

Necessity For Sannyasa

By Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Editor's Preface

What is Sannyas?

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

The ashram of Swami Sivananda, the author of *Necessity For Sannyasa*, included both sannyasis and sannyasinis. However in his writings relating to sannyasa he usually addresses or speaks of male aspirants because it was very uncommon at that time for women to take up monastic life in any form, especially in the Shankara Order. Anandamayi Ma and Sivananda were almost the only ones who encouraged women to become sannyasinis in the full traditional sense. Some devout women such as my beloved friend Sri Maitri Devi of New Delhi gathered around them women who dressed in white and were sannyasinis in the spiritual sense, but with no official monastic status.

It is very necessary for everyone—especially Western aspirants—to understand that, as I have just said, the foundation of true sannyasa is viveka: realization of the reality of Brahman and the eternal Atman (Self) and disinterest and indifference in relation to all else, especially to the illusory and soul-destroying ways and world of those who do not seek liberation (moksha) exclusively and above all else. To take up monastic life only as an expression of emotional “love for God” or “dedication to God” or as a kind of noble “sacrifice” is an unworthy act, and one that will eventually lead to grave consequences inwardly and outwardly. It is a saddening thing to learn of men and women who after years of monastic life for the wrong reasons abandoning that life and immediately plunging into the follies and corruptions of the world, including getting married within weeks or months of leaving the monastery or convent. Of them it can truly be said: “The last state of that man is worse than the first” (Matthew 12:45). “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (II Peter 2:20-22).

Necessity For Sannyasa

This book is a very great treasure from the pen of Swami Sivananda Saraswati. Sannyas was his very life. So anxious was Sivananda to save and protect others from the sufferings of the world, that if someone even casually mentioned that he was thinking of taking sannyas he would wait until they went to their room, then lock them in, gather all the things needed for conferring sannyas, take them from the room and immediately initiate them into sannyas. I experienced some of this fervor for myself.

I went to India at the end of November, 1962, because I had a strong intuition that either Anandamayi Ma or Swami Sivananda would soon leave the body. (My feeling was right; Sivanandaji left this world nine months later.) About eight months after my arrival in India I took sannyas, becoming Swami Nirmalananda Giri. Both Ma Anandamayi and Sivananda had a part in that.

When I first wrote to Ma in June of 1962, I gave my letter to a fellow yogi to take to her. Fortunately, the letter was read out to her in Bengali by Brahmacharini Atmananda, who wrote down her answer and translated it into English. When she gave the translation to my friend she commented: "Ma considers him a sannyasi." This was because in beginning her reply, Ma had said: "Write to my friend...." I did not know it at the time, but Ma had three ways of addressing people. Men she called "Pitaji"—Father; women she called "Mataji"—Mother; and monks and nuns she called "Friend." In *Mother As Seen By Her Devotees* I had read a complaint that Ma consistently exhibited a marked preference for sannyasis and sannyasinis. (The complainant, supposedly a devotee, called this "a fly in the ointment.") So I felt pleased that Ma regarded me as a Friend.

I had been told by Dr. Ghosh who was the priest of Gopala in the Ranchi Anandamayi Ashram (which he had built and donated to Ma's use), that he had once brought some Roman Catholic nuns to meet Ma. The first thing she said was: "Tell them that this body is also a nun." (Ma always referred to herself as "this body.") So she was my Friend as well!

One morning in the Sivanandashram satsang Swami Sivananda said to me: "There are two things I want to tell you. From now on spend as much time as you can with Anandamayi Ma. And take sannyas as soon as possible." Right away I went to Delhi where Ma had just arrived. I received her permission to attend her birthday celebration in Agarpara, north of Calcutta. One afternoon during the celebration I asked Ma if I could take sannyas. She very forcefully said that I should, and approved of my taking sannyas from Swami Vidyananda Giri, a disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda. She went into her room and brought out a large silk chaddar (shawl) which she said I should have dyed gerua and use for the sannyas diksha. At the initiation Vidyanandaji told me: "Your name is Nirmalananda. Normally it means Flawless Bliss, but since Anandamayi Ma's name was Nirmala, you are to consider that it means the Bliss of Anandamayi Ma." And so it was.

My last darshan of Sivanandaji was only about two weeks before his

mahasamadhi. I had taken sannyas (at his urging) only a few weeks earlier and had come to bid him farewell as I was leaving my beloved India. Throughout the morning satsang he kept looking at me and saying: “Swami Nirmalananda Giri! I am very happy. I am very happy.”

May he bless every reader of this precious book, and may they make him happy in the heaven-world by awakening to the necessity for sannyasa and acting upon it without delay.

Swami Nirmalananda Giri
(Abbot George Burke)

Introduction

Perspective of the Renunciante

The realization of the sannyasin is focused in the first mantra of the Ishavasya Upanishad: “All, this, indeed, is pervaded by the cosmic spirit.” The entire universe is an embodiment of God. All that lives and moves in this world is a member of a common universal family. In earth, air, water and ether, in the woods and the glades, in the hills and the dales, in the brooks and the meadows, in the aged and the young—everywhere is God. The world no longer has any exclusive sphere of possession. It loses its illusive power of bondage. “I am his, and he is mine” becomes: “I am for all, and he is Thine, O Lord.”

Diffusive spirit

This is the realization of the sannyasin. The spirit of renunciation enables him not to lose sight of the spirit in matter, or the awareness of divinity in the multitude of names and forms. His expansive, diffusive spirit can no more be held down to a particular groove of life. His great longing to release his consciousness from the limitation of evanescent values opens up before him broad vistas of universal spiritual realization.

The sannyasin renounces the world in the sense that he no longer wishes to be bound up with a single family or be an exclusive possession of it, and if he ceases his association with the family in which he was born, it is because his family members are unable to fully accept his dissociation from their possessive, personalized interests which they regard as the hallmark of kinship.

Rational outlook

The kinship of the sannyasin is the kinship of the spirit. He is related to the world and serves mankind, in the light of his realization. His renunciation is not something negative, but gives him a true understanding of life, and of the objects and the values of the world. His attitude to the mundane world is based on a positive, helpful spirit of detachment.

Attachment is at the root of all suffering. Desire enlivens it, and fulfillment of desire leads to a further increase of attachment and desire. You think that a mundane relationship will give you happiness, but when it does not, as it cannot, you come to grief. You get attached to individuals, and when they do not fulfill your expectations, you become sorrowful. Suffering becomes the shadow of one who clings to the brittle objects of the world.

Renunciation of desire

The life of man is pervaded by suffering, because it is never free from desire. When the sannyasin gets involved with desire, even though it is of a different kind—

such as the desire to be a great spiritual benefactor of the world—he, too, cannot escape from its consequences and shake off the grip of worry.

In renunciation of desires is real joy. The sannyasin thinks, as the Buddha thought: “If the desired object is not attained, there is unhappiness. If the desired object fails to respond, there is unhappiness. If the desired object is momentarily attained, there is the anxiety that it might be lost. If the desired object recoils with a negative response, there is still more unhappiness.” Thus true happiness consists in the renunciation of desires.

Greatest penance

To say that you have renounced the world, when you did not possess anything substantial, or to say that you have no desire for any worldly object just because you do not have the means to possess the object of desire or lack the initiative and drive to attain it, makes no sense. Renunciation and detachment indicate self-denial, self-effacement and dispassion. It means the pulverization of one’s ego. Renunciation or sannyasa is, thus, the greatest of all tapas.

May all sannyasins imbibe the true spirit of renunciation and serve the world effectively and assiduously as humble instruments of God, while exemplifying in their practical lives all that they ask the world to do. May the grace of God be upon all.

Chapter One: Why Sannyasa?

Renunciation of earthly connections is an absolute necessity. Every religion has a band of anchorites who lead the life of seclusion and meditation. There are sannyasis in Hinduism, bhikkhus in Buddhism, fakirs in Mohammedanism, Sufistic fakirs in Sufism, and monks in Christianity! The glory of a religion will be absolutely lost if you remove the hermits or sannyasins or those who lead the life of renunciation and divine contemplation. It is these people who maintain and preserve the religions of the world. It is these people who give solace to the householders when they are in trouble and distress. They are the harbingers of divine wisdom and peace. They are the messengers of atmic knowledge and adhyatmic science, and upanishadic revelations. They tend the sick, comfort the forlorn and nurse the bedridden. They bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak, and courage to the timid by imparting the knowledge of Vedanta and the significance of the “Tat Twam. Asi” Mahavakya.

Sannyasins live on a few pieces of bread, and in exchange move from door to door and spread the sublime teachings of Vedanta, the Upanishads and the sublime philosophy of the realization of Brahman, throughout the length and breadth of the country. The world is under a great debt of gratitude to them. Who can repay the debts to them? Their writings still guide us. Study a few slokas of the Avadhuta Gita. You will at once be raised to the magnificent heights of divine splendor and glory. You will become a changed man. Depression, weakness, anxiety and tribulations will vanish at once.

A real sannyasin is the only mighty potentate on this earth. He never takes anything. He always gives. It was sannyasins alone who did glorious, sublime work in the past. It is sannyasins alone who can work wonders in the present and in the future also. Sri Shankara’s name can never be obliterated so long as the world lasts. It was Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Rama Tirtha, Dayananda, and Vivekananda who disseminated the sublime teachings of the scriptures and preserved the Hindu religion. A sannyasin alone can do real lokasangraha, because he has divine knowledge, he is a whole-timed man! One real sannyasin can change the destiny of the whole world! It is one mighty Shankara who established the doctrine of kevala-advaita philosophy. He still lives in our hearts.

Just as there are research scholars or post-graduates in science, psychology, biology, philosophy, so also there should be post-graduate yogins and sannyasins who will devote their time in study and meditation, in research about the Atman. These post-graduate yogins will give to the world their experiences and realizations in the field of religion. They will train students and send them into the world for preaching. It is the duty of householders and society in general to look after the wants of these sannyasins. In turn, these sannyasins will take care of their souls. Thus the wheel of the world will revolve smoothly. There will be peace in the land.

O men of the world! Realize the necessity for such a high step, the glorious life of sannyasa for self-realization!

The desire for sannyasa is really ingrained in everybody. When some trouble comes, you want to run away! What does this indicate? It indicates the yearning for liberation from earthly bondage! It indicates renunciation! It indicates sannyasa for liberation!

How terrible is Maya! How formidable is moha! How powerful is Maya's charm. Hear me, O men! hear me and enter the sreya-marga! As soon as viveka and vairagya dawn in you, retire from this world. There is no use in clinging to anything of this earth. Otherwise you are simply wasting your life, time and energy! You are losing the inexhaustible spiritual wealth. May you become real sannyasins! May you realize the necessity for life in the soul!

May sannyasins, the repositories of divine knowledge, the torch-bearers of truth, the beacon-lights of this world, the cornerstones of spiritual edifice, the central pillars of the Eternal Dharma, guide the different nations of the world!

Chapter Two

Sannyasa Dharma

Necessity for sannyasa

Sannyasa is an absolute necessity. The mere desire to remain aloof and alone shows that there is an advaitic inclination in you. Every moment you should be ready for sannyasa. The very longing for sannyasa shows that there is growth of spirituality.

The Bhagavata says that fire is not so dangerous as the company of worldly persons and worldly things. Even a cobra is not so very dangerous as these deluded people.

Sannyasa has its own glory and splendor! Sannyasa is extremely necessary. One may say, "I do not need orange-colored robes;" still sannyasa is necessary. Sannyasa has its own psychology. All arguments against it are false! The Mundaka Upanishad will tell you how necessary sannyasa is. The world has not produced a greater genius than Shankara, the greatest sannyasin! Why did Ramakrishna Paramahansa take sannyasa? Sannyasa is necessary though you may have advaitic realization! Totapuri, Ramakrishna's guru, though he had advaitic realization, took sannyasa. Why did Madana Mishra take sannyasa? [More about him later.] Yajnavalkya had the highest realization, but why did he take sannyasa? The world has not produced a greater sage than Yajnavalkya. Study his instructions to his wife, Maitreyi in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Sannyasa destroys all worldliness, all evil samskaras, and establishes you in advaitic meditation. You must come out of your house and fix the mind on the supreme lakshya, Brahman. You must meditate without any break. Then only can you have the choice either to take or not to take the orange robe. But never say, "I have no attachment, I am a mental sannyasin." You will weep afterwards. Study the Mundaka Upanishad. If sannyasa is not necessary why should there be the four ashramas? Were the makers of such rules mere fools?

How can you understand the glory of sannyasa while remaining in the world amidst temptations and attractions, lust and attachment? How can you know the glory of the destruction of Maya and the realization of God?

How, then, can you know the glory of sannyasa? The attachment to men and women, friends and relatives, money and gold, has to be ruthlessly burnt down to ashes. All the so-called duties of the world have to be kicked away for the sake of that glorious state of self-realization! The Mahabharata proclaims that for the sake of self-realization even the whole world should be renounced without hesitation.

If you have real manliness, you must break the chains of earthly bondage, the bondage of birth and death, old age and disease, hunger and thirst! That is courage! That is heroism! That is manliness! Do not be cowards, start now! Fight for the

sake of that state of absolute freedom or kaivalya-mukti!

What is the use of fighting for social and political freedom, when everybody is locked up in the jail of ego and delusion? What is the use of beating the air thinking it is a drum? But so is all this activity and business of life in the world which is only an airy nothing when compared to the glorious truth of self-realization! What is the use of working in an office with a slavish mentality, which is but the outcome of ignorance? The pay you receive in the offices is only a bait in this world of Maya! How much have you eaten, how much have you drunk, how much have you enjoyed, how much have you slept? Is there an end for this?

Remember that all that you see in this world and get attached to is the object of your own imagination! Open your eyes! All this is Pure Satchidananda! All this is undivided and immortal Consciousness. Where is father, where is mother, where is wife, where are children? Where is the world? Where is society, where are nations? You are moving and breathing in the mass of Universal Consciousness. Wake up now! There is no way in this world to get eternal happiness and supreme satisfaction! You do not know where lies the real cause of misery and suffering. You do not know where lies the source of real knowledge and bliss. You are sunk in ignorance. Assert now your real birthright, the freedom of self-realization!

It is better for you to throw off everything now itself and be as a beggar! Then alone will you become the richest man! The Upanishad emphatically declares: “*Yo vai bhuma tat sukham.*” You cannot have real happiness in this world! The real shanti, the peace which the mind is hankering after, is only in the Bhuma. Bhuma is unconditioned, beyond time, beyond space and causation. Bhuma is freedom, freedom from the trammels of flesh, freedom from the tricks of Maya, freedom from the plays of delusion. Bhuma is perfection, beyond all limitations. Bhuma is Infinite Fullness. Bhuma is Brahman, the Eternal Absolute! You will have to remember all this constantly. You will have to write this and read this, talk of this and preach this, meditate on this and live in this, understand this and realize this! “*Yo vai bhuma tat sukham!*”

A blow to the worldly-minded

Sannyasa and Vedanta—whether Advaita, Vashishthadvaita or Dvaita—always go hand in hand. One does not become complete without the other. Wherever there is real sannyasa there is practical Vedanta. Wherever there is practical Vedanta there must be sannyasa of the highest type. Sannyasa without Vedanta or parabhakti becomes fruitless. Vedanta without sannyasa becomes a mere intellectualism. When sannyasa and Vedanta melt into one there crops up a sage of supreme wisdom. Sannyasa empties the individual of the ego and the negative phenomena, and Vedanta fills it with positive truth. Sannyasa without Vedanta remains empty, and does not serve its purpose. Even so, Vedanta without sannyasa becomes essenceless, and loses its meaning. Vedanta cannot be grasped without emptying the ego through sannyasa and sannyasa becomes a waste without getting at the supreme ideal through Vedanta.

One has to be completely dead to the narrowness and the delusion of the world if he is to live in the grandeur and the beauty of life in the Spirit.

Realization of the Absolute is not a talk, is not a play, It is the most difficult and the hardest of all tasks. It demands the price of one's very self! Will you pay it? It demands your individual life. It demands your ego; it demands your very being as the cost for self-realization! If that is everyone's goal, if that is every one's ideal, should not the more experienced impart that secret to the lesser ones? Should not every child in the cradle be initiated into the mysteries of existence? Let the world cease to exist! Let all become sannyasins and Vedantins! Let there be no more creation! Let there be no more procreation! Let every son and every daughter be taught the truths of renunciation and knowledge of Brahman! Only then does life become fruitful! Only then man becomes a real man!

Let every father take the example of Uddalaka! Let every mother take the example of Madalasa! Let every wife take the example of Chudala! Let every husband take the example of Yajnavalkya! Let all children, the sons and daughters, take the example of the four Kumaras! Then only can life be perfectly lived.

