

The Mystery Beyond the Trinity

Tiprura Rahasya

INTRODUCTION

Twenty years ago on one of my frequent trips to India I visited the ashram of the sage Ramana Maharshi. The ashram is situated at the foot of a famous Indian holy mountain, Arunachala, in Tamil Nadu a little over one hundred miles south of Madras, now Chennai, in an arid primitive landscape where summer temperatures regularly surpass one hundred degrees. In those days Ramana, who died in the Fifties and had been internationally famous during his lifetime, was largely forgotten (if the number of visitors to the ashram was any indication), although today it is a thriving pilgrimage center. The ashram was a small, quiet, unpretentious affair and a modest, cobwebbed, none-too-clean ten rupee room could be had for the asking at the office. In the bookstore I found a dusty copy of Tripura Rahasya, The Mystery Beyond the Trinity, a Sanskrit text of indeterminate origin, translated into English. The translator said that it had been one of Ramana's favorites so I dutifully purchased it for a few rupees...the equivalent of about a dollar, I think.

Because of an inordinate and inexplicable love of Vedic culture and a patient nature, I struggled through the text and was suitably impressed by the Yogic and Vedantic ideas and the charming Pauranic style. The Pauranas, a brilliant invention of the *rishis*, India's mystic seer-poets, managed to revive the Vedas, the foundation of Indian spiritual culture, just as they were about to be forgotten.

The Pauranas are called Dharma Shastras, scriptures on Dharma, the Eternal Way. The Pauranas are "the Vedas in action" my guru said. "Vedas in action" means that the cryptic Vedic mantras, which require considerable dedication and brain power to decipher even when unfolded by a sage, were turned into action-packed stories, delightful cartoons appealing to a wide range of minds. The Pauranas were the *rishi's*² 'stealth' technology because Upanishadic ideas about the nature of Reality were cleverly hidden behind the exciting, baroque and romantic facade of Pauranic myth. The confounding abundance of Gods that shock and bewilder India's modern visitor are Pauranic deities.

I decided to rework Tripura Rahasya for several reasons. First, to make it more readable in English. The translation from Sanskrit was credible but inevitably suffered from lack of precision - as second-language works often do. Precision is important because Vedantic ideas are often subtle and technical. Although I don't know Sanskrit grammar I know Vedanta reasonably well. Furthermore, my spiritual teacher was a Sanskrit scholar who conducted Vedanta classes in English, so I learned most of the important Vedantic Sanskrit by heart in the two years I sat at his feet. Vedanta is best in Sanskrit but in the last analysis the ideas and the skill with which they are communicated, not the language in which they are rendered, reveal the mystery beyond the trinity. Tripura Rahasya showcases some very important ideas.

I could have chosen a more famous text but the fact that the guru is a woman, at least in the section I reworked, appealed to me. Vedic culture, not without justification, has recently been accused of sexism. Like the author of Tripura Rahasya, who was undoubtedly male but who chose to let the Vedanta flow from the mouth of a woman, I wanted to make the statement that women are equally capable of realizing the highest truths.

Increasingly, the great spiritual figures of the age are women and, considering the numerous scandals perpetrated of late by men, probably more worthy of our respect. Although only a 'mere woman' according to her disciple husband, Tripura Rahasya's *rishi* has her act together.

I also decided to 'improve' the text, an idea bound to raise eyebrows in orthodox quarters. Obviously I don't see scripture as set in stone, not for want of devotion to spiritual culture, but because time is no respecter of Truth and much of what passes for Spirit, our own Bible, for example, is often times a peculiar amalgam of truth, fantasy, projected unconscious content and blatant opinion. Whether scripture comes in pure and is slowly adulterated or whether it is adulterated from the beginning one cannot say. Nonetheless, I prefer to think of spiritual literature, with notable exceptions, as works in progress, transcendent ideas passing through the human mind, and hence in need of disinterested editing. It is up to those who respect Truth to purify sacred texts. Failure to do so will undoubtedly result in an even more disturbed world than the one we have now. I think a case could be made that many of history's most blatant religious excesses have been justified on the basis of a literal interpretation of unpurified scripture.

Fortunately the translation that came to me in Ramana's bookstore was remarkably clean. Yet it needed a little work. So I fleshed out some of the ideas, removed linguistic extravagances, archaic metaphors, and redundant examples (which are characteristics of Pauranic literature) and clarified concepts that were perhaps difficult for the translator. I have also added a few auxiliary teachings which are well within the grand traditions of Vedanta and Yoga...when common sense and logic permitted. May God have mercy on my soul.

Perhaps I must also plead guilty to the great sin of our age...pandering to the need for entertainment; I spiced and spruced up the relationship between the guru and disciple a bit. In my defense I got a lot of help from the author who chose the throes of sexual passion as the event that inspired the teachings. One might expect to find such a scenario in touchy-feely New Age literature, but hardly in Vedanta, a discipline so lofty it never deigns to delve into the murky recesses of biology. Of course life is never about what life is about on the surface, and true to form Tripura Rahasya merely uses this dramatic example to lead us into a discussion of the quest for liberation through Self knowledge.

I have not actually reworked the entire text although, in addition to another rather farfetched story meant to illustrate the relatively of time and the power of the mind to create reality, it contains marginally important creation theories, the relationship between the dream and waking state, and other interesting and sometimes advanced spiritual ideas. The part I chose, however, deals with issues that any serious seeker will eventually need to confront. It also insists that enlightenment requires disinterested and professional help and suggests that love problems can be solved in an internal way, with a minimum of egoistic squabbling and marriage counselors. Considering the haphazard character of modern questing and the sorry state of gender relations today, I thought these to be timely messages.

I have included footnotes and a glossary explaining technical Vedantic words and ideas that should provide additional information to those who wish to delve more deeply into the mystery beyond the trinity.

Note: The footnotes and glossary are included at the end to the text.

The Mystery Beyond the Trinity

*Salutations to the blissful non-dual Om,¹ the transcendental
Consciousness in which the wonderful universe is
mirrored.²*

*Salutations to the undifferentiated and limitless Om that is
worshipped as the supreme Goddess in whose luminous
crystal-pure body all phenomena live and move and have
their being.*

*Salutations to the Self, the mystery beyond the waking, dream
and deep sleep states.³*

I will now tell you, Oh seeker, the gospel of the illustrious Goddess which teaches the way to transcendence.

The Goddess is called Tripura, mistress of the three cities⁴ and mother of the universe.”⁵

Goddess worship purifies the mind and creates zeal for inquiry into Truth. Those fit for this discourse on wisdom will be freed from misery.

Though I have realized it, it is not mine.

It is the essence of the Vedas⁶ and helps sincere seekers re-discover the essential Self just as a sense of smell allows one to appreciate the fragrance of flowers.

Miserable are those unable to grasp it.

No teaching will impress the mind as much as this. Born of his own experience and validated by scripture, it was first given by the illumined master Dattatreya to his disciple, the pure-minded Parasurama, whose devotional rapture as he listened reached such intensity that his hair stood on end and his skin shivered with joy.”

His voice breaking, the disciple said, “Blessed am I that the Supreme Being has incarnated as my gracious Guru who for unknown reasons has just revealed the mystery of the Goddess Tripura.⁷ Kindly tell me, Master, how should I worship Her?”

To Parasurama's delight Dattatreya carefully explained the sacred meditations and rituals appropriate to Goddess worship.

When the instructions were completed, the disciple bowed, circumambulated the Guru, took the dust of his lotus feet,⁸ and set off for a holy mountain where he built a small hut and religiously worshipped the Goddess for twelve years.

As the years passed Parasurama's devotional exuberance waned and he became increasingly contemplative. He often found himself thinking thoughts like "Where does this wonderful world come from? Why does it exist? It seems permanent but is constantly changing. Is it real? Does it ever end?"

And what about me? I seem to have been many different people playing many roles, but part of me seems to be exactly the same as always. Who am I?

I have done so many things with the idea that I would become happier I am no happier now than before. If all this hard work does not bring lasting happiness, what does?

And who is this Goddess I have been worshipping so long? Sometimes I think she is just a projection of my own mind, not a real Being."

Unable to resolve his doubts, Parasurama left his little hut, descended the mountain, and set off to find his guru. After weeks of searching he found Dattatreya sitting in deep meditation under a banyan tree on the banks of the holy Ganges. He approached the guru's radiant form, touched the revered lotus feet and stepped back with folded hands. The Guru came out of his meditation, smiled, and said, "Ah, ha! You are back after all this time. How are you?"

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"I am happy to be back," Parasurama answered enthusiastically. "Just the sight of you refreshes me. I am fine.⁹ My worship of the Goddess was very rewarding, but over the years I have started to think about things in a different way. May I ask some questions?"

"Why not?" Dattatreya replied. "If I know the answers I will tell you."

Dattatreya motioned for him to sit and encouraged him to open his heart.

“When I was young,” Parasurama began, “our *brahmin* caste suffered gross injustices at the hands of our *kshetriya* rulers. Burning with indignation, I vowed to right these wrongs and set out to exterminate every *kshetriya* in the country.¹⁰ For many years I killed every one I came across, including women children. The ancestors were eventually pleased with my devotion but ordered me to desist. Finally, my wrath was appeased.

Life returned to normal. Then one day I heard of a famous *kshetriya* living in nearby Ayodhya who was said to be an incarnation of *dharma*, one Rama by name. I thought my anger was gone but the very mention of his name sent me into a blind fury and I challenged him to battle.¹¹

Though I was considered the most powerful warrior in the land Rama easily defeated me...such was his skill. Since it was well-known I had slaughtered so many *kshetriyas*, I was certain he would kill me, but he was completely free of anger and chose to let me go...ironically, because I was a *brahmin*¹².

