

॥श्रीः॥

॥स्वात्मनिरूपणम्॥

Soātmanirūpanam

*The True Definition
of One's Own Self*

॥ श्रीः ॥

॥ स्वात्मनिरूपणम् ॥

Soātmanirūpanam

sva **one's/one's own**

ātma **Self**

nirūpaṇam **definition**

or

su **good/well/excellent/true**

ātma **Self**

nirūpaṇam **definition**

Definition of one's own Self

The good definition of the Self

Definition of the good Self

Definition of the true Self

The true definition of the Self

Translation by

Dr. H. Ramamoorthy

&

Nome

Society of Abidance in Truth

COPYRIGHT 2002 BY THE
SOCIETY OF ABIDANCE IN TRUTH
PRINTED IN SOUTH KOREA

FIRST EDITION 2002

ISBN 0-9703667-1-X

FOR ALL INQUIRIES, CONTACT THE PUBLISHER:

SOCIETY OF ABIDANCE IN TRUTH
SAT
1834 Ocean Street
Santa Cruz, California 95060 USA
(831) 425-7287
www.SATRamana.org

Special Acknowledgement

In deep appreciation to

*Dayalal Lalgi Vyas
and
Saraswati Dayalal Vyas*

*In honor of their sixty-third
marriage anniversary
for which their children have kindly given
the support by which it has become possible
to publish this sacred book.*

*May the blessings of Adi Sankara
be ever with them.*

*May they ever abide
in the Truth of Brahman,
the Real Self,
and thus dwell in
eternal bliss and peace.*

Foreword

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Sankaraya

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Ramanaya

It is a great blessing for the Society of Abidance in Truth (SAT) to be able to present this work by Sri Sankara.

SAT's fundamental purpose is to bring forth the universal, perennial wisdom of Advaita Vedanta in a profound, experiential manner as has been handed down by great sages such as Sri Sankara and Sri Ramana Maharshi. We are extraordinarily grateful to those spiritual beings from antiquity who recorded these precious, life-fulfilling teachings for all serious spiritual seekers to meditate deeply upon with the wise guidance of a Sat-Guru in order to unlock their meaning, understand the true significance of life, and realize at heart the pure essence of these sacred texts.

The scripture presented here, composed by the glorious Sat-Guru Sri Sankara, has been translated from Sanskrit into English by Dr. H. Ramamoorthy and Nome to serve a meditative purpose and, thus, remove unreal bondage. It is sincerely hoped by the translators and SAT that nothing has been left out or has been modified in any manner and that this translation retains the pristine teaching as Sri Sankara intended.

Each verse has been presented in four versions. The first is the original Sanskrit; the second is the romanized version which can be used for recitation purposes by those who do not read Sanskrit; the third is a word-for-word breakdown; and the fourth is a running translation in fluent English. The purpose of the four versions is to provide a thorough presentation for spiritual beings, regardless of their language abilities, so that all have the opportunity to understand the teaching as presented by Sri Sankara.

SAT is also grateful to have had the privilege of producing other such works by Sri Sankara such as *Nirguna Manasa Puja* and by the great sage Ribhu such as *The Ribhu Gita* (English translation from Sanskrit) and *The Song of Ribhu* (English translation from Tamil). Numerous Advaita Vedanta texts and stotra-s (hymns) composed by Sri Sankara, writings of Sri Ramana Maharshi, and Upanishad and Agama texts, translated by the same translation team, are also planned for future publication.

These sacred writings are beacons of Reality appearing in a dream. If this work serves to free but a single being from the illusory clutches of samsara, it has fulfilled its divine purpose.

Sasvati

Guru Purnima, July 24, 2002

Acknowledgements

The translators and the Society of Abidance in Truth would like to express their deepest gratitude to:

Ganesh Sadasivan, Raman Muthukrishnan and Sangeeta Raman for their careful proofreading of this text.

S. Venkataramanan whose Sanskrit text and English translation, published by G.A. Natesan and Co., Madras, over sixty-five years ago, helped clarify a few points and provided an alternative Sanskrit edition of Sankara's words for certain verses.

All the members of SAT who, through their dedicated efforts and offerings, enable SAT to continue in its consecrated endeavor to make these timeless teachings of nondualistic Self-Knowledge available to earnest seekers of Truth.

Sasvati for her typing and layout of this book, seeing to its printing, and helping to provide an environment that was conducive to the translators' concentrated work.

All the sages, both those whom we know by name and those whom we do not, who have revealed and preserved this Supreme Knowledge and who have been the inspiration of the present work.

Introduction

Being is. Being alone is. The Self is the Absolute, and That is the only Reality. Such is eternally the Truth. Such is the final conclusion of Advaita Vedanta.

This *Svatmanirupanam (Definition of One's Own Self)*, authored by the great sage of Advaita Vedanta, Adi Sankara, is a concise text of this enlightening teaching. As the title declares, it is the teaching regarding the true definition of the Self. The Self is itself Brahman, the vast, formless Absolute, and any contrariwise conception of it is merely delusion. So, this teaching is an exposition of what is truly the Self. As there are not actually two selves, for the true Self is the ever-existent and a false self is never-existent, and since one being the object of another is impossible, this teaching is of the nature of one's own Self. The teaching is the revelation of the Self for the purpose of Self-Realization for those who earnestly inquire to know within themselves the answer to the question, "Who am I?"

The nondualistic teachings expressed here by Sri Sankaracharya, the great spiritual teacher Sankara, are of an eternal nature. This is so not only because of the timeless meaning or content of these teachings, dealing as they do with the Self that transcends all time, space, and objectivized illusion, but also because they form the very core and the original quintessence of Advaita Vedanta, which is the final, highest Knowledge. Advaita Vedanta is itself the very essence of Sanatana Dharma,¹ the teachings of eternal Truth. The very same teachings are found in the *Upanisad-s*, which are the wisdom portion of the *Veda-s*, which are perhaps the most ancient extant scriptures. These very same teachings of Self-Realization and of the Self-inquiry that results in this

¹Also referred to as Hinduism.