Sannyasa and Vedanta are the only lifegiving teachings. All other teachings are mere play of words. Never think you are unfit for self-realization, that you are unfit for sannyasa or Vedanta. This cowardly nature will not leave you if you do not exert to know the truth as it really is. Better aim at a lion and miss it, than hunt a jackal and catch it. Better aim at sannyasa and Vedanta and fail in their practice than live a worldly life and succeed in it. Remember, O remember that you are born for this Supreme End, not for anything else!

May you all empty yourselves of the ego through sannyasa and may you all fill yourselves with the truth of Vedanta!

Glory of Sannyasa

The glory of sannyasa is indescribable,
Yajnavalkya embraced sannyasa!
Shankara embraced sannyasa!
Ramakrishna, Mandana Misra, too.
Even Europeans are sannyasins;
Mr. Nixon and Dr. Alexander also;
And several others, too, have taken to sannyasa!
Even some great men of India
Have not understood
The glory of sannyasa.
It is a great pity indeed!
Let them have their own way;
But we are the children
Of the great four Kumaras,
Dattatreya and Shankara!
O ye aspirants bold,

Who are equipped with the four,
Who have nivritti-tendencies,
Come, quick! Be quick!
Waste not life any more!

Supreme glory of sannyasa

Can you imagine a greater karmakandi, a follower of pravritti marga, than the great Mandana Misra? He was the greatest votary of karma. He argued with Sri Shankaracharya for days together on the point that sannyasa is not necessary. He wanted to establish that we can attain mukti or salvation by karmamarga and that nivritti is not absolutely essential. But at last Sri Shankara defeated Mandana Misra and he also became one of the four disciples of Shankara. When such a mighty man became a sannyasi, are you not convinced that sannyasa is necessary?

You are not treading the path of the Vedas as Mandana Misra did. He was an ideal householder who knew the four Vedas, who was devoted to his elders, who walked in the footsteps of ideal grihasthas like Yajnavalkya and others. Even he took sannyasa!

What are you doing? In the name of duty you are leading a servile life all the twenty-four hours of the day. Your days are too short. You want thirty hours in a day. Do you call this life? Do you call this life? I call this suicide, blinded by ignorance!

O man! Wake up! Walk in the footsteps of your forefathers, the great Seers! This world is full of miseries and tribulations. The more you think there is joy in it, the more are you deluded! The more you forget your soul, the more are your miseries.

If you cannot live a perfect life in the world, kick aside the world mercilessly. Take refuge in the Self. Practice tapasya. Purify your mind. Serve and love others with a divine bhava! Now you are ready for sannyasa. Become a paramahansa sannyasin and attain the jivanmukti state.

The knowledge of Brahman should be taught to those who have purified their hearts by practicing the sadhana-chatushtaya, who are well-versed in the shastras, who possess faith, who are centered in Brahman, and who have duly practiced the vow of shirovratam. Shirovratam is the well-known Vedic vow mentioned in the Atharva Veda. This obviously means the head-vow, the vow of sannyasa or renunciation. This is the ceremony in which the head is shaven.

Sannyasa is necessary for attaining self-realization. Even in the preliminary stage one should join the ascetic order, as this voluntary renunciation while yet a neophyte will qualify the aspirant for Vedantic study.

The sruti says: *Yadahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajat*: "One should leave the house the very day dispassion dawns in him."

The sannyasi is free from all kinds of worldly distractions, ties and attachments. The garb puts a check on the aspirant from going astray or doing evil actions. When there is internal change, when one is ready for entering the fourth ashrama of life, why should he be afraid of putting on the orange-colored robe? Why should he say,

“I have given coloring to my heart”? It is a sort of timidity and hypocrisy. Vasanas (subtle desires) still lurk in his heart.

Sannyasa has got its own glory and advantages! The freedom of a sannyasin can hardly be described. Only a sannyasin can entirely cut off all connections and ties. Though you have colored your heart, still all the members of your family will cling to you like leeches till the end of your life. You cannot entirely eradicate moha or infatuated love and attachment for your family. When you fall sick you will be tempted to go to them for their help and vice versa. The old samskaras will get a new life and moha will bind you with stronger chains once again. It is only when you take sannyasa that they will leave you free. They will leave all hopes which they had in you. Only then will you become dead for them. They will not approach you again.

If you like seclusion, if you are free from raga or passion, worldly ambition, karmic tendencies and attractions of this world, if you are reticent and serene, if you have disciplined yourself while remaining in the world, if you can live on simple food, if you can lead a hard life, if you have a strong constitution, if you are not talkative, if you can remain alone without company and talk, if you have a meditative temperament or reflective nature, if you can bear all the difficulties in the spiritual path, if you can lead a difficult life of an ascetic till the end of your life, if you can bear any amount of insult and injury done to you, then you can take to the path of renunciation. Only then will you be benefited by embracing sannyasa. You should actually lead the life of a sannyasi in an ashram for one or two years before taking sannyas itself. Otherwise you will find it extremely difficult to tread the path. For a man of dispassion, discrimination and strong will, this path is all joy and bliss.

May you develop real thirst for release from the bonds of samsara! May your hearts be filled with love of the Atman alone! May you develop real vairagya and enter the illimitable kingdom of eternal bliss!

What do scriptures say about sannyasa?

The Narayana Upanishad says: “Not by works, not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone is immortality attained!”

“There is no hope of immortality through wealth,” said Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Manu says in his Smriti: “Of all dharmas, ethics and morals, the knowledge of the Self is the highest duty of man. That is the foremost of all sciences, for through that one attains immortality. After ten births one gets the knowledge of the Veda, after a hundred births one gets good character and conduct. After a thousand births one gets the knowledge of Yoga, but only after a crore of births does one get the love for sannyasa. In this dharma called nivritti, the fruit is called Final Emancipation. That knower of Brahman who gives fearlessness to all creatures and takes sannyasa, attains the world of light and splendor. He who gives fearlessness to all creatures, attains fearlessness in the end.”

In the Yajnavalkya Smriti it is said: “Of all works, like sacrifices, rituals, control of senses, harmlessness, charity or study of the Vedas, this one thing is the highest duty: that one should seek the Self through Yoga. A Brahmana should not marry, he should observe brahmacharya, and, keeping his power of purity, should directly take sannyasa after brahmacharya. Seeing that samsara is essenceless, he should seek to get the nectar of immortality.”

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says: “Desiring the state of the Self, one should renounce. Established in Brahman, one attains immortality.”

Yajnavalkya said to Kahola: “He who passes beyond hunger and thirst, beyond sorrow and delusion, beyond old age and death—Brahmanas who wish to attain that Self, overcome the desire for sons, desire for wealth, desire for the world, and live the life of mendicants.”

The Jabalasaruti says: “The wanderer, with renunciation, with colored cloth, clean-shaven, desiring nothing, the pure, the faultless, the holy, the beggar, becomes one with Brahman.”

The Mundaka Upanishad says: “They who practice tapas with faith in the forest, the peaceful men of wisdom, who live on bhiksha, who are above passion, depart through the passage of the sun to where that immortal Purusha, the Imperishable One, abides. Having scrutinized the worlds that are attained through action, a Brahmana should arrive at dispassion and indifference. For the sake of this knowledge, let him go, fuel in hand, to a spiritual teacher who is learned in the srutis and established in Brahman. Those who have ascertained the meaning of the Vedanta knowledge, the earnest seekers after truth, with natures purified through sannyasa yoga, they all, in the region of Brahman at the end of time, are liberated beyond death.”

In the Vishnu-Smriti it is said: “The householder cannot attain even by a hundred sacrifices what state the sannyasin will attain by living properly even for one night. Purified are hundred families of his ahead, and purified are three hundred families of his of the past, in whose line even a single one takes to the path of sannyasa. The sun trembles when he sees a sannyasin, for he feels that the sannyasin will break the surya-mandala with his force of the soul and attain immortality.”

Rishi Jabali says in his Smriti: “The difference between a householder Brahmana who is learned in the four Vedas, who has performed a hundred sacrifices, and a sannyasin who has renounced, is like that between a mustard seed and a mountain or between a glow worm and the sun.”

The Angiras-Smriti says: “Sixty families of the past and sixty families of the future are raised to immortality by one Brahmana who utters the words, ‘sanyastam mayaa.’ [“I renounce...”—part of the mantras recited when taking sannyas.] Sins acquired through family, sins acquired through karma, are all burnt up by the fire of sannyasa, even as a straw is burnt by forest fire.”

It is told in the Mahabharata: “Even if a person merely wears the ochre robe, he is fit to be worshipped.” Such is the glory of sannyasa.

Rishi Atri says in his Smriti: “One sannyasi is far superior to even a thousand brahmacharins, a hundred vanaprasthas and even a crore of grihasthas. The Lord has two forms: moving and unmoving. The moving form is the sannyasi and the unmoving is the idol worshipped in temples.”

Sri Krishna says to Uddhava: “I am sannyasa among ashramas.” “Only the man of renunciation with knowledge attains Brahman, and none else.” “Action is for the pravritta, the man of the world, and wisdom is for the sannyasin who has risen above worldliness.”

These are the concluding sentences of the Mundaka Upanishad where renunciation and emancipation are extolled: “He who strives by these means, possessed of knowledge, enters into the abode of Brahman. Attaining that state, the seers who are satisfied with knowledge, who are perfected souls, free from attraction, tranquil in mind, attaining that which is universally present, those wise devout souls enter into the All itself. As the flowing rivers in the ocean disappear leaving their names and forms, so the knower, being liberated from name and form, goes to the Supreme Purusha who is higher than the highest. He who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. In his family no one who is ignorant of Brahman arises. He crosses over sorrow. He crosses over sin. Liberated from the knots of the heart, he becomes immortal.”

The views of Shankara on sannyasa

Shankara says that the Atman should and can be realized only through knowledge and not by ritual. He positively asserts that, on the dawn of knowledge, karma [worldly action] naturally and necessarily ceases to function. Karma of any kind is, according to Shankara, a hindrance to final emancipation of the soul, and the performance of karma involves one in the cycle of samsara. It is only Brahmajnana that rends asunder the knots of ignorance and bestows moksha on the soul.

Sannyasa is absolutely necessary, whether it be vividisha-sannyasa or vidvat-sannyasa. Without perfect renunciation it is impossible to pursue the path of Brahmavidya. The qualifications necessary for taking sannyasa are:

1. Discrimination between the One Eternal Substance and the appearance of ephemeral phenomena.
2. Dispassion for the enjoyment of things existing either in this or the other world.
3. Possessing the six-fold wealth, viz., tranquillity of mind; control of the senses; cessation from all worldly activity; endurance of the pairs of opposites, like heat and cold, pleasure and pain, love and hatred, etc.; faith in the Vedantic truth as inculcated by the spiritual texts; power of concentration of mind.
4. An ardent yearning for liberation.

Shankara is of opinion that it is foolish to cite instances of Janaka and others who did not take sannyasa but possessed Brahmajnana. Such instances are quoted by householders who are unwilling to leave their attachments, for there is no

reason why they should stick to household life after attaining knowledge. For knowledge by its very nature is against all senses of worldly duty and activity.

The sannyasin can find adequate leisure and freedom from the distractions of life. Renunciation is desirable even to those who have not attained jnana—“*Avidushaapi mumukshunaa paarivraajyam kartavyameva.*” Only the sannyasin can devote the whole time for meditation. Householders cannot give themselves up completely for meditation. The very word “household” signifies pravritti which is concerned with the world of appearance.

Without abandonment of the concerns of worldly life, knowledge cannot be pursued with unabated vigor and devotion. It does not mean that the sannyasin undervalues human society and discards all men without helping them at all. As the life of a sannyasin is meant only to reach the highest Reality, and as he has already passed through the lower stages of spiritual evolution, he may appear to be not working for the rest of humanity at large; but it is to be borne in mind that he exercises a silent and unnoticed but powerful influence for the good of the public. That itself is the service he is rendering to the society and that is the highest and the most beneficent service that one could ever do to man. One who is intent upon realizing the peace, the bliss, the One Without a Second—Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam—is the most powerful and the useful friend of the world!

Shankara’s arguments for sannyasa

Becoming one with the devas in heaven is not the highest endeavor of man here. There is something beyond karma, higher than the transitory earthly life, higher than the heavenly enjoyment. Even the devas are subject to the misery of samsara and they are not immortal in the real sense. The srutis declare that Brahman alone is above samsara, above hunger and thirst, etc.

It is said in the Isavasyopanishad, “Only doing karma, i.e., one’s own duty, one should wish to live a hundred years.” The life of man does not extend for more than a hundred years, so that he may take up the path of knowledge after performing karma for one hundred years. The hundred years are taken up by karma. Then, when will one find time for acquiring knowledge before his death? The arguments of the karmakandins are not sound. For there cannot be any motive or desire to act when there is the knowledge of the highest truth. He does not find any use in the performance of karma. When one gets a desire to know the Atman which is free from all the faults of samsara, one does not find any benefit out of actions which he has done or which he has to do. If you say that he does it because it is so enjoined although he sees no good in it, we say it cannot be, for he has known the Atman which is beyond all injunctions. One who knows Brahman cannot be bound by injunctions and rules. Even the Veda is born of him, so he cannot be commanded by the Veda to do any karma. None can be directed by his own words proceeding from his own knowledge. A wise master cannot be directed by an ignorant servant.

The srutis say: “Seek the Atman alone,” “This Atman is Brahman which is Intelligence-bliss,” “Thou art That,” etc. The active self of the Vedic karmakanda is

only a means to realize the real Supreme Self. When knowledge of the real Self dawns, there cannot be a false activity.

Knowing Brahman, a person observes self-denial, which is a cessation of all actions. So long as a man is in ignorance he wishes to have something, to do something, whereas in reality he is full and perfect, and therefore he need not be active for any reason whatsoever. This ignorance exists in all beings.

One acts only when there is desire. A desireless man, whose desires have been fulfilled, who has risen above desires, whose desire is the Atman, has no necessity to act. It is not reasonable to ask the question as to why a person who is traveling does not fall into a pit or a mire in broad daylight. If you say that a householder can remain in his state without doing karma after he gets knowledge of Brahman, we say it cannot be, for the householder's life is based on desire. Sannyasa is cessation from all desires and not merely a change of the order. Therefore it is impossible for a knower [jnani] to lead a householder's life.

Some may say: "From this it follows that it is not necessary for a knower even to serve his preceptor or to perform tapas." Householders who are afraid of begging for bread and are afraid of ridicule argue like this through their sharp intelligence. You cannot say that even begging for bread is a binding rule on a sannyasin. That is not a desire and the sannyasin is virtually a mendicant without rules binding him. He is not liable to any kind of command. Even one who does not know Brahman but who is desirous of emancipation should enter into the order of a sannyasin. The sruti says: "Let one live in the order of sannyasa which is a means to the knowledge of Brahman." Brahmacharya may help one to attain knowledge but it is not the case with a householder. When a means is not properly followed it can never accomplish any object. The heavenly bliss of the karmakandin is only a form of worldly enjoyment. Heaven is only another world. If one professes to have knowledge he cannot do actions, for actions are worldly. The Atman is entirely opposed to action and hence it cannot be an auxiliary to the knowledge of it. The sruti says: "When to him everything has become the Self, who should see what and through what should one see?" etc. This nullifies the meaning of actions in one who has knowledge.

It may be argued that the ignorant, seeing that their obligations are not discharged, cannot turn sannyasins. This is not right, for there can be no obligation incurred before one enters the order of a householder. According to the text, "Let one leave his home for the forest, and become a sannyasin, even if he is a brahmacharin; let him immediately become a sannyasin, either from home or from the forest." The order of the sannyasin is enjoined even on one who is in the householder's order.

We read in the Chandogya Upanishad also that in the case of some people performance of agnihotra for twelve days, and subsequent renunciation, is enjoined. As for the argument that the order of a sannyasin is only for those who are unable to perform karma, we say, it is unsound; as, in their case, there is the separate text of the sruti, "He who has discontinued the fire or never maintained it," etc. If you say that it is immaterial whether one lives in his house or in the forest, we say, it is

fallacious. Self-denial alone being the matter of course with him, he cannot stay in the house as that is prompted by desire, and self-denial is mere absence of it. Acting recklessly is entirely out of question with regard to the man of knowledge, for that is known to be the way of extremely ignorant persons.

Therefore the text “Only doing karma, one should wish to live a hundred years” has been refuted by showing that the text applies to the ignorant, and that karma cannot coexist with knowledge.

