adi Nath was Shiva himself manifested to teach yoga, or perhaps the primeval master Bhagavan Sanatkumara about whom the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says: “To such a one who has his stains wiped away, Bhagavan Sanatkumara shows the further shore of darkness” (7.26.2).

Matsyendra wandered throughout India, teaching those who were awakened enough to desire and comprehend the yogic path. One day in his wanderings he came to a house where the owner’s wife gave him something eat and a request: that he would bless her to have a child. In response he blessed her and gave her some ashes from a sacred fire, telling her to swallow them. Then he left. The woman followed his instructions and soon conceived and gave birth to a male child. Several years later Matsyendra came there again and saw the little boy outside the house. He told him to bring his mother, and when she came he asked if she remembered him, which she did. Pointing to the boy, he said: “That is my child. I have come for him.” The woman agreed and Matsyendra left with the boy whom he named Gorakhsha, Protector/Guardian of Light.

Goraksha in time became Gorakshanath—usually called Gorakhnath), the greatest yogi in India’s recorded history. In every part of India there are stories told of his living in those areas. He also lived in Nepal, Tibet, Ladakh, and Bhutan. There are shrines and temples to him in all those
countries, both Hindu and Buddhist. His major temple is in Gorakhpur, the birthplace of Paramhansa Yogananda whose younger brother, Sananda, was originally named Goraksha. Considering all the lore about him, Gorakhnath must have lived at least two or three hundred years, and there are many who claim that he has never left his body but is living right now in the Himalayas.

Gorakhnath had many disciples, a large number of them attaining enlightenment. They were the first members of the Nath Yogi Sampradaya, which in time numbered in its ranks the great sage Patanjali, founder of the Yoga Philosophy (Yoga Darshan) and author of the Yoga Sutras, and Jesus of Nazareth (Sri Ishanath). For many centuries the majority of monks in India were Nath Yogis, but in the nineteenth century there was a sharp decline in their numbers, which continues today. However there are several groups of “Nath Panthis” that follow the philosophy and yoga of Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath, and therefore are involved with Soham as the heart of their sadhana.

**Soham**

Soham means: I Am That. It is the natural vibration of the Self, which occurs spontaneously with each incoming and outgoing breath. By becoming aware of it on the conscious level by mentally repeating it in time with the breath (So when inhaling and Ham when exhaling), a yogi experiences the identity between his individual Self and the Supreme Self.

According to the Nath Yogis (see my book *Soham Yoga*) Soham has existed within the depths of God from eternity; and the same is true of every sentient being. Soham, then, will reveal our inner being. By meditating on Soham we discover our Self within which Soham has existed forever. The simple intonation of Soham in time with the breath will do everything in the unfolding of the yogi’s spiritual consciousness.

The practice is very simple, and the results very profound. Truly wondrous is the fact that Soham Yoga can go on all the time, not just during meditation, if we apply ourselves to it. The whole life can become
Soham Meditation: An Introduction

a continuous stream of liberating sadhana. “By the mantra ‘Soham’ separate the jivatma from the Paramatma and locate the jivatma in the heart” (Devi Bhagavatam 11.8.15).

The important thing about Soham Yoga is that it really works. It only takes perseverance.

The two oldest Upanishads on Soham

The Isha and the Brihadaranyaka are the oldest of the Upanishads, giving us the earliest record of Soham that we know.

The Isha Upanishad concludes with four mantras that are to be recited by a dying person to ensure his ascension to the solar world upon leaving his body. (These mantras are also recited by those who attend the cremation of the body.) The sixteenth mantra says: “O Pushan, the sole seer, O Controller, O Sun, offspring of Prajapati, spread forth your rays and gather up your radiant light that I may behold you of loveliest form. I am that Purusha [Spirit-Self]: I AM SOHAM” (16). (The Sanskrit text is: Yo sav asau purushah; soham asmi.) At the core of every sentient being Soham exists as the Self—is the Self. Soham asmi literally means “I AM THAT I AM,” which is exactly what God told Moses was his Name (Exodus 3:14).

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (5.15.2) repeats the identical words. It earlier says: “In the beginning this (world) was only the Self [Atman], in the shape of a person. Looking around he saw nothing else than the Self. He first said, ‘I am Soham [Soham asmi]’” (1.4.1) Thus Soham is the “first speaking” of the Absolute Itself: the expression of the knowledge and knowing of the Self. Soham is the Name (Embodiment) of the Primeval Being, the Self of the Universe and the Self of our Selves. Soham is the Consciousness of Brahman and of the Self of each one of us. We, too, are Soham.

The ancient yogis of India discovered that the root impulse of inhalation makes the subtle sound of So, and the root impulse of exhalation makes the subtle sound of Hum (written as Ham in Sanskrit). Since
all creation is the thought or ideation of God, meaning is inherent in everything, including the breath: “That [So] I am [Ham].” In this way every living being is perpetually intoning Soham (Sohum) at the core of their being, saying: I AM THAT: the spirit-Self which is a divine part of the Divine Infinite.

No matter how many ages we wander in forgetfulness of our divine origin and nature, we are always affirming “I am That” without ceasing at each breath. But we have lost the awareness of that sacred thread of inmost knowledge and are now wandering without direction or discernment. But by mentally intoning Soham in time with the breath—So when inhaling and Ham when exhaling—we consciously take hold of the thread and begin moving in the right direction.

Repeating Soham in a constant flow with the breath turns the mind inward and produces spiritual awareness in an ever-increasing degree. So whenever we intone Soham in time with the breath, we align and link our consciousness with its origin: both our spirit and Divine Spirit.

For the repetition of Soham to produce its effect it must be pronounced correctly. Soham is pronounced like our English words So and Hum. The short a in Sanskrit is pronounced like the u in up or hunt, so we say “hum” even though we write it as “ham.”

It is most important to pronounce the O correctly. It should be pronounced like the long o in the Italian or common American manner—as in home and lone. In England, Canada, and parts of the American South, the long o is sometimes pronounced as a diphthong, like two vowels jammed together: either like “ay-oh” or “eh-oh.” This is not the correct manner of pronouncing the O, which should be a single, pure vowel sound.

The same is true of the U in ham (hum). As already pointed out, it is pronounced like the u in up or hunt—not like the u in truth or push, as is done in parts of Great Britain.

A mantra is most effective if it is mentally intoned—that is, mentally “sung”—on a single note. (The pitch does not matter—whatever
is spontaneous and natural.) This makes the repetition stronger and of deeper effect, because intoning unifies the mind and naturally concentrates it.

**The Practice of Soham Yoga Meditation**

1. Sit upright, comfortable and relaxed, with your hands on your knees or thighs or resting, one on the other, in your lap.
2. Turn your eyes slightly downward and close them gently. This removes visual distractions and reduces your brain-wave activity by about seventy-five percent, thus helping to calm the mind. During meditation your eyes may move upward and downward naturally of their own accord. This is as it should be when it happens spontaneously. But start out with them turned slightly downward without any strain.
3. Be aware of your breath naturally (automatically) flowing in and out. Your mouth should be closed so that all breathing is done through the nose. This also aids in quieting the mind. Though your mouth is closed, the jaw muscles should be relaxed so the upper and lower teeth are not clenched or touching one another, but parted. Breathe naturally, spontaneously. Your breathing should always be easyful and natural, not deliberate or artificial.
4. Then in a very quiet and gentle manner begin mentally intoning Soham in time with your breathing. (Remember: Soham is pronounced like our English words *So* and *Hum.*

Intone *So-o-o-o-o*, prolonging a single intonation throughout each inhalation, and *Hu-u-u-u-u*, prolonging a single intonation throughout each exhalation, “singing” the syllables on a single note.

There is no need to pull or push the mind. Let your relaxed attention sink into and get absorbed in the mental sound of your inner intonings of Soham.
Fit the intonations to the breath—not the breath to the intonations. If the breath is short, then the intonation should be short. If the breath is long, then the intonation should be long. It does not matter if the inhalations and exhalations are not of equal length. Whatever is natural and spontaneous is what is right.

Your intonation of *Sooooooo* should begin when your inhalation begins, and *Huuummmmm* should begin when your exhalation begins. In this way your intonations should be virtually continuous, that is:

*SooooooHuuummmmmSooooooHuuummmmmSooooooHuuummmmmSooooooHuuummmmm*

Do not torture yourself about this—basically continuous is good enough.

5. For the rest of your meditation time keep on intoning Soham in time with your breath, calmly listening to the mental sound.

6. In Soham meditation we do not deliberately concentrate on any particular point of the body such as the third eye, as we want the subtle energies of Soham to be free to manifest themselves as is best at the moment. However, as you meditate, you may become aware of one or more areas of your brain or body at different times. This is all right when such sensations come and go spontaneously, but keep centered on your intonations of Soham in time with your breath.

7. In time your inner mental intonations of Soham may change to a more mellow or softer form, even to an inner whispering that is almost silent, but the syllables are always fully present and effective. Your intonations may even become silent, like a soundless mouthing of Soham or just the thought or movement of Soham, yet you will still be intoning Soham in your intention. And of this be sure: *Soham never ceases*. Never. You may find that your intonations of Soham move back and forth from more objective to more subtle and back to more objective. Just intone in the
manner that is natural at the moment.

8. In the same way you will find that your breath will also become more subtle and refined, and slow down. Sometimes the breath may not be perceived as movement of the lungs, but just as the subtle pranic energy movement which causes the physical breath. Your breath can even become so light that it seems as though you are not breathing at all, just thinking the breath (or almost so).

9. Thoughts, impressions, memories, inner sensations, and suchlike may also arise during meditation. Be calmly aware of all these things in a detached and objective manner, but keep your attention centered in your intonations of Soham in time with your breath. Do not let your attention become centered on or caught up in any inner or outer phenomena. Be calmly aware of all these things in a detached and objective manner. They are part of the transforming work of Soham, and are perfectly all right, but keep your attention centered in your intonations of Soham in time with your breath. Even though something feels very right or good when it occurs, it should not be forced or hung on to. The sum and substance of it all is this: It is not the experience we are after, but the effect. Also, since we are all different, no one can say exactly what a person’s experiences in meditation are going to be like.

10. If you find yourself getting restless, distracted, fuzzy, anxious or tense in any degree, just take a deep breath and let it out fully, feeling that you are releasing and breathing out all tensions, and continue as before.

11. Remember: Soham Yoga meditation basically consists of four things: a) sitting with the eyes closed; b) being aware of our breath as it moves in and out, and c) mentally intoning Soham in time with the breath and d) listening to those mental intonations: all in a relaxed and easeful manner, without strain.
Breath and sound are the two major spiritual powers possessed by us, so they are combined for Soham Yoga practice. It is very natural to intone Soham in time with the breathing. The way is simple and easy.

12. At the end of your meditation time, keep on intoning Soham in time with your breath as you go about your various activities, listening to the inner mantric sound, just as in meditation. One of the cardinal virtues of Soham sadhana is its capacity to be practiced throughout the day. The Yoga Rasyanam in verse 303 says: “Before and after the regular [meditation] practice, the repetition of Soham should be continuously done [in time with the breath] while walking, sitting or even sleeping…. This leads to ultimate success.”

Can it be that simple and easy? Yes, because it goes directly to the root of our bondage which is a single–and therefore simple–thing: loss of awareness. Soham is the seed (bij) mantra of nirvanic consciousness. You take a seed, put it in the soil, water it and the sun does the rest. You plant the seed of Soham in your inner consciousness through japa and meditation and both your Self and the Supreme Self do the rest. By intentionally intoning So and Ham with the breath we are linking the conscious with superconscious mind, bringing the superconscious onto the conscious level and merging them until they become one. It is divinely simple!

**Soham Yoga Sadhana in three sentences**

The two supreme yogis of India’s history, Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath, and the Yoga Chudamani Upanishad have made three statements that are most important for the yogi, for they present the essence of Soham Sadhana.