Realization have been taught more recently with superlative clarity by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Indeed, the pure emphasis on the Knowledge of one's own Self found in this *Svatmanirupanam* is extremely reminiscent of the teachings given so graciously by the Maharshi, teachings which, when comprehended and thoroughly practiced, unfailingly yield Liberation from all of the imagined bondage. The resultant silent peace and illimitable bliss, of the very nature of the Being-Consciousness that is the Self, are ineffable. It is wondrous that, though transcendent of words and thoughts, the Truth is so clearly revealed by the great sages. The records of their teachings are veritable, inextinguishable lights that have been preserved and handed down for ages. Those who are graced to receive such are blessed, indeed.

These teachings of the *Svatmanirupanam*, which are intended to bring Liberation from the bondage of ignorance, are of Self-Knowledge. This Knowledge is that of Consciousness itself by Consciousness itself. Consciousness is identical with Being, so this Knowledge is that of Being itself. It is something utterly non-bodily and non-sensory in nature. It is also non-mental in nature. Knowledge through the senses or through thoughts may be regarded as indirect or as just of the nature of ignorance. Such ignorant "knowledge" is based on the erroneous notions of an "I" to be a knower or experiencer, a "this" or an existent objective thing, and the relation between them. Such dualism or triadic notions are characteristic of ignorance. True Knowledge is characterized by nonduality. In true Knowledge, there remains no notion of individuality, or an ego, no matter what attributes may be further superimposed on that notion, such as a thinker, a sensing entity, an embodied entity, and so forth and so on. In True Knowledge, there remains no notion of a "this," whether such a world or realm of objectivized experiences or notions be conceived of as permanent or temporary, as of matter or of thought, as material in character or from a divine source, as providing happiness or providing suffering. Truly, the actual experience of all those who conclusively realize the Self is as found in Ajata Vada, or the teaching of No-creation. The Self is unborn and imperishable, timeless and everlasting,

locationless yet omnipresent, ever immutable, undergoing no modification or phase ever. It never gives rise to an “other.” Of the nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss, One without a second, of the nature of the Reality that ever is just as it is, it alone exists. This is Nonduality, to be realized directly by a thorough inquiry to know oneself. For those who are ardent in the pursuit of this inquiry, who are desirous of Self-Realization, and who are keenly aware of the inestimable, inner value of this teaching of Nonduality, the *Svatmanirupanam* has been composed many centuries ago by Adi Sankara.

Sri Sankara commences this sacred work by offering salutations to his Guru, revealing how the glorious state of Self-Realization is simultaneously one of utmost humility, for it is devoid of ego. That which is the Guru, which is manifested as instruction and experienced as grace, is the power that destroys duality, which is a product of erroneous perception. The destruction of such ignorance, and its consequence of imagined duality, is Liberation from all bondage and suffering, which are unbearable as they run contrary to our true nature of Bliss, just as ignorance is contrary to Knowledge, and egoism is contrary to real Being. The sacred ash, mentioned by Sri Sankara and so familiar to those who are devoted to Siva, represents, as Sri Ramana Maharshi has explained, the residuum of unalloyed, nondual Being, or pure formless Existence, after the utter destruction of all the forms of illusion and delusion by the fire of Knowledge. In the second verse, Sri Sankara again praises his Guru, relating how pure compassion alone is the motivation for such sages to bestow their gracious teachings and loving assistance to destroy all doubts as to the nature of Reality, which is the true nature of oneself. The instruction is about the actual experience of Nonduality. This Nonduality signifies the indivisible, immutable, eternal Reality just as it is, which is the significance of the term “That” in such ageless Advaita Vedanta teachings as, “Tat Tvam Asi,” meaning, “That you are.”

Sri Sankara then proceeds to expound the Nondual teachings, setting the exposition in the form of a dialogue between a gracious, wise Guru and an ardently inquiring disciple. The

disciple is described as scorched by the fire of samsara. Samsara is the repetitive cycle of birth and death, or illusion, characterized by sufferings of various kinds. Suffering is due to illusion, commencing with an “I,” or individual, to which is attributed various forms of misidentification such as the mind, the senses, the body, and attachment to the things of the world. The illusion is the result of delusion, or ignorance, the fundamental basis of which is the ignorant notion of an existent, individual entity, or ego. That which is alone destructive of ignorance is Knowledge, and so by Self-Knowledge the disciple is enlightened by the Guru. That is, the Guru, who is the Self, reveals the same Absolute Self as the Self of the disciple. The Self then reposes in itself and is said to have realized itself. The ego has no part in such Realization, as something that is unreal cannot at all realize That which alone is ever real. The disciple’s preparedness to absorb such teachings so as to realize the Self is constituted by what Sri Sankara refers to as “all practices.” This may be understood as referring to sadhana chatustaya, the four requisites or four means of spiritual practice. These are viveka or discrimination; vairagya or detachment; the sextet of essentials of sama or tranquility and peacefulness, dama or self-control, inclusive of control of the senses, uparati or renunciation and withdrawal from the external, titiksha or forbearance and fortitude, sraddha or sincere faith inclusive of the clear understanding and the unwavering determination to find out the Truth revealed by the scripture and the Guru in which one has faith, samadhana or profound, concentrated, formless meditation; and the fourth requisite of mumukshutva or the intense desire for Liberation. By an aspirant endowed with such practices, the teachings regarding the true definition of one’s own Self are fully absorbed.

