



## The Essence of the Teaching [Vakya Sudha] Adi Shankara

<sup>1</sup> The power of vision in the eye sees form; the mind sees the power of vision in the eye; spiritual consciousness, the Witness, sees the changing moods of the mind; but spiritual consciousness is seen of none.

<sup>2</sup> The power of vision in the eye, remaining single, beholds manifold forms, whether blue or yellow, gross or subtle, short or long.

<sup>3</sup> The mind, remaining single, recognizes differing characteristics of the eyes, whether blind, or dim, or keen. The same thing is true of the other powers of perception, like hearing and touch.

<sup>4</sup> In the same way, the spiritual consciousness perceives the differing characteristics of the mind, such as desire, imagination, doubt, faith, disbelief, firmness, indecision, shame, understanding, fear.

<sup>5</sup> Spiritual consciousness neither rises nor sets, neither waxes nor wanes; self-luminous, it illumines the other powers, without using any instrument or means.

<sup>6</sup> When the ray or reflection of spiritual consciousness penetrates and pervades the mind, the mind is illumined with consciousness; the mind has two forms: the personal sense of “I,” and the instrument of thinking.

<sup>7</sup> The ray or reflection of spiritual consciousness is infused into the personal sense of “I” as radiant heat is infused into a lump of red-hot iron. As the personal sense of “I” is infused into the body, the body acquires sensibility and consciousness.

<sup>8</sup> The sense of “I” is manifested in the three: in the mental reflection of spiritual consciousness, in the body, and in the Witness. It is innate in the mental reflection of spiritual consciousness; in the body, it is the result of works done with attachment to the body; in the Witness, it arises through the illusion of separateness.

<sup>9</sup> Since the sense of “I” is inherent in the mental reflection of spiritual consciousness, it remains in it. The attribution of the sense of “I” to the body ceases when works done with attachment to the body cease. As the sense of separateness in the Witness, it ceases when illumination is attained.

<sup>10</sup> When the sense of “I” dissolves, the man goes to sleep, and the body becomes unconscious; when the sense of “I” is half awake, the man dreams; when it is fully manifested, he is awake.

<sup>11</sup> When the sense of “I” is manifested in the mental reflection of spiritual consciousness

during dream, it evokes the mind-images of dreams; when it is manifested in waking, it evokes attraction toward objects of sense perception.

<sup>12</sup> The body of form is compounded of the sense of “I” and the mind; it is essentially material; it enters the three fields of consciousness, waking, dreaming, dreamlessness; it is subject to birth and death.

<sup>13</sup> Maya, World Glamour, has two modes of activity: expansive dispersion, and veiling through limitation. The power of expansive dispersion brings all things into manifestation, from the body of form to the sphere of the Cosmos.

<sup>14</sup> This creative manifestation is the cause of individualized existence, expressing itself as name and form, in the Eternal, which is in reality undivided being, consciousness and bliss; just as in water are manifested individual bubbles and foam, with their names and forms.

<sup>15</sup> The other power of Glamour, the power which veils through limitation, acts to hinder the inner discernment between the perceiving spiritual consciousness and the manifold mental states which are perceived, and to hinder the outer discernment between the Eternal and the manifested worlds. This power is the cause of recurring birth and death.

<sup>16</sup> When the light of the Witness, entering the body of form as a ray or reflection of the spiritual consciousness, is united with it, the ordinary self comes into being.

<sup>17</sup> So long as the Witness, the Spiritual Self, is held by the power of delusion, it identifies itself with the ordinary self; when the power that veils and limits is overcome, the distinction is perceived, and the Spiritual Self is revealed.

<sup>18</sup> In the same way, when the power that veils and limits is overcome, the Eternal is revealed as distinct from the appearance of the manifested world, and it is perceived that change belongs to the manifested world and not to the Eternal.

<sup>19</sup> There are these five: being, light, joy, name and form. The first three are the properties of the Eternal; the last two are the properties of the manifested world.

<sup>20</sup> In the five elements, ether, air, fire, water, earth, and in gods, animals and men, being, consciousness and bliss are undivided, while name and form only are divided.

<sup>21</sup> Therefore, setting aside these two, name and form, and intent upon being, consciousness and bliss, let the disciple practise spiritual contemplation concerning both what is in the heart within, and what is without.

<sup>22</sup> The contemplation in the heart within has two degrees: the lower, where the sense of separateness is present, and the higher, above the sense of separateness.