I had assumed that all *kshetriyas* were beasts because of the way they treated my family, but Rama was different. He fought with great courage and, surprisingly, without a trace of anger. When he let me go I was ashamed and humiliated. But I also felt a strange admiration and wondered if what they said about him being an incarnation was true.

Although I could not be sure, I was convinced that I would never again be caught in the grip of anger. Yet I was confused and depressed because my all-consuming passion, revenge, was gone. On the way home I happened upon the great *avadhut*,¹³ Samvarta, sitting in meditation under a large banyan tree in the forest. As I am sure you know, though he is only a human being, his *tapas*¹⁴ was so powerful he rendered Indra, the King of the Gods, impotent for trying to disrupt a sacrifice.¹⁵

His body was smeared with ash and his spirit glowed like a red hot coal. Just being near him filled me with a strange exhilaration. The waves of peace emitting from him washed away the disturbing feelings from my defeat at Rama’s hands.

I asked about his state and he said he had merged with the Absolute. When I told him about my Goddess worship, he said that the fruits of ritual worship were limited and that I would have to keep doing my *upasanas*¹⁶ forever to keep my mind quiet. His presence was so overwhelming I felt like a beggar before a king and was too impressed to question him properly. It probably would not have made

any difference because I think he was too lost in his state to be a good teacher. For weeks his words confused my mind.

I lost interest in devotional practice when I realized it was not going to give answers to the questions troubling me. And I saw that ritualism never ends. Devotion, *bhakti*¹⁷, seems as imperfect as *karma*¹⁸ as a path to happiness. Finally, I began to meditate on death which led to the conclusion that everything we do here is ultimately pointless.

My meeting with Samvarta made me realize how far a human being can go spiritually. Everything he does is natural and spontaneous. They say he wanders fearlessly through the jungles in the dead of night. He's like a majestic elephant playing in a lake of melted snow while the surrounding forest burns. How did he gain that state? Please explain these things and rescue me from the jaws of the monster of *karma*."

Dattatreya listened with interest and replied, "What you have said shows that you are fit for wisdom. Because of your virtuous actions and open mind, the Goddess, who dwells in the hearts of all and knows their most pressing needs, has sent you to me for help in scaling the sacred mountain of Self realization.

Listen carefully.¹⁹

Action itself is never a problem. How can we live without action? But the compulsion to act, the fear that unless one engages in both obligatory and discretionary actions one will not be happy, is a thief in the night making off with your most valuable possession ...peace of mind. Working for the wrong reasons with the wrong attitude, humans have lost the power to distinguish what is ultimately good from what is expedient. Therefore, their minds are incapable of inquiry into Truth...like the tired and hungry man who mistook poisonous wild mushrooms for edible ones. The poison caused blindness and he lost his way, eventually stumbling into a river where he was eaten by a crocodile. To be eaten by the crocodile of desire and obligation is the fate of those who lose their discrimination searching for happiness in objects and activities.

Fortunately you have transcended this distracted state and are now capable of making an investigation into your own nature. **Inquiry is the cause of liberation, a seed that will flourish into a gigantic**

tree of lasting happiness. Inquiry leads to discrimination and discrimination, separating the real from the apparent,²⁰ to liberation.

Certainly you know the famous story from the Ramayana. Because of his attachment to his wife's desires, Rama, the Self, temporarily loses discrimination and fails to heed the wise advice of his brother. Because of this lapse, Ravana, the ten-headed²¹ ego monster, steals Sita by subterfuge. Sita means 'peace' and stands for a pure mind, one wedded to the Self. To regain his peace of mind Rama, with the help of *bhakti*, (Hanuman), wars with and ultimately kills the ravenous ego.²² Had he used discrimination in the first place much suffering would have been avoided.

Inquiry,²³ life's most valuable possession, is the royal road to Self realization. I was concerned when you left twelve years ago after your vision of the Goddess because you were acting only on your devotional feelings. I taught you how to worship properly so that you would develop an inquiring mind. You have become self-aware because of your meditations on the Goddess. For those who worship Her become rich in love and brilliant of mind.

"But surely, the Goddess blesses many in this way. Are there other factors necessary for liberation?" Parasurama replied.

"Very good!" Dattatreya said, impressed by the question. Association with the wise leads to Self inquiry. Inquiry is not simply asking questions like 'Who am I,' 'What is the cause of the universe?' 'Why am I suffering?' and waiting or praying for an answer. It is a process of discrimination, comparing the ego with the Self, accepting the knowledge that you are whole and complete and allowing it to percolate into every aspect of your being until the mind is transformed and your feelings and actions harmonize with the Truth.

"What do you mean by 'the knowledge that I am whole and complete?' said Parasurama.

"People under the spell of ignorance think of themselves as limited, inadequate, incomplete beings. Because this is merely an ill-considered opinion and not a fact, they suffer. The more they cling to this notion the more disturbed they become, until everything they do reinforces this belief. A change of habits, devotional practice, meditation, or intellectually asking 'Who am I?' will not remove this fundamental error.

But changing the platform from which you view yourself...seeing yourself as adequate, whole, and complete...will cause your thought and feeling life to gradually shift and eventually synchronize with your

real nature. All that separates you from your Self is the erroneous notion that you are incomplete and inadequate. Discrimination, because it blows away the cloud of unknowing veiling the Self, allows you to stand free of your fears and desires. When your mind is free it can easily realize the Self.

Association with a realized soul lets you see how his or her Self knowledge translates into an efficient and happy life. Slowly the vision transfers to you.”

“I thought the whole point of spiritual practice, meditation especially, was to stop thinking altogether. Do not our ancient *yoga* texts say enlightenment only comes when the mind is free of thoughts?”²⁴

“There is truth to that view,” Dattatreya replied, “because one cannot conduct a proper inquiry into oneself until the mind is psychologically sound, relatively free of disturbing thoughts and feelings. But thought is natural to human beings, a function in consciousness...like breathing. And the Self is beyond the mind, unaffected by thought or not-thought. The Self does seem to automatically appear when the mind is still, but keeping the mind free of thoughts is not possible, except momentarily. The process of inquiry uses the mind’s power to ‘lift it out of itself’ or ‘experience the Self.’ And since it is the mind that gets enlightened, it must remain awake and alert for the knowledge of the Self to dawn in it. A mind without thought is not a mind. When the experience of emptiness, which is just another dualistic experience, ends, ignorance reasserts itself and all one’s limitations return.”

“I think I understand,” said Parasurama, but is not a new way of thinking just another limiting factor?”

“Yes, but this kind of thinking is different. When the stomach is upset with too much acid, a base is taken. When the base neutralizes the acid, neither remains. The thought that I am whole and complete neutralizes the thought that I am incomplete and inadequate, leaving the mind free of confining thoughts. In a mind free of limiting concepts the ever-free Self is realized.”

“But I thought you said a thinking mind was necessary for realization?”

“Thinking is not a problem. We need the mind to take care of many things in life. The only thought that causes problems is the thought ‘I am a limited being.’”

“But surely this is not a conscious thought?”

“Correct!” said Dattatreya, impressed by his disciple’s insight. “It is unconscious, hidden behind the screen of daily thinking. The purpose of inquiry is to expose this thought (which we take for the truth) and replace it with the truth...I am limitless being. I am effortless awareness. I am the Self. In fact, there is nothing to replace. When you transcend the mind, the Self, the mind’s substrate, is realized.

But let me return to the point about association with the wise. If you analyze your experience you will see that you had contact with Rama, Samvarta, and me. Before you met us you were an atheistic, angry, violent young man, heading for destruction. Rama’s compassion turned you around and made you think about what you were doing. Samvarta gave you a deep experience of the Self which made you question the way you were living. And I will show you who you are using the teachings of the science of Self Realization.

Let me tell a story that shows the importance of associating with *mahatmas*.²⁵

One day a learned and cultured prince became separated from his hunting party in a deep forest and stumbled upon a clearing. To his amazement he saw a beautiful, radiant, peaceful young woman sitting in front of a small grass hut.

When he approached and asked who she was she welcomed him with great courtesy saying, “Hospitality is the sacred duty of the pious.”

He realized that in spite of her humble surroundings and common dress she was a cultured person.

She offered refreshment and told her story. “My name is Hemalekha and I am the foster child of Nyaghrapada, a sage of unparalleled wisdom,” she said.

I am the actual daughter of a beautiful celestial damsel, Vidyadhari²⁶ who came to a nearby river to bathe one day. It so happened that a nobleman who was passing saw her and immediately fell in love. She returned his love and became pregnant but he ran off and left her alone...as men are likely to do. She was afraid of slander and caused an abortion, but I was born alive and placed on the river bank.

Nyaghrapada came to the river for evening prayers and took me home because of his love for sentient beings. Our scriptures say that the one who offers righteous protection is the father. I am therefore his daughter and devoted to him.”

“But are not you afraid to live alone in the forest,” Hemachuda asked?

“Not at all,” she replied. “The sage is very powerful. Not even gods or demons can enter this hermitage if they harbor selfish motives, much less mere mortals. Wait here. The sage is gathering flowers for his worship. When he returns, humbly ask for shelter and I am sure he will let you stay the night.”

At some point during Himalekha’s story the prince fell hopelessly in love and his mind became extremely agitated. Fearing that his feelings might cause her offense he tried to conceal them, but she picked up on them and said, “I understand your feelings, prince. Tell my father everything and see what happens.”

Realizing she shared his feelings to some extent, the prince relaxed. When the sage arrived, carrying a basket of flowers for his worship, the prince rose, prostrated, introduced himself and took his seat at the sage’s direction. Assessing the situation with his occult powers, Nyagrhapada said, “I see that you are in love with my daughter. You have my permission to marry her. Treat her well for she is much more than you, in your distracted state, think.”