1. The inhalation comes in with the subtle sound of So, and the exhalation goes out with the subtle sound of Ham.
2. There is no knowledge equal to this, nor has there ever been in the past or shall be in the future any knowledge equal to this.
3. There is no japa equal to this, nor has there ever been in the past or shall be in the future any japa equal to this.

The implication is that the unequaled, and therefore supreme, knowledge and the unequaled and supreme yoga practice are the mental intonations of So throughout the inhalation and Ham throughout the exhalation. And therefore that intoning So and Ham in time with the breath is the totality of Soham Yoga practice.

Such gimmicks as thinking the breath is going up the spine with the intonation of So and down the spine with the intonation of Ham, or intoning Soham at the chakras, are not Soham Sadhana. Consequently, the Soham yogi’s attention should be only on the movement of his breath and his mental intonations of So and Ham in time with it.

These three statements of Matsyendranath, Gorakhnath and the Yoga Chudamani Upanishad also imply that the difference between Soham Yoga and other yogas is the difference between lightning and lightning bugs.

How is this? Because, as we have seen in the previous chapter, according to the Isha and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads the fundamental nature of both the Supreme Self (Ishwara) and the Individual Self (Jiva) of each one of us, is Soham. Soham Sadhana takes us directly and immediately into the consciousness of the Self and the Supreme Self, simultaneously. Other yoga practices do not do this, but go about it in a roundabout manner, taking many years (if not decades) before even beginning to do what Soham Sadhana does from the very first.

In Soham Yoga only the sufficient time to experience the full range of Self-experience and become permanently established in that experience is necessary for the Soham yogi to become liberated. As soon as he truly knows: “I am Soham,” the Great Work is complete. For Ishwarapranidhana not only means offering the life to God, it also literally means offering the breath (prana) to God. This is done by intoning So during inhalation and Ham during exhalation, both in meditation and the rest of the day and night. In this way Soham Bhava, God-consciousness, is attained.
What can you expect?

Yoga and its practice is a science and the yogi is the laboratory in which that science is applied and tested. At first the aspirant takes the word of a book, a teacher or other aspirants that a yoga method is worthwhile, but eventually it is his personal experience alone that should determine his evaluation of any yoga practice. Because each person is unique in his makeup there can be a tremendous difference in each one’s experience of yoga. Nevertheless, there are certain principles which can be stated.

If a yogi is especially sensitive or has practiced the method in a previous life, he may get obviously beneficial results right away. Yet for many people it takes a while for a practice to take hold and produce a steadily perceptible effect. One yogi I knew experienced satisfactory effects immediately. Then to his puzzlement for some days it seemed that absolutely nothing was happening, that his meditation was a blank. But he had the deep conviction (no doubt from a past life as a yogi) that Soham sadhana was the right and true way for him. So he kept on meditating for hours at a time. Then one morning during the final hour of meditation results began coming in the form of experiences that he had not had before. All doubt was dispelled, and he knew he was on the right track. From then onward everything was satisfactory, though there were alternating periods of active experiences and simple quiet observation of inner rest.

Experiences, as I say, can be different for everyone, but certainly peace and refinement of consciousness can be expected. Many things will occur that simply cannot be described because ordinary human language has no words for them. The real test is the yogi’s state of mind outside meditation. This he should watch carefully. And he must make sure that he is always practicing correctly. Fortunately, Soham sadhana is simple and easy to do.
Warning: Do Not Interfere!

We are used to directing and controlling as much of our life as possible. But what applies to the external life as wisdom is not necessarily so in the internal life of meditation. The very simple twelve points given previously when followed exactly in a relaxed and calm manner will produce the inner environment in which Soham can do its divine work of revealing itself as the consciousness that is the yogi’s true Self. If there is any interference in the form of trying to change something or direct the meditation or experience in any way, the process is interrupted and will produce no results. Naturally, since the practice is so incredibly simple and we have read all kinds of propaganda about “powerful” yogas and the chills and thrills they produce and the “profound insights” and even visions of higher worlds, etc. and etc. that supposedly result from them, we wonder if there surely isn’t “more than this to it” and consider trying out such gimmicks as intoning Soham at the chakras, integrating it with some artificial form of pranayama, concentrating on the spine while visualizing/imagining currents moving up and down the spine, and other “enhancements” that may entertain but will only be obstacles to success in Soham sadhana.

The truth is that Soham intoned in time with the breath immediately begins producing a tremendous number of yogic kriyas, but kriyas that are so subtle and natural that they are usually not perceived. It takes real refinement of the mental energies to experience much of what Soham effects in the entire being of the yogi. I have been astonished at how profound the effects of Soham sadhana are, and some of my experiences have been really incredible, but I have had decades of yogic practice behind me to enable me to experience and understand the workings of Soham. I am not describing any of these experiences lest when you encounter them yourself you wonder if your experience is only auto-suggestion based on my description.

Be wise and just breathe and intone Soham in time with it with eyes closed during mediation and open during the rest of the day’s activity.
Nothing else, but just being aware of that process and listening to the inner intonations of Soham, is the secret and the assurance of success. And that is all. Soham must not be interfered with—it really cannot be, so any attempt will interrupt and spoil the practice and drag you back on the path of samsara, however “yogic” it may seem to you.

**Simplicity of practice**

The simpler and more easeful the yoga practice, the more deeply effective it is. This is a universal principle in the realm of inner development and experience. How is this? In the inner world of meditation things are often just the opposite to the way they are in the outer world. Whereas in the outer world a strong aggressive force is most effective in producing a change, in the inner world it is subtle, almost minimal force or movement that is most effectual—even supremely powerful. Those familiar with homeopathic medicine will understand the concept that the more subtle an element is, the more potentially effective it is. In meditation and japa the lightest touch is usually the most effective. This being so, the simple subtle intonations of Soham are the strongest and most effective form of mantric invocation.

An incident that took place during one of the crusades illustrates this. At a meeting between the leaders of the European forces and Saladin, commander of the Arab armies, one of the Europeans tried to impress and intimidate Saladin by having one of his soldiers cleave a heavy wooden chair in half with a single downstroke of his broadsword. In response, Saladin ordered someone to toss a silk scarf as light and delicate as a spider’s web into the air. As it descended, he simply held his scimitar beneath it with the sharp edge upward. When the scarf touched the edge, it sheared in half and fell on either side of the blade without even a whisper as he held it completely still. This is the power of the subtle and simple practice of Soham Yoga meditation.
Subtlety of practice

Soham sadhana is extraordinarily powerful, yet until we become attuned to it by some time of practice it may seem very mild, just a kind of yogic sitting-up exercise. But it is a mighty tool of yoga alchemy. The secret of its power and effectiveness is its subtlety—the very thing that may cause it to be disregarded and not recognized for its intense value, for it is the subtle energies that are able to work lasting changes in our awareness. The more evolved consciousness or energy becomes, the more refined and subtle it becomes—truly spiritual.

It is the very subtle energies that are able to work lasting changes in our awareness. The more evolved consciousness or energy becomes, the more refined and subtle it becomes. Thus it is the highest level of spiritual powers alone that are able to effect our ascent in consciousness.

Tension of any kind interferes with these energies. It is important, then, to keep in mind that often when things seem stuck in meditation and not moving as they should, or when the mind does not calm down, it is often because we are not relaxed sufficiently and are not allowing our inner intonations of Soham to become as subtle as they should be. For the subtler the intonations, the more effective and on target they are.

Even so, I do not mean to give you the impression that your inner intonations of Soham should become feeble or weak in the sense of becoming tenuous—only barely within your mental grasp, and liable to slip away and leave you blank. Not at all. The inner sound of the intonations may become subtler and subtler, but they do not at all become weaker—only gentler and more profound and therefore more effective.

An exception

In point 6 of the Soham Meditation instructions I said that “we do not deliberately concentrate on any particular point of the body such as the third eye, as we want the subtle energies of Soham to be free to manifest themselves as is best at the moment.” There is an exception to that. On occasion, such as at the very beginning of meditation or
when during the rest of the day you find your attention drifting from the breath and Soham, it can be helpful to make yourself very gently (lest you give yourself a headache from tension) aware of your entire brain (Sahasrara) area, feeling that the breath and Soham intonations are taking place there. A short time of this awareness (which can arise spontaneously as well) is sufficient, because correct practice will result in Sahasrara awareness naturally.

A short time of this awareness (which can arise spontaneously as well) is sufficient, because correct practice will result in Sahasrara awareness naturally.

There is a whole book on the subject of Soham Yoga entitled: Soham Yoga: The Yoga of the Self, which we recommend you read.
As stated in the introduction by the compiler, the contents of _Atmaprabha_ were in response to invitations in 1943 and 1945 for Sri Gajanana Maharaj to attend or send a written message to the Jayanti Utsav of Sri Ramana Maharshi. The request was not just because of the reputation of Gajanana Maharaj as a great yogi, but because of the Soham Sadhana he advocated, which was in complete consonance with the teachings of the Maharshi.

Someone asked Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi: “What is the purport of the teaching that one should meditate, through the ‘I am he’ [Soham] thought, on the truth that one is not different from the self-luminous Reality that shines like a flame?”

Bhagavan replied: “The purport of teaching that one should meditate with the ‘I am he’ thought is this: _sah-aham_: So’ham; _sah_ the supreme Self, _aham_ the Self that is manifest as ‘I.’ If one meditates for a long time, without disturbance, on the Self ceaselessly, with the ‘So’ham–I am he’ thought which is the technique of reflection on the Self, the darkness of ignorance which is in the heart and all the impediments which are
but the effects of ignorance will be removed, and the plenary wisdom will be gained…. The body is the temple; the jiva is God (Shiva). If one worships him with the ‘So’ham–I am he’ thought, one will gain release” (Collected Works [Section] 29).

Once Sri Ramana Maharshi was shown the Sanskrit text of Devi-kallotara Jnanachara Vichara Padalam (A Study of the Exposition of Supreme Wisdom and Conduct to Goddess Ishwari by Lord Shiva) written on palm leaves. He said that this writing was very, very important, and himself translated it into Tamil with his commentary. Sri T. K. Jayaram then translated it into English, including the following:

“[Shiva said to Parvati:] The means by which this mind, which is restless and moves about quicker than the wind, can be brought under control, is indeed the means to obtain liberation; is indeed what is good for those who seek permanent Reality; it itself is pure Consciousness and the state of firmness; moreover, it alone is the righteous duty to be followed by discerning aspirants; it alone is the pilgrimage to holy waters; it alone is charity; it alone is austerities. Know that there is no doubt about this.” (8-9)

Bhagavan’s comment: Now all your pilgrimages are over. Soham Sadhana is the last pilgrimage.

“Repeatedly say thus: I am He, the eternal, Omnipresent Reality which is Brahman. Meditating thus for a long time, whoever abides imperturbably, will become the Supreme Brahman, thereby attaining immortality.” (60)

Bhagavan’s comment: This is the secret of the Nath Panth. Here comes “I Am He” or “He I Am”–Soham. Our system also says this. Meditate thus for a long time on the Self. You have to say repeatedly: “He I Am”–Soham. This sixtieth verse is very important.

According to the article “Sri B. G. Vellal, A Spiritual Master” in “The Mountain Path” of January, 1987, it has been the long-standing practice of some of the spiritual descendants of Sri Gajanana Maharaj to annually make a pilgrimage to Arunachala and engage in intense Soham Sadhana on the mountain itself and in the Shrine of Bhagavan Sri Ramana.
The present times may properly be described as the age of progress, or the age of determination of truth. New discoveries are being made in every science. What is new today becomes antiquated tomorrow, and the human intellect is trying to break all previous records and soar into regions of knowledge hitherto unknown. Modern intellectuals have, as it were, taken a vow to find out that one principle underlies all different sciences and their branches. Books like The Great Design assure us that there is thread holding together all sciences.