<sup>23</sup> Contemplation with a sense of separateness has again two degrees: the penetration of the meaning of mind-images or forms, and the penetration of the meaning of words or names.

<sup>24</sup> The contemplation with a sense of separateness which penetrates the meaning of mind-images is a viewing of the images of desire and fear in the light of the Witness, the spiritual consciousness.

<sup>25</sup> A realization of the truth by affirming that “I am being, consciousness, bliss, free from attachment, luminous, undivided,” is the contemplation which penetrates the meaning of

words.

<sup>26</sup> When the disciple, rising above mind-images and words, enters into the essence of immediate spiritual experience, this is contemplation without the sense of separateness, in which the Spirit is quiet as a lamp flame in a windless place.

<sup>27</sup> As there are three degrees of contemplation within the heart, so there are the same three stages regarding any outward thing. The setting aside of distinctions of form, and the recognition that it is Being only, is the first, the contemplation with the sense of separateness, which penetrates the meaning of outward appearances.

<sup>28</sup> The affirmation and recognition that the outward object is in reality partless essence of Being, whose properties are being, consciousness, bliss, is the contemplation of outward things which penetrates the meaning of words.

<sup>29</sup> Contemplation of outward things without the sense of separateness is a steadfast condition of the Spirit which directly experiences the essence of the Eternal. Let the disciple give himself continually to these six degrees of contemplation.

<sup>30</sup> When the false attribution of selfhood to the body has been completely destroyed, and the Supreme Self is realized, then, in whatever direction the mind may turn, these stages of contemplation will arise.

<sup>31</sup> The knot of the heart is severed, all doubts are solved, the bonds of works are destroyed, for him who has beheld the Supreme Eternal: thus the Scripture declares.

<sup>32</sup> Three forms of Life are to be known: first, the Eternal appearing as the individual, which is the Higher Self; second, the ray or reflection of spiritual consciousness in the body of form, which is the personal self; third, the self built up of dreams. The first is the eternal, transcendent reality.

<sup>33</sup> The limitation of the Eternal as the individual is built up by the illusion of unwisdom, through which the Eternal appears to be limited. In the individuality, the limitation is superimposed by the power of unwisdom; in reality, the individual is the Eternal.

<sup>34</sup> The essential oneness of the individual life with the infinite Eternal is taught in such Scriptural sayings as, "That thou art." This essential oneness is not true of the other two forms, namely, the personal self and the self of dreams.

<sup>35</sup> In the Eternal, Maya, World Glamour, exists in two forms: the power of expansive dispersion, and the power which veils through limitation. By veiling the partless infinitude of the Eternal, this power builds up the separate world and the separate life.

<sup>36</sup> The ray or reflection of spiritual consciousness in the body of form is the experiencer, the doer of works. This whole phenomenal world is the field of its experiencer.

<sup>37</sup> The immemorial division between the experiencer and the world of experience continues until final liberation is attained. Thus the self of habitual activity confronts the habitual world.

<sup>38</sup> Dream, in which also the two powers of expansive dispersion and veiling through limitation are active, spreads itself over the ray or reflection of spiritual consciousness; veiling the habitual self and the habitual world, it builds up a new self and a new world.

<sup>39</sup> As these last only so long as dreaming lasts, they are called the apparitional self and the apparitional world; the same dream self and dream world do not recur after the man has once awakened from his dream.

<sup>40</sup> The apparitional self believes the apparitional world to be real; but, once the man is awake, the habitual self knows that the dream self and the dream world are unreal.

<sup>41</sup> In the same way, the habitual self believes that the habitual world is real; but the real, transcendental Self knows that it is unreal.

<sup>42</sup> The real, transcendental Self perceives and experiences its real, transcendental oneness with the Eternal, and perceives nothing else except the unreality of all other things.

43 As sweetness, fluidity, coldness, and other qualities of water enter into the wave on its surface, they likewise enter into the foam that forms on the wave.

<sup>44</sup> In like manner, the being, consciousness and bliss of the spiritual consciousness, the Witness, are transmitted to the habitual self and to the dream self.

<sup>45</sup> When the foam melts away, its properties, like fluidity and coldness, return to the wave; when the wave sinks to rest, these same properties return again to the water.

<sup>46</sup> When the dream self melts away, its properties return to the habitual self; when the habitual self melts away, its being, consciousness and bliss return to the spiritual consciousness, the Witness, the Universal Spirit.

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