As did Sri Ramana Maharshi, Adi Sankara immediately reveals the fact of one’s Existence. You are, and you know that you are. Such knowledge is identical with what is known, that is, your own Existence, and does not rely on any other means of knowing, such as thought or sense perception. It is not possible to doubt your existence, for if you did, surely the doubter’s existence would still be taken for granted. The

ultimate nature of that doubter can only be Existence itself. Existence is irrefutable. That Existence is Brahman, the solitary knower, of the nature of Consciousness. So, whether there is the idea of “I am” or the idea of “I am not,” Brahman is, and that Brahman is alone the Self. The Self is only Brahman. The idea of oneself being different from Brahman in any manner or degree whatsoever is merely delusion, such delusion being the cause of suffering. The delusion is simply misidentification.

Thereafter, Sri Sankara describes how to discern the Self, utilizing discrimination to distinguish it from the sheaths that appear to cover it. It is a process, proceeding from gross to subtle, of freeing oneself from misidentification. This reveals one’s real Being, which is Consciousness and which is Bliss itself. This Being-Consciousness-Bliss is before all and has no birth. It is after all and has no death. It is changeless and thus formless. It is always unaffected, and thus the Bliss of the Self is as ever-existent and invariable as Being itself is, as Consciousness itself is. Yet, it is only when one actually inquires to know oneself, liberating one’s identity from the misidentification with all that constitutes the veiling sheaths, that the ever-effulgent Self shines in Knowledge of the Self.

In commencing an inquiry to know the Self, even if it first appears to the spiritual aspirant that there is nothing in his experience other than what constitutes the five sheaths, from the causal through the intellectual and mental to the prana and the body, there still exists one who is the knower, or experiencer, of these. All of these sheaths are objective to the Self, the innermost Consciousness. All of these are not one’s actual Existence. The knower can never be a known or unknown object. The knower, the Self, is ever-existent and, being nonobjective, can only be formless without the least trace of any of the attributes of the known.

The object of experience will always correspond to the identity of the subject. So, if the subjective identity be that of the misidentification with the body, an objective world will appear to be the experience. Similarly, if the identity is composed of misidentification with the mind, thoughts, modes, and states of mind will be the corresponding object.

Upon inquiry, though, one recognizes the previously assumed subjective stand to be merely objective as well. This inquiry is revealed in the *Taittiriya Upanisad*, and the same inquiry to find the real Consciousness free of superimposed objective attributes of the sheaths is taught by Sri Sankara. Tracing the sheaths inwardly, the prana is the subject of the body, while prana is the object of the mind. The mind, though, is also an object of the intellect, and both are objective to the causal sheath. Still, there is one for whom all these are objective. Since that is interior to, or transcendent of, all that is gross and subtle, all that is manifest and even that which is unmanifest, all that can be conceived and even the absence of conception, there is nothing beyond it. That can never change its nature to become an object of experience. It is always existing as pure Consciousness, the self-effulgent illuminator of all. It knows all, yet none knows it, as the Self is always of the nature of pure, immutable Consciousness. It can neither be an object of something else nor can it be divided within itself as subject and object, "I" and "this." It may be regarded as that which experiences all, but nothing else experiences it. In saying so, Sri Sankara does not give any validity to the object of experience, nor yet to the notion of an individual experiencer, but rather emphasizes the reality of Consciousness. It can neither be perceived nor conceived, but is realized as itself by itself. That is the true Self, transcendent of the entire universe, dependent upon which is the universe, in which the universe appears, yet in which there is not actually ever a universe, since this Self is of the nature of homogeneous, undifferentiated, immutable Consciousness. Therefore, that alone is the sole-existent Reality for all eternity. Realizing the nonobjective nature of the Self is the way to Liberation from the bondage of illusion.

This Self is Brahman. Being the Reality and nonobjective, it is pure Existence of a completely formless nature. It is thus always attributeless. Therefore, as the Self is not this or that and never becomes this or that, but is always just Being, the Realization of the Self, or Self-Knowledge, which in non-duality must necessarily be of the identical nature as the Self which is realized or known, is only Being. It is not becoming

or being this or that. It is simply Being, which is neither a thing nor an activity. This is clearly and abundantly taught by Sri Ramana Maharshi, and the very same is elucidated in verse eighteen of the *Svatmanirupanam* by Adi Sankara, the wondrous Acarya (Acharya, spiritual teacher) of Advaita Vedanta.

What is an object, be it gross or subtle, is not directly experienced. Such is experienced through some instrument or means of perception or conception. A gross object depends upon the body from which to perceive, the senses by which to perceive, the prana to enliven them, and the mind to cognize the senses. This occurs only in a particular state of mind, such as the waking state for waking state, objective experiences. A subtle object, that is, an object of thought, requires less to be experienced, but still requires a mind in a particular state. From a higher perspective, both what appears as gross and what appears as subtle, what appears as internal within the mind and what is imagined to be external due to misidentification with the body, are entirely within the mind. The waking state of mind constitutes the waking state experiences, just as a dreaming state of mind constitutes the dream state experiences. Misidentified within the state, the experiencer is perplexed and all of it seems real, though actually the invisible, indivisible Consciousness is alone real and all-pervading. However the experiences are viewed, they cannot wisely be regarded as directly experienced, yet Consciousness, which is one's very Existence, is always directly experienced or known, without being dependent on anything else in order to be or to be known.

The apparent, temporary existence of an object, anything regarded as "this," is contradicted by its nonexistence at another time. Everything born is subject to death. All that is created is also destroyed. The attributes of a body at one time are replaced by different or antithetical ones at another time. Thought along one line may be contradicted by contrary thinking at another time. All that is "this" is subject to change and destruction, and one who misidentifies with such does not find firm, lasting peace. Such peace is inherent in the changeless. The changeless is the Existence of the Self. It can never

be disturbed by changeful phenomena and can never be contradicted by mental conception, for it is transcendent over matter and thought, is neither created nor destroyed, and is utterly nondependent. This Absolute Reality, is, as Sri Sankara states in verse 19, “not beyond Awareness.” That is, it can be known as Consciousness itself. This is Supreme Knowledge, with no division into knower and known, and no separate relation or activity of knowing. All three are one and the same in this Nondual Self-Knowledge. It is Consciousness conscious of itself, yet not as an object. It is Existence reposing in itself, self-luminous and free of all misidentifications. Such is direct experience.