A thinker might say that all these are haphazard efforts to discover the one basic underlying principle which is true, beautiful and beneficial, and it is a question as to how far human intellect alone can proceed in this quest and whether it will ever be able to find out that one underlying principle, knowledge of which would bring certain peace and happiness to all human beings.

Our Aryan culture, however, looks at this question from a peculiar standpoint of its own. Our prophets and seers say that the human intellect alone will never be able to solve the riddle of the universe.
The A. B. C. of this science can only be learnt in the school of internal intuition and the knowledge or realization of the human soul. In other words, Self-realization is the only link which unites all sciences and philosophies together. Differences and controversies will then vanish. The rise of Self-knowledge will dispel the darkness of Maya or illusion and the path leading to the highest truth will become distinctly visible. On this path peace and happiness are waiting to give a hearty welcome to the human soul.

Cast a glance at all the philosophical books in the world, and you will find that it is only the philosophical and spiritual books of India that boldly call upon spiritual aspirants to come to them, and proclaim that they will show them the path leading to peace and happiness. This is the call of the Nath Pantha to all human souls and the real power and greatness of this cult lies in this.

The origin of this Nath Pantha can be traced to Adinath: Mahadev [Shiva Himself]. Matsyendranath was initiated into the path of Self-realization by the great Adinath himself. At the time of Sri Matsyendranath all power in religious and social matters was centered in the hands of the followers of the Vedic religion. Sanatanis, who were followers of the ritualistic form of the Vedic religion, were to be seen everywhere. Temples and maths were entirely under the control of their followers. They used to proclaim that they alone were fit to be the recipients of the highest knowledge, and some of them were highly respected in society as royal preceptorship, and religious leadership was centered in them. The distinctions between men and men and between men and women were very keenly observed. The caste system was very rigid. Only a sannyasin was considered worthy of receiving spiritual knowledge. Hence knowledge regarding God fell to the lot of extremely few persons. Shudras and Atishudras [outcastes and aboriginals] were not allowed to enter the temples. A woman was considered as unworthy of being the recipient of divine knowledge.

All religion was considered to be centered in the strict performance of different kinds of rituals. Baths, japa and tapasya were the order of
the day. The cult of Hatha Yoga sprang from this tendency and ordinary people looked with great awe upon hatha yogis as they were supposed to possess powers to reduce anyone to ashes by cursing him. This Hatha Yoga cult gave rise to various minor cults affording great opportunities to hypocritic, self-centered individuals to enrich themselves. The Shakta and Bhairava cults began to flourish. The figure of Sri Matsyendranath stands out with a peculiar magnificence and greatness against the background of these social conditions.

Sri Matsyendranath, through the power of his great personality, dispelled the dense clouds of ignorance and superstition. The divine luster on his face and his persuasive and sweet tongue attracted the hearts of all. There were no restrictions in approaching him. Everyone who approached him was absolutely sure that Sri Matsyendranath would show him the path of everlasting joy and happiness. What a shock was this to the Sanatani followers of the path of rituals! Their temples and maths began to be less and less frequented.

The first doctrine that was preached by Sri Matsyendranath was this: “Everyone, whether a man or a woman, and of whatever caste, has a birthright to obtain knowledge regarding God.” There was only one condition and that was that his prajna (power of understanding) must be ripened. He used to preach that anyone who understood the instability of all worldly things, and who therefore was convinced that realization of God was the only means of acquiring happiness, was one whose prajna could be said to have been ripened. He used to proclaim loudly to all spiritual aspirants, “Oh ye restless human souls, come to me. I will give into your hands the key to everlasting happiness and will fix the seal of eternal joy on your hearts.”

The great Nath did not give learned lectures on Vedanta, nor did he ask people to read any religious books. He said to his disciples, “Observe very minutely how ideas arise in the mind. If you understand how and whence they arise, you will be able to control them. When ideas are controlled, there will arise realizaton of the Self.”
The spiritual power of Sri Matsyendranath was very great. He understood the minds of his disciples and gave impetus to their wills by his own spiritual power and placed them on the path of Light.

As soon as the disciple went to the guru, he was taken under protection and was given internal sight, and then in course of time he got Self-realization and was submerged in the ocean of joy. Sri Matsyendranath used to make his disciples sit near him and practice meditation. He removed all obstacles to progress on the path, and having shown to the disciple different visions ultimately made him one with the Universal Brahman.

Sri Gorakhnath was the foremost of the disciples of Sri Matsyendranath. Hundreds of anecdotes have been told regarding this pair of guru and shishya. Sri Gorakhnath initiated a peasant who later on became well known as Adbanganath. Sri Gorakhnath initiated also Gahininath, who in his turn became the guru of Sri Nivrittinath, the guru and elder brother of the great saint of Maharashtra, Sri Jnaneshwar. This was how the Nath Pantha became rooted in Maharashtra and spread its branches in different parts of it. Nivritti, Jnaneshwar, Eknath, and other shining lights of the cult spread their beneficent effulgence all over the land of Maharashtra and made it blessed. The mind loses itself in contemplation of the widespread influence of this Pantha, and the far-reaching results achieved by it. It may be considered as a sign of the special divine grace vouchsafed to Maharashtra that its land has been blessed with the sacred imprints of the feet of such great saints and yogis.

Such is the greatness and power of the Nath Pantha. What a succession of great personalities it gave rise to, to guide humanity in achieving the highest goal of life and in attaining the highest bliss. This tradition of great personalities will be carried on in the future to the end of time, and pilgrims on the spiritual path will continue to be guided by the cheerful rays of these shining lights. Blessed indeed are they who get initiation from such sadgurus.

Sri Gajanana Maharaj is an adept in this Nath Pantha. Those who have been favored with his grace know his greatness and they do not
need any extraneous proofs to convince them of it. It is no wonder that they are full of gratitude to him. They have tasted the nectar-like fruit of spiritual joy.
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**Glossary**

**Abhanga**: A devotional song in the Marathi language of Maharashtra.

**Abhisheka(m)**: Bathing—the ritual pouring of various items over a sacred image or personage in homage and worship.

**Abhyasa**: Sustained (constant) spiritual practice.

**Adesha**: A divine command from within the being; teaching, as is upadesha—teaching received while sitting near (upa).

**Adhimatra**: The degree of vairagya when worldly enjoyment becomes a source of pain.

**Adhishthana(m)**: Seat; basis; substratum; ground; support; abode; the body as the abode of the subtle bodies and the Self; underlying truth or essence; background.

**Adhyatma**: The individual Self; the supreme Self; spirit.

**Adinath (Adi Nath)**: The first teacher of the Nath Panthi, or Nath Yogi Sampradaya, usually believed to be Shiva himself.

**Aghora**: Not terrifying (ghora); benevolent; a title of Shiva.

**Aghora Pantha**: An order or sect of worshippers of Shiva (Shaivites).

**Aham**: I; I-awareness; the ego; the individual soul; self-consciousness; the pure inner Self.

**Aham Brahmasmi**: “I am Brahman.” The Mahavakya (Great Saying) of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

**Ahamkara**: See Ahankara.

**Ahankara**: Ego; egoism or self-conceit; the self-arrogating principle “I,” “I” am-ness; self-consciousness.

**Ajapa Japa**: A yogic term that means the natural, spontaneous sound of the breath that goes on perpetually through the simple act of breathing. This sound is extremely subtle, and though non-verbal is the highest form of mantra. The Mantra “So’ham” (I am He) which is produced
by the breath itself, without any conscious effort at repeating it: the inhalation sounding ‘So’ and the exhalation ‘ham.’

**Akarma:** Inaction; non-doing.

**Amanitwam:** Humility; absence of pride.

**Amrita:** That which makes one immortal. The nectar of immortality that emerged from the ocean of milk when the gods churned it.

**Anna:** In the old currency, there were sixteen annas in a rupee. In the modern currency, twenty-five and fifty pice coins are called four and eight annas, respectively, but it is not really so.

**Antardrishti:** Inner vision; inner sight.

**Anugraha:** Divine grace; attraction; favor; kindness, conferring benefits; assistance.

**Arati:** A ceremony of worship in which lights, incense, camphor, and other offerings representing the five elements and the five senses—the totality of the human being—are waved before an image or symbol of the Divine.

**Arghya:** Offering of water made in ritualistic worship. Sometimes an offering of flowers, bel leaves, sandal paste, durva grass, and rice together.

**Arishadvarga:** In Hindu theology, the Six Passions, Arishadvarga, are the six enemies of the mind, which are: kama (lust), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (delusive, often emotional, attachment or temptation), mada (pride), and matsarya (jealousy): the negative characteristics of which prevent man from attaining moksha or salvation.

**Arta:** Pained; distressed; afflicted; one who is seeking/asking for relief from personal troubles or suffering.

**Asana:** Posture; seat; meditation posture; Hatha Yoga posture.

**Ashram(a):** A place for spiritual discipline and study, usually a monastic residence. Also a stage of life. In Hinduism life is divided ideally into four stages (ashramas): 1) the celibate student life (brahmacharya); 2) the married household life (grihasta); 3) the life of retirement.
(seclusion) and contemplation (vanaprastha); 4) the life of total renunciation (sannyasa).

**Ashtanga Yoga:** The “eight-limbed” Yoga of Patanjali consisting of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi (see separate entries for each “limb”).

**Asura:** Demon; evil being (a-sura: without the light).

**Atma(n):** The individual spirit or Self that is one with Brahman. The true nature or identity.

**Atmabala:** Soul-force.

**Atmajnana:** Direct knowledge of the Self; Brahma-Jnana.

**Atmajnani:** One who has atmajnana.

**Atmaprabha:** Light of the Self; shining by one’s own light; self-illuminated or Self-illuminated: illuminated by one’s own true Self.

**Atmarama:** Satisfied–delighted–in the Self.

**Atmasakshatkara:** “Direct sight of the Self;” realization of the true nature of the Self; Self-realization.

**Atmasakshatkari:** One who possesses atmasakshatkara.

**Atmic:** Having to do with the atma–spirit or self.

**Avadhuta:** “Cast off” (one who has cast off the world utterly). A supreme ascetic and jnani who has renounced all worldly attachments and connections and lives in a state beyond body consciousness, whose behavior is not bound by ordinary social conventions. Usually they wear no clothing. They embody the highest state of asceticism or tapas.

**Avatar(a):** A fully liberated spirit (jiva) who is born into a world below Satya Loka to help others attain liberation. Though commonly referred to as a divine incarnation, an avatar actually is totally one with God, and therefore an incarnation of God-Consciousness.

**Avyakrita:** Undifferentiated; undefined; unexpounded; inconceivable; unanswerable questions; the elementary substance from which all things were created, considered as one with the substance of Brahman.

**Avyakta(m):** Unmanifest; invisible; when the three gunas are in a state of equilibrium’ the undifferentiated.
GLoSSary

Baba: A title often given to sadhus, saints and yogis, meaning “father.”

Bal(a)krishna: The child/boy Krishna.

Bandha: “Lock;” bond; bondage; tie or knot; a Hatha Yoga exercise.

Bhagavad Gita: “The Song of God.” The sacred philosophical text often called “the Hindu Bible,” part of the epic Mahabharata by Vyasa; the most popular sacred text in Hinduism.

Bhagavatam/Srimad Bhagavatam: One of the eighteen scriptures known as Puranas which are attributed to Vyasa.

Bhairava: Shiva.

Bhajan: Devotional singing; a devotional song; remembrance (of God).

Bhakta: Devotee; votary; a follower of the path of bhakti, divine love; a worshipper of the Personal God.

Bhakti: Devotion; dedication; love (of God).

Bhakti Marga: The path of devotion leading to union with God.

Bhasma: Ash; ash from a sacrificial fire; sacred ash smeared on the body—on the forehead, between the eyebrows or on the entire body.

Bhashya: Commentary.

