

Sri Rama Gita

This is complete collection of sixty-two verses spoken by Lord Rama to his devoted brother Lakshman are found in Veda Vyasa's Adhyatma Ramayana, in the Uttarakanda as its fifth chapter. It is conceived in the literary style called Pauranic. The text, popularly known as Sri Rama-Gita, is also often described as sruti-sara-sangraha, a brief summary of the very essence of all the Vedas.

sri mahadeva uvaca tato jaganmangala mangalatmana vidhaya

ramayanakirtimuttamam cacara purvacaritam raghuttamo myatha.

Thereafter, the great hero of the Ramayana, the best among the Raghus – the glory of the universe ever blessing the world of creatures – organized his life into a program of intense tapa, as lived earlier by the royal saints in his own dynasty.

Kailasa. Springtime. A dim crescent moon imperceptibly floats against the snowy peaks of the sacred Himalayas. Lord Siva has just emerged out of deep meditation and smiles at his devoted consort, Parvati.

When Lord Mahadeva is in the higher states of meditation, his consort. Sri Gauri, though ever wedded to him feels out of contact with him. Rare are the moments when the Lord comes down to play in his lower state to contact his greatest devotee and sevika, Sri Parmesvari. Seeing him at a level where she can easily hug his personality and desiring to hold him at that level before he next soars into the Higher. Parvati asks a question regarding a theme that is ever fascinating to Lord Siva – the life of Sri Rama. It is well known that in the heart of Siva dwells Rama, and in the heart of Rama Siva is ever present.

Perhaps Lord Siva has many a time told the story of Sri Rama to his consort, and she knows very well how dear that theme is to the heart of Mahadeva. So she asks : “After making the inhuman sacrifice at the altar of his royal duty as a king and after deserting his pregnant and innocent queen Sita near the ashram of Valmiki, how did Rama continue his life ?” As king, Rama had to attend to his administrative duties and live in his luxurious palace, surrounded by his ministers and courtiers. Physically, he had to live as if nothing had happened. The foolish demand of the people had been fulfilled, and the spirit of democracy had been maintained. The inquisitive Mother of the Universe wants to know from Lord Siva the life-style that Rama adopted after this terrible personal tragedy.

It is under these circumstances that the facile pen of Vyasa set to work. The fifth chapter of his Adhyatma Ramayana contains the exquisite Vedantic poem called Sri Ram Gita, which holds Lord Siva's answer to his consort's question :

Prompted by Parvati's inquiry, Siva with an irresistible enthusiasm, eloquently explains that in the midst of the luxurious life at his palace in Ayodhya, Rama lived in total penance (tapas), just as his ancestors had lived, and earned the worthy title of “royal saint” (raja rsi).

Rama, popularly known as Ramacandra, was the son of dasaratha. Rama's name derives from the Sanskrit rama, which means “that which revels in every form.” (ramate sarva bhutesu, sthavaresu caresu ca) “that” being the Self, the higher Reality in us.

Text II

saumitrina prsta udarabuddhina ramah kathah praha puratanih subhah ramah kathah praha puratanih subhah rajnah pramattasya nrgasya sapato dvijasya tiryaktvamathaha raghavah.

At the request of the large-hearted Lakshmana, son of Samitra, Rama told him many gracious and ancient stories, such as the story of the in advertent King Nrga, who, when cursed by a brahmin, became a chameleon.

Continuing, Lord Mahadeva, as though seeing in his mental vision the scene in the palace, describes how Rama told his beloved brother many ancient stories, emphasizing the right values of life and the tremendous pit-falls and unavoidable injustices one is compelled to suffer in the world of plurality. In the present state of consciousness, life around him can never be without its contradictions, confusions, and compelling compromises. Truth in all its glory and purity can be lived only in the higher planes of consciousness.

Rama seems to have emphasized the story of King Nrga. It was ridiculously unjust. The sufferer was totally innocent. Yet, he had to live and suffer:

King Nrga, on all auspicious occasions, would invite many learned pundits and poor brahmins and distribute cattle to them. (In those days, before the existence of money, cattle was wealth.) One old brahmin also received some cattle as a gift.