That Self is Brahman, which as the *Kenopanisad* (*Kena Upanishad*) declares, is known yet not known, which though not known (objectively) yet is known. In verse 20, Sri Sankara declares the definition of Brahman to be Reality-Knowledge-Infinity. It is Reality, for Being alone exists always, without modification. That which never undergoes modification, which is self-existent, and which never ceases to be, is Truth or Reality. Knowledge is as explained above and, as such, is pure Consciousness. Thus, Supreme Knowledge is Brahman. That which is without form and thus boundaryless, which is undifferentiated and thus partless and indivisible, which is timeless and eternal, and which has no limitations whatsoever is signified by “Infinity.” That which is Reality-Knowledge-Infinity is alone the Self, for this Self is only Brahman.

In verses 20 and 64, Sri Sankara declares that satyam-jnanam-anantam, Truth-Knowledge-Infinity, is the very definition of Brahman, or the Supreme Self, thus graciously providing a description of the ineffable. The *Taittiriya Upanisad* declares the very same, and, in his commentary upon it, Sri Sankara elucidates the significance of these adjectives of Brahman. The Truth, or Reality, is that which never changes its nature, while the mutable should be recognized by the wise as unreal. If the real nature of Being is Consciousness, it is ever that, and thus the nature of the knower can never become other than what it is or bear any of the attributes of the known. Knowledge signifies

Consciousness itself, which, being formless and egoless, is not an individual knower. The Knowledge is, therefore, transcendent of both knower and known, and it is thus not the relation of those assumed poles, or dualistic cognition. If the Self would be regarded as an individual knower, it would be limited, and, therefore, Liberation would become impossible. The Knowledge that is Liberation is free of such a false assumption of individuality. Similarly, if the Self would be regarded as the known, there would need to be another to know it, but there is no one else to know the Self. The Self is not inert, and it is the experience of all that Consciousness is the most interior, the true meaning of “I,” and does not require another to know it. Furthermore, in that commentary, Sri Sankara declares that Consciousness is the unchanging Reality and the unlimited, for it is neither the known nor the knower just mentioned. So, it is all-knowing, and the all-knowing is the all-blissful. That is, the Self is the Consciousness that knows and is the bliss of all beings everywhere for all time. Finally, Sri Sankara declares that the nature of Infinity is to be “not separate from anything,” having no other. The Self is infinite in terms of space because it is not born of anything, having no form. It is infinite in time because it not created, but ever is. It is infinite in “substance” because it is identical with all. A differentiated thing is limited. Likewise, a differentiated idea is limited by both time and other ideas, as well as by its own form. The Self, though, is undifferentiated and thus limitless. That Self is Brahman, known to be the cause of all things, time, space, and all else. It is the cause of infinite space and is all-pervading. It is not a thing or a product of anything else and is without end in terms of time. Because there is nothing different from the Self, the Self is infinite in “substance.” That Truth-Knowledge-Infinity is Reality and is absolute.

With misidentification with the sheaths, the nature of the Self is veiled. Mistaken to be an individual limited to the body and the mind, the Supreme is then seen as the Lord, as explained in verse 21. The individual being, or jiva, seems different from the Lord, or Isvara. They seem different in their attributes, and their attributes are regarded as determining

their nature. In such ignorance, the jiva (individual) is assumed to be completely different in nature (unqualified duality), different with something of the Lord, who is the source, within the jiva (qualified duality), or similar in nature but with some difference such as magnitude, power, knowledge, etc. (qualified nonduality). With the negation of the misidentifications constituting the limitations of the jiva, the differences utterly vanish, being unreal. The one Self that had appeared as the Lord and the individual is realized just as it truly is, without any distinctions. The absence of the individual leaves only the Self, the Absolute, existing without any duality whatsoever. This is unqualified nonduality, or pure Advaita.

From the worldly-minded perspective, when all is seen as subject to change and contradiction, being perishable and unstable, it may seem that there is nothing absolutely real, nothing truly existing. If, instead, one wisely inquires to know oneself, one finds the Self to be beyond all that is subject to change. The Self and its Knowledge are most certainly beyond the worldly viewpoint. What is beyond all that is changeful and not subject to contradiction is Brahman. This is seen by the seers of Truth, by the rishis (sages) of the *Veda-s* and throughout all time. Sri Sankara brings forth not newly appearing ideas, for what appears will disappear, but rather elucidates eternal Truth. Always, the nature of the Self is the same, and that Self is the Self of all. Always, the suffering of living beings is caused only by ignorance characterized by misidentification, and always freedom from ignorance and suffering is by Knowledge, the Knowledge of the Self. Always the Reality, which is Brahman, is as it is. As it was, so it is, and so it will be always.