Bhati: Shining; self-luminous; light; splendor; intelligence, consciousness.

Bhuta: A spirit. Some bhutas are subhuman nature spirits or “elementals,” but some are earthbound human spirits: ghosts. Bhutas may be either positive or negative.

Brahmajnana: Direct, transcendental knowledge of Brahman; Self-realization.

Brahman: The Absolute Reality; the Truth proclaimed in the Upanishads; the Supreme Reality that is one and indivisible, infinite, and eternal; all-pervading, changeless Existence; Existence-knowledge-bliss Absolute (Satchidananda); Absolute Consciousness; it is not only all-powerful but all-power itself; not only all-knowing and blissful but all-knowledge and all-bliss itself.

Brahmanishtha: Remaining steadfast in the Absolute (Brahman). One who is firmly established in the Supreme being, in the direct knowledge of Brahman, the Absolute Reality.
Brahmavidya: Science of Brahman; knowledge of Brahman; learning pertaining to Brahman or the Absolute Reality.

Brahmin (Brahmana): A knower of Brahman; a member of the highest Hindu caste traditionally consisting of priests, pandits, philosophers, and religious leaders.

Brindaban: The place where Krishna was born and where he lived until the age of twelve. Today it is a city of devotees and temples. Many agree with a friend who once said to me in a very matter-of-fact way: “Brindaban is my life.” Its actual name is Vrindavan, but so many Bengali devotees and saints for centuries have called it “Brindaban” in their dialect, it has become common usage throughout India.

Buddhi: Intellect; intelligence; understanding; reason; the thinking mind; the higher mind, which is the seat of wisdom; the discriminating faculty.

Chaitanya: Consciousness; intelligence; awareness; the consciousness that knows itself and knows others; Pure Consciousness.

Chakra: Wheel. Plexus; center of psychic energy in the human system, particularly in the spine or head.

Charvaka: The Indian materialistic school, also known as Lokayata (“restricted to the world of common experience”). Its central teaching is that matter is the only reality, and sense perception is the only valid means of knowledge or proof. Therefore sense satisfaction is the only goal.

Chidabhasa: Reflected consciousness; the reflection of intelligence which resides in the internal organ (anthakarana).

Chitta: The subtle energy that is the substance of the mind, and therefore the mind itself; mind in all its aspects; the field of the mind; the field of consciousness; consciousness itself; the subconscious mind.

Collyrium: Khol: A black substance put around the eyes. Though used cosmetically, it is considered to have medicinal properties that protect the eyes from infection or disease. It is often put around children’s eyes for this purpose.
Crore: Ten million.
Dada: Uncle.
Dakshina: Gift; priestly gift; sacrificial fee; donation; an offering given as a gift of gratitude; guru dakshina is that given at the time of initiation.
Damaji (Damaji Pant): A fifteenth-century Marathi saint who risked his life for the sake of others by distributing grain from the royal granaries to the people in famine.
Darshan: Literally “sight” or “seeing;” vision, literal and metaphysical; a system of philosophy (see Sad-darshanas). Darshan is the seeing of a holy being as well as the blessing received by seeing such a one.
Dattatreya: A famous sage, son of the Rishi Atri and Anasuya. His birth was a divine boon, hence his name: Datta—“given”—and atreya—“son of Atri.” Considered a divine incarnation and known as the Lord of Avadhutas, he is often revered as the embodiment of the Supreme Guru. He is credited with the authorship of the Avadhuta Gita, the Jivanmukti Gita, and the Tripura Rahasya.
Deva: “A shining one,” a god–greater or lesser in the evolutionary hierarchy; a semi-divine or celestial being with great powers, and therefore a “god.” Sometimes called a demi-god. Devas are the demigods presiding over various powers of material and psychic nature. In many instances “devas” refer to the powers of the senses or the sense organs themselves.
Dharana: Concentration of mind; fixing the mind upon a single thing or point. “Dharana is the confining [fixing] of the mind within a point or area” (Yoga Sutras 3:1).
Dharmashala: A place for pilgrims to stay, either free of charge or at a minimal cost.
Dhruva: A child who performed intense tapasya to attain the vision of Vishnu; permanent; fixed; steady.
Dhvani: Tone: sound; word; the subtle aspect of the vital shakti or the jiva in the vibrations.
Dhyana(m)/Dhyana Yoga: Meditation; contemplation.
Dhyatri: Meditator.
**Dhyata**: Meditator.

**Dhyeya**: Object of meditation or worship; purpose behind action.

**Divyadrishti**: Divine vision.

**Diwali**: The Hindu autumnal Festival of Lights celebrated everywhere in India and abroad.

**Doshadrishti**: Seeing defects; especially the defects in samsara and samsaric life.

**Durbar**: A royal court; a divine court of a god or goddess.

**Duta**: Messenger; ambassador; envoy; one who has been sent by another.

**Dvaita**: Dual; duality; dualism.

**Ekagrata**: One-pointedness of the mind; concentration.

**Eknath**: A renowned sixteenth-century Vaishnava poet-saint of Western India (Maharashtra).

**Gadi**: Throne; seat; head (of a monastery).

**Ganapati**: “Lord of the Ganas” (the spirits that always accompany Shiva). See Ganesha.

**Gandharva**: A demigod—a celestial musician and singer.

**Ganesha**: The elephant-headed son of Shiva and Parvati; the remover of obstacles; lord (pati) of the ganas (spirits that always accompany Shiva); god of wisdom; god of beginnings; the granter of success in spiritual and material life; in ritual worship he is worshipped first, and is therefore known as Adi-deva, the First God.

**Gokul(a)**: The place of Krishna’s childhood; Brindaban (Vrindavan).

**Gokulashtami**: Birthday of Krishna.

**Gorakhnath/Gorakshanath**: A master yogi of the Nath Yogi (Nath Pantha) tradition. His dates are not positively known, but he seems to have lived for many centuries and travelled throughout all of India, Bhutan, Tibet, and Ladakh teaching philosophy and yoga.

**Grihastha**: One who is living in the second stage (ashrama) of Hindu social life; married householder’s life.

**Guru**: Teacher; preceptor; spiritual teacher or acharya.

**Guru Dakshina**: Gift given to the guru at the time of initiation.
**Hanuman**: A powerful monkey chief of extraordinary strength and prowess, whose exploits are celebrated in the epic *Rāmāyana*, the life of Rāma. He was an ideal devotee (bhakta) and servant of Lord Rāma.

**Hari**: Vishnu; “thief” in the sense of stealer of hearts.

**Hatha Yoga**: A system consisting of physical exercises, postures, and breathing exercises for gaining control over the physical body and prana.

**Hiranyagarbha**: Cosmic intelligence; the Supreme Lord of the universe; also called Brahma, cosmic Prana, Sutratma, Apara-brahman, Maha-brahma, or karya-brahman; Samasti-sukshma-sarirabhimi (the sum-total of all the subtle bodies); the highest created being through whom the Supreme Being projects the physical universe; cosmic mind.

**Ishta-devata**: Beloved deity. The deity preferred above all others by an individual. “Chosen ideal” is the usual English translation.

**Ishwara**: “God” or “Lord” in the sense of the Supreme Power, Ruler, Master, or Controller of the cosmos. “Ishwara” implies the powers of omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience.

**Jagrita samadhi**: Samadhi experienced in the waking state.

**Jamuna**: A sacred river, tributary of the Ganges, which flows through Brindaban, the home of Lord Krishna in his childhood.

**Janardan Swami**: A renowned saint of Western India (Maharashtra), a devotee of Lord Dattatreya.

**Jani Janardan**: God present in all human beings.

**Janmashtami**: Birthday of Krishna.

**Japa**: Repetition of a mantra.

**Jijnasu**: One who aspires after knowledge; spiritual aspirant.

**Jiva**: Individual spirit.

**Jivanmukta**: One who is liberated here and now in this present life.

**Jivanmukti**: Liberation in this life.

**Jivatma(n)**: Individual spirit; individual consciousness.

**Jnana**: Knowledge; knowledge of Reality—of Brahman, the Absolute; also denotes the process of reasoning by which the Ultimate Truth
is attained. The word is generally used to denote the knowledge by which one is aware of one’s identity with Brahman.

**Jnana Marga:** The path of discriminative knowledge leading to union with God.

**Jnana Yoga:** The path of knowledge; meditation through wisdom; constantly and seriously thinking on the true nature of the Self as taught by the upanishads.

**Jnandev:** See Jnaneshwar.

**Jnanendriyas:** The five organs of perception: ear, skin, eye, tongue, and nose.

**Jnaneshwar:** A thirteenth-century saint of Maharashtra, a poet, philosopher and yogi of the Nath Yogi Panth or tradition.

**Jnani:** A follower of the path of knowledge (jnana); one who has realized—who knows—the Truth (Brahman).

**Kaivalya-mukti (moksha):** Liberation in which the yogi becomes one with Brahman while living (jivanmukti); final emancipation.

**Kaliya:** A monstrous serpent (cobra) that was killed by Krishna in his childhood.

**Kama:** Desire; passion; lust.

**Karana sharira:** The causal body (where the individual rests during sound, deep, dreamless sleep, the intellect, mind and senses being reduced to an unmanifested potential condition), also known as the anandamaya kosha, the “sheath of bliss.”

**Karma:** Karma, derived from the Sanskrit root *kri*, which means to act, do, or make, means any kind of action, including thought and feeling. It also means the effects of action. Karma is both action and reaction, the metaphysical equivalent of the principle: “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). It is karma operating through the law of cause and effect that binds the jiva or the individual soul to the wheel of birth and death. There are three forms of karma: sanchita, agami, and prarabdha. Sanchita karma is the vast store of accumulated
actions done in the past, the fruits of which have not yet been reaped. Agami karma is the action that will be done by the individual in the future. Prarabdha karma is the action that has begun to fructify, the fruit of which is being reaped in this life.

**Karma Marga:** The path of selfless knowledge leading to union with God.

**Karma Yoga:** The Yoga of selfless (unattached) action; performance of one’s own duty; service of humanity.

**Karma Yogi:** One who practices karma yoga.

**Karmabhumi:** Land of action; the earth-plane; the world of karma, where karma is sown and reaped.

**Kashaya:** Attachment to worldly objects; passion; emotion; the subtle influence in the mind produced by enjoyment and left there to fructify in time to come and distract the mind from samadhi; hidden impressions.

**Katha:** Tale or story; history or narrative.

**Kayastha:** A kayastha is a member of the Kayastha caste that is traditionally believed to be been keepers of public records and accounts, writers and state administrators. Yet their actual place in the caste system has never been really determined. In north central India the term “kayastha” is a polite and non-committal term used to refer to non-Brahmins.

**Kevala kumbhaka:** Sudden restraint of breath, not preceded by either inhalation or exhalation. Spontaneous breath retention, the kumbhaka which occurs during samadhi.

**Kirtan(a):** Singing the names and praises of God; devotional chanting.

**Krama mukti:** Attainment of liberation in stages; gradual liberation; passing from this world to a higher world beyond rebirth and from there attaining liberation.

**Krishna:** An avatar born in India about three thousand years ago, Whose teachings to His disciple Arjuna on the eve of the Great India (Mahabharata) War comprise the Bhagavad Gita.

**Krishnarpana:** That which has been offered to Krishna, to God.
Kriyamana: Literally: “what is being done;” the effect of the deeds of the present life to be experienced in the future; same as Agami.

Krodha: Anger, wrath; fury.

Kukarma: Negative, bad or evil action.

Kundalini: The primordial cosmic conscious/energy located in the individual; it is usually thought of as lying coiled up like a serpent at the base of the spine.

Lakh: One hundred thousand.

Lila: Play; sport; divine play; the cosmic play. The concept that creation is a play of the divine, existing for no other reason than for the mere joy of it. The life of an avatar is often spoken of as lila.

Lobha: Greed; covetousness.