History of sannyasins

The history of sannyasins starts with the four Kumaras: Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata. These four Kumaras were the mental sons of Brahma, the creator. Brahma created these four Kumaras through his mind and asked them to help him in the work of creation. The Kumaras refused to fulfill his request. They were nivrutti-niratas, possessed of absolute renunciation. In spite of Brahma’s anger, they took to the life of nivrutti and meditation on Brahman. Brahma in his rage wanted to burn down these Kumaras. But the powerful Kumaras who ever lived in the Supreme Soul, unconnected with pravritti, could not be harmed by Brahma. Such is the power of renunciation and life in the Absolute.

The Kumaras were initiated by Lord Shiva, in the form of Dakshinamurti, into the mysteries of Brahmajnana. Dakshinamurti sat under a banyan tree and taught them jnana by silence. They imbibed wisdom through silence and got rid of their doubts.

Dattatreya is the father of all men of renunciation. We are all the children of Dattatreya. Adorations to Him at all times! Dattatreya’s Avadhuta Gita and his instructions to king Yadu mark out his Supreme wisdom of Brahman. He lived in Brahman and he breathed Brahman. It is rare to find a sage like Dattatreya.

We trace our ancestry from Lord Narayana. From Narayana was born Brahma. From Brahma’s mind was born Sage Vashishtha, the reputed embodiment of wisdom, the spiritual preceptor of the kings of Ayodhya. He gave us the Yoga-Vashishtha, the transcendental guide-light to humanity. Vashishtha’s son was Sakti. From Sakti was born sage Parasara. From Parasara was born Vyasa, the great Badarayana, or Krishna-Dvaipayana, who divided the Vedas, and wrote the Mahabharata. Vyasa’s son was the ideal sage Sukha Deva, who gave the Bhagavata to Parikshit. Suka was initiated into sannyasa by Lord Shiva himself. Read the Suka-Rahasya Upanishad. You will find that Suka was initiated into the Mahavakyas by Sadashiva at the request of Sri Vyasa Maharshi. The blood of Suka-Deva is said to run in the veins of Gaudapada, the famous advaitic metaphysician, the father of Advaita Vedanta. Gaudapada initiated Govindapada into sannyasa, who, in turn, initiated into sannyasa Sri Shankara, the wondrous giant of Indian philosophy and religion. Shankara’s name will be remembered as long as the Divine Names of Rama and Krishna will last in this world. But for the timely incarnation of Shankara the upanishadic wisdom would have sunk into oblivion. Glory to the greatest sannyasin, Shankara, the “Loka-Shankara,” who showered the rain of peace all over

the land!

The famous disciples of Shankara, Sureswaracharya, Padmapada, Hastamalaka and Trotaka became the disseminators of upanishadic and Vedantic knowledge all over the four quarters of Hindustan! Glory to all of them! Among the later sannyasins, Sage Vidyaranya ranks the foremost. He kept up the light of Advaita even in the midst of political bloodshed and suffering in the country. Next to Shankara and his direct disciples, none is so famous in the history of sannyasa and Vedanta as Swami Vidyaranya, the disciple of Swami Shankarananda. The commentary on the Bhagavad Gita written by Shankarananda is a boon to the sannyasins. It is specially meant for the sannyasins. It is purely a sannyasic interpretation of the Gita.

There are innumerable sannyasins at present belonging to one or the other of the four centers established by the four disciples of Shankara—at Sringeri, Dwaraka, Badrinath and Jagannath Puri. They are called Dasanami sannyasins, i.e., sannyasins with ten names. The credit of vigorous insistence on the necessity for sannyasa goes solely to the adorable advaitic sannyasin, the glorious Shankara!

Glory, glory to the sages, the gurus, the sannyasins, who have opened our eyes from sleep, who have widened our hearts, brightened our intellects and immersed us in Supreme knowledge!

Modern sannyasins

O ignorant man, who is fully immersed in worldliness! Just hear this interesting story and wake up from the long slumber of ignorance!

Even some Europeans have understood the glory and freedom of sannyasa and have embraced sannyasa. Mr. Nixon, M.A. (Oxon) who was a Professor in Lucknow University became a sannyasi—Sri Krishna Prem. He was a scholar in Sanskrit and Hindi. He did kirtan and danced in divine ecstasy. He was the author of famous books such as *Yoga of the Bhagavadgita*, *Yoga of the Katha Upanishad*, etc. He gave impressive, forcible speeches in English and Hindi also.

Mr. Alexander I.M.S., who was in the Medical College, Lucknow, became a sannyasin. He stayed in Uttara-Brindavan along with Sri Krishna Prem.

Sri Swami Tapovanam, the lion of Vedanta, a Brahmajnani, the author of several Sanskrit books, the crest-jewel and beacon-light of the Himalayas, lived in Uttarakasi. Even the biggest officers sat at his lotus feet to learn Vedanta.

Sri Malayala Swami, a great Sanskrit scholar, a Brahmajnani, thrilled the whole of Andhra Province with his lectures and spiritual instructions. He elevated the people of the entire Andhra. He was the author of several spiritual books in Telugu. He conducted a beautiful ashram at Yerpedu. He also held spiritual conferences. He was the spiritual king of Andhra.

Sri Swami Ramdas spread his spiritual influence from Anandashram, Kanhangad throughout the world. His books are a treasure for the world. He was a dynamic yogi and bhakta.

Sri Swami Omkar had two ashrams, one in Totapalli hills and another in Waltair.

He did great work in America also.

Sri Swami Rajeshwaranandaji founded the Upanishadic Vihar in Kalahasti. He was the founder of Satchidananda Sangha in Madras. He was assisted by Dr. Sri T.M.P. Mahadevan, M.A., Ph.D., of the Madras University. He did great spiritual work. He was an orator and an author of several spiritual books.

Many cultured young men from Bengal have renounced the world and joined the Sri Ramakrishna Mission and are doing great spiritual work here and in various parts of America and Europe. Apart from the great direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Swami Madhavananda, Swami Nikhilananda, Swami Yatiswarananda, Swami Sasvatananda, Swami Sharvananda, Swami Tyagishananda, Swami Vireswarananda, Swami Ranganathananda and several others are torch-bearers of Divine Wisdom.

Sri Swami Yogananda did great spiritual work in Los Angeles. He was an orator. He was the founder of Self-Realization Fellowship.

A barrister of Gujarat became Swami Advaitananda. His articles appeared in various magazines. He was a dynamic yogi and a sage.

Swami Swayam Jyoti founded an ashram in Chota Udaipur and started a Gujarati Journal, the "Utthan." He did great work in Gujarat.

Swami Purushottamanandaji, who lived in Vashishtha Guha, Himalayas, did silent spiritual work.

Swami Karapatri has been a too well-known and famous figure to need introduction. He lived the life of an ideal sannyasin. He conducted great yajnas for the peace of the world.

Sri Swami Suddhananda Bharati from South India was a jewel among sannyasins. He was a king among poets. He was the author of several important books. He was a yogi and anubhava-jnani. He radiated his Brahmic effulgence from the South.

The names of Swamis Vivekananda, Rama Tirtha and Dayananda can never be forgotten. They have become world-famous figures. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a sannyasin, and was a synthesis of the different conceptions of spiritual realization.

It is only sannyasins bold, who have cut off all ties and connections, who are fearless, who are freed from delusion, passion and selfishness, that can do real service to the world. Sannyasa alone can free one entirely from delusion and all worldly attachments.

Glory to sannyasins who are gods on this earth! May their blessings be upon you all!

Sannyasinis

When women are equipped with the four means of salvation, they are also quite eligible for sannyasa. They are as efficient as men in the field of spirituality. When one is born with sannyasa samskaras no force on the earth can prevent him or her from taking sannyasa. Even if you keep a hundred guards to prevent them from

leaving the house they cannot check them. The father of the great Buddha guarded him in all possible ways, but his horse scaled the heights of the compound and took him to the forest. It is only the effeminate, impotent, timid men (who are only mustached women), with no good samskaras, and no spiritual asset, who are spiritual bankrupts, that will cling to things mundane and die like worms. They will speak against sannyasa. He who has understood the glory and freedom of sannyasa, a real child of Sri Shankara, Sri Dattatreya, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara, cannot remain even for a day in the pravritti-marga.

Sulabha was a reputed lady sannyasini. She wandered about as a parivrajaki or itinerant woman and had a controversy with Raja Janaka. She was a Brahmajnani.

Sri Gauri Mataji was a sannyasini. She was the president of the Saradamani Ashram. Sri Durga Mataji is the present president of the ashram. She is a graduate.

Sri Omkar-Ishwari was a learned sannyasini. She was a Vedantini. She lived in Rishikesh. She had a small group of disciples; some were males, some were females.

Sri Swami Malayalaswami of Vyasa-Ashram, Yerpedu, Chittor Dt., has many sannyasini disciples.

The late Swami Poornananda of Sivalaya, Rishikesh, a cultured sannyasin of great reputation, had sannyasini disciples.

The daughter of the late Sri Chakravarty of Uttara-Brindavan, Almora, has taken sannyasa.

Even ladies born in rich families, like Sri Sushila Mangaldas of Bombay, do not want to marry and want to follow the spiritual path. This clearly shows that there is a sannyasa tendency in them.

Glorious sannyasinis

The indispensable necessity and the extreme importance of sannyasa can be very well imagined by the fact that it was not men alone but also women that took sannyasa in doing sadhana for self-realization. We know of the existence of sannyasinis, bhairavis and yatiswaris who have been a glory not merely to womankind but to the nation and the world as a whole. The chronicles of Christian mystics teem with immeasurable instances of such renowned all-renouncing nuns who were the examples of fiery aspiration, intense vairagya and supreme tyaga.

In India, the earliest records speak of the renunciation of Maitreyi, after hearing the sublime upadesha by Sage Yajnavalkya. She was permeated with the true spirit of sannyasa. She renounced the world. She is an ideal for all women, for all times.

The names of Sulabha and Gargi are too famous to need elaborate explanation. We hear of the glorious sannyasini Sulabha, the wandering mendicant, the knower of Brahman, conversing with King Janaka of Videha. This is described in the mokshadharmaparva of the Mahabharata. She gives Janaka profound knowledge of the Reality, explains to him the nature of existence and walks away unconcerned with matters of the world. It is told that Sulabha, the dandi-sannyasini, was highly devoted to the religion of final emancipation. She wanted to test Janaka whether he was emancipated or not. She finds countless faults in Janaka and tells him that he is

only a lip Vedantin, that he is not emancipated, that his emancipation is only talk, and that he has not renounced attachment. She illumined Janaka with supreme wisdom and left his palace.

The questions put by Gargi to Sage Yajnavalkya in the court of Janaka mark her out as an ideal sannyasini. "If he will answer me these questions, not even one among you will surpass him in discussions about Brahman," said Gargi to the learned sages assembled in the court of Janaka. How bold should a woman be to question a Brahmajñani like Yajnavalkya! Is this not a sign of absolute renunciation?

The Buddhist and the Jaina order of ascetics had its equal share of world-renouncing nuns as of its famous monks.

Nearer our times, a most brilliant example of a woman sannyasini is that of the great Bhairavi Brahmani who was the tantric guru of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. She was a fiery example of wonderful renunciation, great boldness and courage, that distinguished her out as a fearless yogini. Among the later lady devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, and the holy Mother Saradamani Devi, the name of Gauri Mata should be mentioned. She felt the call for the higher life from her very girlhood and resisting all efforts of her relatives to get her married she renounced home and hearth and became a sannyasini. She wandered about fearlessly in many parts of India and performed severe austerities in the Himalayas, and later on, in Brindavan.

Yogini Mata is another such lady and an associate of Gauri Mata. She was a highly spiritual lady living a life of great detachment and intense continuous sadhana. She had performed the purnabhisheka ceremony of the tantras as well as the viraja homa of the Vedas, both indicative of having renounced the worldly life completely. The present Durga Mata of Saradewari Ashram, Calcutta, is a similar sannyasini.

O devis of the world! Should you not strive for the higher, the grand, the sublime, the only real life in the soul? Is it sufficient if you are satisfied with the petty material necessities of life on earth? Do you remember what Maitreyi said to Yajnavalkya? "What shall I do with that wealth of this whole world if thereby I would not become immortal?" said she to her husband. How many of the ladies of this world will be bold enough to assert this wise saying of the upanishadic ideal of a woman?

To chain themselves with the bondage of samsara is not the birthright of the mothers and sisters of the world. To get stuck up in family, children and relatives is not the ideal of courageous and discriminative women. Every mother of the world should realize her responsibility to awaken herself and her children, her family, her husband, to the true light and splendor of spiritual life. What a glorious mother was Madalasa! Did she ask her children to study up to the post-graduate examination and then seek for some employment? "You are pure, you are consciousness, you are taintless, you are devoid of the maya of samsara." Such was the advaitic instruction which Madalasa gave to her children when she rocked them in cradle. How many mothers of the present-day world have got the fortune to teach their children such a profound knowledge? On the other hand, the present day mothers would try to

crush the spiritual tendency of their children even if it is found in them in a microscopic state! What a sad and pitiable condition of these ignorant mothers! Wake up, O mothers, sisters! Wake up from your deep sleep! Recognize your responsibility! Spiritualize yourselves! Spiritualize your children! Spiritualize even your husbands, for you are the makers of the family! Remember how Chudala illumined her husband. You are the makers of the nations! You are the builders of the world! Therefore spiritualize yourselves! Assert in yourselves the spirit of Sulabha, Maitreyi, Gargi, Gauri-Puri-Devi! Do not be cowardly! Come out of your fleshly homes, the homes of delusion, the homes of vanity!

Be you all real sannyasinis, and bring real glory, real greatness, for that is real boldness and courage, that is real wisdom and understanding! A woman is not a woman if she is devoid of spiritual fire in her, if she is ignorant of a higher life in the soul! A woman's duty is not merely family, her duty is also to transcend family! Her duty does not lie in saris, bangles jackets, powders and scents! Her duty does not lie in getting employment for her children! Her duty is also concerned with the self, the Atman, the Brahman! Such a woman is a real symbol of God, she is to be adored, she is to be worshipped!

Sannyasa ashrama

Sannyasa is the fourth ashrama of life. It is, in other words, the upanishadic life. It is the life of renunciation. It is the last of the four ashramas. In none of these stages should a person grasp at the duties of the other three. He should stick to the dharma of his own particular ashrama.

“Ahimsa paramo dharmah” [“Non-violence is the supreme dharma.”] cannot be strictly practiced by householders. It can be practiced by sannyasins who tread the nivritti marga. Real sannyasins do not defend themselves even when their lives are in danger, because, they know that existence is in reality changeless. A sannyasin is one who has no body, and who identifies himself with Brahman or the Atman.

The duty of a brahmachari is different from that of a grihastha, vanaprastha and a sannyasin. The duty of a grihastha is quite unconcerned with the duty of the other three. Similar is the case with the vanaprastha and the sannyasin. One has nothing to do with the works of the other. The brahmachari studies the samhita portion of the Vedas as swadhyaya. The grihastha performs action according to the brahmana portion of the Vedas. The vanaprastha leads a mystic and secluded life according to the sylvan text or the aranyaka portion of the Vedas. The sannyasin contemplates according to the upanishadic or knowledge portion of the Vedas.

The sannyasin is dead to the world and his family. The very color, the very orange robe gives strength and purity. I do not believe those people who say, “We have given coloring to our hearts.” This is timidity and hypocrisy. If there is real internal change, the external change is bound to come. You cannot be a sage inside and a rogue outside. The inner nature will not allow you to keep an opposite nature outside. I do not admit that merely an attainment towards eradication of egoism, sankalpas and vasanas, does really constitute sannyasa. The ashrama-bheda is

absolutely necessary. Why did sages like Shankara and Sri Ramakrishna take sannyasa? Why did Yajnavalkya take sannyasa even after realization of Brahman? Where is the necessity for this order at all?

Some people say, “Think for yourself. There is no need of spiritual rules or spiritual initiation.” O ignorant man! How can you think for yourself? If I ask you to enquire “Who am I?” you will think you are Mr. so and so, born of such-and-such a person, with such a height and weight, and having such a name. Is this the enquiry of “Who am I?” Is this thinking for yourself? Ignorant people cannot think for themselves.