Though the Self exists always, shining as never-diminished Consciousness, the seeker of Self-Realization must reflect and deeply meditate upon the spiritual Truth expressed in the aphorisms of the wise sages, the teachings regarding the Self being That, in order to realize it. Otherwise, this Absolute Self seems to remain beyond the scope of one's experience, even though it is one's very Existence. By a deep inquiry into the meaning of the teaching, inquiring to know

“Who am I?” and by the Grace of the Master, which is beyond measure, Sri Sankara declares, one attains “a direct Awareness, in an instant, of the Self.” The Knowledge of the Self is not time-bound. The Self, itself, neither comes nor goes, and its Realization, therefore, can never be quick or slow, for time does not exist in the Self. Moreover, it would be ridiculous to define or attempt to measure the Realization, which is of the nature of Reality and not an event that would occur to some individual, by the measurements and definitions of the unreal. In addition, the Reality of the Self is ever present, and, the moment ignorance is removed, it is known to be there without any delay. Whenever ignorance is removed, to the extent it is removed, to that extent the Self shines unobscured. When the superimposition is negated, That which truly exists and which was the substrate of the superimposed, alone remains. Since That was existing the whole time, both during the imagined bondage and in the revealed Liberation, it is not an attainment, and the Realization, being nondual and thus of the identical nature, is not an attainment, though all illusion and the sufferings of samsara are abolished. In his commentary upon the *Taittiriya Upanisad*, Sri Sankara says that the Self does not truly fall into the categories of attainment and non-attainment, realization and non-realization, as if there were different states for the Self. The Self is itself—in its own state always, as the Maharshi has declared—and the ego, being unreal, cannot have a real state. Sri Sankara states that one cannot attain oneself, for the Self is unlimited and identical with all, so Realization consists of the discovery through Knowledge of what is actually always true, just as, in the proverbial story of the tenth man, no one was lost or regained, but there was relief from all concern when right Knowledge dawned. Therefore, certitude of Knowledge is what is needed, while depth of inquiry is the means for it. Grace is ever present and is experienced proportionate to one’s diving within. Therefore, Sankara has said in this *Svatmanirupanam*, “...reflecting upon the meaning of the aphorism, by the greatness of the Grace of the Master, one attains a direct Awareness, in an instant, of the Self.”

The aspirant is blessed with the instruction of, “You are That.” Prior to Self-inquiry, the “you” (that is, one’s sense of “I”) is confounded with the body, the senses, and the mind. Consequently, the “I” is considered to be an experiencer and the performer of the activities of the body, as explained in verse 25. As for “That,” it is considered to be the omniscient Absolute, the very cause of the entire universe, which is truly Consciousness. Upon Self-inquiry, the Self is recognized as the Witness, which is Consciousness that is distinct from the body, the senses, the mind, and the ego. As for That, it is known by direct experience as immaculate Consciousness, which has no conditioning of any kind ever, as indestructible, as being without duality or anything else whatsoever, and as transcendent of the universe. With such inquiry, one arrives at true Knowledge by emphasis upon Consciousness itself, discarding the apparently different or contradictory attributes of the “I” and the Absolute (“That”). Since the most ancient times, the sacred Knowledge of the most profound wisdom has been taught by revealing the identity of the “I” and the “That.” The instruction is “That you are,” and the “are” or identity can be realized by the inquiry that reveals what the “I” truly is. Thus, by the inquiry, “Who am I?” is the profound Knowledge of the Self realized, and abidance in this Knowledge is freedom from all sorrow.

In verses 39 through 43, Adi Sankara extols the importance of the Guru, pointing out that purity of mind, performing religious practices such as rites, and engaging in other spiritual activities will not in themselves suffice for the highest good. In the relationship with the Guru, which is not a relationship as between two embodied beings, there occurs the dissolution of the ego of the disciple. The Guru abides as Brahman itself, the impersonal, bodiless, egoless Self, with no confusion regarding the Truth. By the Guru’s wise, compassionate, gracious instruction, the disciple loses his individual identity, or ego. That which the Guru is, That which is the Self, That which is Brahman, alone remains. Next, Sri Sankara extols the *Veda-s*, proclaiming them to be the very pronouncements of the Supreme Lord and of a beginningless nature. This beginningless Knowledge is the Knowledge of the eternal, Absolute

Self, which is beginningless, and this Supreme Lord is none other than the Self itself. Specifically, Sri Sankara refers to that portion of the *Veda-s* that treats of the Supreme Knowledge, which is Nonduality and of which this *Svatmanirupanam* is a reiteration. Indeed, Sri Sankaracharya states that all that is written concerning this Knowledge, no matter how wonderful, is only a restatement of the original Knowledge.

For one desirous of the Supreme Knowledge of the Self, this reliance on the *Veda-s* is one of four crucial validations of one's understanding, as described by Sri Sankara in other works of his. The first, already mentioned, is the sruti, or the *Veda-s*. The second is smriti, or "remembered works" constituted of those scriptural or spiritual texts that come after the *Veda-s*. The disciple may view his own Guru's instructions as belonging to what is mentioned thus far. The third is deep reasoning, which is of the nature of discrimination, the essence of which is inquiry to know the Self. The fourth is one's own direct experience. Only when one's knowledge coincides with all four of these criteria, validated by all four, can the knowledge be regarded as true. This safeguards the seeker from mistaking self-created ideas or transient experiences for Truth and from misinterpreting the holy texts, as well. The *Veda-s* provide the ancient root of eternal Truth, the smriti-s provide the details of instruction, discrimination and inquiry provide the clear understanding, and one's own direct experience ensures that such does not remain as indirect, objectified knowledge. In *Vivekacudamani*, *The Crest Jewel of Discrimination*, Sri Sankara describes these four validations as holy texts, deep reasoning inclusive of meditation on the Supreme, instruction by the Guru, and direct, inner experience.