Lota: A metal water vessel used for drinking, carrying, or pouring water.

Mahabharata: The world’s longest epic poem (110,00 verses) about the Mahabharata (Great Indian) War that took place about three thousand years ago. The Mahabharata also includes the Bhagavad Gita, the most popular sacred text of Hinduism.

Mahabhava: Supreme love and yearning for God, exemplified by Sri Radha.

Mahabodha: The Great Awakening.


Mahapralaya: The final cosmic dissolution; the dissolution of all the worlds of relativity (Bhuloka, Bhuvaloka, Swaloka, Mahaloka, Janaloka, Tapaloka, and Satyaloka), until nothing but the Absolute remains. There are lesser dissolutions, known simply as pralayas, when only the first five worlds (lokas) are dissolved.

Maharaj(a): “Great king;” lord; master; a title of respect used to address holy men.

Maharashtra: One of the largest–and the wealthiest–states in India, whose capital is Mumbai (Bombay).

Mahashivaratri: “The Great Night of Shiva.” The major, night-long festival of the worship of Shiva that occurs on the fourteenth day
of the dark half of the lunar month known as Phalguna (usually in
February, but every third year when an extra month is added to the
lunar calendar, it may occur in March).

**Mahatma:** Literally: “a great soul [atma].” Usually a designation for a
sannyasi, sage or saint.

**Manana:** Thinking, pondering, reflecting, considering.

**Manas(a):** The sensory mind; the perceiving faculty that receives the
messages of the senses.

**Mantra(m):** Sacred syllable or word or set of words through the rep-
etition and reflection of which one attains perfection or realization
of the Self. Literally, “a transforming thought” (manat trayate). A
mantra, then is a sound formula that transforms the consciousness.

**Marathi:** The language of Maharashtra.

**Math:** A monastery.

**Matsyendranath:** Guru of Gorakhnath and the first publicly known
Nath Yogi, having become a disciple of Adinath who is considered
an avatar of Shiva. As with Gorakhnath, we have no dates for him.

**Maya:** The illusive power of Brahman; the veiling and the projecting
power of the universe, the power of Cosmic Illusion. “The Measurer”—a
reference to the two delusive “measures,” Time and Space.

**Moksha:** Release; liberation; the term is particularly applied to the
liberation from the bondage of karma and the wheel of birth and
death; Absolute Experience.

**Mudhavastha:** State of ignorance or forgetfulness of one’s real nature.

**Mudra:** A position—usually of the hands/fingers—which inherently pro-
duces a desired state in the subtle energy levels (prana) according
to the Tantric system; a Hatha Yoga posture; a position of the eyes
in meditation.

**Mukta:** One who is liberated—freed—usually in the sense of one who has
attained moksha or spiritual liberation.

**Muktii:** Moksha; liberation.

**Mumukshu:** Seeker after liberation (moksha).
Mumukshutwa: Intense desire or yearning for liberation (moksha).
Naivedya: Edible offerings to the deity in a temple or household shrine.
Nama: Name; the Divine Name.
Namasmaramana: Remembrance (repetition) of the Name of God. Remembrance of the Lord through repetition of His name.
Narada: A primeval sage to whom some of the verses of the Rig Veda are attributed. Narada) is a Vedic sage, famous in Hindu traditions as a traveling musician and storyteller, who carries news and enlightening wisdom. He appears in a number of Hindu texts, notably the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, as well as in the Puranas.
Narayana: A proper name of God—specifically of Vishnu. The term by etymology means a Being that supports all things, that is reached by them and that helps them to do so; also one who pervades all things. He Who dwells in man. Literally: “God in humanity.” Sadhus often address one another as Narayana and greet one another: “Namo Narayanaya”—I salute Narayana [in you].
Nashik: An ancient holy city in the northwest region of Maharashtra in India. Situated on the banks of the Godavari River, Nashik is best known for being a Hindu pilgrimage sites and where the Kumbha Mela is held every twelve years.
Nath Pantha (Nathas): Various associations of yogis who trace their roots back to Matsyendranath and the Nath Yogi Sampradaya.
Nath Yogi: A member of the Nath Yogi Sampradaya.
Nath Yogi Sampradaya: An ancient order of yogis claiming Matsyendranath, Gorakhnath, Patanjali, Jnaneshwar and Jesus (Isha Nath) among their master teachers.
Nididhyasana: Meditation; contemplation; profound and continuous meditation. It is a continuous, unbroken stream of ideas of the same kind as those of the Absolute. It removes the contrariwise tendencies of the mind.
Nine Nathas: Nine great Masters of the Nath Yogi Sampradaya, including Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath.
**Nirakara:** Without form.

**Niramaya:** Without disease, defect or deficiency; health; complete; entire; pure.

**Niranjana:** Without blemish; spotless; stainless; untainted; pure; simple; void of passion or emotion; a title of Brahman.

**Nirguna:** Without attributes or qualities (gunas).

**Nirvikalpa:** Indeterminate; non-conceptual; without the modifications of the mind; beyond all duality.

**Nirvikalpa samadhi:** Samadhi in which there is no objective experience or experience of “qualities” whatsoever, and in which the triad of knower, knowledge and known does not exist; purely subjective experience of the formless and qualityless and unconditioned Absolute. The highest state of samadhi, beyond all thought, attribute, and description.

**Nishkama:** Free from wish or desire; desirelessness; selfless, unselfish.

**Nishkama Karma Yoga:** Action without expectation of fruits, and done without personal interest or egoism.

**Niyama:** Observance; the five Do’s of Yoga: 1) shaucha–purity, cleanliness; 2) santosha–contentment, peacefulness; 3) tapas–austerity, practical (i.e., result-producing) spiritual discipline; 4) swadhyaya–self-study, spiritual study; 5) Ishwarapranidhana–offering of one’s life to God.

**Padmasana:** Lotus posture; considered the best posture for meditation.

**Panchanga:** The traditional Indian (Hindu) calendar. “It provides precise information about astrological factors, planets, and stars which influence and alter the nature of the subtle environment” (*A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy*).

**Pandavas:** The five sons of King Pandu: Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, and Sahadeva. Their lives are described in the Mahabharata.

**Pandharpur:** The major pilgrim city for Vaishnavas in Maharashtra, site of the famous Vithoba (or Vithala) Temple of Lord Krishna.

**Pandit(a):** Scholar; pundit; learned individual; a man of wisdom.
Panduranga: Krishna, in the form worshipped in the Vithoba Temple in Pandharapur.

Pantha: Road; path; way. Often this is used to designate a spiritual tradition or an association of followers of a particular spiritual tradition or path, such as the Nath Pantha, Kabir Pantha, etc.

Para(ma): Highest; universal; transcendent; supreme.

Paramahan[ma]/Paramhan[ma]: Literally: Supreme Swan, a person of the highest spiritual realization, from the fact that a swan can separate milk from water and is therefore an apt symbol for one who has discarded the unreal for the Real, the darkness for the Light, and mortality for the Immortal, having separated himself fully from all that is not God and joined himself totally to the Divine, becoming a veritable embodiment of Divinity manifested in humanity.

Paramartha: The highest attainment, purpose, or goal; absolute truth; Reality.

Paramatma(n): The Supreme Self, God.

Paraloka: The world beyond this world; the future life. Not a technical term for a particular level or loka, but just a general term for a/the world we go to after death.

Parasamvit: Supreme knowledge or consciousness.

Patala: Nether world; hell. In ancient Sanskrit texts the Western Hemisphere is called Patal Desh, the Underworld.

Pativrata: A chaste woman devoted to her husband.

Pice: A monetary unit. There were sixty-four pice in the old rupee, but now there are one hundred.

Pishacha: A vampiristic spirit or demon, sometimes called “a blood drinker,” though it really depletes its victims of prana, the life force.

Prabha: Light; splendor; radiance.

Prabhu: Lord.

Prajna: Consciousness; awareness; wisdom; intelligence.
GLoSSary

Prakash(a): Shining; luminous; effulgence; illumination; luminosity; light; brightness. Pure Consciousness, from the root kash (to shine) and pra (forth); cognition.

Prakriti: Causal matter; the fundamental power (shakti) of God from which the entire cosmos is formed; the root base of all elements; undifferentiated matter; the material cause of the world. Also known as Pradhana. Prakriti can also mean the entire range of vibratory existence (energy).

Pralaya: Dissolution. See Mahapralaya.

Prana: Life; vital energy; life-breath; life-force; inhalation. In the human body the prana is divided into five forms: 1) Prana, the prana that moves upward; 2) Apana: The prana that moves downward, producing the excretory functions in general. 3) Vyana: The prana that holds prana and apana together and produces circulation in the body. 4) Samana: The prana that carries the grosser material of food to the apana and brings the subtler material to each limb; the general force of digestion. 5) Udana: The prana which brings up or carries down what has been drunk or eaten; the general force of assimilation.

Pranashakti: Subtle vital power.

Pranavayu: The upward moving prana in the body, controller of the heart and lungs.

Pranayama: Control of the subtle life forces, often by means of special modes of breathing. Therefore breath control or breathing exercises are usually mistaken for pranayama. It also means the refining (making subtle) of the breath, and its lengthening through spontaneous slowing down of the respiratory rate.

Prarabdha: Karma that has become activated and begun to manifest and bear fruit in this life; karmic “seeds” that have begun to “sprout.”

Prasad(am): Grace; food or any gift that has been first offered in worship or to a saint; that which is given by a saint. It also means tranquility, particularly in the Bhagavad Gita.

Prashanta: Calmed; quiet; tamed; intensified peace.
Prashanta-vahita: Continuity of a tranquil state of mind.
Pratiti: Perception; apprehension; insight; complete understanding; conviction; faith, confidence, belief, trust, credit; fame, respect; delight.
Pratyaksha: Perception; direct perception; intuition.
Prayashchitta: Atonement (through various prescribed acts); expiation; mortification.
Prema: Love; divine love (for God).
Puja: Worship; ceremonial (ritual) worship; adoration; honor. Usually involving the image of a deity.
Pundit: Scholar; pandita; learned individual.
Purana: Literally “The Ancient.” The Puranas are a number of scriptures attributed to the sage Vyasa that teach spiritual principles and practices through stories about sacred historical personages which often include their teachings given in conversations.
Raja Yoga: See Ashtanga Yoga.
Rajasa: See Rajasic.
Rajasic: Possessed of the qualities of the raja guna (rajas). Passionate; active; restless.
Rakshasa: There are two kinds of rakshasas: 1) semidivine, benevolent beings, or 2) cannibal demons or goblins, enemies of the gods. Meat-eating human beings are sometimes classed as rakshasas.
Rama: An incarnation of God—the king of ancient Ayodhya in north-central India. His life is recorded in the ancient epic Ramayana.
Rama Nama: The name of Rama—both of the Absolute Brahman and of the incarnation, Rama of Ayodhya—used in devotional singing, japa and meditation.
Rama Tirtha (Swami): One of the key spiritual figures in late nineteenth and early twentieth century India. Born in Maharashtra, after being a university professor of mathematics in the Punjab for some years, he took sannyas and traveled throughout India and even to Japan and America in 1902, where he taught Indian philosophy and yoga (especially in San Francisco) for two years before returning to India.
Glossary

**Ramakrishna, Sri:** Sri Ramakrishna lived in India in the second half of the nineteenth century, and is regarded by all India as a perfectly enlightened person—and by many as an Incarnation of God.

**Ramana Maharshi:** A great twentieth-century sage from Tamil Nadu, who lived most of his life at or on the sacred mountain of Arunachala in the town of Tiruvannamalai.