Some others say, “We can find out good and evil, right and wrong, by consulting our conscience alone.” No individual will be able to do this by consulting his conscience merely. Conscience will not help you unless you have reached the height of purity and understanding. The impure conscience cannot give right suggestions. The pig thinks that the whole world is full of pigs only, and that it itself is nothing more than a pig. Similar is the fate of those men of little understanding with an impure conscience who try to think for themselves and get suggestions from their conscience. Conscience is one’s own habit and conviction. The conscience of the individual speaks in accordance with his tendencies, proclivities, inclinations, education, habits, passion and the like. The conscience of a savage speaks a language entirely different from that of a civilized European. How can you depend upon this false so-called conscience? The conscience of an aboriginal brute speaks a language entirely different from that of an ethically developed yogi of India. The sense of duty ingrained in the clerk of a collectorate, a car-driver, a scavenger, are all different. There are ten different consciences in ten different persons of the same district. Virochana thought for himself, took guidance from his conscience, and enquired “Who am I?” But with what result? He “realized” that the body is the Self. [See Chandogya Upanishad 8:71-8:8:5.]

The voice of the conscience alone is not sufficient to guide man in his life. Without taking sannyasa you cannot live the life of detachment and renunciation through mere independent thinking and through conscience. The duties of life will be misunderstood without the shastras and the words of the realized persons (aptavakya). The Lord Krishna says in the Gita: “He who, having cast aside the ordinances of the scriptures, follows the promptings of his desires, does not attain perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest goal.”

Tired with the mundane life of the world, and striving for the realization and correct knowledge of the Self, pondering over the wisdom of the Upanishads which appertain to the science of Brahman, a really wise man should abandon his home and take to the life of sannyasa. Those brahmanas who, declaring protection to all creatures (i.e., sannyasins), leave their homes and take to asceticism, attain to effulgent regions.

Houseless, bereft of the sacred fire, desireless, indifferent and speechless, he should maintain perfect equanimity. Life and death he must not court; like a servant waiting for the receipt of his salary he must patiently wait for the time of

emancipation.

Always contemplating on Brahman, non-attached to anything of the world, and desiring nothing both here and hereafter, he should, in the company of his Self alone seek for the bliss of emancipation. He should court peace and live in peace, for peace is bliss, and peace is his ideal.

Meditation is the sannyasin's duty, meditation is his food, meditation is his life. He lives meditation, breathes meditation. He is ever intent upon the realization of the Supreme Brahman.

By restraining the senses, by annihilating desire and aversion, by extending compassion to all creatures, by seeing the Eternal Being alone existing everywhere, a sannyasin attains immortality.

By means of yoga, a sannyasin should comprehend the disembodied Self or the Supreme Brahman which runs through all creatures, good or bad, high or low. The all-pervasiveness of this inner Self which spreads among all living and dead beings alike, is unintelligible to the untrained and uncultured intellects; let the sannyasin witness the majesty of this Existence-Knowledge-Bliss by means of profound meditation.

Him, who has fully witnessed this supreme state of existence, actions do not bind; without this knowledge a man shall revert to this mortal world.

The sannyasin should take refuge in the wisdom of Brahman and the sentences of the Vedanta which treat of the eternal truth. Brahman is the refuge of all knowing as well as ignorant beings. It is the final goal of the aspirations of all who wish to become immortal.

Bereft of all work, indifferent to the pleasures of heaven as factors of embodiment and enchainment, on account of the privilege of witnessing the Self, and by constantly brooding over the Supreme Brahman, the wise sannyasin attains the highest bliss!

Gist of the Narada Parivrajaka Upanishad

One should qualify himself with sadhana-chatushtaya before entering into sannyasa. He must be above the tricks and bondages of samsara. He should develop dispassion towards objects which he sees or hears. He must be encircled by the fence of dispassion from all sides. As soon as disgust arises in the mind for all objects of the world, then one should take to sannyasa without any further hesitation. A passionate man should not take sannyasa. A person who takes sannyasa even when he is being overpowered by passion, goes to the regions of darkness and gloom. Whose tongue, genital, stomach and hands are properly disciplined, that man is fit to take sannyasa. A Brahmana should take to sannyasa even while he is yet a brahmachari—without marriage—for samsara is essenceless. He should try to seek that Essence through renunciation. A man who possesses deep dispassion cannot marry. Works and duties are only for the worldly man; not for the man of renunciation.

As soon as the supreme truth is ascertained, one should abandon his house,

family, and take up a staff and leave off his sacred thread and the hairs on the head.

Who is a real bhikshu?

He who is attached to the Supreme Self, who is detached from the non-self, who has no desire whatever, he is a real bhikshu.

Who is happy, whether worshipped or censured, whether praised or beaten—he is a real bhikshu.

Who possesses the bhava that he is the Supreme Brahman, that he is one without a second—he is a real bhikshu.

Who is an abode of tranquillity, self-control, purity, truth, contentment, straightforwardness, renunciation and egolessness—he is fit to be a sannyasin.

Who knows the true import of the Vedanta, who has given fearlessness to all creatures—he is a real bhikshu.

Who never thinks of his past, who never dreams of his future, who is indifferent to the present—he is fit to be a sannyasin.

Who is able to withdraw all the senses within and throw off all sense objects outside—he is fit to be a sannyasin.

Who lives with his prana, as if he had no prana (i.e., as if he is dead)—he is fit to be a sannyasin.

General rules for a sannyasin

Never is desire extinguished by its fulfillment, on the other hand it increases like fire after pouring ghee over it.

Hearing, touching, tasting, seeing, or smelling anything, he who is neither exhilarated nor depressed is said to be a man of self-control.

A sannyasin should shun praise like poison. He should accept censure as if it is nectar. He who is censured sleeps soundly, wakes up soundly, wanders soundly, but the person who censures perishes quickly.

A sannyasin should not argue, he should not denounce anybody. For the sake of the body, he should not create any enmity.

He should not be angry with one who is angry with him; he should be friendly with him who censures him.

Desiring for nothing else than the final liberation of the soul, he should live with his Self as his sole guide.

To feel that the body is the Self is the real hell, is real punishment, is real bondage, is real sin. This is to be avoided with care.

He should not crave either life or death. He should be indifferent to them. He should patiently await the time when he will be liberated.

He should not feel that this is good or that is not good, but take whatever food he gets, and speak the minimum, but truthfully, sweetly, appropriately.

By casting a look on either a baby born just now, or a girl of sixteen, or even a woman of hundred years, he should be unperturbed.

He should be indifferent even after hearing good or bad, sweet or harsh words,

which cause sorrow or joy.

Never should a sannyasin even think in his mind to love, hate, supersede, delude, censure or injure other beings.

A sannyasin should not undertake long journeys. He should always spend his time in studying the Upanishads for his salvation.

Sannyasa is open to a brahmachari, a grihastha or a vanaprastha, all alike. One can take sannyasa either direct from brahmacharya or otherwise as he likes.

The sannyasin has no yajnopavita, for he wears the yajnopavita (sacred thread) of Brahmajnana. He is the real yajnopavitin, others are not real yajnopavitins.

The real Brahmana is one who wears the jnana-yajnopavita, and not one who merely wears an external thread.

The sannyasin shines like gold, like the sun, with his orange robe. He renounces the whole universe at a stretch and has nothing to do with anything except the One Self.

The sannyasin is contented with whatever happens to come. He is the most blessed. He has fulfilled his mission of life.

The sannyasin renounces both the world and the Veda, and centers himself in the Supreme Self.

He should not pay heed to words of others, like, "Please come, please stand, please go," etc. He should not accept gifts from anybody, when it is really not necessary.

If he hears any bad news about his previous wife, children, relations, etc., he should not be moved in his mind. He should not even dream of them at any time.

The sannyasin is a real Brahmana, for he does not know what is meant by the difference between good, bad, sacred, secular, virtuous and vicious, etc., among things of the world.

Seeing that peaceful sage, the celestial beings are attracted towards him. Because he does not have any corporeal sign, he is fit to attain kaivalyamukti.

There should be perfect renunciation (dispassion) born of viveka or discrimination (understanding). The vairagya should not be mild and half hearted. Nothing but the state of kaivalya or final liberation is to be the ideal of attainment.

He who possesses wisdom is a real sannyasin. Wisdom is the sign of a sannyasin.

The sannyasin should be ever intent on advaitic meditation.

Only a jnani crosses over samsara. None else can cross it. The sannyasin should practice jnana yoga for the liberation of his soul.

"That is the Abode of the Supreme reaching which one returns not again. There the sun does not shine, nor the moon. That jnani does not return again, does not return again." Thus ends the Upanishad.

Chapter Three

Instructions to Sannyasins

Do not be tempted by siddhis. Do not try to get them. Do not exhibit your spiritual powers.

Be always saturated in the continuous thought of peace, knowledge and bliss without decay.

You are not the body. Do not love it.

Be always true and loyal to the doctrines of Vedanta, which you should try to practice to the best of your ability.

The eternal Brahman alone exists everywhere. There is nothing else but That. Therefore be silent and wise.

Do not forget that whatever you see, hear, smell, taste, or touch, or feel, is nothing but Brahman only in reality.

Be always doing the japa and meditation of OM.

Remember that you are the immortal Atman, and that the whole world is but Brahman only.

You are living in eternity and infinity. Your concern is not with space and time.

Never feel sorry or depressed or grieved if you witness a pitiable sight, like a suffering man or a dead man, etc. Discriminate and try to see the Atman alone in all sights, situations and experiences, though you should help the suffering, if you can.

Do not keep pet animals.

Never think of death, though you must think of the death of the body that may come any time. Remember you have no death in reality. You are the eternal and homogeneous essence of Satchidananda!

Part Two

Vairagya the First Foundation of Sannyasa–I

Vairagya is the opposite of raga (attachment). Vairagya is dispassion. Vairagya is detachment. Vairagya is indifference to material enjoyment here and hereafter. It is the second item in sadhana-chatushtaya–viveka, vairagya, shadsampat and mumukshutwa.

Vairagya is born of viveka, or discrimination between nitya and anitya (eternal and non-eternal), sat and asat (real and unreal), tattwa and atattwa (element and non-element). Viveka comes through selfless service done in several births and through puja and aradhana (worship and adoration of God), and through the grace of the Lord. From viveka is born vairagya. It gives spiritual strength.

A man of vairagya has no attraction for the material world. So vairagya is a supreme, inexhaustible wealth for spiritual aspirants. Vairagya aids concentration of mind, (Samadhana) and generates burning mumukshutwa, or strong yearning for liberation or emancipation, or Release.

Raga is attachment to objects. Wherever there is a little pleasure, there is raga. Wherever there is pain, there is dislike. Like and dislike are interrelated. Raga-dwesha is also one of the important afflictions, according to Patanjali Maharshi. The five afflictions are avidya (ignorance), asmita (egoism), raga-dwesha (like and dislike) and abhinivesha (clinging to life). First, there is ignorance, the original avidya. From this is born egoism, asmita, and from asmita is born raga-dwesha, and from raga-dwesha, abhinivesha, or clinging to this life.

Types of vairagya

Vairagya is of different types or degrees–mridu, madhyama and teevra (mild, moderate and intense). Only intense vairagya will help the aspirant to stick to the spiritual path. So the aspirants should be careful. Even though their vairagya is of a mild type, they should try to make it moderate and then intense.

Vairagya comes through looking into the defects of material life. Material happiness is not real happiness. It is illusory, transient, impermanent. It is mixed with pain. So, again and again by looking into the defects of material life, vairagya dawns. It should be strengthened through study of spiritual books, satsanga, vichara (discrimination) and enquiry.

Need for enquiry

Vairagya should be born of discrimination, enquiry and analysis. By these, the mind is weaned from material enjoyments and rendered subtle–only this is lasting vairagya. Again and again you will have to make enquiry. External deprivations do not constitute real vairagya. Real vairagya should come from enquiry, vichara. “All

these material objects do not give us lasting happiness. They lead us into pain and sorrow.” Such deep enquiry, again and again persisted in for a very long time, produces lasting vairagya.

Vairagya is the real wealth for an aspirant. It helps him to do real sadhana. It makes the mind introverted. Vairagya puts a brake to the extroverted tendency of the mind. Even if the mind runs towards objects, at once vairagya will point out that there is pain there, that such enjoyment is the cause for rebirth and intense suffering. So the mind is bridled, and gradually through intense practice it is established in real, lasting, sustained, intense vairagya.

Vairagya is of two grades: para (supreme) vairagya and apara (relative) vairagya. Para vairagya comes after we attain self-realization. The whole world then appears like a straw. This gives intense spiritual strength.

An essential prerequisite

Without vairagya there cannot be any real spiritual progress. In Vedanta it is the only vital, fundamental sadhana. If you have vairagya, all other virtues will come by themselves. Patanjali Maharshi says: *Abhyastavairagyabhyam tannirodhah*—“The mind is controlled by meditation or sadhana and vairagya.” They are the two wings of the aspirant to soar high into the realm of the Immortal Abode. The same thing Lord Krishna also says: *Abhyasena tu Kaunteya, vairagyena cha grihyate*—“The mind is controlled by practice and dispassion and intense detachment.” By vairagya the mind is detached. He who works in a detached way is not bound by karma (action). So it is the aspirant’s duty to cultivate this one virtue, or sadhana-anka-vairagya.

Mental disposition

Vairagya is, doubtless, a mental state whereby the mind does not run into material or material grooves. It moves towards the Atman, towards God. By external appearance you cannot tell that one has vairagya. Vairagya is a mental disposition—detachment and indifference born of viveka.

“Golden Medium”

Lord Krishna says that He is not in favor of extreme asceticism: “They torture all the elements in the body and Me also who dwell in the body.” Lord Buddha also tortured his body in the beginning, but later on found out that he made little if any spiritual progress. The body is an instrument for attaining self-realization. So you should not torture the body. Whatever is truly needed for the body, you should provide. God has given you common sense. So you should practice common sense sadhana. The thing is you should not give too much leniency to the mind. It will hurl you down. Always be watchful. Be eternally vigilant.

Common sense approach

Vairagya is necessary, but too much of it will produce a dilapidated constitution. You will then have no progress in sadhana. So use your common sense and have

whatever you require. This is my doctrine. Train the stomach in different ways. In Bhagavad Gita 17:8, Lord Krishna says clearly that the food should be flavorful, smooth (oleogenous), substantial and satisfying. One should take wholesome food. One should not get attached to food, nor should one be particular about select dishes. You should eat to live, not live to eat. The stomach should not be made sensitive by a continuously bland diet. Occasional fasting is good. Impure, intoxicating and non-vegetarian food should be avoided. Whatever you take, it must be digested. Thus you will have no difficulties. Wherever you go, you will have perfect balance and your constitution can function under different climatic conditions and on different kinds of food. That is common sense discipline.

How to develop vairagya

By looking into the defects of material life and reading books on vairagya, lives of saints, Bhartrihari's *Vairagya Shataka*, and the *Vairagyaprakarana* in the *Yoga Vashishtha*, dispassion should be cultivated. These will increase your desire for liberation and your conviction in spiritual life. Advanced students should not think that they have attained self-realization and that they need not study these books. These books are important to neophytes, middle students and advanced students, too. You should study our own publication *How to Get Vairagya*. If you are established in vairagya, the superstructure of samadhi, ritambharaprajna (truth-consciousness) will be duly attained. So let us remember all these points, and cultivate paravairagya, real vairagya born of viveka, vichara and enquiry. Otherwise, you will only remain half-aspirants.

May the Lord grant you all paravairagya! May you all be established in vairagya. It is the only vital, fundamental sadhana for all people to get themselves established in their inner Self whose swarupa is vairagya, whose swarupa is sannyasa, whose swarupa is nivritti

Behold! Listen! Come! There is a way to the immortal abode. There is a way to the supreme happiness. There is a way to the fourth state. There is a way to the fourth dimension. Follow the way. That way is vairagya. Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realize, be kind, be compassionate.

Vairagya the First Foundation of Sannyasa–II

There are various kinds of vrittis-some painful, some pleasant. To destroy these vrittis Patanjali Maharshi suggests abhyasa and vairagya, by which all the vrittis subside and you enter into samadhi.

The same thing is said by the Lord in the Bhagavad Gita also. Arjuna questions the Lord regarding the impetuosity of the mind. Lord Krishna says: “Control this impetuous mind through abhyasa and vairagya.” Vairagya is the most essential factor, indifference to enjoyments herein and hereafter. Through dosha drishti, you can develop vairagya. The mind is filled with material samskaras. It is very difficult to wean the mind from the objects. The method is to remember the description of the world given by the Lord in the Gita: *Anityam sukham lokam, dukhaalayam asavotam*—this world is impermanent, full of sufferings, the abode of sorrow. All the material pleasures appear to be pleasant in the beginning, but in the end they are like poison.

Remember the *Vairagya Dindima* of Sri Shankaracharya: “Lust, anger and greed are the thieves lurking in the mind; the jewel of wisdom is plundered by these dacoits. Therefore, wake up, O man of this samsara! Wake up; life is waning; you are caught up in this wheel of samsara. You are roasted by various kinds of anxieties and expectations. You do not realize, but this life is gradually waning away.” Constantly dwell on these thoughts; you will gradually develop vairagya.