Nonduality is Truth. Dualism is merely a superimposition upon the Truth. The Reality is never superimposed. Rather, the unreal, the illusory, is superimposed, through ignorance, upon the Reality, as Sri Sankara explains in verse 52. Therefore, utter Nonduality is not an idea superimposed upon a real duality. Rather, unreal duality is merely superimposed, by imagination, upon Nonduality. Nonduality is the Truth established by the *Veda-s* and other sacred texts that declare

the Supreme Truth, such as this *Svatmanirupanam*. These holy books contain a sacred message that might not otherwise be understood. They do not confirm existing ignorance, but rather reveal Knowledge that transcends and destroys such ignorance. One does not require such holy works to learn of dualism, because one already knows of such dualism by worldly experience in the samsara. The texts are composed to reveal something not gained by worldly experience and not to be known by worldly means. That something is Nonduality. As long as duality subsists, suffering will be experienced. Such suffering is intolerable because it is contrary to one's true nature of Being-Consciousness-Bliss. For the sake of happiness, one seeks the true definition of oneself. With such Knowledge, one knows Being as it is, and in Nonduality, one is what one knows. Thus, there is the unalloyed, limitless Bliss of Being, which is as continuous and unending as ever-existent Being itself is.

The Self is blissful, Absolute Being, yet, in ignorance, it is assumed to be a limited individual entity, or jiva. This is described in verses 56 through 62. The jiva, being a product of ignorance, is unreal, or may be regarded as a misperception of what is real. If the individual entity, or ego, were really such, it would always be such, as a thing does not actually change its nature. If it is real, it is ever real. If it is unreal, it is ever unreal. The transient does not become the eternal, and the eternal does not become transient. The nonobjective does not become a thing, and an object does not become the transcendent Consciousness. The homogeneous, undifferentiated, and nondual does not become split, differentiated, and dual, and vice versa. The real Consciousness does not become an unreal thought, and an unreal thought does not become, or attain to, the real Consciousness. Therefore, if individuality be the real nature of the individual, it will always be so, but then there would be no Liberation possible, as it is agreed by all that Liberation is the egoless state. Without Liberation, there would be no permanent peace and happiness. A state lacking in peace and characterized by unhappiness runs contrary to one's nature. So, such peace and

happiness are sought. They are to be found within. Within is the Self. The Self is real, and thus ever-existent. One need only know the Self as it truly is and not misconstrue it to be an ego-entity in order to abide in the lasting peace and happiness of the Absolute Reality, for ignorance regarding such is the cause of all that is of the nature of suffering and futility. Therefore, Self-Realization is what is necessary. The Self that is to be realized must be innately egoless. That Self will never change its nature. Its Realization, or Knowledge of itself, is the experience of permanent peace and happiness. What then is the individual? This is the inquiry to be made by the seeker of Self-Knowledge. Upon such inquiry, this falsely assumed individuality vanishes, leaving the residuum of egoless Being, which was the only real identity or Existence the entire time. The true nature of the individual is, thus, only the real Self, which has no attribute of individuality whatsoever.

By Knowledge alone does the misidentification with the body and the delusion of samsara vanish. This cannot be accomplished by any bodily means. Ignorance is not a production of the body, and Knowledge, also, is not a bodily production. Ignorance has no valid cause, though it seems to rise from the "I." Yet, when one inquires into this "I," its "I"-ness vanishes, being unreal, and along with it vanishes ignorance, which is unreal. As for true Knowledge, it inheres in the Self. The effects of ignorance cannot be reasonably considered its cause. The effect is the samsara, of which the misidentification with the body is a pivotal factor. If the effects be traced to their cause, and that causal "I" be inquired into, what remains is oneself, the Self, alone, one without a second.

Sri Sankara declares that Self-Knowledge alone is necessary. The path to such Knowledge consists of Knowledge, the primary means for which is the practice of Self-inquiry. That which is the active ingredient in any practice resulting in deeper spiritual experience is Knowledge. Without it, no deeper experience is forthcoming. Yet, Knowledge itself can stand alone. As stated in verse 70, it requires no other assistance, just as the brilliant sun does not require some other

help to dispel darkness. The inquiry to know oneself is all-sufficient for the elimination of the darkness of ignorance and the revelation of the Absolute.

Sri Sankara proclaims that the relation between the objects of experience (inclusive of the world and thought, the gross and the subtle) and the real Existence is like that of an imagined snake superimposed upon a rope. The rope alone is, even when, in dim light, it is misperceived as a snake. The snake is never actually born, nor does it have any reality at all, other than that of the rope. The rope never changes its nature. It neither projects a snake nor changes into a snake. So it is with the Self and the imagination of anything else. This is the true purport of the essence of the *Veda-s* and all the other texts and teachings that declare the highest Truth.

In verses 72 and 73, Sri Sankara explains that, in relation to all that is objective, the Self is the silent witness. The witness is attributeless and formless. Its ultimate nature is pure Being, unmodified Consciousness, nondependent Bliss. In meditating upon the Self as the witness, no reality is to be attributed to the witnessed. The meditation is a return of happiness, identity, and reality to their true abode, and that is the uncreated Self. The witnessed is unreal, like a snake imagined where there is only a rope. As the rope alone exists and there never is really a snake, so it is with the Self and the non-Self. As the rope truly has no connection to the snake, that is to say the snake is only the rope though the rope is not at all ever a snake, so the unchanging Self is ever as it is and is never attached to unreal things.

In expedient teachings employed to assist the aspirant, *maya*, or illusion, is the reason given for the appearance of the Self as an experiencer, the performer of action, and such and the corresponding objects of such. However, as explained by Sri Sankara, *maya* itself does not actually exist. What is, is only Brahman, and nothing other than That ever comes to be. This Truth is seen by the seers of Truth, as the Real ever is and the unreal never is. Brahman is all that ever is. What seems to be a universe is only Brahman and not anything else. One who knows Brahman, therefore, knows all that there truly is, and this is true Knowledge. To aid the seeker, Sri Sankara fur-

ther teaches that same Brahman to be the cause of the universe, for, since the effect cannot be of a different nature than the cause, and since it is only illusion that makes it appear otherwise, such understanding leads to true Knowledge.