Though he did not know what the sage meant, the prince was overjoyed and returned to the palace with Hemakekha the next morning. The king and queen were also pleased and ordered a week’s festivities culminating in a grand wedding.

On the wedding night the couple retired to the nuptial chamber to consummate the marriage, the prince wild with excitement. As he became more and more aroused he realized his wife’s mood did not match his own. In fact, she seemed quite unresponsive. So he stopped his lovemaking and said, “What is the matter, dear? Is not this greatest of pleasures to your taste? You seem quite indifferent. How can I be happy if you are uninterested in sex? You seem almost unconscious and, incredibly, you even asked, “My Lord, did you come?” I doubt that you even heard the wonderful things I said to you. To be honest, I am terribly disappointed. This has been one of the most unpleasant experiences of my life. What is the matter?”

Hemalekha looked at him with amusement, a slight smile on her face, but said nothing.

Clearly distraught, the prince said, “Please speak! Why are you like this? You are more dear to me than my own life. Please relieve my mind!”

Seeing her infatuated husband's distress, Hemalekha said, "It is not that I do not love you, but every minute I am trying to find a joy that will not eventually become a source of frustration. Perhaps this is why I seem distracted. I am sure there is such a joy but I am not exactly sure what it is. It can not be sex, can it, since one always seems to need more of it? Perhaps you know what it is and will help me find it."

Hemachuda laughed derisively and said, "Are you serious? You are a typical woman, slightly short of brains. Even animals know what is good and bad. Whatever feels good is good and what feels bad is bad!"

"It is true women are foolish, lacking in common sense," Hemalekha replied with a touch of sarcasm. "How kind of you to correct my thinking so I can enjoy this 'greatest of pleasures' with the same heedless passion that seems to motivate you. This will make for a very happy marriage, I am sure."

Hemachuda was shocked and confused by his wife's attitude. No one had ever spoken to him in this manner and he was unable to reply.

Hemalekha continued, "If it is true that getting what you want is happiness and avoiding what you do not is unhappiness then why does an object that formerly gave happiness often bring unhappiness? You were quite happy with me as a woman until you discovered that I do not share the same interest in sex. Now you are quite unhappy with me, ridiculing as foolish and stupid the very woman that only a few hours ago you vowed to honor and protect for as long as you live.

Or take a less personal example. In the winter fire gives pleasure, in the summer discomfort. This leads to the conclusion that pleasure and pain are controlled by circumstances, not personal will. Everything that can be possessed and enjoyed changes. If it does not change, then you change. You become dissatisfied and your relationship with it changes.

If what feels good is happiness then why is not your father happy? He can instantly have any pleasure known to man. Yet, he is full of desires, as if he has nothing at all. Every minute he is trying to get something he thinks he lacks."

Hemachuda, amazed at the depth of his wife's understanding, saw his anger change to admiration.

She continued, "I think that happiness associated with objects and activities, the kind that can change to unhappiness or indifference, is

not real happiness. Anyone who thinks that satisfying desires will lead to happiness is mistaken. In fact desire is a sign of unhappiness.

Take sex, for example. Why do you want sex? Because you are tortured by lust. Sex is not actually what you want. After all, what is it but two pieces of meat rubbing together? What you want is the freedom from the misery of lust. But sex does not diminish the pain of lust...except temporarily. Quite the contrary, the more sex one has, the more one's lust increases.

Or beauty. Every day people fall in love with something or someone they find attractive because they think it will bring happiness. Yet beauty is not in any object. If it were, the same object would make everyone who possessed and enjoyed it happy. Let me tell you a story to illustrate my point.

A handsome king was very devoted to his equally beautiful wife. But the wife loved a servant in the royal household. She had the servant get the king very drunk every evening and call in a prostitute who showed the king a good time while the queen carried on with the servant. The king thought he was the happiest of men to be married to such a wonderful woman.

One night, however, the servant, eager to get to the queen, neglected to stay until the king was sufficiently drunk. The king enjoyed himself for a while but the alcohol wore off before he passed out and he discovered the ruse.

When he threatened the woman she confessed. He ran to the queen's chambers and found her locked in the embrace of the loathsome servant. Realizing the vanity of his ways the king abandoned his duties and went off in search of God."

"At least some good came of it," Hemachuda said.

"Perhaps," said Hemalekha, "but I find it interesting that the king was happy as long as he thought the prostitute was his wife. When he discovered otherwise his happiness deserted him. **This shows that acting out the mental concept associated with his desire**, not the queen or the love making itself, made him happy."

"I do not understand," her husband replied. "Please explain."

"Based on the memory of previous pleasant experiences, the mind creates a fantasy which it would like to enjoy," Hemakekha began. "The more it thinks about its fantasy the more it becomes enslaved to it. When the pain of enslavement is too great to bear the fantasy has to become reality. So it is directed to a real person. The fantasy exerts a magnetic attraction on the object. Who can resist so much need? If the

projection works and the fantasized object succumbs, the relationship will be unsuccessful because people need to be taken for what they are, not as objects of desire. Each of us needs to know that we are valuable, quite apart from the projections of others.”

If you want to make love with me and you want me to respond to you, then **you need to find out who I am**. What pleasure is in it for me if I know that you are only making love with the idea that women are meant to satisfy men’s lust? Real love is when you love the beloved for the beloved’s sake, not simply for what she can do for you. If you loved me for my sake you would take time to find out who I am.”

Hemachuda, who had been following the argument carefully, suddenly felt ashamed.

Hemalekha continued, “Even if this idea is incorrect, consider carefully what you actually think is the source of sexual pleasure.

Take a look at this,” she said, pointing to her body. “Just what part do you love? The hair? Dead protein. The bones? Only calcium. And what about the lower half, the part that seems of special interest to men? Should we talk about the blood, the mucus, the feces and urine, not to mention the host of tiny organisms that live and breed and die inside.”

A look of disgust and comprehension crossed Hemachuda’s face and Hemalekha saw that she had made her point.

Hemachuda was absolutely amazed at Hemalekha’s strange discourse. When he fell in love he had no idea she was so self-contained and such a deep thinker. His admiration increased and he thought carefully about everything she said. Slowly his interest in worldly pleasures waned.

Yet desire remained and he found himself unable to either enjoy himself or to let go of the cravings completely, his mind swaying to and fro like a swing. The constant struggle sapped his energy and he became sad and depressed.

“You seem distracted these days,” his wife said. “What is the matter?”

“As if you did not know,” he said dejectedly. “Your words brought on this sorry state. I am like a condemned man unable to enjoy his last dinner. Nonetheless I am not angry with you. Maybe you can help me out of it. I want my happiness back.”

“Yes, you are right. My well-chosen words brought this favorable reaction.”

“Favorable reaction?” Hemachuda replied sarcastically. “You must be joking. This is not a pleasant state of mind.”

“I know that, but had you simply ignored my words and continued your blind pursuit of pleasure, you would have been unfit for the Gospel.”

“The Gospel? What Gospel?”

“The teachings of the Goddess Tripura, the science of Self knowledge, the only sure way to lasting happiness.”

“This is ridiculous. Will you stop playing with me? Are you now claiming to possess the supreme happiness that is spoken of in our ancient scriptures?”

“Perhaps it does seem preposterous that a mere woman should be enlightened, but you might recall that I am the daughter of a celestial and that I was raised by the omniscient sage, Nyagrhapada.”

“But the morning after our wedding night you said that you were still seeking lasting happiness. Now you say you have it. What am I to believe?”

“I am sorry I deceived you,” Hemalekha said. But I thought it would have been a little too much for you to accept at first. That is why I started the discussion in a way you might find more acceptable. But my Self knowledge is the real reason for my lack of interest in worldly things. Not that I do not enjoy myself in every way, but there is no reason to work for something I already have.”

“Something you already have?”

“People pursue pleasure for the happiness it brings, not for the pleasure itself. When you are already happy, why chase pleasure?”

What you say is logical, but could it be true? Do you feel happy all the time?”

“It is not exactly happy as opposed to unhappy, but a sense of being complete and whole...not needing anything. I experience pleasure and pain like you but I do not seek pleasure or try to avoid pain. I take what comes with a grain of salt because I know that ultimately nothing can change me...for better or for worse. I am satisfied with what I am.”

“Again, I am sorry I deceived you but you would not have believed me in that emotionally charged moment. I know you have no way of knowing whether or not what I say is true, and I may have made things worse by deceiving you, but I think you realized that what I said about sex and love was true.

“It is hard to admit, but yes, you are right. It did make sense.”

“I thought so. It caused a change and now you are open to hearing more.”

“More of what?”

“The Gospel of my mother the Goddess Sri Tripura.”

“I think I have heard enough already. Look at the state your wisdom has put me in.”

“Yes, that is true, but the Gospel also shows the way out.”

“What is the way out? I will do anything to get out of this state.”

“First you need to understand why you are as you are, why you have forgotten your original nature. Let me tell you my true story.

My Mother,²⁷ a great queen, gave me to one of her ladies in waiting, a very pure woman²⁸ whom I loved more than life itself. I could not remain without her even for even a few minutes. This woman, however, loved Madame Ignorance,²⁹ a wicked strumpet who was forever creating new and exciting things. Because of my attachment to the lady in waiting, who was like a sister to me, I also associated with her friend behind my Mother’s back.

That wicked woman secretly introduced her son, an ignorant drunk, one Mr. Fool,³⁰ to my friend, who openly carried on the most unseemly affair with him. Needless to say, I was shocked and disgusted, but I would not leave her because I was very attached to her. Before long they had a child who was named Master Inconstant.³¹ This child inherited his father’s stupidity and his grandmother’s creative wickedness. Under their tutelage he grew up to be a restless fellow skilled in their ways. He could negotiate the most difficult places with perfect ease and surmount obstacles in a trice.