Cultivation of vichara for sannyasa

A swan splits a mixture of water and milk and rejects the water and drinks the milk alone. Even so, a paramahansa rejects the material objects which give pain, abandons this illusory world of names and forms, identifies himself with the undying Atman and drinks the nectar of immortality.

Mira Bai deserted her husband; Raja Bhartrihari his wife; Vibhishana his brother, Ravana; Bali his guru, Sukracharya; and Prahlada his father, Hiranyakasipu. You can desert anyone who stands in the way of God-realization. But be careful that your aspiration is genuine and firm. If you have an intense spiritual thirst for God, and if you have a passionate wife/husband to pull you down, what is the earthly use of having such a disastrous partner with intellectual, psychological disparity and discord? You cannot sacrifice your noble ideal just for the sake of pleasing someone. Can you?

Wise, dispassionate men like Bhartrihari, Buddha, and Gopichand retired into forests abandoning all these things, considering all worldly things as worthless as straw, for realizing the Self which alone can confer immortality infinite bliss and eternal peace.

Tell me now friends! What do you find really in this illusory world? Happiness or pain? Joy or sorrow? Have you understood the illusory nature of this mayic creation? This world is a mere appearance. The mind and the senses are deceiving you at every moment. You have mistaken pain for pleasure on account of clouded understanding. There is not an iota of happiness in this sense-universe. Abandon this selfish struggle for earthly gain and satisfaction. March directly to that wire-puller who is moving these toys of flesh–human bodies—who is keeping up this big show, who is behind this show. In Him alone will you find lasting happiness and perennial joy. Merge in Him by practicing daily meditation.

During adversities, troubles, extreme difficulties, sickness, etc., a feeling of utter helplessness and of the presence of a mighty mysterious power or hidden governor of this universe, creeps over your being. But such moments do not last for a long time. And they are very few, also. Maya is very powerful. The illusory material objects invade the mind and cloud the understanding. But a man of dispassion and discrimination is always vigilant. Maya is afraid to approach him.

Prana or the life-breath is as impermanent as the drop of water on the lotus-leaf which is likely to be thrown by the slightest breeze. It is not certain that the man who is living today will live the next day. Life is as evanescent as a bubble. Try therefore to attain immortality.

There is an internal peace which is not disturbed by external happenings. This is the supreme peace of the soul or Atman. He who rests in this peace is able to meet difficulties and troubles with fortitude. He is not upset by adversities, calamities and trying circumstances.

Who is your real father? Search for Him. Who is your real mother? Search for Her. What is death? Why are you attached to the flesh? Be attached to the imperishable Atman, the indweller, the immortal friend and well-wisher.

A sannyasin's analysis of life

Discrimination will tell us that this is a strange world that we live in. This is a very big museum or wonderful show. The flowers and the Himalayan scenery, the Niagara Falls, the sea, the sky are beautiful and charming. But the earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, lightnings, thunderstorms, landslides, cyclones, epidemics of influenza and plague are awful and threatening. And disease, old age and death await us all—unless we die too young for them.

That which is nothing in the beginning and is so also in the end, necessarily does not exist in the present. Objects are like ordinary illusions though regarded as real. Do vichara. This world is verily like a resting tree for birds. One evening birds meet together on a tree for a night's stay and the next morning they leave the tree and part from one another and go their way. Even so do men meet for a time as relatives, parents, sons and friends and then disperse. Birth leads to death and death to birth. Thus without rest man wanders forever.

This mysterious world with its charming scenery is very beautiful to look at but it is very dirty to mingle with. All are deceived by Mayic charm. But the sage, the

devotee, the yogi and the viveki are not affected.

This very big world is a mere drop or an atom when compared to the infinite Brahman. Just as a straw is floating in the ocean, so also this world is floating in a corner of Brahman, as it were. The mind and the lenses of the eye are deceiving you. They reveal to you an exaggerated picture, just as the microphone exaggerates the sound of a pin-drop into a mighty thunder. This is a kind of jugglery which is understood by people who possess dispassion and discrimination, but not by the worldly-minded.

The mighty and powerful will pass away. This world will pass away with all its occupants. The sun, moon, and stars will pass away. All joys and sorrows will pass away. The five elements will pass away. Days and nights, months and years and centuries will pass away. Verily the Akshara or the Imperishable Sat-Chit-Ananda Brahman or the Eternal alone will endure forever. Realize this Brahman, thine innermost Self through constant and profound meditation, and become immortal.

The glory of the worldly life passes away quickly. Name and fame are vibrations in the ether. How many renowned men and women, great and notorious, have come and gone! No one speaks of them now.

Ah! how quickly does the glory of the world pass away! Where are the mighty potentates who once wielded their scepters with vain pomp and glory? Where are those erudite professors, pandits and vidvans who once passed for great men in society? Tell me now, where are all those scholars, multimillionaires, who posed themselves so much for their erudition and wealth? Do people talk of them now?

The egoistic man of vanities has grown very old. His body is bent now and he walks with a stick, and yet his anger has not disappeared now. His body is emaciated. The limbs are in a wasted condition. The senses are cold, and yet his egoism has not vanished. His mustache has become grey, and yet the desires have not left him!

A frog which is in the mouth of a serpent and which is about to be devoured, attempts to get hold of nearby insects for its enjoyment. Even so man who is in the jaws of the serpent of time, tries in vain to obtain objects of sense-enjoyments like the frog, and forgets thereby his goal of life and his essential divine nature. How deluded he is!

The pleasure that one derives from the sense objects is temporary. This temporary pleasure is followed by a painful reaction. That is the reason why vivekins who are endowed with discrimination between the real and the unreal do not hanker after material pleasures. They shun them ruthlessly through dosha-drishti. The pleasure that you get from material objects is tantamount to the size of a grain of barley while the pain that you experience in this world is of the size of a mountain. Life is a lightning-flash of breath. Time is but a thunderclap of death. Live in the Atman. You will attain immortality. Go beyond time. You will attain eternity.

Advantages of sannyasa

Sannyasa is a mental state, a state of indifference to material and material enjoyments of this world, a state wherein man is trying to merge his mind in its source, the Satchidananda Parabrahman. Only a sannyasin can cut off all moha for the world. A man in the world will have some degree of moha. To destroy moha completely, one should take sannyasa. Otherwise what is the use of the sannyasa order? Why did this order come into existence? Why did Sri Shankaracharya take sannyasa? There is a purpose. There is a benefit. Sannyasa completely destroys moha. You may have heard about Narayanaswami. He has related his experiences. He says, "I practiced devotion. I attained a certain stage in bhakti, but for completing my evolution, I had to renounce. I found that I could not make any further progress while at home." This is his experience, and this will be the experience of many others also.

So let us become true sannyasins. Let us develop the true spirit of sannyasa and devote ourselves to study, meditation and selfless service and shine as Shankara, Hastamalaka, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana, Sanatkumara, and attain self-realization and divine wisdom and radiate peace and wisdom to all people who come in contact with us.

Need for the Nachiketa element

Every one of you should have strength of mind and will through discrimination. He who treats all the objects of this world as straw—that person is the greatest hero. Read the first section of the Katha Upanishad and see the glory of the world-renouncing Nachiketa. The world is in need of such Nachiketans. The Nachiketa spirit is wanted. Such a man can move the whole world. He is the support for us all; he is the guide; and he can give you solace. Nachiketa had no bank-balance. Lord Yama tempted him, promising him dominions and celestial cars, innumerable years of life; but he was a wise boy, though he was young. The world is in need of such boys of Nachiketa's type. He shunned everything; "O Lord Yama! Keep these things for yourself. Give me immortality. They will only wear out our energies and the senses will become old. Keep the dance and the cars for yourself; give me immortality. Give me the knowledge of the sreyo-marga, not the preyo-marga—the sreyomarga that leads to immortality, eternal bliss, eternal sunshine. Show me that path." Yama found that the boy was not an ordinary boy. Then he began to teach him the immortality of the soul, the nature of the soul beyond cause and effect, beyond good and evil, beyond time, space and causation. He found Nachiketa as the proper student, one who did not want earthly objects.

The Maitreyi element for women

We want not only Nachiketans; we want the Maitreyi element in women also. The world is in need of ladies endowed with the Maitreyi element. See her glory in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (2:4:1, et. al.) There was a great jnani in Janaka's court named Yajnavalkya. He had numberless cows and great wealth. When he wanted to enjoy the state of liberation while yet living, the jivanmukti-sukha, he was already a

jnani, yet he wanted to retire to the forest. He called his two wives, Katyayani and Maitreyi, and wanted to divide his property between them. Katyayani was a wonderful woman; she was a righteous housewife. But Maitreyi was a Bhramavadini. She was endowed with viveka. She was a kevala adwaitin. She asked: “My revered Lord! Even if you give me the wealth of the fourteen worlds can I attain immortality?” That is the real thing! You will have to put that question always, and not be carried away by these little things. She wanted immortality–God-realization. “If all the wealth of the three worlds cannot give me immortality, I do not want them,” she said. We want not only Nachiketas, but Maitreyis, too. Only then can the world be redeemed. We want Gargis and Sulabhas, who have had experience of the Self–aparoksha anubhuti. That is the goal of your life.

Do selfless service. Always try to realize that wherever you see, it is the Atman that you see; understand the vibhuti yoga. Study. Purify your heart. Forget not the goal; attain it right now, this very second.

It is like walking on the razor’s edge; but for an aspirant who is endowed with aspiration, it is very smooth. Try to find out where there is real happiness. Enquire, “Who am I?” Negate these five sheaths–annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vijnanamaya kosha and anandamaya kosha. These have all a beginning and an end. The Atman transcends all the five koshas. That is your real nature. Realize it, through renunciation–sannyasa.

Real sannyasa

Sannyasa is real internal transformation. It is not mere “taking gerua cloth from somebody.” It is not shaving the head, wearing orange-colored robe, carrying a kamandalu. Mere taking of sannyasa is no sannyasa: there must be complete transformation in the mind.

Such a transformed mind is wholly free from lust, desires and egoism, raga-dwesa, jealousy and vanity; it is free from outgoing tendencies. It has no attraction for sense objects; it is free from ambitions and planning.

Such a mind which makes for real sannyasa is always filled with sattwic qualities; it is free from kartri-bhoktri-bhvas. It always moves inwards–it is antarmukha vritti. It has renounced all work with desire; it has relinquished the fruits of all actions; it rests in its own Satchidananda swarupa. This is real sannyasa.

Secret of sannyasa

Immortal divine life cannot be attained without renunciation of the petty material, worldly life. The secret of renunciation is the renunciation of egoism and desires. Some think that renouncing the family and the material world alone is the real renunciation. But it is not enough. What is wanted is the renunciation of egoism, lust, anger, greed, petty-mindedness, and such other negative qualities that stand in the way of one’s perfection and self-evolution.

To want nothing is indeed the most efficacious way to attain the highest good. If you crave for a thing, you may not get it, and consequently be unhappy. Therefore,

renounce the craving for objects.

Renounce the evil vrittis of the mind through regular introspection and by cultivating the opposite positive qualities. You will attain God-realization. Renunciation alone can make you fearless and happy. It is the bestower of eternal peace and immortality.

Who is a sannyasin-I

The life of Jesus shows how a real sannyasin will behave. A sannyasin is a very good and extremely virtuous man. He has no attachment to the world. He may live in the forest or in the city. He will always be thinking of God and of the welfare of other people. He will keep his mind and heart quite pure. He is without anger, without hatred, is truthful and kind. He wants no luxuries but just enough food to keep him alive. He wears very simple dress, He has no family and children and property. Yet he is extremely happy.

He is wise and virtuous. He possesses divine qualities such as mercy, universal love, truthfulness, purity. He has control over his mind and senses.

He is free from anger, lust, greed, pride, jealousy. He loves all. He always prays and meditates. He never does any harm to anybody. People respect and adore him.

Who is a sannyasin-II

A sannyasin has a different angle of vision. He has different eyes. He looks upon everything from an absolutely different point of view. Just as the man who wears green spectacles sees green objects everywhere, so also a jnani sees the Atman everywhere through his new eye of wisdom. There is absolutely no personal element in him. He has not a bit of selfish interest. The lower self is completely annihilated. He lives for serving all. He feels the world as his own self. He actually feels that all is himself only. There is not a single thought or feeling for his personal little self. He has cosmic vision and cosmic feeling. Just as the river has joined the ocean, he has joined the ocean of bliss, knowledge and consciousness. He thinks and feels and works for others.

A sannyasin is absolutely free from worries, difficulties, troubles, tribulations, sorrow and anxieties under any circumstance or condition. He is always cheerful and happy. He is not a slave or victim of different moods. He is not moved a bit by sorrow, grief or persecution.

A sannyasin has got all-round development. He has spotless or unblemished character. All sattvic virtues shine in him. He is an embodiment of mercy, sympathy, love, patience, serenity, etc. He has high qualities. The whole nature has been perfectly unfolded. All divine attributes are fully awakened in him.

Qualifications for sannyasa

Do not take sannyasa without the proper qualification and even if you do so without necessary qualification, you should stick to sannyasa and make genuine effort to make yourself qualified. To revert back to household life after renunciation

is deplorable. It is like eating the vomited food or crow's excrement.

If you make use of the orange robe for leading a comfortable life without exertion, you are the worst sinner. You can have no progress in the spiritual path. You cannot develop any virtue.

Strive ceaselessly to live in God through meditation, study, service of the needy and meditation. Then alone will you be able to conquer time and death.

Become a hero. Conquer the formidable foe, the turbulent mind. Self-conquest is more than many a martyrdom. The inner war against the evil thoughts, evil vasanas, cravings and evil samskaras or impressions is more formidable than the external wars. War against the mind and the senses is indeed more drastic than this outer warfare.

Realize your unity with human beings, animals, plants and rocks—with all Nature. Cultivate equal vision and universal brotherhood. You will soon attain the *summum bonum* of life.

Taste the immortal sweetness of the beautiful life in the Self within by annihilating the mind. Live in the Atman and attain the blessed immortal state. Meditate and reach the deeper depths of eternal life, and eventually attain the full glory of union with the Supreme Self.

The touchstone of sannyasa

Only a sannyasin really knows how to perform selfless actions. Only a sannyasin can do perfect nishkama seva. You can attain a very high degree of selflessness; but perfection can be attained only when you renounce everything and become completely desireless and motiveless. The test of renunciation is selflessness; and the test of selflessness is renunciation.

Often people say, "I have mentally renounced everything. I am doing selfless service." But they are afraid to enter the holy order of sannyasa. Attachments and cravings lurk in the corners of their mind. No doubt they are rendering great service; no doubt in due time they, too, will attain that perfection but it is not possible without complete renunciation, the ideal of a sannyasin.

Sannyasin's clothes represent the highest ideals

The gerua cloth or the orange-colored robe should put into your mind the ideals of Shankara, of Dakshinamurti. Respect all saints. Reflect over the purpose for which you have taken birth in this world. Is it for a little position, a little bank-balance, a motorcar? Even the whole wealth of the fourteen worlds is nothing when compared to half a grain of vairagya. Nothing will tempt you in this world if you have real vairagya.

A man of renunciation operates through the purses and banks of the whole world. Maya stands with folded hands to serve that man who has got real dispassion. Dispassion comes from viveka. Dispassion should be born of discrimination. Smasana-vairagya or prasava vairagya will not help one in the spiritual path. Vairagya born of discrimination only will give you real strength. You

may have nothing to eat, nobody to help you, yet strength born of discrimination, strength born of regular meditation, will make you bold, fearless and take you to the other shore of fearlessness and immortality. That strength is necessary. Discrimination and dispassion—he who possesses these alone is really the great man of the world. He is the king of kings, and he owns the wealth of the whole world.

Even a little meditation on *Brahma satyam, jagan mithya*—Brahman is real; the world is unreal—must be ingrained in every cell. The world is unreal. But Maya is tempting. It makes you forget the Reality. The function of Maya consists in making the real appear as unreal and the unreal appear as real. When you begin to meditate, even if you have no success, you must persist. Regularity is of paramount importance. You must have the conviction that you can get nothing from this world. Then only will your mind be turned inward.

If Devi's grace is on us, we can reject the whole world as straw. May the Lord give us this knowledge: "Brahman is real, the world is unreal. The jiva is identical with Brahman." Mere intellect is nothing. You might have studied and exhausted all the spiritual books of a library, but it is useless without viveka and dispassion. If you have even a little dispassion, a little viveka, all the objects will have no attraction for you. The man of dispassion is happy. He is the emperor of emperors. Dispassion will come when you have understood the real nature of Reality. What is your goal? Satchidananda Swarupa! Do not do parrot-like repetition, but actually experience it.