Verses 80 through 83 continue to instruct along these lines, revealing how all—the Guru, the disciple, and the entire universe—are only the Supreme Reality. Yet, in order to ensure that this profound instruction is not consumed within the context of the previous ignorant conception of the world being real in any way, he negates the idea that the universe is real. Viewed in highest Knowledge, the three statements, “The world is unreal,” “Brahman alone is real,” and “The universe is Brahman alone,” all have the identical significance. This is to be known by an inner, experiential inquiry. Without such inquiry, these aphorisms, and how their meanings are identical, remain a mystery.

Between “I” and “this” is displayed all delusion. The direct means of realizing the Truth, the true definition of one’s own Self, is to hold on to the “I” and inquire to determine what it is. The answer to such inquiry is never an objective conception. The only answer, as Sri Ramana Maharshi explained, is the nature of the inquirer himself. From verse 84 onward, Sri Sankara, speaking as the Guru, describes in detail this essential inquiry into the “I,” revealing the Self’s freedom from the body, senses, ego, and all else. After instructing in the manner of inquiry, he again reveals the ajata (no-creation) teaching of complete Nonduality, going beyond even the apparent distinctions of ignorance and knowledge, making clear that Brahman, the Self, alone is. The Guru’s instruction finishes with descriptions of the sublime, exalted, indivisible state of the realized sages who know this unalterable Truth without an alternative.

Thereupon, in the context of the dialogue, the disciple, having deeply meditated upon all that was taught by the Guru until no more contradictions to it could possibly arise in his mind, describes his own direct experience. This portion of the text is cast in the first person, for the “I” has been realized as the true Self, and nothing else remains of his “I.” The aspirant

who reads these lines should observe that these statements in the “first person” are made by one who has already realized the Truth of them by deep inquiry, and they are presented as such. It would not be wise to use such statements as a surrogate for the actual practice of inquiry, for such would not eliminate the ego. When the ego is gone, its illusory existence destroyed by the Knowledge of the Self, what is described in the remainder of the *Svatmanirupanam* is one’s own direct experience, the natural state. The descriptions are those of complete detachment, of the vast and universal view of the Self, and of identity with Being-Consciousness-Bliss. In verse 110, the term, “uhapoha” is customarily interpreted as positive and negative reasoning or consideration of the pros and cons of a topic being contemplated. In the verse, “inquiry” is added, so that the interpretation is that of an inquiry into the pros and cons or an inquiry using positive and negative reasoning. These terms may also be understood as comprehending, reasoning, and inquiry, which is the process of absorbing the teachings of Nonduality; or as examination, removing, and inquiry, which is descriptive of the process of examination of ignorance composed of misidentification and attachment, the removal of such, and the inquiry into the nature of what remains of the “I” upon such removal. Thereafter, the disciple continues to describe, in the “first person” indicative of direct experience, the nature of the Self in both cosmic and attributeless terms, as the infinite, as the eternal, as that which is all, as the essence, and as the utterly transcendent. He abides as identical with the Self and its Realization. No more is there the conception of a self to realize, a Self to be realized, the movement toward Realization and a state of Realization. Being alone is, and it is the Self, free of the division of realizer and realized. Being is itself the Realization. Toward the conclusion of his description, the disciple glorifies the Guru again and again, for there is in him no ego to claim his experience.

The *Svatmanirupanam* concludes with a re-statement of the ajata vada (teaching of no-creation, no-birth), the Truth of which is realized by all who abide in Self-Knowledge—the

state of Kaivalyam, the state of being That which alone is— as well as a final exhortation for you, who are reading this, to deeply reflect on these teachings about your own true Self.

In order to aid the seeker in obtaining a thorough comprehension, wherever alternative translations of a word or phrase are possible, such has been included in the word-by-word translation, though, in a few instances, they have been incorporated into the final, running English translation, as well. Terms and phrases in parenthesis are supplied to clarify the meaning of the preceding word or phrase, while terms and phrases placed in brackets indicate an insertion by the translators considered necessary to render the passage comprehensible in English. As the two editions of Sri Sankara's Sanskrit text that served as the original basis of the present English text differ at points, the translators have chosen those portions of each that seemed most consistent with the rest of the text. With those passages in which the two editions differ significantly and the text would seem to allow for either meaning to be appropriate, both versions have been given in the translation. Any mistakes that may appear herein are entirely the fault of the assistant translator and do not reflect any flaw in the flawless original text or in the meticulous, devoted, selfless work of the primary translator, the late Dr. H. Ramamoorthy.

May this English translation of the *Svatmanirupanam* serve the same intention of the Sanskrit original composed by the wondrous sage, Adi Sankaracharya. May He be pleased with what is here. May this be an offering to Him.

May this presentation of the ancient teachings pertaining to the inquiry resulting in Self-Knowledge serve the same intention as the liberating teachings of this inquiry by my ever-gracious Guru, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. May He be pleased with what is here. May this be an offering to Him.

May this be an offering to Brahman.

श्रीगुरुचरणद्वन्द्वं वन्देऽहं मथितदुःसहद्वन्द्वम् ।

भ्रान्तिग्रहोपशान्तिं पांसुमयं यस्य भसितमातनुते ॥ १ ॥

śrī-guru-caraṇa-dvandvaṁ vande'haṁ mathita-
duḥsaha-dvandvam

bhrānti-grahopaśāntim pāmsu-mayaṁ yasya bhasitam-
ātanute

sri guru **the revered guru** carana **feet** dvandvam
pair vande-aham **I bow to/I salute** mathita **destroy-**
ing dus-saha **unbearable** dvandvam **pair of oppo-**
sites¹ bhranti-graha **the (malefic) planet of erroneous**
perception upasantim **allaying** pamsu-mayam **full of**
dust yasya **of which** bhasitam **ashes** atanute **causes**

I bow to the revered guru's pair of feet,
Which destroy the unbearable pair of opposites,
The dust of which is the ash allaying
The (malefic) planet of erroneous perception.