**Ramdas:** See Samarth Ramdas.

**Rasakrida:** Transcendental sport that Lord Krishna played with the gopis and gopas of Brindaban.

**Sadagati:** Everlasting happiness; final beatitude.

**Sadguru:** True guru, or the guru who reveals the Real (Sat: God).

**Sadhaka:** One who practices spiritual discipline—sadhana—particularly meditation.

**Sadhana:** Spiritual practice.

**Sadhana-chatushtaya:** The fourfold aids to spiritual practice: 1) Viveka: the ability to discriminate between the transient and the eternal (nitya-anity-astu-viveka); 2) Vairagya: the absence of desire for securing pleasure or pain either here or elsewhere (iha-anutra-artha-phala-vairagya); 3) Shad-sampat: the attainment of calmness, temperance, spirit of renunciation, fortitude, power of concentration of mind, and faith (shama-damadi-sadhana-smaptti); 4) Mumukshutva: an intense desire for liberation (mumukshutwa).

**Sadhu:** Usually this term is applied only to monastics: sannyasis.

**Saguna:** Possessing attributes or qualities (gunas).

**Sadguru:** True guru, or the guru who reveals the Real (Sat: God).

**Sahaja:** Natural; innate; spontaneous; inborn.

**Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi:** Natural, non-dual state of Brahmic Consciousness.

**Sahaja samadhi:** See Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

**Sahajavastha:** Superconscious state that has become natural and continuous.
Sahasrara: The “thousand-petalled lotus” of the brain. The highest center of consciousness, the point at which the spirit (atma) and the bodies (koshas) are integrated and from which they are disengaged.

Sahasr(ar)adala: The Sahasrara chakra located in the center of the brain according to the Nath Panth tradition.

Sakama: Action with expectation of fruits.

Sakshatakara: Self-realization; direct experience; experience of Absoluteness; Brahmajnana.

Sakshiavastha: Permanent establishment in the Witness State.

Sakshitwa: Establishment in the consciousness of being the Witness Self; looking upon oneself as merely the observer.

Samadarshana: Equal vision; seeing all things equally; equal-sightedness; equanimity.

Samadhi: The state of superconsciousness where Absoluteness is experienced attended with all-knowledge and joy; Oneness; here the mind becomes identified with the object of meditation; the meditator and the meditated, thinker and thought become one in perfect absorption of the mind.

Samarth Ramdas: A renowned saint and poet of Maharastra; guru of the great warrior-king Shivaji.

Samata: Samadarshana; balanced state of mind.

Sampradaya: Tradition; philosophical school; literally: “handed-down instruction;” also a line of initiatic empowerment.

Samprajnata: A stage in samadhi wherein one is conscious of an object; that mind functions in this stage and concentrates on an object of knowledge (perception).

Samprajñata samadhi: State of superconsciousness, with the triad of meditator, meditation and the meditated; lesser samadhi; cognitive samadhi; samadhi of wisdom; meditation with limited external awareness. Savikalpa samadhi.

Samsara: Life through repeated births and deaths; the wheel of birth and death; the process of earthly life.
**Glossary**

**Samskara:** Impression in the mind, either conscious or subconscious, produced by action or experience in this or previous lives; propensities of the mental residue of impressions; subliminal activators; prenatal tendency.

**Samyama:** Self-control; perfect restraint; an all-complete condition of balance and repose. The combined practice of the last three steps in Patanjali’s Ashtanga Yoga: concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana), and union (samadhi). See the Vibhuti Pada of the Yoga Sutras.

**Sanchita:** Sanchita karma.

**Sanchita karma:** The vast store of accumulated actions done in the past, the fruits of which have not yet been reaped.

**Sandhya:** A ritual done at the “junctions” (sandhyas) of the day—dawn, noon, and sunset—during which the Savitri Gayatri is repeated.

**Sankalpa:** A life-changing wish, desire, volition, resolution, will, determination, or intention—not a mere momentary aspiration, but an empowering act of will that persists until the intention is fully realized. It is an act of spiritual, divine creative will inherent in each person as a power of the Atma.

**Sankhya:** One of the six orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy whose originator was the sage Kapila, Sankhya is the original Vedic philosophy, endorsed by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita (Gita 2:39; 3:3, 5; 18:13, 19), the second chapter of which is entitled “Sankhya Yoga.” *A Ramakrishna-Vedanta Wordbook* says: “Sankhya postulates two ultimate realities, Purusha and Prakriti. Declaring that the cause of suffering is man’s identification of Purusha with Prakriti and its products, Sankhya teaches that liberation and true knowledge are attained in the supreme consciousness, where such identification ceases and Purusha is realized as existing independently in its transcendental nature.” Not surprisingly, then, Yoga is based on the Sankhya philosophy.

**Sannyas(a):** Renunciation; monastic life. Sannyasa literally means “total throwing away,” in the sense of absolute rejection of worldly life, ways
and attitudes. True sannyas is based on viveka and vairagya. It is not just a mode of external life, but a profound insight and indifference to the things of the world and the world itself—not the world of God’s creation, but the world of human ignorance, illusion, folly and suffering which binds all sentient beings to the wheel of continual birth and death. The sannyasi’s one goal is liberation through total purification and enlightenment. His creed is Shankara’s renowned Vedanta in Half a Verse: “Brahman is real. The world is illusion. The jiva is none other than Brahman.”

**Sannyasi(n):** A renunciate; a monk.

**Sat Chakras:** The six chakras: Muladhara, Swadhishthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha and Ajna, located at the base of the spine, in the spine a little less than midway between the base of the spine and the area opposite the navel in the spine, the point in the spine opposite the navel, the point in the spine opposite the midpoint of the sternum bone, the point in the spine opposite the hollow of the throat, and the point between the eyebrows, respectively.

**Sattwa:** Light; purity; harmony, goodness, reality.

**Sattwic:** Partaking of the quality of Sattwa.

**Savikalpa Samadhi:** Samadhi in which there is objective experience or experience of “qualities” and with the triad of knower, knowledge and known; lesser samadhi; cognitive samadhi; samadhi of wisdom; meditation with limited external awareness. Samprajñata samadhi.

**Savitri Gayatri:** A mantra of the Rig Veda which is recited for unfoldment of the intellectual powers leading to enlightenment.

**Sayujya:** Closely united with; united with God; becoming one with God.

**Sayujyata:** The state of being in Sayujya.

**Shad-Sampat:** The sixfold virtue: 1) Sama: serenity or tranquillity of mind which is brought about through the eradication of desires; 2) Dama: rational control of the senses; 3) Uparati: satiety—resolutely turning the mind away from desire for sensual enjoyment; 4) Titiksha: the power of endurance. An aspirant should patiently bear the
pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc.; 5) Shraddha: intense faith, lasting, perfect and unshakable; 6) Samadhan: fixing the mind on Brahman or the Self, without allowing it to run towards objects.

**Shakta**: A worshipper of Shakti, the Divine Feminine.

**Shakti**: Power; energy; force; the Divine Power of becoming; the apparent dynamic aspect of Eternal Being; the Absolute Power or Cosmic Energy; the Divine Feminine.

**Shalagrama**: A flat-round or disk-like stone with rounded edges, found only in the Mandakini River in the region of Tibet, considered to be a manifestation of Vishnu and His avatars.

**Shankara (1)**: “The Auspicious One.” A title of Shiva.

**Shankara (2)**: Shankaracharya; Adi (the first) Shankaracharya: The great reformer and re-establisher of Vedic Religion in India around 500 B.C. He is the unparalleled exponent of Advaita (Non-Dual) Vedanta. He also reformed the mode of monastic life and founded (or regenerated) the ancient Swami Order.

**Sharira**: Body; sheath; literally: “that which perishes,” from the root shri which means “to waste away.”

**Shastra**: Scripture; spiritual treatise.

**Shastri**: One who is a scholar and teacher of the scriptures (shastras).

**Shastric**: Scriptural or having to do with the scriptures.

**Shesha**: The endless; the infinite; The name of the snake (naga) upon which Vishnu reclines.

**Shishya**: Disciple; student.

**Shiva**: A name of God meaning “One Who is all Bliss and the giver of happiness to all.” Although classically applied to the Absolute Brahman, Shiva can also refer to God (Ishwara) in His aspect of Dissolver and Liberator (often mistakenly thought of as “destroyer”).

**Shivatma(n)**: The Paramatman who is the root cause of all the activities in the Universe.

**Shodhana**: Process of cleansing (purifying) in Hatha Yoga.
Shravana: Hearing; study; listening to reading of the scriptures or instruction in spiritual life.

Shruti: That which is heard; revealed scripture in the sense of divine communication. Usually applied to the Vedas, Shankara also spoke of the Upanishads as Shruti.

Shuddha-chaitanya: Pure intelligence; pure consciousness.

Siddha: A perfected–liberated–being, an adept, a seer, a perfect yogi.

Siddhi: Spiritual perfection; psychic power; power; modes of success; attainment; accomplishment; achievement; mastery; supernatural power attained through mantra, meditation, or other yogic practices. From the verb root sidh—to attain.

Six Passions: See Arishadvarga.

Smriti: Memory; recollection; “that which is remembered;” code of law. In this latter sense, Smriti is used to designate all scriptures except the Vedas and Upanishads (which are considered of greater authority: Shruti).

Soham: “That am I,” the Ajapa Gayatri formula of meditation in which “So” is repeated mentally during natural inhalation and “Ham” is repeated mentally during natural exhalation. Soham is pronounced “Sohum,” as the short “a” in Sanskrit is pronounced like the English “u” in “up.”

Soham Bhava: The state of being and awareness: “THAT I am.” Goraknath says that So’ham Bhava includes total Self-comprehension (ahamta), total Self-mastery (akhanda aishwarya), unbroken awareness of the unity of the Self (swatmata), awareness of the unity of the Self with all phenomenal existence—as the Self (vishwanubhava), knowledge of all within and without the Self—united in the Self (sarvajñatwa).

Sphota: The Sanskrit original of our English word “spot;” manifestor; the idea which bursts or flashes—including the Pranava which burst or flashes forth from the Absolute and becomes transformed into the Relative.
**Sri:** Holy; sacred; excellent; venerated (venerable); revered; a term of respect similar to “Reverend.” Also: prosperity, glory, and success—and therefore an epithet for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and abundance, the consort of Vishnu. It is often used as an honorific prefix to the name of deities and holy persons to indicate holiness (Sri Krishna, Sri Swami N., etc.). Also used as the equivalent of the English “Mr.” (Srimati would be the equivalent of “Mrs.”)

**Sthula:** Gross material; physical entity; atomic matter.

**Sthula sharira:** Gross body; physical body; body of atomic matter.

**Stotra:** A hymn or verse in praise of God.

**Sudarshana:** Sudarshana Chakra.

**Sudarshana Chakra:** The invincible weapon of Lord Vishnu which is able to cut through anything, and is a symbol of the Lord’s power of cutting through all things which bind the jiva to samsara. Thus it is the divine power of liberation (moksha).

**Sukarma:** Good action; good deed; virtuous; diligent.

**Sukhadeva:** The son of Vyasa who was liberated before coming into incarnation. He is considered a supreme renunciate, a perfect avadhuta.

**Swami Maharaj of Akalkot (Swāmi Samarth Mahāraj; Akkalkot Swami):** A nineteenth century guru of the Dattatreya tradition (sampradaya), widely respected in the Indian states of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. He lived in the Akkalkot village in Maharashtra for about twenty-two years.

**Swapna:** The dream state; a dream.

**Swapna samadhi:** Samadhi that occurs in a dream—that is, the dream passes into a superconscious state.

**Swarupajnana:** Knowledge which is of the nature of the Self; knowledge of one’s essential nature; knowledge of pure consciousness, which is the highest end in life.

**Tamas:** Dullness, darkness, inertia, folly, and ignorance.

**Tamasic (Tamasa):** Possessed of the qualities of the tamo guna (tamas). Ignorant; dull; inert; and dark.
**Tantra:** A manual of, or a particular path of, sadhana laying great stress upon japa of a mantra and other esoteric practices relating to the powers latent in the human complex of physical, astral, and causal bodies in relation to the cosmic Power usually thought as the Divine Feminine.