Swadhyaya for sannyasins

Do not waste your mental energy by studying obscure vedantic texts for years. What is the use of becoming a dry pandit without self-realization? A dry pandit is like an ass which carries a load of sandalwood on its back. Even if you study a little, you must assimilate and absorb it thoroughly. You must meditate and reflect over it. It must become part and parcel of your life. Take down notes when you study a book on yoga or philosophy. This is a highly useful practice. This will help you in remembering the essential or fundamental matters. This itself is a kind of lower samadhi, as the mind is deeply occupied in sattwic ideas. This will strengthen the spiritual samskaras and check the outgoing tendencies of the mind. The mind will move towards the Atman.

The Yoga Vashishtha is a splendid work in jnana yoga. You must study it again and again. Avadhuta Gita, *Ashtavakra Gita* and *Ribhu Gita* are excellent books for jnana yoga students. *Laghu Vasudeva Manana* and *Vedantasara* are the two books to be placed in the hands of beginners in the study of Vedanta. English translations are available from the Theosophical Society, Adyar, Madras, and the Ramakrishna Mission.

I am very fond of the book *Viveka Chudamani* written by Sri Shankaracharya, that master-exponent of Advaita philosophy. The essence of Vedanta is there. It is a treasure of thought and a fount of inspiration. This is a book for constant study. It is your constant companion in your daily life. The style is simple and flowing. I used

to carry the book with me always. It is an ideal book for the beginner and an ideal companion and remembrancer for the advanced students also.

Study the Mandukya Upanishad. You will know all about OM and the four states of consciousness. It is one of the classical Upanishads, and has twelve verses. Sri Gaudapadacharya, the Paramaguru or the grandpreceptor of Sri Shankara, has written karikas on this Upanishad which are very illuminating and sublime. Without the help of the karikas you cannot have a comprehensive understanding of the text, you cannot get a clear insight into the system of thought or philosophy that is propounded in this unique upanishad.

This upanishad does not deal with rituals and upasanas. It does not contain any story or parable or dialogue. It deals with pure philosophy alone, with metaphysical discussion of the Ultimate Reality or Brahman and the method of approach to the truth. It is said in the Mukti Upanishad: “The only means by which the final emancipation is attained is through the teachings of the Mandukya Upanishad alone, which is enough for the salvation of all aspirants.”

Meditation—the sannyasin’s foremost duty

To meditate is our foremost duty. It is for that we have taken our birth here. To concentrate, to purify, to meditate and realize our essential divine nature is our foremost duty. Realization cuts the knots of avidya, kama and karma and gives us permanent satisfaction and everlasting peace and eternal bliss.

There are various kinds of meditation—saguna dhyana for devotees, nirguna dhyana for Vedantins. There is jyotir-dhyana—“Light of lights, which transcends darkness, which transcends inertia, which is attainable through knowledge, is seated in your heart” (Bhagavad Gita 13:17). Nowhere will you find this in the Western philosophical books. It is only a realized sage like Lord Krishna that can give the *summum bonum* of human existence, the essence of all scriptures, in one word: The Light of Lights. What is the nature of Brahman? It is Light of lights. It is seated in the hearts of all. You study Western philosophical books, ten or fifteen volumes, and at the end you will find yourself to be an agnostic. That is the difference between the teachings of Eastern sages and the writings of Western philosophers. That Light of lights which transcends darkness, which transcends the three gunas, is close to you, closer than the jugular vein, closer than your breath. How to obtain this? Through wisdom, through meditation, you will have to obtain this. Every indriya is a light. Ear is a light. Eye is a light. Every sense of perception is a jyotish [light], because through the organs of perception you get knowledge of this world. Each is a light. Intellect is a light. Prana is a light. He who gives light to these—the Light of lights—is your own Atman. If you meditate on this, you will attain jnana and will be established in the supreme Light of lights.

“Him the sun does not illumine, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor the lightning—nor, verily, fires kindled upon the earth. He is the one light that gives light to all. He shining, everything shines” (Katha Upanishad 2:2:15). Through His light all the objects of this world are illuminated, the senses and mind are illuminated. The

mind, intellect and senses borrow their light from the ultimate Source, the fountain-source for everything.

Advice to all

Realization of the supreme truth is not an easy task. It demands the price of your individuality, your ego, nay, your entire being itself. Live a life of detachment and renunciation. Ceaselessly strive to realize your Self or Atman. Always contemplate on Brahman. Desire nothing in this world or hereafter. Sannyasa is the greatest self-sacrifice, the greatest offering, that any man can make. There are only three duties for a sannyasi to perform. To love the whole of humanity as his own Self, to do selfless service, and to meditate. Meditation is his duty. Meditation is his food. Meditation is his life.

Everybody must become a sannyasi one day or the other. Everyone is moving towards Brahman. Identification with the body and the mind is the cause of all sufferings. In reality, you are Satchidananda-swarupa. Identification with this real swarupa is the key to perennial peace and supreme bliss. *Ajo nityah saswatoyam purano*: This Atman is unborn, eternal and ancient. Be regular in your meditation, japa and prayer. Regularity is of paramount importance in sadhana. Whatever you do, do regularly. Increase the period of meditation gradually. Do not be attracted by the tantalizing tinsels of the world. Nobody has been benefited by material possessions. You may have crores [tens of millions] of rupees in the bank; you may have a hundred motorcars and a dozen houses, but peace of mind you cannot have from these. You can have peace of mind only if you are regular in japa and meditation. Only when you realize the Self will you enjoy perennial peace. Construct a meditation cave in your own heart through regular and systematic spiritual practice and realize Him, not in the unknown future, but right now this very second. Forget not the goal.

Qualifications of a sannyasi

The real sannyasi is full of divine virtues. He is all-bliss and peace, and he serves vigorously. He works not for the sake of himself, but for the sake of service itself—in the yajna spirit. He is outwardly seen to engage himself in actions in the same way as any ordinary man, but there is a vast difference; and that is: the sannyasi is unattached. He does not long for anything. He works selflessly. He does everything as worship of the Supreme Lord. That is the secret of his tranquillity, equanimity, and even-mindedness in success and failure, praise and censure. Such a man is a glorious sannyasi.

There is no work which is specially dear to him; there is nothing which is repugnant to him. He greets every piece of work as service of the Lord. He does every work well. And he offers every work as a flower at the lotus feet of the Lord. Such sannyasins are the greatest need of the hour. The world should have ideal and dynamic sannyasins. May you all become the embodiments of the ideal of sannyasa!

Come, embrace sannyasa

Come, embrace sannyasa! One day or other you have to embrace sannyasa. The Upanishads declare that nothing except renunciation can give you moksha. If not now, at a later stage; if not in this life, in a life to come. Before you attain the Supreme, you will have to embrace sannyasa.

Some people say, “Why give sannyasa to young people?” Why? They are most fit for sannyasa. Only young people can practice intense sadhana and tapasya. What can an old man do? Just when he is about to die, some one will utter the Mahavakyas in his ears which had already gone stone-deaf! Of what use is such a sannyasa? Glory to the youthful sannyasins who have dared to defy the worldly temptations and embrace the holy order!

Even ladies ought to take sannyasa. There have been most astounding examples in the Upanishads and Yoga Vashishtha of ladies who possessed Brahmajnana. You are by nature nearer to God. You are loving by nature. You have many divine virtues. Ladies are more attached to their children. That is their weakness. If you try even a little bit, you can achieve the Supreme.

May you all realize the Self in this very birth!

Renunciation and society’s duty to sannyasins

You can have abiding peace and bliss only in renunciation and not in the objects of this world. You should develop discrimination, dispassion and non-attachment. You should be able to preserve the equanimity of your mind under all circumstances, like Raja Janaka who said coolly: “If the whole of the Mithila City is destroyed, the Self is not destroyed.”

You will always find in the world such supermen of higher wisdom, who are fired with intense dispassion and yearning for liberation. They will renounce the world and embrace sannyasa. There will always be sannyasins in the world. No political or social doctrine or system can put a stop to people renouncing the world and leading the life of sannyasa. Sannyasins and bhikshus are the very life breath of a nation. Without men of renunciation and spiritual leaders there can be no peace or happiness in the world. They are the suns that dispel the darkness of ignorance and vice. They are the pillars of dharma on which society has been built. They are the very foundation of a nation and the world at large.

Everyone should prepare himself for sannyasa. And there will always be young men who would, through the force of purva-samskaras acquired in past births, boldly renounce the world and embrace sannyasa. The Upanishads emphatically declare that immortality cannot be attained either through the performance of selfish actions even though they may be good and virtuous, or by any means other than renunciation. Only by renouncing selfishness, only by renouncing and annihilating egoism and mineness can man achieve immortality. And, remember this, immortality is your real goal, not the pittance of material enjoyments nor even the pleasures of heaven. The Ishavasya Upanishad in its very opening mantra exhorts man to renounce, and enjoy the highest bliss: “Therefore by renunciation

alone enjoy all things.”

Bhagavan Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita extols the glory of renunciation. He has clearly stated in the Gita the true meaning of sannyasa. He does not countenance the mere renunciation of actions, but He insists on the renunciation of karmaphala or the fruits of actions. The Lord extols the glory of the nitya sannyasi who longs for nothing and hates nothing. No doubt the path of renunciation is a thorny one; it is the razor's edge. But there will always be brave, heroic men of discrimination and dispassion who will be fired with the zeal to renounce the world and lead the life of nivritti and attain self-realization. No “ism” can check them. This is the land of Lord Buddha. You all know that Lord Buddha's fiery determination to renounce the world could not be damped by a princely life, wife and newborn babe.

The supreme urge to renounce manifests itself in man and grows deep within him. Keen discrimination and fiery dispassion arise in him. He perceives: “Brahman is real. The world is unreal. The jiva is none other than Brahman.” (This is Shankara's renowned “Vedanta in half a verse.”) He gets a flash of that truth. So he aspires to make it a permanent reality. That flash is quite sufficient to sustain him till he merges into the conflagration of universal consciousness. That flash of understanding destroys all the charms of material enjoyments. The happiness of the three worlds appears as a mere straw in his eyes. All his earthly relations appear to him as strangers. He feels he is independent even as each jiva is essentially independent of others. He knows that family ties are a sort of karmabandhanam (karmic bondage; karmic tie) which are to be snapped if he is to attain Brahma-anubhava (direct personal experience of Brahman). Such an urge to renounce is irresistible when it arises in man. No obstacle could deter such a man. If society does not want him, he would seclude himself in the heart of a desert or a forest or in a mountain cave and carry on his quest.

But it is the duty of an enlightened society to support such men of renunciation and to help them in every possible way in their quest of truth. They in their turn would serve the society and give men and women the priceless spiritual food.

People very often ask me why I admit young men into my ashram and initiate them into sannyasa. These aspirants appear to be young only to your superficial vision. They appear to be young only so far as their body is concerned. But they are not young in their mind. Their heart is mature. In it have arisen viveka and vairagya. It is due to their purva samskaras. It is due to their yoga sadhana done in previous births. When millions of their fellow-men were slumbering, these few brave adhyatmic soldiers toiled day and night and acquired spiritual wealth. They had made considerable progress on the path to perfection and the Lord has given them inner wisdom very early in their present birth, and also opportunity for further spiritual growth.

These young mumukshus have renounced the world in search of God. When the son renounces the world, the parents and other members of the family should at once feel that he has done the noblest act; and from that moment they, too, should regain their faith in God; and they too, should aspire in their own station to reach

Him.

The scriptures declare: “The moment vairagya dawns in you, you should renounce the world.” No one can fix a time for a man to renounce. Everything depends on purva samskaras. Dhruva renounced when he was a boy. Shankara renounced when he was a young man. Lord Buddha renounced after marrying and begetting a son.

It is the duty of saints and elder sannyasins to protect spiritually thirsting aspirants. A spiritually thirsting aspirant, full of vairagya and mumukshutwa, is to the saint what an invaluable treasure trove is to a worldly man. Nothing on earth gladdens a saint’s heart as much as finding a real thirsting aspirant. When such an aspirant comes to him and he sees that the aspirant is qualified for initiation, it is the duty of the sadhu to fulfill the aspirant’s spiritual yearning. He cannot say: “Oh, I cannot initiate you now.” By throwing him back into worldly life, the sadhu is really squandering rare spiritual wealth. It is a serious blunder. It is a great loss to humanity.

This aspirant ought to be helped by other sannyasis to grow in spirituality and to attain self-realization. After reaching this ultimate goal, after attaining wisdom, this aspirant will not only shine as a jivanmukta, as a supreme example of supermanhood, but he will also render real selfless service to the world. By granting this young man’s aspiration the sadhu is really rendering inestimable service to humanity, though this is not realized at once.

Sannyasa is a mental state

It is difficult to find out who is a real sannyasi. According to the Gita, detachment and dispassion is sannyasa. Sannyasa is a mental state, not merely putting on an orange cloth. Develop dispassion and viveka. The world is a straw for a man of dispassion. Vairagya is the greatest wealth.

Money in the bank cannot make you fearless. It is vairagya that makes you absolutely fearless. Vairagya and abhyasa are the most important sadhana. The enjoyment of the fourteen worlds becomes like a straw to a man of vairagya. Vairagya, renunciation, detachment is a mental state.

Find out the defects of material life. The world appears attractive, but there is cancer, there is tuberculosis, there is paralysis. People become hopeless and helpless. Therefore, vairagya, vivekapurvaka vairagya, vairagya born of discrimination, wisdom, only will help you, but not vairagya that comes on account of difficulties. Therefore develop vivekapurvaka vairagya and virtues like kshama, serenity, titiksha, little by little. You may fail a thousand times, but again you will rise up, if you have God’s grace, if you are eternally vigilant. Always remember the important Gita slokas: “He who is free from all desires, free from mineness and egoism, will attain peace.” “He who has faith attains knowledge. He who is devoted to the Self, he who has controlled the senses, attains knowledge. Attaining knowledge, he enjoys supreme peace.”

Become a real mental sannyasi

This world is a world of accidents, fractures and dislocation. So let us be careful. How to avoid karma? Give up raga-dweshha, likes and dislikes. How to avoid raga-dweshha? Do not have egoism. How to give up egoism? Abandon aviveka, non-discrimination. How to give up nondiscrimination? Get rid of ignorance. Ignorance is the first cause for the chain of sorrows—dukhaparampara. How to get rid of ignorance? Attain knowledge of the Self. Then there will be no egoism, no raga-dweshha (likes and dislikes), no karma, no body and no sorrow. You will merge yourself in Parabrahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Just as rivers join the ocean, so also the individual soul will join the universal Existence: Satchidananda Parabrahman. Just as camphor melts in fire and becomes identical with fire, even so mind melts in Silence, its Source, Ananda. That is our duty. That is the goal. That is happiness, Brahmic seat of splendor, immaculate seat of splendor. Become, then, a real mental sannyasi.

Necessity for sannyasa

Immortality is attained, not by work, progeny or wealth, but by renunciation. Renounce your ego, Bear insult. Bear injury.

Brahma jnana is the highest wealth. Even if you possess the wealth of the three worlds, it is nothing, You will be afraid of other things. Fear should go. Worry should go. For that you should have knowledge of the Self.

The root-cause for diseases is selfishness. The root-cause is anger. The root-cause is malice. When you are angry, impurities are thrown in the blood. Hatred bacilli, malice bacilli, jealousy bacilli enter your system and produce diseases.

Our foremost duty is to attain the supreme, ancient wisdom. One may deliver lectures; he may be a learned man. But his learning is useless if he has no dispassion, if he has no detachment. He who detaches himself from the objects of the world is a real yogi, a sage of supreme wisdom. What is needed is detachment. Do not allow the mind to think of objects. Detach the mind from the senses. Then only you will have tranquillity of mind. This is sannyasa.

People are bound by hopes, expectations, works, anxieties. So they do not know that their life is passing away. All the hairs may have grown gray. Many teeth may have fallen. Only a few years of life may be left. But it does not matter. Even in a moment (muhurta) one can attain self-realization, through devotion, dedication, discrimination, dispassion, aspiration, renunciation. You must develop these virtues. Sannyasa is necessary.

Man sees only the objects of this universe and not the internal Self. But the wise man, who turns away from material objects seeking immortality, beholds the Self within.

You should discipline the mind. You must take sannyasa. Then only can you cut off moha completely. The supreme wealth is dispassion, detachment. Detach, attach. Detach the mind from worldly objects and attach it to God. Do constant selfless service. You must crush your egoism. Through self-surrender you can attain

God. But egoism and desire assert at every step. These are obstacles for doing self-surrender. But the wise man, desirous of immortality, renounces the material pleasures. You should withdraw the mind, and the senses (indriyas), just as a tortoise withdraws its limbs.