¹Duality, such as happiness and sorrow.

देशिकवरं दयालुं वन्देऽहं निहतनिखिलसंदेहम् ।

यच्चरणद्वयमद्वयमनुभवमुपदिशति तत्पदस्यार्थम् ॥ २ ॥

deśikavaram dayālum vande'ham nihata-nikhila-
samdeham

yac-caraṇa-dvayam-advayam-anubhavam-upadiśati
tat-padasy-ārtham

desika-varam **the excellent guru** dayalum **the com-
passionate** vande-aham **I bow to** nihata-nikhila-
sandeham **who destroys all doubts** yat-carana-
dvayam **whose feet** advayam-anubhavam **the non-
dual experience** upadisati **instructs** tat-padasya-
artham **the meaning of the word “That”**

To the excellent guru, the compassionate (one),
I bow,
Who destroys all doubts,
Whose feet instruct one in the nondual experience,
The meaning of the word “That.”

संसारदावपावकसंतप्तः सकलसाधनोपेतः ।

स्वात्मनिरूपणनिपुणैर्वाक्यैः शिष्यः प्रबोध्यते गुरुणा ॥ ३ ॥

samsāra-dāva-pāvaka-saṁtaptah sakala-sādhanopetaḥ
svātma-nirūpaṇa-nipuṇair-vākyaiḥ śiṣyah prabodhyate
guruṇā

samsara-dava-pavaka **the forest fire of samsara (the
birth-death cycle) samptaptah scorched**
sakala-sadhana-upetah **possessed of all practices**
sv-atma or su-atma **one's Self/one's own Self/the true
Self nirupana definition nipunaih-vakyaih by accu-
rate perfect words sisyah disciple prabodhyate is
enlightened/instructed guruna by the Guru**

Scorched by the forest fire of samsara,
Possessed of all practices,
The disciple is enlightened by the Guru
In perfect, accurate words, as to the definition of
one's own (the true) Self.

अस्ति स्वयमित्यस्मिन्नर्थे कस्यास्ति संशयः पुंसः ।

अत्रापि संशयश्चेत्संशयिता यः स एव भवसि त्वम् ॥ ४ ॥

asti svayam-ity-asminn-arthe kasyāsti saṁśayaḥ
 puṁsaḥ
 atrāpi saṁśayaś-cet-saṁśayitā yaḥ sa eva bhavasi tvam

asti svayam-iti **that oneself exists** asmin-arthe **in this fact** kasya **for whom** asti **exists** samsayah **doubt** pumsah **for a person** atrapi **even in this** samsayah-cet **if there be doubt** samsayita-yah **he who has the doubt** sa-eva **he indeed** bhavasi **are** tvam **you**

“Oneself exists”—in this fact
 For whom does a doubt exist?
 Even in this, if there be doubt,
 He who has the doubt, indeed, you are.

नाहमिति वेत्ति योऽसौ सत्यं ब्रह्मैव वेत्ति नास्तीति ।

अहमस्मीति विजानन्ब्रह्मैवासौ स्वयं विजानाति ॥ ५ ॥

nāham-iti vetti yo'sau satyam brahmaiva vetti nāstīti
aham-asmīti vijānan-brahmaiv-āsau svayam vijānāti

na-aham **“I am not”** iti **thus** vetti **knows** yah-asau **he**
who satyam **truly** brahma-eva **Brahman indeed** vetti
knows na-asti-iti **that “He is not”** aham-asmi **“I am”**
iti-vijanan **knowing thus** brahma-eva **Brahman**
indeed asau **he** svayam **himself** vijanati **knows**

When one knows that “I am not,”
Truly, Brahman, indeed, it is that knows he is not;
Knowing that “I am,”
Brahman, indeed, it is that knows himself thus.

ब्रह्म त्वमेव तस्मान्नाहं ब्रह्मेति मोहमात्रमिदम् ।

मोहेन भवति भेदः क्लेशाः सर्वे भवन्ति तन्मूलाः ॥ ६ ॥

brahma tvam-eva tasmān-nāhaṁ brahmeti moha-
mātram-idam
mohena bhavati bhedaḥ kleśāḥ sarve bhavanti tan-
mūlāḥ

brahma tvam-eva **Brahman is only yourself** tasmat
hence na-aham brahma-iti **that “I am not Brahman”**
moha-matram **is only delusion** idam **this**
mohena **by delusion** bhavati **comes into being**
bhedaḥ **difference** klesah **sorrows** sarve **all** bhavanti
come into being/are tat-mulah **rooted in that**

Brahman is only yourself.
Hence, “I am not Brahman”—this is only delusion.
Difference comes into being from delusion;
All sorrows are rooted in that.

न क्लेशपञ्चकमिदं भजते कृतकोशपञ्चकविवेकः ।

अत एव पञ्च कोशान्कुशलधियः संततं विचिन्वन्ति ॥ ७ ॥

na kleśa-pañcakam-idam bhajate kṛta-kośa-pañcaka-
vivekaḥ
ata eva pañca kośān-kuśala-dhiyaḥ saṁtatam
vicinvanti

klesa-pancakam-idam **this pentad of troubles**
na-bhajate **does not experience** krta-kosa-pancaka-
vivekah **he who has the discrimination regarding the**
pentad of sheaths ata-eva **hence it is** panca-kosan **the**
pentad of sheaths kusala-dhiyah **persons of skillful**
intellect saṁtatam **ever** vicinvanti **investigate**

The pentad of troubles¹ is not experienced by one
Who has discrimination of the pentad of sheaths.
Hence it is that persons of skillful intellect
Ever investigate the pentad of sheaths.

¹Ignorance (avidyā), egoism (asmitā), attachment (rāga), aversion (dveṣa) and the clinging to life or tenacious desire (abhineveśa).