Because of her association with Madame Ignorance, Mr. Fool, and Master Inconstant, my friend gradually lost interest in me but I was young and needy so I hung around anyway. Mr. Fool, a lusty fellow who was continually having intercourse with his wife, thought I was like her and repeatedly tried to rape me. But I am pure by nature and successfully resisted him.³² Even so, people thought I was his mistress.

Because my friend was so busy carrying on with her husband I had to take care of Master Inconstant who eventually grew up and married a wife of his mother’s choosing, one Miss Unsteady,³³a restless woman who pandered to her husband’s every whim by assuming any mood pleasing to him. Though he could fly hundreds of miles and return in a twinkling, he was completely restless and bored. His wife, however, entertained him by endlessly creating exciting new

situations, and becoming whatever he wanted so that he eventually fell completely under her spell.³⁴ Shortly after their marriage they moved to the city of ten gates.³⁵

She bore him five devoted sons³⁶ who were also entrusted to my care. Each erected a splendid palace in which to entertain the father. In one he could listen to all manner of pleasant music: incantations of the Vedas, the reading of scriptures, the humming sounds of bees, and the twittering of birds. Sometimes he heard the raging sea, thunderclaps, earthquakes, the roar of lions, the rattle of the dead, and the lamentations of the living.

In the house of the second son through which hot and cold vapors circulated, he experienced hard rocky furniture yet slept in downy beds in silky pajamas. He was pleased with whatever felt good and displeased with whatever felt uncomfortable.

When he visited the third son he saw innumerable scenes in immeasurable colors, some pleasing and some unpleasant.

In the fourth son's mansion he spent his days drinking sweet, sour, pungent and astringent juicy liquids.

In the last son's home he was treated to every imaginable smell.

The sons were so devoted to their father they wouldn't touch anything in their homes in his absence.⁴⁰

Master Inconstant, being fickle, divorced Miss Unsteady and wedded Madame Vorax⁴¹ whom he loved heart and soul. Madame Vorax had a huge belly and a very long pencil-thin neck. She kept her new husband and his five sons busy from dawn to dusk stocking in provisions...for her's was a gargantuan appetite. All her men became weak and sickly from working to meet her needs. Yet, because her hungry belly was so large and her neck so long and narrow it took forever for the food to reach her stomach...no matter how much she ate. Therefore, she was always hungry.

the younger, Master Mean.⁴³ Alas, theirs was not a happy family because whenever Mr. Inconstant had sex with Madame Vorax, which was often, Master Flaming-Mouth scorched his body and Master Mean, a contemptuous fellow, beat him mercilessly.⁴⁴ Eventually Mr. Inconstant lost all his energy trying to satisfy Madame Vorax. The situation became so bad he could no longer feed her properly. Fortunately, his grandmother, Madame Ignorance, had an endless store of food which she happily contributed, much to the delight of Madame Vorax.

When Master Inconstant fell asleep, watched by my friend,⁴⁵ his sons also fell asleep. On such occasions the city⁴⁶ was guarded by his intimate friend, Mr. Motion,⁴⁷ who was continually moving to and fro by the upper gateway.

During the interval between waking and sleep I would leave the city and remain in the blissful embrace of my Mother,⁴⁸ returning when Mr. Motion awakened his friend Mr. Inconstant.

Mr. Inconstant and his sons could not live for a moment without Mr. Motion. Though only a tiny seed he keeps the whole universe running. Smaller than the tiniest atom, he multiplies into all the names and forms we see here, sustaining, and destroying everything. He is the thread holding every experience together like pearls in a necklace. He is the bond between the prisoners in the city and myself.⁴⁹ When the city has outlived its usefulness he spirits its citizens to another.⁵⁰

Though born of a virtuous mother, brought up by me, and supported by such a powerful friend, Mr. Inconstant is always miserable. My friend, his mother, was stricken by grief by her son's calamities and nearly died of sorrow. I too suffered out of attachment to her and indeed it seemed that I had become an ignorant, foolish, inconstant, unsteady, angry, mean person, though I am always pure because I am one with my Mother, who is supremely good, subtler and as pervasive as space. She is all knowing yet capable of limited knowledge, is inactive yet capable of activity. Though unsupported and unattached, everything depends on her. Formless, she is all forms. She illuminates the minds of every being but is unknown by most. She is bliss but not blissful. Unborn and unmarried she has as many offspring as the ocean has waves. Like me, each is involved in the lives of his or her companions and yet possess a secret inner knowledge that sets us apart from everything.⁵¹

divorce her husband, kill her son, and imprison her grandchildren. Though she resisted at first, she eventually saw the wisdom in my advice. When she had completed her tasks I introduced her to my Mother who embraced her with open arms.⁵² She dived into the sea of Bliss and became Bliss itself.

In the same way," Hemalekha concluded, "you can overcome your association with the unhealthy parts of yourself, transcend karmic propensities⁵³ and gain lasting happiness."

Hemachuda was astonished at his wife's tale. "I never know what to expect from you," he said. "No offence, but at times I think you are quite mad. I assume that you are not talking about reality because this is the second account of your past I have heard so far. I do not know what to make of it".

"It is a fantastic story," said Hemalekha with great love, "and not to be taken literally. It is not about the 'reality' you are referring to but to an inner reality, a story going on all the time in every human being. I think I made a mistake assuming that you could relate to it at this point. Let us not worry about it now. I think it will make sense later when you have had more experience."

"You know, Hemalekha," I hate to say this, but I am not sure I like this relationship we seem to be developing. It is very confusing to me. I'm never certain how to take what you say. Sometimes I think you are just using this whole spiritual idea to keep me down."

"I can understand how you must feel, since you have no way of checking up on what I am saying. I guess you will just have to trust me. Perhaps we need to go back to the wedding night where this all started."

"I do not think that is a good idea," said Hemachuda. "That was a very painful evening."

"The reason I say that is because I think you do not realize that the reason I was so frank with you is because I love you. I want this marriage to work and I believe it will only work if we can get to know each other. I cannot accept the traditional relationship in which the wife cowers in the shadow of the husband. I need to be appreciated for who I really am. Because you cannot always see that, I need to show you.

I know how hard it is to listen to a woman. But I am on your side. Part of you knows that because my words had such a powerful effect on you before. Try to listen from that part. Hear me with an open mind."

Hemachuda made a determination to try.

She continued, "Everything in this world depends on trust. The farmer who plants his crops trusts that sun and rain will bless them. Can a baby survive without trust in its mother? Or a lover gain pleasure without trust in his or her beloved? The universal belief that the law of cause and effect will produce certain results is based on trust. The order of nature and the very fabric of society depends on it.

Yes, you need to trust me and I think trust will come if we work at it, but I do not fault you for not swallowing everything because right now you have no way of knowing what is behind it.

But I think that no matter what happens with us, you have been deeply affected by what has happened and you will always look behind the surface to find the truth. If you cannot hear me, why not take scripture as your guide?"

"What scripture?" Hemachuda said.

"Our ancient holy texts. The Vedas, the Upanishads. They are saying what I am saying. And if you cannot trust them, trust the Lord because faith is always superior to cynicism.

As he listened Hemachuda's negativity dissolved.

"I am sorry I doubted you," he said. "I seem to have been under the spell of Madame Ignorance. Your words have again awakened me again. I am so lucky to have met you. What should I do next?"

"After I have explained a point and you have taken it in you must follow up with appropriate effort. The path to Self realization is a path of self transformation. Intellectual understanding is very important...but not enough.

And the very first thing, what you need to come back to over and over, is the realization that life without Self knowledge is suffering. If you are still trying to attain happiness in the world, through a relationship with me or anyone else, for example, you are not ready for this excellent path. Next you need to see that if you could get out of it on your own, you would have done so by now. You need help. But you cannot completely rely on a teacher either, so you should appeal to the Creator of this grand illusion called life. Without God's grace spiritual progress is impossible. When God, a personification of your innermost Self, is invoked with a pure heart, Self knowledge will come."

"What if I do not believe in a Creator?"

"Fair enough. But let me ask you this: who made you? If you say a sperm and an egg, who made the sperm and egg? If you say your parents, who made them? When you trace back you come to a point where you understand that something much greater than the sum of its parts had to make the universe. And it is that uncaused partless whole you need to invoke.

If It has the power to generate this bewitching illusion, It also has the power to wake you up."

“So why doesn’t It just wake me up and be done with it?”

“Because you have unconsciously been telling It you enjoy sleeping.”

“How?”

“By taking the world to be real and trying to get happiness in it. Because It⁵⁴ created you free, It assumes that you have chosen to live the way you do. It is only when you are tired of the game of life that your mind changes. By getting to work spiritually, praying sincerely and working on yourself, you put God on notice that you want out. Eventually He responds by lifting you out of your suffering, until you realize that you were never bound, that you have always been free.

If you have a problem with me or the idea of God, then put your trust in scripture as I suggested before. It also shows the way out.”

“I do not know about this God idea,” said Hemachuda. “The universe seems unintelligent to me. I think it is just matter.”

“I do not want to argue with you,” his wife said, “but scripture says that matter by definition is unintelligent and therefore incapable of conscious thought, feeling, and activity.

If you say that you are just matter, I wonder why a random accretion of chemicals is so interested in the question of happiness. And on the larger scale, how could something that is not conscious organize itself into what is obviously a well-ordered and beautiful world?

Another argument you might consider is why the Lord has been worshipped for untold ages. People do not continue a practice unless they benefit from it. The Lord’s mercy is beyond doubt and because of it He is rightly famed. Has any individual commanded the love and respect of billions of souls over millions of years? Surrender to Him and He will show you how to proceed on your path.”