**Tantrika:** Pertaining to Tantra.

**Tanumanasa:** Threadlike (extremely subtle and attenuated) state of mind, indicating that impurities and impediments are lessening.

**Tapasya:** Austerity; practical (i.e., result-producing) spiritual discipline; spiritual force. Literally it means the generation of heat or energy, but is always used in a symbolic manner, referring to spiritual practice and its effect, especially the roasting of karmic seeds, the burning up of karma.

**Tirtha:** A sacred place of pilgrimage; a river or body of water in which it is auspicious and spiritually beneficial to bathe; the water offered in ritual worship and then sprinkled on or drunk by the devotees. Also, a name of a Dasanami Sannyasin belonging to the Dwarka Math.

**Tola:** Three-eights of an ounce.

**Trikalajnana:** Knowledge of the past, present and the future.

**Trikalajnani:** One who knows the past, present and the future.

**Tukaram:** A poet-saint of seventeenth century India (Maharashtra) devoted to Krishna in his form of Panduranga (Vittala).

**Turiya:** The state of pure consciousness. A Ramakrishna-Vedanta Word-book defines it as: “The superconscious; lit., ‘the Fourth,’ in relation to the three ordinary states of consciousness–waking, dreaming, and dreamless sleep–which it transcends.”

**Turiya-Turiya:** “The consciousness of Consciousness;” the Absolute Consciousness of God, the Consciousness behind our individualized consciousness (turiya).

**Tyaga:** Literally” leaving; separation; abandonment; renunciation in the sense of dissociation of the mind from worldly objects and the seeds of desire; in the Gita, the relinquishment of the fruit of action.
Glossary

**Tyagi:** A renouncer, an ascetic.

**Unmana:** ”That which transcends the mind;” the “mindless” state of a yogi that is really the state beyond the mind.

**Unmani:** One who is in the state of unmana.

**Upadesha:** Spiritual instruction; the instructions given by the guru at the time of initiation; initiation itself.

**Upanayana(m):** Investure with the sacred thread (yajnopavita) and initiation into the Gayatri mantra.

**Upasana:** “Sitting near” or “drawing near;” worship; adoration; contemplation of God or deity; devout meditation; both teaching and learning.

**Vairagya:** Non-attachment; detachment; dispassion; absence of desire; disinterest; or indifference. Indifference towards and disgust for all worldly things and enjoyments.

**Vani:** Speech; voice; sound; music; language; words.

**Varna:** Caste. (Literally: color.) In traditional Hindu society there were four divisions or castes according to the individual’s nature and aptitude: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra.

**Varnashrama:** Related to the four castes and the four stages (ashramas) of Hindu life; the laws of caste and ashrama.

**Varnashram dharma:** The observance of caste and ashram.

**Vasana:** Subtle desire; a tendency created in a person by the doing of an action or by experience; it induces the person to repeat the action or to seek a repetition of the experience; the subtle impression in the mind capable of developing itself into action; it is the cause of birth and experience in general; an aggregate or bundle of samskaras—the impressions of actions that remain unconsciously in the mind.

**Vasana(s):** A bundle or aggregate of such samskaras.

**Vedanta:** Literally, “the end of the Vedas;” the Upanishads; the school of Hindu thought, based primarily on the Upanishads, upholding the doctrine of either pure non-dualism or conditional non-dualism. The
original text of this school is Vedanta-darshana, the Brahma Sutras compiled by the sage Vyasa.

**Vedas:** The oldest scriptures of India, considered the oldest scriptures of the world, that were revealed in meditation to the Vedic Rishis (seers). Although in modern times there are said to be four Vedic Vedas (Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva), in the upanishads only three are listed (Rig, Sama, and Yajur). In actuality, there is only one Veda: the Rig Veda. The Sama Veda is only a collection of Rig Veda hymns that are marked (pointed) for singing. The Yajur Veda is a small book giving directions on just one form of Vedic sacrifice. The Atharva Veda is only a collection of theurgical mantras to be recited for the cure of various afflictions or to be recited over the herbs to be taken as medicine for those afflictions.

**Vibhu:** All-pervading; great.

**Videhakaivalya mukti:** Disembodied salvation.

**Videhi:** One who is bodiless.

**Vijnana:** The highest knowledge, beyond mere theoretical knowledge (jnana); transcendental knowledge or knowing; experiential knowledge; a high state of spiritual realization—intimate knowledge of God in which all is seen as manifestations of Brahman; knowledge of the Self.

**Vikalpa:** Imagination; fantasy; mental construct; abstraction; conceptualization; hallucination; distinction; experience; thought; oscillation of the mind.

**Virat:** Macrocosm; the cosmic form of the Self as the cause of the gross world; the all-pervading Spirit in the form of the universe.

**Vishnu:** “The all-pervading;” God as the Preserver.

**Vithoba:** See Vitthala.

**Vitthala:** A title of Krishna, meaning “the one standing on a brick,” a reference to the image of Krishna worshipped in Pandharpur in Western India.

**Vivarta:** Illusory appearance; a doctrine of the Nondualistic school of Vedanta philosophy explaining creation as an illusory appearance of
the Absolute; apparent variation; illusory manifestation of Brahman; apparent or unreal or seeming change; superimposition; appearance.

**Viveka:** Discrimination between the Real and the unreal, between the Self and the non-Self, between the permanent and the impermanent; right intuitive discrimination.

**Vivekananda (Swami):** The chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who brought the message of Vedanta to the West at the end of the nineteenth century.

**Vritti:** Thought-wave; mental modification; mental whirlpool; a ripple in the chitta (mind substance).

**Vyakta:** Manifest(ed); revealed.

**Vyatireka:** Separate; negation; distinguishing the non-Self from the Self.

**Yajnopavita:** Sacred thread. A triple thread worn by the twice-born (dwijas) that represents the threefold Brahman. It is essential for the performance of all the rites of the twice-born. Usually worn only by Brahmins, originally it was worn by Kshatriyas and Vaishyas as well.

**Yaksha:** There are two kinds of yakshas: 1) semidivine beings whose king is Kubera, the lord of wealth, or 2) a kind of ghost, goblin, or demon.

**Yama (1):** Restraint; the five Don’ts of Yoga: 1) ahimsa–non-violence, non-injury, harmlessness; 2) satya–truthfulness, honesty; 3) asteya–non-stealing, honesty, non-misappropriativeness; 4) brahmacharya–continence; 5) aparigraha–non-possessiveness, non-greed, non-selfishness, non-acquisitiveness. These five are called the Great Vow (Observance, Mahavrata) in the Yoga Sutras.

**Yama (2):** Yamaraja; the Lord of Death, controller of who dies and what happens to them after death.

**Yama Duta:** A messenger of Yama; who who comes to take the soul from the body at the time of death.

**Yamuna:** A sacred river, tributary of the Ganges, which flows through Brindaban, the home of Lord Krishna in his childhood.

**Yantra:** Geometrical designs of the energy patterns made by mantras when they are recited or which, when concentrated on produce the
effects of the corresponding mantras. Though often attributed to deities, they are really the diagrams of the energy movements of those deities’ mantras.

**Yashoda:** The foster-mother of Krishna in Brindaban where Krishna was taken by his father Vasudeva on the night of his birth for his protection from his mother Devaki’s brother, Kansa, the king of Mathura. His foster-father was Nanda.

**Yoga:** Literally, “joining” or “union” from the Sanskrit root yuj. Union with the Supreme Being, or any practice that makes for such union. Meditation that unites the individual spirit with God, the Supreme Spirit. The name of the philosophy expounded by the sage Patanjali, teaching the process of union of the individual with the Universal Soul.

**Yoga Shastra:** The scriptures and writings of various authorities dealing specifically with the theory and practice of yoga, especially the Yoga Sutras (Yoga Darshan) of Patanjali.

**Yoga Vashishtha:** A classical treatise on Yoga, containing the instructions of the Rishi Vashishta to Lord Rama on meditation and spiritual life.

**Yogini:** A female practitioner of yoga.
About the Author

Abbot George Burke (Swami Nirmalananda Giri) is the founder and director of the Light of the Spirit Monastery (Atma Jyoti Ashram) in Cedar Crest, New Mexico, USA.

In his many pilgrimages to India, he had the opportunity of meeting some of India’s greatest spiritual figures, including Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and Anandamayi Ma. During his first trip to India he was made a member of the ancient Swami Order by Swami Vidyaputra Giri, a direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda, who had himself been given sannyas by the Shankaracharya of Puri, Jagadguru Bharati Krishna Tirtha.

In the United States he also encountered various Christian saints, including Saint John Maximovich of San Francisco and Saint Philaret Voznesensky of New York. He was ordained in the Liberal Catholic Church (International) to the priesthood on January 25, 1974, and consecrated a bishop on August 23, 1975.

For many years Abbot George has researched the identity of Jesus Christ and his teachings with India and Sanatana Dharma, including Yoga. It is his conclusion that Jesus lived in India for most of his life, and was a yogi and Sanatana Dharma missionary to the West. After his resurrection he returned to India and lived the rest of his life in the Himalayas.

He has written extensively on these and other topics, many of which are posted at OCOY.org.
Light of the Spirit Monastery is an esoteric Christian monastic community for those men who seek direct experience of the Spirit through meditation, sacramental worship, discipline and dedicated communal life, emphasizing the inner reality of “Christ in you the hope of glory,” as taught by the illumined mystics of East and West.

The public outreach of the monastery is through its website, OCOY.org (Original Christianity and Original Yoga). There you will find many articles on Original Christianity and Original Yoga, including *Esoteric Christian Beliefs*. *Foundations of Yoga* and *How to Be a Yogi* are practical guides for anyone seriously interested in living the Yoga Life.

You will also discover many other articles on leading an effective spiritual life, including *The Yoga of the Sacraments* and *Spiritual Benefits of a Vegetarian Diet*, as well as the “Dharma for Awakening” series—in-depth commentaries on these spiritual classics: the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Dhammapada, and the Tao Teh King.

You can listen to podcasts by Abbot George on meditation, the Yoga Life, and remarkable spiritual people he has met in India and elsewhere, at http://ocoy.org/podcasts/
Light of the Spirit Press presents books on spiritual wisdom and Original Christianity and Original Yoga. From our “Dharma for Awakening” series (practical commentaries on the world’s scriptures) to books on how to meditate and live a successful spiritual life, you will find books that are informative, helpful, and even entertaining.

Light of the Spirit Press is the publishing house of Light of the Spirit Monastery (Atma Jyoti Ashram) in Cedar Crest, New Mexico, USA. Our books feature the writings of the founder and director of the monastery, Abbot George Burke (Swami Nirmalananda Giri) which are also found on the monastery’s website, OCOY.org.

We invite you to explore our publications in the following pages.

Find out more about our publications at lightofthespiritpress.com
Satsang with the Abbot
Questions & Answers about Life, Spiritual Liberty, and the Pursuit of Ultimate Happiness

Grounded in the perspective of classic Indian thought, directly taught by such luminaries as Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh and Sri Anandamayi Ma, and blessed with the clarity and originality of thought that can only come from years of spiritual practice (sadhana), Abbot George Burke’s answers to inquirers’ questions are unique, fresh, and authoritative.

The questions in this book range from the most sublime to the most practical. “How can I attain samadhi?” “I am married with children. How can I lead a spiritual life?” “What is Self-realization?”

In Abbot George’s replies to these questions the reader will discover common sense, helpful information, and a guiding light for their journey through and beyond the forest of cliches, contradictions, and confusion of yoga, Hinduism, Christianity, and metaphysical thought.

What Readers say:
“Abbot George speaks as one who knows his subject well, and answers in an manner that conveys an effortlessness and humor that puts one at ease, while, at the same time, a wisdom and sincerity which demands an attentive ear.”—Russ Thomas
Soham Yoga
*The Yoga of the Self*

An in-depth guide to the practice of Soham sadhana.