Appendix One

Sannyasins as universal benefactors

Sannyasa is resting in one's own Satchidananda swarupa. Sannyasa is self-realization. Our forefathers, our gurus, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara—the four Kumaras, the mentally born sons of Brahma—were asked by Brahma to lead the life of householders, but they refused, because they knew the worth of this samsaric life. So they at once entered the nivritti order. They were our sannyasins' forefathers. The sannyasins are the children of Sri Shankara, Gaudapada, Dattatreya—glorious divine personages who had knowledge of Brahman, and who shone with divine splendor having attained oneness with the Paramatman, the supreme soul.

Sannyasa is a life of self-restraint and renunciation—renunciation not only of external objects and worldly activities, but renunciation of egoism, cravings, vasanas, kartritwa-buddhi (the feeling that I am the doer) and bheda buddhi (the intellect that differentiates one from the other), which instead of producing homogeneity produces heterogeneity. External sannyasa is renunciation of objects and selfish activities along with internal sannyasa.

A sannyasi is an atma-samrat, a self-king. A sannyasi or sadhu is one who has knowledge of God, who has controlled his indriyas, who is compassionate to all, who has equal vision and balanced mind, and who is a friend to everybody. A cosmic benefactor is the sannyasi. A sannyasi is a veritable god on earth.

A person who has enrobed himself in orange-colored clothes is Lord Vishnu Himself. He blesses all. He elevates them, gives them advice how to lead the life divine, how to control the mind, how to cultivate virtues, how to remove dehadhyasa and how to identify oneself with the all-pervading Atman. He uplifts the worldly people, raises them to the status of Brahmanhood, and makes them shine with divine splendor and pristine purity.

A sannyasi is not a useless person as some people think. He is a king of the world, he is the emperor of the three worlds. Even the very sight of him will destroy one's sins. Every religion has got this band of anchorites. Buddhism has got Buddhist monks. Jainism has got digambaras and swetambaras. Islam and Sufism have got fakirs. These anchorites are the glory of every religion. They have disciplined themselves. If you remove these people, there is no essence in religion. These people glorify the religions.

Some people bring the charge that a sannyasi is unproductive, a burden on this earth. Sannyasins are those who have renounced their own wealth, read much, attained distinctions, and are given over to intense meditation and dynamic selfless service. They write articles, and give lectures. They hold classes. They impart instructions to the men of the world. They do work. They are not useless. The whole world is maintained by the glory of the sannyasins. They serve them in a variety of ways. Their very existence is a glory and splendor on earth. When people are in distress, and when they do not know what to do, these sannyasins speak one word. This one word elevates them, removes their sufferings. The very sight of sannyasins destroys one's sufferings. Such is the glory of sannyasins.

There are many hidden sannyasins in the Himalayas. They are sending their thought-vibrations to the world. It is not necessary that a sannyasi should come to the platform and give lectures and interpret the Gita and the Upanishads. They can purify the whole world by their thoughts. Such is the glory of sannyasins.

Sannyasins have established ashrams. They are helping people. They hold Vedantic conferences. Recently Prem Puriji held a conference in Bombay, for five days. There are Divine Life Conferences in Salem, Venkatagiri, Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore, and Copenhagen. These are all productive.

People expect that sadhus and sannyasins should go to the agricultural field and plough the field and produce so many bags of rice and go to mills and weave so many yards of cloth. They think that only he who produces fifty yards of cloth, or he who goes to the dairy farm and makes so many pounds of butter or ploughs the fields and raises so many pounds of paddy is productive. To train people in Brahmavidya, in knowledge of the Self, in self-discipline, in disciplining the mind and the senses, and in attaining discrimination is productive. Ignorant people have no idea of spiritual things. They see only the external objects. They are ignorant of transcendental things.

Sannyasins are storehouses of power

Sadhus and sannyasins are potent powers; they are those that have got through tyaga, through renunciation, through vairagya and meditation, an eternal storehouse of energy. Meditation is the key to open the door of Elysian bliss. Renunciation is the first step, and vairagya is the passport to enter into the kingdom of eternal bliss. Our mahatmas are storehouses of energy and power. They are whole-time aspirants and when they utilize their energy we can easily effect the moral and spiritual regeneration not only of India, but of the whole world at large.

We require the cooperation of the sadhus and sannyasins for the moral uplift of the people and for their spiritual advancement. Their instructions will penetrate the heart. They are selfless people, endowed with viveka and vairagya. It is time for the sadhus and sannyasins to pool their energies, time, and wisdom, for the moral and spiritual uplift of the world.

There must also be sannyasins who can devote themselves to whole-time meditation. We have got medical research institutes, scientific research institutes,

and various other research centers. We must also have people who devote their time to concentration and meditation and bring out the atomic pearl. There must be people who devote their whole time for atomic research. It is these people who can contribute to the moral and spiritual uplift of the whole world at large.

God as the greatest sannyasi

A sannyasi is Sakshat Narayana Himself. The greatest sannyasi is Parabrahman Himself. He is without the least tinge of samsara. There is no prapancha or vyavahara in Him.

The secret of sanyasa is renunciation of egoism and desires. Renunciation of "I"-ness and "mineness" is real sanyasa. Without yoga, sanyasa is hard to attain. Sanyasa bestows immortality and eternal bliss.

A real sannyasi alone can teach Brahavidya. The glory of sanyasa is ineffable. Practice of fourfold means, sadhana-chatushtaya, will prepare you for sanyasa. A sannyasi is the happiest and the richest man in the world. Therefore, renounce and rest in the Absolute.

Make courage your rosary, desirelessness your staff, discrimination your deerskin, dispassion your kamandalu, and meditation your holy ash.

Make perseverance your raft, the Name of the Lord your boat, and cross this formidable ocean of samsara fearlessly.

Sanyasa for the Western world

These days many Western people are taking sanyasa. In our own ashram, there are a number of American and European sanyasins. Hundreds of them have taken sanyasa here in the Sivanandashram and have gone back to their respective countries for dissemination of India's upanishadic wisdom. Many Americans have taken sanyasa and joined the Ramakrishna Mission. It is gratifying to note that Western people are coming to India to take sanyasa and live a life of yoga and meditation.

Renunciation is the only means for attaining self-realization. "Not by works, not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone one attains immortality." Through sanyasa alone can we entirely cut off moha for property and relatives. Sanyasa is very necessary. The glory of sanyasa, the fruit of sanyasa, is indescribable.

Characteristics of a sannyasi

The distinguishing quality of a sannyasi is universal love. Erudition by itself cannot be the mark of saintliness because an erudite man will not be able to love or to be loved as much as a man who has surrendered himself completely to the Lord and who lives in the world only for the purpose of carrying out the behests of the Lord in the manner in which he is able to conceive of them. Such a person will have absolute peace of mind, complete cleanliness and purity, intuitive recognition of what is of permanent value, a quickness of intelligence to understand at one stroke

and without much effort the essence of the scriptures, an innate and intense longing for self-denial so that he might be of utmost use to the people around him and, last but not the least of all, deep devotion to and unfailing faith in the dispensation of the Lord.

The mission of sannyasins

Sadhus and sannyasins as a body have a universal purpose for which they exist. They are the custodians of the spirituality of the land and have a definite part to do in the advancement and elevation of humanity. To equip themselves for the noble task entrusted to their care, the monks and sadhus of the world isolate themselves in the beginning from the rest of mankind as a necessary discipline. But unfortunately we have allowed this separation to become a permanent condition and thus to a great extent the sadhu community has come to regard itself as a unit outside the pale of the rest of humanity struggling valiantly in the plains and the cities.

Losing touch with others has consequently made us forget the part we have to do and to neglect our work as educators and enlighteners of the other three orders. We have once again to bestir ourselves and commence playing our destined part in the nation's life. We are to be one united body dedicated to the noble ideal of exerting ourselves unselfishly and wholeheartedly for ushering in of the new era of brotherhood and peace that must follow after the years of savage strife and bloodshed the world is now plunged in. [This was written during the Second World War. *Editor.*]

Every section of humanity will play its part in the reconstruction of the New World on a worthier basis. If the new civilization is to be enduring one (not merely a prelude to a bigger war), it has to be based on lasting values of a spiritual nature. The providing of this fundamental spiritual basis to the new humanity is the work of the sannyasins and sadhus, monks and celibates of the world.

The onus of spiritualizing the coming generation rests upon the shoulders of the men of Spirit, the sannyasins, the saints, the mahatmas. They should do this without fail to keep the glorious tradition of this land and to maintain their respected place as a useful unit of society.

The lay people always look up to the sadhus for active guidance in matters of moral and spiritual import. We have, therefore, to set to work by precept, actual example and active life-work. In bringing together the saints of the country into a united and harmonious association, let us all join with enthusiasm and help in every way to make it a thorough success. In view of the greater work that lies before us all, the sadhus of the holy places in India, let us start with earnestness and faith in the Almighty.

Such a Sanghatana is to be a preliminary and a preparatory step for the grander union of all the saints and sannyasins of the world, for the noble work of lokasangraha in the postwar world. India is to be made the glorious Bharatvarsha of King Bharata once again and she will be the spiritual Mother of the world not in

theory, but actually in fact. The instrument to achieve this divine work is this selfless union.

To make itself qualified, fit and ready for the task is the initial work of this organization. To this end the first measure will be to take stock of the united strength of the Sangha. Even as was done on the eve of Mahabharata, Yuddha, this will provide an idea of our capacities. For verily we represent the force of sattwa and good for overcoming the force of tamas and evil that has the world in its grip today.

The genuine sadhus of our country constitute in themselves a most honorable community, and each of them bears an eloquent testimony to the exemplary nature of his individual character, affords a proof of the heights scaled in the spirit of sacrifice, in the development of spiritual wisdom, in a resolute disregard of the merely materialistic values and whole-hearted devotion to the supreme ends and values of human existence. It has been, through several centuries, the distinctive role of the enlightened sannyasins to disseminate more by the example of their lives than by the word of mouth, the knowledge which is embodied in the rich cultural heritage of our country. They have sustained and vitalized the wisdom of the ancient rishis, kept up the traditions of spiritual development, breathed thoughts of peace and welfare for all mankind, proved the worth, beauty and suzerainty of the inner spirit in man over the body-mind organism that the human individual is, over the temptations and allurements of the material and the worldly, and have sought successfully to establish relations with the infinite Being that alone sustains all the manifest universes, maintains the dharma in the land of the mortals, and yet yields strength, life and joy to all living forms.

The world of ours is a world woven by the threads of light and darkness, good and evil, truth and falsehood; therefore, we find in the body of the social life of humanity several evils recurrently manifesting themselves; and into the body of the sadhu and sannyasin community, too, there have entered several unwholesome or hostile elements and thus have necessitated a reorganization of the sadhus, the creation of a new spiritual center which could seek to eliminate the unworthy from the cadre of its order and assimilate for the cultural development of contemporary India the best services of the worthy.

All over India we find strenuous efforts being made for the economic, political and social reconstruction; and where the moral, mental and spiritual culture of the people is concerned, a great responsibility and privileged role rests upon the educated, enlightened, spiritually-developed sadhus. It is only when the basis of all cultures, the foundation of all movements, the divinity in man, is inspired to make itself manifest in the environment of high aspiration and moral growth rendered possible and maintained by the impact of the efforts and labors of the sadhus, that we can find on earth peace, happiness, genuine progress, real prosperity and the delights of a purposive, meaningful and fulfilled existence.

Glossary

Abhinivesha: Clinging to earthly life; will to live; strong desire; false identification of the Self with the body or mind; an instinctive clinging to life and a dread of death.

Abhyasa: Sustained (constant) spiritual practice.

Abhyasa Yoga: Yoga, or union with God, through sustained spiritual practice.

Abhyasin: Yoga-practitioner.

Adhyatmika: Adhyatmic; pertaining to the Self (Atma), individual and Supreme.

Advaitic: Non-dual; having to do with the philosophy of Advaita (Non-Dualism).

Agnihotra: “Fire offering;” a Vedic fire sacrifice.

Akshara: Imperishable; indestructible, immutable, undying; undecaying; unchanging—all in reference to the individual self and the Supreme Self, Brahman. It also means syllable and is used in reference to the ekakshara—the one syllable, the One Imperishable: Om.

Anandamaya: Full of bliss.

Anandamaya kosha: “The sheath of bliss (ananda).” The causal body (karana sharira). The borderline of the Self (atman).

Anitya: Impermanent; transient.

Antarmukha: Literally “inner face”—inward vision or perception.

Antarmukha vritti: A state in which the mind is turned inwards and is withdrawn from objects.

Anubhava: Perception; direct personal experience; identity of the Jiva with Brahman; spiritual experience; intuitive consciousness and knowledge.

Apara: Lower; lower knowledge; other; relative; inferior.

Aparoksha anubhuti: The direct, immediate, intuitive experience or perception of the invisible—the realization of Brahman. The title of a treatise on Advaita Vedanta by Shankaracharya.

Apta: Competent person; a sage or an adept; a wellwisher.

Aradhana: Worship of the Divine; adoration; self-surrender.

Arya(n): One who is an Arya—literally, “one who strives upward.” Both Arya and Aryan are exclusively psychological terms having nothing whatsoever to do with birth, race, or nationality. In his teachings Buddha habitually referred to spiritually qualified people as “the Aryas.” Although in English translations we find the expressions: “The Four Noble Truths,” and “The Noble Eightfold Path,” Buddha actually said: “The Four Aryan Truths,” and “The Eightfold Aryan Path.”

Arya Samaj: The organization founded by Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati in the nineteenth century to encourage the restoration of the more ancient and simple forms of original Vedic religion.

Asamprajñata samadhi: Highest superconscious state where the mind and the

ego-sense are completely annihilated. Superconscious union; a stage in samadhi wherein one is not conscious of any object and in the mind ceases to function.

Asat: Unreal[ity]; nonbeing; nonexistence; false; falsehood.

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

Asmita: I-ness; the sense of “I am;” “I exist;” sense of individuality.

Atattwa: The absolute opposite of Tattwa; non-principle; non-element; non-essence; untruth; unreality.

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

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

Avidya: Ignorance; nescience; unknowing; literally: “to know not.” A Sakti or illusive power in Brahman which is sometimes regarded as one with Maya and sometimes as different from it. It forms the condition of the individual soul and is otherwise called Ajnana or Asuddha-maya. It forms the Karana Sarira of the Jiva. It is Malina or impure Sattwa. Also called ajnana.

Bhagavata(m): Srimad Bhagavatam. A major purana devoted to the glory and worship of Vishnu and his incarnation as Krishna. The major scripture of the Vaishnavas.

Bharat(a)varsha: The land of India.

Bhava: Subjective state of being (existence); attitude of mind; mental attitude or feeling; state of realization in the heart or mind.

Bhiksha: Almsfood; food obtained by begging or that is offered to a monk.

Bhikshu: One who lives on bhiksha (almsfood); a mendicant; a sannyasi; also a designation of a Buddhist monk.

Bhuma: The unconditioned Infinite; Brahman.

Brahma satyam; jagan mithya; jivo brahmaiva naparah: “Brahman is real. The world is unreal. The jiva is none other than Brahman.” This is Shankara’s renowned “Vedanta in half a verse.”

Brahma-anubhava: Direct personal experience of Brahman.

Brahmachari(n): One who observes continence; a celibate student in the first stage of life (ashrama); a junior monk.

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

Brahmajnani: One who possess Brahmajnana.

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

Brahmana (1): A knower of Brahman; a Brahmajnani.

Brahmana (2): A member of the Brahmin caste.

Brahmavada: The Path to Brahman; the way to supreme enlightenment.

Brahmavadin: Literally “one who walks the path of Brahman.” One who advocates that there is one existence alone—Parabrahman.

Brahmavidya: Science of Brahman; knowledge of Brahman; learning pertaining to Brahman or the Absolute Reality.

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

Crore: Ten million.

Dakshinamurti: A name for Lord Shiva as the silent teacher. Vedic Religion declares that in every cycle of creation God manifests as Dakshinamurti and becomes the guru of the first human beings—those who were most spiritually evolved in the previous creation—teaching them the path to liberation (moksha).

Dasanami: “Ten named.” A term for members of the monastic order of Shankaracharya headquartered in the four quarters of India (Sringeri, Dwaraka, Badrinath and Jagannath Puri). After their proper monastic names they add one of ten titles (Saraswati, Bharati, Puri, Tirtha, Ashrama, Giri, Parvata, Sagara, Vanam, Aranya) according to their monastic succession.