In everyday life people are benefited by the attention of a patron. Service born of ambition may achieve faster results, but devoted service without ulterior motive will eventually be appreciated. Though it takes humans a long time to recognize unmotivated activity, the Lord, who dwells in the hearts of all as the innermost Self, immediately bestows the appropriate fruits.

Selfish devotees, those who use the Lord to satisfy desires for wealth, security, and pleasure need to wait to have their desires fulfilled...while those who want subtle things are more likely to get instant results.”

“It seems this Lord you are talking about is quite unfair, distinguishing between one kind of devotee and another,” replied Hemachuda.

“It may seem that way, but consider this. If someone prays for physical wealth, for example, which is a human creation, it has to come from the existing supply. In this world desirers are many and desired objects few, so the Lord is constrained by limitations in the system. Since everyone is consciously or unconsciously praying for wealth and the existing wealth has been distributed according to the needs of the total, to immediately deprive one person to satisfy another is not only unfair but perverse. So the distribution of wealth depends on the scarcity principle established by human beings, not on God.

On the other hand if you pray for spiritual wealth, which is unlimited and your very nature, it can be granted whenever you are truly ready to receive it. If your suffering is caused by an incorrect understanding of yourself it can be corrected at any moment. Therefore pray for enlightenment and enlightenment alone. Your prayers will surely be answered.

Pure devotion transcends natural laws. Do you remember the wonderful story of the *rishi* Markandeya who did penance for a son?

When Shiva appeared and asked if he wanted a dull-witted boy who would live a long time or a brilliant boy who would die at sixteen, the *rishi* chose the latter.

Accordingly, a charming, dutiful, intelligent son was born. As he grew the parents became more and more sad. The son asked the reason and they told him of Shiva’s conditions. He told them not to worry and undertook rigorous penance which pleased Shiva who ordained that the boy remain sixteen years old for all eternity.⁵⁵

Only the weak-minded believe they cannot escape their destiny. Even yogis, by purifying their *samskaras*,⁵⁶ can alter the course of their lives. If human beings can change their realities by proven methods, how difficult would it be for the ruler of the universe to alter your destiny?

Therefore, take refuge in the Lord. He will spontaneously take you to the goal.”

“I am still not clear who the Lord is,” Hemachuda said. Do you mean one of our Gods like Shiva, Vishnu, or Rama? The different sects and religions speak as if theirs were the only one. Which is true? I am starting to believe that you do know what you’re talking about, that perhaps your father did enlighten you. Please teach me.”

“The God I am talking about is the all-seeing, luminous, nameless, formless pure Consciousness that generates, permeates, sustains and destroys the universe. It is none of these deities and all of them. It is the one Being that many different religions and sects call by various names and worship in different ways. If you look into the root meanings of the many names of the deities you will see that each reveals something of the nature of the nameless Self. *Shiva* means ‘that which is good under all conditions and at all times.’ *Vishnu* means ‘all-pervading.’ Consciousness pervades everything just as space pervades all physical objects. *Rama* means ‘the one who revels in the hearts of all.’ The Self is the essence of everything.

To project the nameless and formless Spirit as a God, like Shiva with three faces, three eyes, a blue neck, and a body smeared with ashes, one endowed with a body and mind, like us, is ignorance. Humans need instruments (bodies and minds) because we are not-self existent and have limited capacities...so we assume that Consciousness is like us.

The non-dual Self, however, is whole and complete and needs no instruments to create the universe. Were instruments required they would have to be requisitioned from some other being or another universe. The universe is created out the Self by Its own intelligence just as the spider’s web is fashioned by its intelligence. What we see here, ourselves included, is just the Self sporting in an apparently dualistic universe.”

“If It is non-dual why does It seem to be dual?” said Hemachuda.

“If you look at clear water in a colored glass the water seems colored. If you look at the universe through the ego, the apparently separate self, it seems to be dual. Transcend or temporarily remove the ego and duality disappears, revealing only pure Consciousness.

“This nameless, formless Being seems so abstract and inconceivable I have no idea how to relate to It,” said Parasurama. Please tell me how to worship It.”

“Worship It in any form you wish,” Hemalekha replied. “Because the Self is the knowing principle in your own mind, it understands your innermost desire and operates through your chosen deity to reveal Itself to you. As you worship your deity your mind becomes subtler and subtler, quieter and quieter, and at special moments dissolves into you, the worshipper...who is none other than the Self. At that point

you find yourself to be beyond all forms, non-dual, and eternally aware.

“Hemalekha’s words sent an inspired Hemachuda to his royal chambers where he lost himself in worship of the Goddess, very much as you did after I taught you the appropriate meditations. His craving for outer pleasure soon diminished and he settled into one-pointed investigation of the Self.”

“How does investigation relate to meditation?” Parasurama asked.

“Meditation is the art of quieting the mind to produce transcendence,” said Dattatreya. “Our sages discovered that when the waves in the mind are effaced, the Self shines in all Its glory.⁵⁷ Very often, when the Self is experienced the intellect is so stunned it is incapable of investigating the Self, so when the experience ends, as does every experience, the meditator comes back to the normal waking state without clear knowledge...without having discovered that he or she is the Self. Identification with the ego is not broken and the old life resumes, full of pleasures and pains.

Inquiry applies to both the normal and the transcendental situations. In everyday life the meditator continually uses the intellect to objectify and analyze the content of the mind and negate it as ‘not Self.’ Rigorous application of this technique produces transcendence, experience of the Self. The Self, which is actually always experienced but seems hidden, becomes an obvious object of experience when identification with the three bodies and their respective objects are negated. If the discriminator/meditator continues to investigate the Self from the transcendental position, knowledge of the Self dawns. **Knowledge of the Self is not liberation because the Self is thought to be an object of experience.** But continued and intense investigation destroys the misconception that the Self is an object of experience, the final impediment to liberation. Liberation from the body, mind and intellect arises simultaneously with the knowledge that you are the Self. With knowledge that you are the Self, experience of the Self ceases. How can you experience yourself? You are yourself.”

“When you talk about ‘the transcendental position,’ do you mean when you are beyond body/ mind consciousness and seeing, as it were from the Self’s position?” asked Parasurama.

“Yes. You have obviously been successful with your meditation to understand that,” Dattatreya replied.

“The trick of meditation is to stay in that position, keep the mind quiet, and just observe what your relationship to the body/mind and the world actually is. The more you stay in it with the mind held on the Silence, the more clear it becomes.

Let us return to the story now and see what happened to Hemachuda.

After three months of intense meditation he went to see his wife and guru. She bowed to him, washed his feet and spoke lovingly.

“It is so good to see you. How are you? You have been neglecting me for a long time. You used to visit me daily, saying that a moment without me was an eternity. What happened? I have been very distraught.”

“Do not play with me” he said. “I know you are beyond this silly emotional business. Nothing can shake you. I came to ask some questions.”

“What do you want to know?” she said, pleased that he had overcome his infatuation and regained his inner strength.

“What is the real meaning of that story you told me about your ‘life?’ What do all those people represent? While investigating my Self I came across many of those characters in some form or other, but I am not sure how they all fit together. I think it will now be helpful to know more.”

“I am pleased that you have received the Goddess’ grace,” she said. “Dispassion will not arise without Her blessing. I will explain the inner meaning of the story.”

“This is the story of the spiritual path, the fall from grace and ultimate redemption. The Mother is the Self, pure Consciousness, eternally luminous and free.

When the Self apparently falls under the spell of Ignorance, It imagines itself a separate, limited entity.”

“How can this happen?” said Hemachuda. “My experience tells me that the Self can never become deluded or limited.”

“You are right,” Hemalekha said, “That is why I said ‘apparently’ and ‘imagines.’ It cannot, but seems to. And in this “seeming” the world is born... with all its limited beings striving for perfection. This is such a subtle point the intellect can never properly grasp it.”

“Why?”

“Because Ignorance, *maya*, happens before the intellect emerges out of Consciousness. She is its cause. And an effect, being gross, can never comprehend its cause. For example, Senses are aware of Sense Objects but not of Mind. Mind is aware of Senses but not of Intellect. Intellect is aware of Mind but not of Self. Ignorance is sandwiched between Intellect and Self, subtler than Intellect but grosser than Self. So Intellect can never understand Ignorance.

This Ignorance causes the sense of separation from life and our feelings of inadequacy and limitation. When you feel incomplete and empty, Desire, Madame Vorax, arises. She is responsible for all your desires, angers and fears. Intellect, Master Inconstant, reacts to these desires and fears, cravings and aversions, by planning and scheming. Intellect is inconstant because it cannot distinguish what is real from what is unreal. Therefore it is forever changing course, taking up and abandoning projects. It believes that by getting certain things and avoiding others, the fears and desires torturing it will be laid to rest...and happiness will come. Since its dreams and plans are based on ignorance of the fact that, as the Self, it is already whole and complete, they are out of harmony with reality and destined to fail.

To make matters worse Intellect marries Miss Unsteady, the Mind. The Mind is responsible for the emotions and feelings. It enters into this alliance because successful action in the world, action calculated to get the objects and perform the activities meant to bring fulfillment, requires emotional power. But his bride is also ignorant of the pure Love that she is, and therefore extremely unreliable, continually changing course, flitting from one thing to another like her husband.

The emotions are the motivators in the struggle of life, moving the senses toward and away from the sense objects.

When the senses act in the world motivated by a selfish, ignorant mind they create subconscious impressions that work out as *karma*, Mr. Motion. Karma forces the body/mind complex to behave habitually, sometimes compulsively. These habits reinforce existing subconscious tendencies and cause further *karma*. Before long one is completely caught up in one's rituals, repeating things over and over, until boredom and frustration threaten to destroy the personality.