Soham (which is pronounced like “Sohum”) means: I Am That. It is the natural vibration of the Self, which occurs spontaneously with each incoming and outgoing breath. By becoming aware of it on the conscious level by mentally repeating it in time with the breath (So when inhaling and Ham when exhaling), a yogi experiences the identity between his individual Self and the Supreme Self.

The practice is very simple, and the results very profound. Truly wondrous is the fact that Soham Yoga can go on all the time, not just during meditation, if we apply ourselves to it. The whole life can become a continuous stream of liberating sadhana. “By the mantra ‘Soham’ separate the jivatma from the Paramatma and locate the jivatma in the heart” (Devi Bhagavatam 11.8.15). When we repeat Soham in time with the breath we are invoking our eternal being. This is why we need only listen to our inner mental intonations of Soham in time with the breath which itself is Soham.

**What Readers say:**

“The more I read this book, study it and practice Soham meditation and japa, the more thrilled I am to find this book. It is a complete spiritual path of Yoga.”—Arnold Van Wie

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Yoga: Science of the Absolute
*A Commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*

In *Yoga: Science of the Absolute*, Abbot George Burke draws on the age-long tradition regarding this essential text, including the commentaries of Vyasa and Shankara, the most highly regarded writers on Indian philosophy and practice, as well as I. K. Taimni and other authoritative commentators, and adds his own ideas based on half a century of study and practice. Serious students of yoga will find this an essential addition to their spiritual studies.

**What Readers say:**

“Abbot George has provided a commentary that is not only deeply informative, making brilliant connections across multiple traditions, but eminently practical. More importantly he describes how they can help one empower their own practice, their own sadhana.”—Michael Sabani
The Bhagavad Gita for Awakening
*A Practical Commentary for Leading a Successful Spiritual Life*

With penetrating insight, Abbot George Burke illumines the Bhagavad Gita’s practical value for spiritual seekers. With a unique perspective from a lifetime of study and practice of both Eastern and Western spirituality, Abbot George presents the treasures of the Gita in an easily intelligible fashion.

Drawing from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Jesus, Paramhansa Yogananda, Ramana Maharshi, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, Papa Ramdas, and other spiritual masters and teachers, as well as his own experiences, Abbot Burke illustrates the teachings of the Gita with stories which make the teachings of Krishna in the Gita vibrant and living.

**What Readers say:**
“...This is not a book for only “Hindus” or “Christians.” Anyone desiring to better their lives mentally, emotionally, and spiritually would benefit greatly by reading this book.” — Sailaja Kuruvadi

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Dwelling in the Mirror
*A Study of Illusions Produced by Delusive Meditation and How to Be Free from Them*

“There are those who can have an experience and realize that it really cannot be real, but a vagary of their mind. Some may not understand that on their own, but can be shown by others the truth about it. For them and those that may one day be in danger of meditation-produced delusions I have written this brief study.” — Abbot George Burke

In *Dwelling in the Mirror* you will learn:
• different types of meditation and the experiences they produce, and the problems and delusions which can arise from them.
• how to get rid of negative initiation energies and mantras.
• what are authentic, positive meditation practices and their effects and aspects.
• an ancient, universal method of meditation which is both proven and effective.

**What Readers say:**
“...I totally loved this book! After running across many spiritual and self-help books filled with unrealistic promises, this little jewel had the impact of a triple Espresso.” — Sandra Carrington-Smith, author of *Housekeeping for the Soul*
The Christ of India
The Story of Original Christianity

“Original Christianity” is the teaching of both Jesus of Nazareth and his Apostle Saint Thomas in India. Although it was new to the Mediterranean world, it was really the classical, traditional teachings of the ancient rishis of India that even today comprise Sanatana Dharma, the Eternal Dharma, that goes far beyond religion into realization.

In The Christ of India Abbot George Burke presents what those ancient teachings are, as well as the growing evidence that Jesus spent much of his “Lost Years” in India and Tibet. This is also the story of how the original teachings of Jesus and Saint Thomas thrived in India for centuries before the coming of the European colonialists.

What Readers say:

“Interpreting the teachings of Jesus from the perspective of Santana Dharma, The Christ of India is a knowledgeable yet engaging collection of authentic details and evident manuscripts about the Essene roots of Jesus and his ‘Lost years’. . . . delightful to read and a work of substance, vividly written and rich in historical analysis, this is an excellent work written by a masterful teacher and a storyteller.” –Enas Reviews

The Dhammapada for Awakening
A Commentary on Buddha’s Practical Wisdom

The Dhammapada for Awakening brings a refreshing and timely perspective to ancient wisdom and shows seekers of inner peace practical ways to improve their inner lives today.

It explores the Buddha’s answers to the urgent questions, such as “How can I find find lasting peace, happiness and fulfillment that seems so elusive?” and “What can I do to avoid many of the miseries big and small that afflict all of us?”

Drawing on the proven wisdom of different ancient traditions, and the contemporary masters of spiritual life, as well as his own studies and first-hand knowledge of the mystical traditions of East and West, Abbot George illumines the practical wisdom of Buddha in the Dhammapada, and more importantly, and make that teaching relevant to present day spiritual seekers.

What Readers say:

“In this compelling book, Abbot George Burke brings his considerable knowledge and background in Christian teachings and the Vedic tradition of India to convey a practical understanding of the teachings of the Buddha. . . . This is a book you’ll want to take your time to read and keep as reference to reread. Highly recommended for earnest spiritual aspirants” –Anna Hourihan, author, editor, and publisher at Vedanta Shores Press
May a Christian Believe in Reincarnation?

Discover the real and surprising history of reincarnation and Christianity.

A growing number of people are open to the subject of past lives, and the belief in rebirth–reincarnation, metempsychosis, or transmigration–is becoming commonplace. It often thought that belief in reincarnation and Christianity are incompatible. But is this really true? May a Christian believe in reincarnation? The answer may surprise you.

Reincarnation–also known as the transmigration of souls–is not just some exotic idea of non-Christian mysticism. Nor is it an exclusively Hindu-Buddhist teaching.

In orthodox Jewish and early Christian writings, as well as the Holy Scriptures, we find reincarnation as a fully developed belief, although today it is commonly ignored. But from the beginning it has been an integral part of Orthodox Judaism, and therefore as Orthodox Jews, Jesus and his Apostles would have believed in rebirth.

What Readers say:

“Those needing evidence that a belief in reincarnation is in accordance with teachings of the Christ need look no further: Plainly laid out and explained in an intelligent manner from one who has spent his life on a Christ-like path of renunciation and prayer/meditation.”

—Christopher T. Cook

A Brief Sanskrit Glossary

A Spiritual Student’s Guide to Essential Sanskrit Terms

This Sanskrit glossary contains full translations and explanations of many of the most commonly used spiritual Sanskrit terms, and will help students of the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads, the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, and other Indian scriptures and philosophical works to expand their vocabularies to include the Sanskrit terms contained in them, and gain a fuller understanding in their studies.

What Readers say:

“If you are reading the writings of Swami Sivananda you will find a basketful of untranslated Sanskrit words which often have no explanation, as he assumes his readers have a background in Hindu philosophy. For writings like his, this book is invaluable, as it lists frequently used Sanskrit terms used in writings on yoga and Hindu philosophical thought.

“As the title says, this is a spiritual students’ guidebook, listing not only commonly used spiritual terms, but also giving brief information about spiritual teachers and writers, both modern and ancient.

“Abbot George’s collection is just long enough to give the meanings of useful terms without overwhelming the reader with an overabundance of extraneous words. This is a book that the spiritual student will use frequently.”—Simeon Davis
The Gospel of Thomas for Awakening
A Commentary on Jesus’ Sayings as Recorded by the Apostle Thomas

“From the very beginning there were two Christianities.” So begins this remarkable work. While the rest of the Apostles dispersed to various areas of the Mediterranean world, the apostle Thomas travelled to India, where growing evidence shows that Jesus spent his “Lost Years,” and which had been the source of the wisdom which he had brought to the “West.”

In The Gospel of Thomas for Awakening, Abbot George shines the “Light of the East” on the sometimes enigmatic sayings of Jesus recorded by his apostle Saint Thomas, revealing their unique and rich practical nature for modern day seekers for spiritual life.

Ideal for daily study or group discussion.

What Readers say:
“An extraordinary work of theological commentary, The Gospel of Thomas for Awakening is as informed and informative as it is inspired and inspiring”. —James A. Cox, Editor-in-Chief, Midwest Book Review

The Bhagavad Gita–The Song of God
A new translation of the most important spiritual classic which India has produced.

Often called the “Bible” of Hinduism, the Bhagavad Gita is found in households throughout India and has been translated into every major language of the world. Literally billions of copies have been handwritten and printed.

The clarity of this translation by Abbot George Burke makes for easy reading, while the rich content makes this the ideal “study” Gita. As the original Sanskrit language is so rich, often there are several accurate translations for the same word, which are noted in the text, giving the spiritual student the needed understanding of the fullness of the Gita.

For those unable to make a spiritual journey to India, a greater pilgrimage can be made by anyone anywhere in the world by simply reading The Holy Song of God, the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. It will be a holy pilgrimage of mind and spirit.
Robe of Light
An Esoteric Christian Cosmology

In *Robe of Light* Abbot George Burke explores the whys and wherefores of the mystery of creation. From the emanation of the worlds from the very Being of God, to the evolution of the souls to their ultimate destiny as perfected Sons of God, the ideal progression of creation is described. Since the rebellion of Lucifer and the fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise flawed the normal plan of evolution, a restoration was necessary. How this came about is the prime subject of this insightful study.

Moreover, what this means to aspirants for spiritual perfection is expounded, with a compelling knowledge of the scriptures and of the mystical traditions of East and West.

*What Readers say:*

“Having previously read several offerings from the pen of Abbot George Burke I was anticipating this work to be well written and an enjoyable read. However, Robe of Light actually exceeded my expectations. Abbot Burke explicates the subject perfectly, making a difficult and complex subject like Christian cosmology accessible to those of us who are not great theologians.” —Russ Thomas

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Foundations of Yoga
Ten Important Principles Every Meditator Should Know

An in-depth examination of the important foundation principles of Patanjali’s Yoga, Yama & Niyama.

Yama and Niyama are often called the Ten Commandments of Yoga, but they have nothing to do with the ideas of sin and virtue or good and evil as dictated by some cosmic potentate. Rather they are determined on a thoroughly practical, pragmatic basis: that which strengthens and facilitates our yoga practice should be observed and that which weakens or hinders it should be avoided.

It is not a matter of being good or bad, but of being wise or foolish. Each one of these Five Don’ts (Yama) and Five Do’s (Niyama) is a supporting, liberating foundation of Yoga. An introduction to the important foundation principles of Patanjali’s Yoga: Yama & Niyama

Available as a free Kindle ebook download at Amazon.com, as well as in paperback.
Spiritual Benefits of a Vegetarian Diet

The health benefits of a vegetarian diet are well known, as are the ethical aspects. But the spiritual advantages should be studied by anyone involved in meditation, yoga, or any type of spiritual practice.

Although diet is commonly considered a matter of physical health alone, since the Hermetic principle “as above, so below” is a fundamental truth of the cosmos, diet is a crucial aspect of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development as well. For diet and consciousness are interrelated, and purity of diet is an effective aid to purity and clarity of consciousness.

The major thing to keep in mind when considering the subject of vegetarianism is its relevancy in relation to our explorations of consciousness. We need only ask: Does it facilitate my spiritual growth—the development and expansion of my consciousness? The answer is Yes.

A second essay, Christian Vegetarianism, continues with a consideration of the esoteric side of diet, the vegetarian roots of early Christianity, and an insightful exploration of vegetarianism in the Old and New Testaments.

Available as a free Kindle ebook download at Amazon.com.