Dattatreya: A famous sage, son of the Rishi Atri and Anasuya. His birth was a divine boon, hence his name: Datta—“given”—and atreya—“son of Atri.” Considered a divine incarnation and known as the Lord of Avadhutas, he is often revered as the embodiment of the Supreme Guru. He is credited with the authorship of the *Avadhuta Gita*, the *Jivanmukti Gita*, and the *Tripura Rahashya*.

Dayananda (Maharishi Swami): A leading reformer within Hinduism in the nineteenth century (1824-1883) and the founder of the Arya Samaj.

Dehadhyasa: False identification with the body.

Devi: Goddess; the Supreme Shakti (Divine Power) or Divine Mother, or a demigoddess.

Dharma: The righteous way of living, as enjoined by the sacred scriptures and the spiritually illumined; characteristics; law; lawfulness; virtue; righteousness; norm.

Diksha: Initiation.

Dosha: Defect; imperfection; blemish; fault; shortcoming. In Yoga philosophy there are five doshas: lust (kama), anger (krodha), greed (lobha), delusion (moha), and envy (matsarya).

Dosha drishti: Seeing the defects in samsara and samsaric life.

Dukha(m): Pain; suffering; misery; sorrow; grief; unhappiness; stress; that which is unsatisfactory.

Dwesa: Aversion/avoidance for something, implying a dislike for it. This can be emotional (instinctual) or intellectual. It may range from simple non-preference to intense repulsion, antipathy and even hatred. See Raga.

Grihastha: A married “householder;” the second stage (ashrama) in life.

Gurukula: “Teacher’s school” or “teacher’s abode.” A gurukula is the residence of a spiritual teacher where young students (brahmacharis) came to live and learn.

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

Indriya: Organ. The five organs of perception (jnanendriyas) are the ear, skin, eye, tongue, and nose. The five organs of action (karmendriyas) are the voice, hand, foot, organ of excretion, and the organ of generation.

Janaka: The royal sage (raja rishi) who was the king of Mithila and a liberated yogi, a highly sought-after teacher of philosophy in ancient India. Sita, the wife of Rama, was his adopted daughter.

Jiva: Individual spirit.

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

Jivanmukti: Liberation in this life.

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

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

Jnana yogi: One following the path of knowledge—jnana yoga.

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

Jyoti(h): Light; flame; illumination; luminosity; effulgence.

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

Kama: Desire; passion; lust.

Kamandalu: A water vessel carried by a traveling sannyasi; usually made of a gourd or coconut shell, it may also be earthenware. The kamandalu and staff (danda) are considered the insignia of the sannyasi along with gerua clothing.

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

Karika: Commentary; treatise.

Karma: Karma, derived from the Sanskrit root *kri*, which means to act, do, or make, means any kind of action, including thought and feeling. It also means the effects of action. Karma is both action and reaction, the metaphysical equivalent of the principle: “For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). It is karma

operating through the law of cause and effect that binds the jiva or the individual soul to the wheel of birth and death. There are three forms of karma: sanchita, agami, and prarabdha. Sanchita karma is the vast store of accumulated actions done in the past, the fruits of which have not yet been reaped. Agami karma is the action that will be done by the individual in the future. Prarabdha karma is the action that has begun to fructify, the fruit of which is being reaped in this life.

Karmabandhanam: Karmic bondage; karmic tie.

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

Karmakanda: The ritual portion of the Veda. The philosophy that Vedic ritual is the only path to perfection.

Karmakandi(n): One who follows the Karma-kanda as philosophy and practice.

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

Karmaphala: The fruit (phala) of actions (karma); the consequence of a deed in the shape of pain or pleasure.

Karmic: Having to do with karma.

Kaupina: A small strip of cloth used to cover one's private parts. Also called a langoti.

Kevala: Oneness; alone; single; independent; perfect; uncompounded. The Absolute.

Kevala-advaita: Absolute Non-dualism culminating in liberation.

Kevala Advaitin: A nondualist intent on the attainment of the state of Kaivalya–liberation.

Kosha: Sheath; bag; scabbard; a sheath enclosing the soul; body. There are five such concentric sheaths or bodies: the sheaths of bliss, intellect, mind, life-force and the physical body–the anandamaya, jnanamaya, manomaya, pranamaya and annamaya bodies respectively.

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

Kshama: Forgiveness; patience; forbearance.

Kumaras (Four): Those advanced souls–Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata—who at the beginning of this creation cycle refused to engage in worldly life despite the command of Brahma. They were then taught by Lord Shiva, in the form of Dakshinamurti, the mysteries of Brahmajnana and attained liberation.

Lakshya: Perceivable object; object or point of concentration-attention; target; vision.

Lokasangraha: Solidarity of the world; uplift of the world.

Madhyama: Moderate; the middle stage of sound as it develops from silent to fully audible or spoken. Sound in its subtle form as it exists in the mind/psyche before its gross manifestation.

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

Hinduism.

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

Mahavakya: Literally: “Great Saying.” The highest Vedantic truth, found in the Upanishads expressing the highest Vedantic truths or the identity between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. There are four Mahavakyas: 1) Prajñanam Brahma–“Consciousness is Brahman” (Aitareya Upanishad 3.3); 2) Ayam Atma Brahma–“This Self is Brahman” (Mandukya Upanishad 1.2); 3) Tat Twam Asi–“Thou art That” (Chandogya Upanishad 6.8.7); 4) Aham Brahmasmi–“I am Brahman” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.4.10).

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

Mimamsa: An enquiry into the nature of a thing; the science of philosophical logic enquiring into Vedic knowledge. Usually a reference to Purva-Mimamsa, one of the six schools of orthodox Indian philosophy. It focuses on the Vedas and the Vedic rites to establish their supreme spiritual value and authority.

Mimamsaka: A follower of the Purva Mimamsa school of philosophy. See Mimamsa.

Moha: Delusion–in relation to something, usually producing delusive attachment or infatuation based on a completely false perception and evaluation of the object.

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

Mridu: Mild.

Muhurta: A unit of time–a thirtieth part of a day, forty-eight minutes in length; auspicious moment.

Mukti: Moksha; liberation.

Mumukshu: Seeker after liberation (moksha).

Mumukshutwa: Intense desire or yearning for liberation (moksha).

Narayana: A proper name of God–specifically of Vishnu. The term by etymology means a Being that supports all things, that is reached by them and that helps them to do so; also one who pervades all things. He Who dwells in man. Literally: “God in humanity.” Sadhus often address one another as Narayana and greet one another: “Namō Narayanaya”–I salute Narayana [in you].

Nididhyasana: Meditation; contemplation; profound and continuous meditation. It is a continuous, unbroken stream of ideas of the same kind as those of the Absolute. It removes the contrariwise tendencies of the mind.

Nirguna: Without attributes or qualities (gunas).

Nirguna Brahman: The impersonal, attributeless Absolute beyond all description or designation.

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

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

Nishkama: Without desire.

Nitya: Eternal; permanent; unchanging; the ultimate Reality; the eternal Absolute. Secondly: daily or obligatory (nitya karma—that which must be done every day).

Nivritti: Negation; the path of turning away from worldly activity; withdrawal. Literally, “to turn back.” The path of renunciation.

Nivritti Marga: The path of renunciation or sannyasa, of withdrawal from the world.

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

Parabhakti: Supreme devotion to God. This leads to jnana.

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

Parabrahman: Supreme Brahman.

Paravairagya: Highest type of dispassion; the mind turns away completely from worldly objects and cannot be brought back to them under any circumstances.

Patanjali: A yogi of ancient India, a Nath Yogi and the author of the Yoga Sutras.

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

Prapancha: The world; appearance of the world.

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

Pravritta: One who follows the Pravritii Marga of active involvement in the world—attached action.

Pravritti: Action; endeavor. Literally: “to turn forth.” Active involvement in the world; attached action.

Pravritti Marga: The path of active involvement in the world. The path of action or life in worldly society or according to the nature of the world.

Preyo marga: The path of the pleasing, the pleasant, the pleasurable, or of

worldly gain, as opposed to the path of the good or truly beneficial.

Puja: Worship; ceremonial (ritual) worship; adoration; honor. Usually involving the image of a deity.

Purana: Literally “The Ancient.” The Puranas are a number of scriptures attributed to the sage Vyasa that teach spiritual principles and practices through stories about sacred historical personages which often include their teachings given in conversations.

Purusha: “Person” in the sense of a conscious spirit. Both God and the individual spirits are purushas, but God is the Adi (Original, Archetypal) Purusha, Parama (Highest) Purusha, and the Purushottama (Highest or Best of the Purushas).

Purva samskaras: Previous samskaras; that is, samskaras brought over from previous lives.

Raga: Blind love; attraction; attachment that binds the soul to the universe. Attachment/affinity for something, implying a desire for it. This can be emotional (instinctual) or intellectual. It may range from simple liking or preference to intense desire and attraction. Greed; passion. See Dwesha.

Raga-dwesha: The continual cycle of attraction and repulsion; like and dislike; love and hatred.

Rama: An incarnation of God—the king of ancient Ayodhya in north-central India. His life is recorded in the ancient epic Ramayana.

Rama Tirtha: One the key spiritual figures in late nineteenth and early twentieth century India. A former university professor of mathematics in the Punjab, Swami Rama Tirtha traveled throughout India and even to Japan and America, preaching the truths of Advaita Vedanta and vigorously teaching the practice of Om Yoga.

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

Rishi: Sage; seer of the Truth.

Ritambharaprajna: Truth consciousness; consciousness that is full of truth.

Rudra: Shiva. Derived from rud—he who drives away sin or suffering.

Sadhana: Spiritual practice.

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

Saguna: Possessing attributes or qualities (gunas).

Saguna Brahman: Brahman with attributes, such as mercy, omnipotence, omniscience, etc.; the Absolute conceived as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe; also the Personal God according to the Vedanta.

Samadhana: Equal fixing; proper concentration.

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

Samhita: A division of the Vedas; Vedic hymns.

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

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

Sanandana: One of the Four Kumaras (see Kumaras).

Sang(h)a: Attachment; affinity; company; association; collection; community.

Sanaka: One of the Four Kumaras (see Kumaras).

Sanatkumara: One of the Four Kumaras (see Kumaras).

Sanatkumaras: The Four Kumaras (see Kumaras).

Sanatsujata: One of the Four Kumaras (see Kumaras).

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

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

Sannyas(a): Renunciation; monastic life. Sannyasa literally means “total [san] throwing away [yas],” absolute rejection.

Sannyasi(n): A renunciate; a monk.

Sannyasic: Pertaining to sannyasa and the life and thought of a sannyasin.

Sat: Existence; reality; truth; being; a title of Brahman, the Absolute or Pure Being.

Satchidananda: Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; Brahman.

Satsang(a): Literally: “company with Truth.” Association with godly-minded persons. The company of saints and devotees.

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

Seva: Service; selfless service.

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

Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam: “Peaceful, Blissful, Non-Dual”—the definition of Brahman and the Self found in the seventh verse of the Mandukya Upanishad.

Shanti: Peace; calm; tranquility; contentment.

Shastra: Scripture; spiritual treatise.

Shirovratam: “Vow of the head;” a vow in which fire is carried on the head or in which the head is shaven; sannyasa.

Shuddha: Pure; clear; clean; untainted.

Shuddhi: The state of purity (shuddha); purification.

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

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

Sloka: A Sanskrit verse. Usually it consists of two lines of sixteen syllables each, or four lines of eight syllables each.

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

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

Sreyo marga: The path of the good or truly beneficial, as opposed to the path of the merely appealing, pleasant, pleasurable, or that which leads to worldly gain.

Surya-mandala: The circle (orbit) of the sun.

Swadharma: One’s own natural (innate) duty (dharma, based on their karma and samskara. One’s own prescribed duty in life according to the eternal law (ritam).

Swarupa: “Form of the Self.” Natural–true–form; actual or essential nature; essence. A revelatory appearance that makes clear the true nature of some thing.

Tapas: See tapasya.

Tapaswi(n): Ascetic; one who is practising Tapas.

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

Tat Twam Asi: “Thou art That.” The Mahavakya (Great Saying) of the Chandogya Upanishad.

Tattwa: “Thatness.” Principle; element; the essence of things; truth; reality.’

Titiksha: Endurance of opposites; forbearance; tolerance; the ability to withstand opposites like pleasure and pain, heat and cold, etc., with equal fortitude; the bearing of all afflictions without caring to change them and without anxiety or lament.

Tivra: Intense.

Triputa: The triad (seer, sight, seen).

Triputi: “The triple form.” The triad of: knowing, knower, and object known;

cognizer, object, and cognition; seer, sight, and seen.

Tyaga: Literally: “abandonment.” Renunciation—in the Gita, the relinquishment of the fruit of action.

Upadesha: Spiritual instruction.

Upanishads: Books (of varying lengths) of the philosophical teachings of the ancient sages of India on the knowledge of Absolute Reality. The upanishads contain two major themes: (1) the individual self (atman) and the Supreme Self (Paramatman) are one in essence, and (2) the goal of life is the realization/manifestation of this unity, the realization of God (Brahman). There are eleven principal upanishads: Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka, and Shvetashvatara, all of which were commented on by Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhavacharya, thus setting the seal of authenticity on them.

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

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

Vakya: That which is denoted by speech.

Vanaprastha: Literally: a forest dweller. The third stage of life (ashrama) in which, leaving home and children, the husband and wife dwell together in seclusion and contemplation as a preparation to taking sannyasa.

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

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

Veda: Knowledge, wisdom, revealed scripture. See Vedas.

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

Vedantin: A follower of Vedanta.

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

Vibhuti: Manifestations of divine power or glory; the special forms in which the Lord reveals himself; might; prosperity; welfare; splendor; exalted rank; greatness; miraculous powers; superhuman power resembling that of God (Ishwara). The quality of all-pervasiveness (omnipresence). Also sacred ash from a fire sacrifice.

Vichara: Subtle thought; reflection; enquiry; introspection; investigation; enquiry/investigation into the nature of the Self, Brahman or Truth; ever-present reflection on the why and wherefore of things; enquiry into the real meaning of the Mahavakya Tat-tvam-asi: Thou art That; discrimination between the Real and the unreal; enquiry of Self.

Vidvan: A knowing person; the term is particularly applied to one that knows the real nature of the Self as distinct from the body; an expert in all aspects of the Sanskrit language.

Vidvat sannyasa: Renunciation after the attainment of the knowledge of Brahman. Asceticism resorted to by the wise (jnani) and perfected ones (siddhas). Renunciation by the wise. Sannyas conferred without the elaborate rituals—either simply with some mantras or with none but the giving of the gerua cloth and bestowal of a sannyas name.

Viraja homa: “Universal homa;” the final fire sacrifice done just before taking sannyas in which offerings are made to all living beings in petition for their releasing of the prospective sannyasin from all karmic obligations he might have in relation to them.

Virochana: King of the demons (asuras). According to the Chandogya Upanishad, along with Indra he went to the Creator to learn the nature of the Self. Misunderstanding the teaching: “Virochana, satisfied for his part that he had found out the Self, returned to the demons and began to teach them that the body alone is to be worshiped, that the body alone is to be served, and that he who worships the body and serves the body gains both worlds, this and the next.”

Viveka: Discrimination between the Real and the unreal, between the Self and the non-Self, between the permanent and the impermanent; right intuitive discrimination.

Vivekananda (Swami): The chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who brought the message of Vedanta to the West at the end of the nineteenth century.

Viveki(n): One who possesses discrimination (viveka).

Vividisha sannyasa: Renunciation for the purpose of knowing Brahman.

Vritti: Thought-wave; mental modification; mental whirlpool; a ripple in the chitta (mind substance).

Vyavahara: Worldly activity; relative activity as opposed to Absolute Being; empirical/phenomenal world; worldly relation; worldly life which is the basis of all one’s practical movements.

Yajna: Sacrifice; offering; sacrificial ceremony; a ritual sacrifice; usually the fire sacrifice known as agnihotra or havan.

Yajnavalkya: A great sage whose teachings are recorded in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad; the guru of King Janaka.

Yajnopavita: Sacred thread. A triple thread worn by the twice-born (dwijas) that represents the threefold Brahman. It is essential for the performance of all the rites of the twice-born. Usually worn only by Brahmins, originally it was worn by Kshatriyas and Vaishyas as well.

Yama: Yamaraja; the Lord of Death, controller of who dies and what happens to them after death.

Yoga Vashishtha: A classical treatise on Yoga, containing the instructions of the Rishi Vashishta to Lord Rama on meditation and spiritual life.

Yogi(n): One who practices Yoga; one who strives earnestly for union with God; an aspirant going through any course of spiritual discipline.