To free my friend, the embodied Self, from the dangerous liaison with Mr. Fool, the separated habituated ego, *karma* must be burned up. This is why I advise her to divorce her husband (dis-identify with the ego), kill her son (destroy false ideas) and imprison her grandchildren

(keep her senses in check). Though a difficult process to master, she eventually accomplished this task and was ready for Self Realization. Therefore, I introduced her to my Mother whom she embraced with open arms. She dived into the sea of Bliss and became Bliss itself.”

“What a beautiful teaching,” said Hemachuda. “Our ancient seers knew what they were talking about. How clearly they laid it all out, a complete science of life. And in such a humorous way. It is amazing that nobody thinks like this any more. And now it is even obvious to me. How fortunate I am! What have I been doing all my life?”

“Yes, it is the truth,” Hemalekha said. It was not as difficult for me because my father knew the truth.

The purpose of this teaching is to make you aware of the subtle forces that keep you bound to the wheel of *karma* and *kama*, Action and Desire. As you become more aware, misconceptions about yourself and the world disappear...making you fit for transcendence.

“I understand. I will work hard. I am sorry I doubted you. Until now I did not realize who you are, but now things are very clear. Still, I would like to hear more about the Mother whose loving embrace is the goal of all our efforts.”

“Listen carefully, dear.” she said. “Your devotion to the truth has made your intellect capable of understanding. I will now impart the knowledge required for a successful investigation.

My Mother is the Self. The Self cannot be objectified. Therefore it cannot be understood by the mind because the mind is only capable of understanding objects.⁵⁸ I cannot actually tell you about It. Or when I do speak, you must understand that the words are not it, that they are simply meant to lead your mind in a certain direction. However, the Self exists in everyone and everything...so It can be known. You will not find It in the world of objects, even though all objects are illumined by It, because objects seemingly absorb Its light, making It unrecognizable. However, It shines brightly in a pure mind and can be realized there. For example, light shines equally on a mirror and the wall behind it, yet you see yourself only in the mirror because its surface is reflective. Therefore, purify your mind.

Asking me to show It to you is like asking me to show you your own eyes.

“Yes, but sometimes I see It clearly when you speak. Perhaps I should just listen to you.”

“That is good,” Hemalekha replied, “But you need to free yourself of the *guru* too. You must find It on your own using the

knowledge you have gained from me. Then It will be yours and yours alone. Listen attentively.

As long as the intellect is contaminated by notions of 'I and mine, you will not find the Self. Listen to your speech. When you hear yourself saying 'I,' think about who is speaking. Is it you or is it the ego? Analyze your thoughts and see how many are 'I' related. For example, how do you think of me? Do you see me as 'your' wife or do you see me as your Self? Look at everything dear to you and try to see it as it is without 'I' and 'mine.' Let go of everything that you think of as 'mine.' When you are free of the push and pull of objects, see what is left. Every object, subtle and gross, can be discarded, but the one who discards them can never be removed. That one is you, the Self, transcending everything, beyond conception. The realization of who you are is liberation."

After receiving instructions Hemachuda entered a crystal palace in the royal pleasure garden outside the city, dismissed his attendants and climbed to a room on the ninth story with a panoramic view. He sat on a comfortable cushion and thought "How foolish I have been trying to find lasting happiness in objects for the sake of a Self that is already happy. Hemalekha is right. I need to discover the Self as it is, disassociated from everything.

Obviously my home, wealth, and wife are not me. Nor are they 'mine.' 'Mine' is just a concept, a social construct.

The body, which is composed of the five elements and always changing, cannot be the eternal unchanging Self. It cannot be 'me' because I use it. It is therefore only a tool.

The mind and intellect are also constantly changing and limited in every way. In deep sleep they do not exist, yet I exist. Like the body, they are merely my tools.

Furthermore, I am aware of the body and mind, yet they are unaware of me and must be known by the Self. So why is not the Self obvious? Because I am caught up in my perceptions, experiences, thoughts and feelings. The mind is the instrument that makes experience possible, so I will stop it and see what happens. If it is no more, the Self should manifest.

To his surprise he was able to bring his mind to a still point causing him to experience a vast emptiness. When the experience ended he was sure he had realized the Self.

He decided to repeat the meditation but this time he saw a blazing limitless light. When he came back to reality he was puzzled because the experience was quite different from the first.

The third meditation produced a deep sleep filled with wonderful dreams, further confusing him. “If the Self is non-dual,” he thought, “why does it seem different every time I stop my mind?”

The next time he stopped his mind he lost external awareness and experienced an incredible state of deep bliss that went on for several days. The experience, which surpassed anything he could ever have imagined, was so powerful it made his previous meditations seem completely insignificant.

The meditation caused him to wonder how he could experience bliss without the mind. “Hemalekha said all experience is dualistic, a transaction between a subject and an object,” he thought to himself, “so what was experiencing the bliss? It could not have been the mind because it was completely inactive.

This whole business is very confusing. Which of these experiences is the Self? Or is the Self another experience? I need help.”

He sent for his wife who discovered him sitting in meditation, a peaceful smile on his radiant face. “What can I do for you?” Hemalekha said, as she entered his chambers. “You seem quite happy. I take it you are working on yourself.”

“Yes,” he said, touching her feet and offering her a seat, “but I have some questions. Each time I meditated I experienced something different.”

After recounting each experiences in detail, he asked, “Which experience is the Self?”

“It is a good beginning,” she said. “You will not make serious progress without meditation, but I need to tell you that none of these experiences is the Self. How can the Self, which is experienced all the time, be the result of a specific action, in this case stopping your mind?”

“Experienced all the time? What do you mean?” Hemachuda said. “If it is experienced all the time, then everyone is enlightened. I do not get it.”

“Everything is the Self,” his wife replied. “The experiencer, the experienced, and the experiencing. It is not something in a far away location, obtainable only through extreme means. **Everyone is always enlightened; they just do not know what the Self is.**”

I am not suggesting you stop meditating,” she said, “but what can you do to get what you’ve already got? If meditation is an act of mind, how will it produce the Self? Meditation is valuable in that it temporarily gets the mind out of the picture, but if you have to keep meditating to experience the Self, when will you have time to live your life?

The Self is always here, always available, the most essential and intimate part of every experience, with or without a controlled mind. You are always in the presence of the Self, continually experiencing it. Yet it remains ‘apart’ because you do not have knowledge of what it is. One day a man found an interesting rock in a field. He took it to the marketplace and displayed it in his shop as a decoration. A jeweler noticed it and recognized it as an opal of immense value. The shopkeeper, thinking it was just an interesting rock, sold it for a few rupees.

Although the first owner experienced the rock, he did not know what he was experiencing, so he let it go for a pittance. The second man experienced it too, but he knew what it was. Knowing was the only difference. And what a difference that is!”

“You seem to be saying that trying to get a particular experience of the Self through meditation is not the way to go. Should I continue meditating?” said Hemachuda.

“By all means,” his wife replied. “Meditation turns the mind in the right direction. The next time you meditate in this way pay attention to the short interval between the last thought and the experience of light or darkness or bliss. If your mind is subtle enough you can recognize the Self there as effortless awareness. The Self is difficult to recognize because the mind is extroverted. Even the experience of the darkness, the light, and bliss are ‘outer’ experiences to the Self, though they seem to be ‘inner’ experiences to you.

And secondly, if you find the gap, and a mystic experience occurs, ask yourself how you know this experience. Meditation experiences are like waking dreams. In sleeping dreams you see many things, yet your eyes are completely non-functioning. In what light are these subtle events taking place? There is no physical light, yet you can see quite clearly. The light illumining them is the Self, just as the Self illumines your mystic experiences.”

The Self is like the light rays coming from the sun. You cannot see the rays themselves but they are capable of illumining objects. This Self, effortless awareness, is very difficult to grasp. The more you

try to see It the more It eludes you, like trying to step on your own shadow. When you look at yourself in a mirror you are so concentrated on your image that you do not see the mirror. Similarly, concentration on your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions reduces your natural panoramic awareness to a fine shaft and you miss the light in which your perceptions are taking place. Just as people do not notice space because of their fixation on the objects in space, the Self is unknown because of your fixation on experience.

Reality consists of a Seer and the seen, Consciousness and objects. The objects perceived by the senses, mind, and intellect, including the senses, mind, and intellect, are non-Self. The Self, which is often called the Knower, is self-known. Objects like the senses and mind (which are just material instruments) cannot validate Its existence.”

“That does not make sense,” Hemachuda said. You mean the eyes do not see the world, the ears do not hear sounds? I cannot accept that.”

“It is understandable that you should make this mistake, but if the eye is what is seeing, then it would see when removed from the body...but it does not. The senses and mind are just instruments, like a telescope, through which Consciousness sees. You can take away any object in Consciousness’ panoramic field and Consciousness, the Seer, is unaffected. But if you were to take away Consciousness, which, of course, you cannot, there would be no objects. Everything in your world depends on the fact that you are conscious. Consciousness, not Hemachuda, is you. Hemachuda is little more than a bundle of subtle tendencies illumined by you.

When the Knower cognizes an object through an instrument, knowledge arises. Knowledge is not possible without the Knower. You might think of it like this: objects and knowledge are only reflections in eternal, self-luminous, Consciousness, the Knower. If you were to dissolve every object in the universe, the Knower, you, would be left over. Try to dissolve yourself. It is impossible. You are permanent and unchanging. You are whole and complete, not subject to validation or removal.

When you identify yourself as the Knower of the restless mind you are free because you cannot be what you perceive.”

“But I thought the Self was all the objects too? If it is non-dual, then the objects have to be the Self, just as the waves are also the ocean.”

“Very good!” Hemalekha said, “You are thinking clearly. But this vision only comes after you negate the objects as not-Self. To negate the objects means to separate the gross and subtle forms of Consciousness from Consciousness itself. When Consciousness is realized in Its unmanifest state and all confusion of It with objects is laid to rest, you are completely free. At that time you comprehend the magic by which Consciousness appears as objects...which is similar to the way water assumes the shapes of the earth into which it flows. To merely intellectually understand that everything is non-dual Awareness is not liberation because suffering continues. Your inquiry is over when your sense of limitation disappears.

Are there other meditations that might reveal the Self?” Hemachuda asked.

“Indeed.” his wife replied. “Keep your mind as quiet as possible. Stay away from all distractions and become aware of the state between the waking and dream states. If you can let the mind empty without falling asleep you will enter into the space between waking and sleep and realize the Self.

Or notice the interval between the cognition of one object or event and another. One’s life is so full of events that the mind hops from one to another, from the past to the present to the future without ever looking into itself. Keep the mind steady and indrawn and observe the interval between experiences.

As the Self you will see that Hemachuda and all the objects in his world are only reflections of the mind. In the Self there are no senses or mind, nothing to be gained or realized. Finally, when you investigate the Self, remember that the seeker is the sought.

Or bring the mind into the state of a newborn baby until you feel that you are separate from all objects and only the feeling of ‘I am’ remains. Remain like that for a short time as if you were a blind man who came into a new room and was trying to “feel” where each piece of furniture was situated. Then allow the feeling of ‘I am’ or ‘I see’ to dissolve. The Self transcends even this subtle feeling of being or witnessing.

I think I have given you enough to work with now so I will take my leave. I will come back in a few days to see how you are faring.”

Hemachuda thanked her, touched her feet and showed her to the door. He immediately returned to his seat, closed his eyes and began to meditate.

When Hemalekha returned a few days later she found him sitting in deep meditation on the Self. Her arrival jarred him out of his state and irritated him.

“Perhaps you can come back another time,” he said, closing his eyes. “I want to go back into that incredibly blissful state.”

“I would not think of disturbing your meditation, but please quickly tell me what is the difference in your experience when your eyes are open or closed,” Hemalekha replied.

On being pressed for an answer Hemachuda said, “Thanks to you I have discovered pure happiness. Worldly activities, including speech, give me no pleasure. I am through with them. My only desire is to sink into the ocean of bliss within. Perhaps you can leave now and let me return to the experience of that wonderful state. I am sorry to be so rude but that is all I want. And, to be truthful, I am surprised that you, who know about this state, are not actually in it. Anyone not in it is wasting her time.”

“Hemalekha looked at her husband with amusement and replied, “So now you have become the guru here. It sometimes happens that a disciple surpasses his or her guru. This is very interesting. Before I start to take instruction from you, however, please consider what I have to say.”

“If your experience of the Self depends on whether or not your eyes are open or closed, how can it be enlightenment? The scriptures say that enlightenment is the knowledge that you are whole and complete Consciousness. Are you incomplete and unconscious when your eyes are open and complete and conscious when they are closed? How is it that your blissful nature stops being blissful when your eyes are open? How can such a trivial action deny you your own ever-present nature? Does not it seem a bit illogical that the movement of an eyelid an inch long can obscure the vastness in which the whole universe rests?

Secondly, the scriptures say the Self pervades everything, like space pervades all objects. When you close your eyes and return to it, just where do you go? If you are not seeing it here and now with your eyes open, there is something wrong.

Thirdly, how can you be ‘in’ it? The scriptures say you are it. How can you be in or out of yourself? This is not possible.

Finally, nowhere is it said that liberation is an ‘experience’ of the Self. If the experience of the Self were liberation then it would be a dualistic state, yet the scriptures say it is non-dual knowledge. Is it

that you remain Hemachuda and add a special experience of overwhelming bliss to your self when you close your eyes and meditate? If that is what has happened, then you have to be something other than the all-pervading non-dual Self. The Self is literally everything that is. There is nothing other than It to experience It. Your problem is that you have not 'experienced' It enough to have discovered that you are It.

The concepts 'experience, within and without, in and out, Self and not-self,' are useful when you do not know who you are. They point you in the right direction and help you distinguish the pure Self from Its many forms. This is indeed a high stage, but I suggest that you return to your meditation and continue to inquire until you no longer see the Self as an object.

Do not worry, you will not lose your individuality forever. It will return purified and beautified from your journey. But you need to melt into the Self until the first thought in your mind is 'I am this.' Right now you are thinking of the Self as an object... 'that.' When you are liberated your thought will be 'I am' and there will be nothing else to experience.

Overwhelmed by his wife's clarity and wisdom, Hemachuda once again realized he had more to learn.

"I am sorry I spoke so foolishly," he said. I cannot argue with what you say and will use the information you have so graciously given to erase my false concepts. I can see that I am still identified with my body and my ego."

"You have taken in my words" Hemalekha replied. "Return to your meditation and you will be successful," she said with great love. "And then we will have truly attained oneness with each other."

Hemachuda did as instructed and after many months of investigation he suddenly became aware that he was no longer Hemachuda meditating on the Self but that he was the Self looking out at Itself in the form of Hemachuda meditating.

He left his meditation room and rejoined Hemalekha who was overjoyed to see him. And from this point on he had no complaints about their love life.

With a perfectly-balanced mind he ruled his subjects fairly. The kingdom prospered and he set up schools that taught meditation and the knowledge of the Self to everyone.

Even his family, who thought he had gone mad when he took up with Hemalekha, noticed that he remained the same in pleasure and

pain, was indifferent to loss and gain, treated friend and foe alike, undertook his royal duties like an actor in a play, and was always happy.

One day when they asked him what was happening he told them about the Self. They were inspired to hear more, took him as a teacher, and eventually became liberated. The state ministers followed suit. Before long ordinary citizens began meditating and in a few years the whole city was enlightened. Even children and the aged were no longer moved by selfishness.

Everyone slowly became respectful of each other and lived in harmony with nature. Mothers sang lullabies of the Self to their babies. Masters and servants saw the Self in each other. Craftsmen built meditation halls and artisans fashioned symbols of the Self. Musicians chanted holy texts about Self realization and actors engaged in dramas depicting the war between the Self and the ego. Even the prostitutes treated their customers with real love and never overcharged for their services.

Nobody regretted the past or worried about the future. Everyone was quite happy with life as it unfolded and kept their minds focused on the Self, thus dissipating their latent tendencies.

The sages called theirs the City of Wisdom and visited it often. Even the parrots in their cages made profound statements like, "Meditate on the Self which is Pure Intelligence bereft of all objects of knowledge." Or, "What is known is not different from the Knower, Pure Intelligence." And, "The universe is like infinite images reflected in the mirror of absolute Consciousness." Some said, "The all-pervasive and limitless Consciousness is both the sentient and the insentient, the changing and the changeless. Those especially loquacious and gifted in logic said, "Everything is known by Intelligence but nothing knows It. Therefore let sensible people who are desirous of liberation give up the quest for intellectual knowledge and rediscover their own absolute Intelligence."

"So you see, Parasurama," Dattatreya continued, "the primary cause of liberation is association with the wise."

The End

FOOTNOTES

1. A sound symbol of undifferentiated pure Consciousness.
2. Consciousness, the cause of all phenomena, is not separate from the phenomena, just as a reflection in a mirror is not separate from the mirror.
3. The 'trinity' referred to in the title.
4. The three (*tri*) 'cities' (*puri*) symbolize the waking, dream and deep sleep states of Consciousness. The Goddess, a symbol of the undifferentiated Om, 'rules' these cities in the sense that our waking, dream and deep sleep states depend on the association of undifferentiated Consciousness with the gross, subtle and causal bodies. The teaching on Om, the three bodies and three states is given in the Mandukya Upanishad.
5. Consciousness is often symbolized as a mother because love binds it to the universe just as a mother is bound to her children in love. Secondly, Consciousness is the cause of the universe as parents are the cause of children.
6. In this context Vedas means the Upanishads, the appended portions of the Vedas. The Upanishads are the source of Vedanta, a means of knowledge that reveals the limitless Self.
7. The disciple has just received *darshan*, an experience of the Self in the form of the Goddess, from his guru. Literally, *darshan* means 'sight' or 'vision.'
8. 'Guru' means 'one who removes darkness' i.e. the 'light' of Self knowledge. 'Feet' symbolize understanding, the knowledge of the Self. Touching the feet indicates surrender to the idea of enlightenment. The lotus is a common symbol of enlightenment.
9. Parasurama is a mature individual free of psychological problems. He is mildly disillusioned with spiritual practice, but on balance he is a positive, centered person whose questions are motivated by curiosity and deep thought. In the Vedic spiritual world he would be considered an *adikhari*, someone qualified for Self-Realization.
10. In ancient Vedic culture the *brahmins* occupied the highest niche in the caste system because of their learning and spiritual wisdom. The *kshetriya* (political and military) class was required by caste *dharma* to protect and support the *brahmins*. Failure to do so was considered *adharmic*, a serious breach of social obligation.
11. On the esoteric level Rama symbolizes the Self although the average Indian considers him a god or an historical figure. At this stage of life the very idea of God made Parasurama angry.
12. As an incarnation of *dharma*, Rama would necessarily show mercy to a defeated enemy.
13. *Avaduts* are Self realized souls completely free of body consciousness who wander about naked. They have no fixed abode, don not touch money, nor do they beg for food. They are the highest stage of *sannyasis* (renunciates). *Sannyas* is the forth or final stage of life in the Vedic system.
14. The heat or power generated from meditation.
15. The inner meaning is that meditation renders the mind impotent. Indra is a Vedic symbol of the mind. Vedic science also claims that the human level is superior to the level of the Gods because enlightenment is only possible in human

form. The state of 'the Gods' is a state of pure pleasure devoid of discrimination. One remains in it until one's good karma runs out. Then the 'God' returns to the human level where it is possible to seek the truth.

16. Religious rituals and detailed meditations found in the Vedas and Pauranas. Spiritual practice does not produce lasting happiness.

17. Devotional practice. Although the path of *karma* does not, *bhakti*, one-pointed love of God, can lead to liberation, lasting happiness. Tripura Rahasya is a Vedantic text, intended for the intellectually inclined. Parasurama's intellect has become subtle and inquiring because of his *bhakti* for the Goddess and he now needs a path that can removed his doubts. When one loves someone or something, one desires to know more about it.

18. The belief that lasting fulfillment can come through activity.

19. Vedanta is known as a *shabda pramana*, a means of knowledge that uses sound (*shab*) or words to effect enlightenment. Since Parasurama is an *adhikari*, he should easily realize the Self simply by listening attentively to the words of his guru.

20. What is seen or known is apparent and the Knower or Seer is Real.

Rediscovery of oneself as the Self, the Seer, is liberation.

21. The ten heads represent the five active and five perceptive senses.

22. This story, perhaps the most famous and poetic Purana, is known to nearly every Indian. In the old days it was repeated endlessly by village storytellers. A forty part television series of the Ramayana was the most popular television show ever and brought the whole country to a standstill during screenings.

The Indian mind's lack of a linear chronological sense is probably responsible for the mention of Rama as a mythological figure and his subsequent appearance in the life of Parasurama.

23. *Vichara* in Sanskrit. It also means investigation, discernment, and discrimination.

24. Some argue that because the Self is already realized, only the unenlightened mind/ego entity can get enlightened. Others say that since only the Self exists there is no ego to get enlightened. These apparently opposing views suggest that ignorance both exists and does not exist. The problem is resolved by determining which point of view is operating. From the Self's point of view ignorance and ego do not exist, except as illusion, or not at all if the mind is completely destroyed. From the ego's point of view, ignorance exists (because it sees itself as inadequate, incomplete, and limited). If you argue that limitation is natural to the ego how do you explain ego's continual desire to rid itself of it? Furthermore, when the ego experiences oneness with the Self it clings to the experience tooth and nail, suggesting that oneness is its nature. An ego that has never 'experienced the Self' does not know it's ignorant of the Self. The teachings of Vedanta are meant to help egos who know they are ignorant remove their ignorance.

25. 'Great souls' or Self Realized beings.

26. 'The one who loves knowledge.'

27. The Self, pure limitless Consciousness.

28. The individual Self or pure ego.

29. *Maya*, Self forgetfulness or ignorance.
30. The ego. The part that is intoxicated with life.
31. The intellect.
32. The association of the pure Self with the ego. Ignorance causes the pure Self to seem ignorant, even though It is never actually contaminated.
33. The emotions.
34. The unholy alliance between the emotional and intellectual faculties in a person who has forgotten who they really are. In a Self realized soul the intellect, steeped in wisdom, maintains emotional stability but in an ordinary person the emotions, stirred by ignorance, eventually come to dominate the intellect causing one to behave irrationally.
35. The body.
36. The five senses.
40. A reference to the fact that sense information is useless unless a conscious being (the mind/intellect/ego entity) is connected to the senses. In deep sleep, some forms of meditation and intense internal concentration sense information is unavailable to the conscious being.
41. The principle of ignorance-born Desire. Voraciousness.
42. When a person is consumed with ignorance-born Desire, he or she is constantly at odds with a frustrating world of scarcity. Desire turns to anger when obstructed.
43. Aggression. Anger leads to aggression.
44. When the mind lusts for objects it feels guilty because it unconsciously knows that it is setting itself up for disillusionment and frustration. Guilt leads to anger and aggression.
45. The limitless Self associated with a given mind/intellect entity. When the mind/intellect entity sleeps the Self remains awake. 'Watching' is a symbol for the ever-aware Self, often referred to as a 'witness.'
46. The body.
47. Karma, activity. Karma, the momentum of past actions, is always at work, keeping the body alive even when we sleep. Though apparently inactive when we sleep, it is actually generating the energy to wake us up, project the mind and unfold our lives. In its seed or causal state Karma is called the Causal Body because it causes the Subtle Body, the mind/intellect entity, to function. This is probably the reference to the "upper gateway."
48. When the mind/intellect sleeps the apparently limited Self shucks off Its apparent limitation and 'merges' back into its original state. In fact, It was never separate. The letting go of Its apparent limitation allows It to be what It is.
49. Karma causes the association of the pure Self with the limited worlds.
50. Reincarnation
51. Self-Knowledge.
52. Self Realization does not happen until one's attachments are dissolved.
53. Conditioning.
54. The original text used the masculine pronoun "He" because Consciousness, ordinarily symbolized as a male, is feminine in this text. Vedic spiritual science generally sees creation as a union between two cosmic principles, Consciousness

and energy (shakti) or Spirit and matter. Non-dual Vedanta does not admit a creation separate from the creator. But in so far as we take our interpretation of sense experience as real, the creation seems to be separate from the Creator. In this case Vedanta admits another principle, *Maya*. *Maya* is the misapprehension of a creation caused by the non-apprehension of the Self. But whether one accepts the dualist or non-dualist view, the Self is genderless.

55. The text seems to contradict itself. Previously, Hemalekha said that God was bound by the laws operating in the creation. Now we are told that God can suspend the laws of the universe, in this case time. Actually, time is only a concept, like the idea of scarcity, so it can be altered from within so the parents can gain the vision of their son's true eternal nature and therefore not lament the demise of the body. In fact, there are many examples in spiritual literature of the power of pure devotion (*para bhakti*) over natural law.

56. Subconscious impressions, conditioning.

57. This idea, the basis of *yoga*, comes from the Patanjali Yoga Sutras, a codification of yogic doctrines of great antiquity. The idea is not mentioned in the original text but is included by the author because it relevant to the topic of meditation.

58. In Vedantic literature the word 'object' refers to both physical objects and subtle objects. Subtle objects are smental (concepts and ideas) and emotional (feelings) phenomena.

Glossary

avadhut The highest class of *sannyasins*, renunciates. *Avadhuts* are completely devoid of body consciousness. They are 'sky clad,' naked, have no fixed abode and do not beg for food.

bhakti Devotion. There are two types of devotion: *guna* (conditioned) *bhakti* and *para* (pure) *bhakti*. Conditioned *bhakti* is devotion conditioned by one's psychological complexion. Unconditioned *bhakti* is pure love without qualifications. It is complete identification with the beloved.

Brahmin The religious or spiritual class. Those devoted to following and propagating *dharma*. Nowadays, the highest social caste, an hereditary designation.

Dharma The eternal way. Righteousness. A code of conduct and way of life based on universal values. The duties enjoined on a seeker.

Adharma Going against *dharma*. Actions motivated by selfish craving and fear.

Hanuman The monkey God. A symbol of pure *bhakti*, unconditional love.

karma Action. Activity. The results of action.

Kshetriyas The military and political class. Those devoted to protecting *dharma* and the spiritual class.

Mahatma A great (*mahan*) soul (*atma*). Mahatmas are Self-Realized beings.

OM A symbol of the Self, pure consciousness.

Puranas Vedic culture's mythological literature. The Pauranas enshrine Vedic ideas and ideals in charming stories and tales of the deeds and exploits of the Gods.

Ram 'The one who revels in the Heart.' A great king, an incarnation of Vishnu, the Self. The protagonist in the Ramayana, one of Vedic culture's two major epics.

Rishi A seer. The spiritual visions of the *rishis* are the basis of Vedic culture. A sage.

Sanskrit 'Well-done, purified.' A revealed spiritual language. The language of the Vedas.

Shabda Sound. Words. The oral means of teaching Self knowledge.

Shastras Scriptures. Vedic texts containing the science of Self-Knowledge. The Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Puranas, Yoga texts, etc.

Shiva ‘That which is good at all times and places.’ A word describing the Self. A Pauranic diety. Shiva is an ascetic, a meditator.

Self The essence of everything. Pure Consciousness. The holy Spirit. The source of lasting happiness. The object of all striving.

Tapas ‘Heat-producing.’ Any discipline, including meditation, that generates energy. Ascetic practices.

Tripura ‘Three cities.’ The three states of consciousness: waking, dream, and deep sleep.

upasanas The rituals and meditations enshrined in the karmic portion of the Vedas.

Upanishads The portions of the Vedas containing the visions of the *rishis* which have been subsequently developed into Vedanta, the ‘science’ or way to the Self. Their fundamental idea, that the whole universe is spirit or pure consciousness, is the basis of Vedic culture.

Vedas *Veda* means knowledge. The Vedas are voluminous texts of great antiquity that contain both the religious and spiritual ideas of the Hindus. The Vedas are composed of two sections. The section on karma details the actions necessary to obtain desirable objects in this life and the hereafter. The section on knowledge is called the Upanishads and is the source of the Vedanta.

Vedanta Literally, *veda anta*, the end of the Vedas. Also, the knowledge (*veda*) that ends (*anta*) the search for knowledge, or Self-Knowledge. Vedanta is a means of Self knowledge. It is an oral tradition that stretches back thousands of years to Vedic times.

Vichara Inquiry, investigation. Vichara is a rigorous method of inquiring into the Self.

Vishnu ‘All-pervading.’ A word describing the Self. A Pauranic diety, the ‘long strider.’ One of the three universal principles operating in the manifest realm.

Yoga To yoke, join. The union of the individual soul with the Self, the universal Spirit. One of the two main Vedic spiritual traditions, the other being Vedanta. A path of purification and experience of the Self.