Somehow, one of the cows in his share strayed away from the herd and instinctively mingled with the thousands of cattle in the king's herd. On the next auspicious occasion, the king again away cattle to the poor, and it so happened that the cow that was given to the brahmin and had strayed away and later returned to the king's herd was again part of the king's gift, this time to a new recipient. This was a totally unintentional mistake, but the old brahmin was not forgiving, and the king was cursed to become a chameleon.

The story has an intimate reference to the immediate personal suffering of Sri Rama, although it is not clear whether Lakshmana received the message. Through stories such as this, elementary students of Vedanta are trained to recognize, appreciate, and come to live the nobler values of life. Everywhere, value-oriented educational systems best follow this technique; there is no other way in which we can impart healthy moral values to the growing generation. Values and principles of living are too subtle for a young mind that does not have thorough schooling in the experiences of life. But when these subtle values of life are concretized in the form of stories, they are readily taken in, easily digested, fully assimilated, and comfortably absorbed by the student.

Text III

kadacidekanta upasthitam prabhun ramam ramalalitapadapankajam saumitriarasaditasuddhabhsvanah pranamya bhaktya vinayanvito 'bravit

Upon seeing Lord Ramacandra, (who is none other than Lord Visnu), whose feet are ever adored and served by, Lakshmi, sitting all alone, Lakshmana, the son of Sumitra, whose heart was extremely purified (through selfless service), after prostrating to the Lord in deep devotion, humbly asked :

One day, free from administrative duties and programs of his severe spiritual sadhana, Rama was sitting relaxed under a tree in the garden, all alone, listening to the noisy orchestra of birds gathering to roost upon the trees for the night, when his brother Lakshmana approached him.

After fourteen years of a perfect life of self-control, every moment of which was spent in selfless service to Rama and his life's work, the spiritual seeker Laksmana has already gained a steady mind, undisturbed by the pressure of vasanas in him. A mind that has been thus steadied is an instrument fit for seeking the spiritual dimension of life through contemplation.

The brother did not dash into the presence of Rama shouting a cheery "Hi!" as a loving brother would, but he approached Sri Rama as a devoted disciple should. With great reverence and humility., surrendering himself to the Lord's gracious will, humble and dedicated, the devotee in him asked Sri Rama.

Text IV

tvam suddhabodho 'si hi sarvadehina –matmasyadhiso'so nirakrtih svayam
pratiyase jnanadsam mahamate padabjhrngahitasangasanginam.

O wise one ! You are, indeed, pure Knowledge, the Self of all beings, the Lord of all, but in Yourself Yo are formless, You are seen by those men who are endowed with the eye of wisdom and are attached to the company of Your devotees who court Your lotus feet, like the bees.

Laksmana was not considering Rama as a physical entity, who has relationships qualities. Sri Rama, the great warrior, the benevolent king on the throne of Ayodhya, was Laksmana's own blood brother, now living in dignified sorrow at his tragic bereavement. But Laksmana had penetrated deeper than this superficial person, the delusory name and form, and in his devoted heart recognized the inner spiritual significance of Sri Rama, the paramatman, the supreme Self. He not only recognized it, but he openly acknowledged it and declared : "You are nothing but the pure light of Consciousness in which Knowledge – not knowledge of something, but pure Knowledge in the light of which all other knowledges are rendered possible."

This seat of Consciousness is the flame of life, the enlivening Presence in the heart of all living beings, the one Self in all. So long as Consciousness is present in us, our sense organs, mind, and intellect function. This Self enlivens everything. Where Consciousness is not, all physical, mental, intellectual, and even our spiritual activities cease to be, and hence Consciousness is the sole proprietor, owner, master, and boss of the universe. It is the supreme Lord of the world vividly throbbing in the fields of time and space.

Laksmana was saying to Rama: "In your essential nature, as the supreme Consciousness, you are formless." Form is possible only to the limited. When something is conditioned by something else, it possesses a form. Space, being all-pervading, has no form. Pure Consciousness, being beyond the body, mind, and intellect equipments, is deconditioned from everything, and therefore this unconditioned Self can only be formless.

The Laksmana continued: " Yet, as those who are ever devoted to you (Rama) gather mental purity, they come to apprehend your true spiritual nature, arriving at the state of Knowledge (jnana). The dreamer in the dream state apprehends the dream; the sleeper in the sleep state apprehends sleep; the spiritual seeker in the spiritual state apprehends the pure spirit (jnana darsana)."

As a result of steady contemplation upon the deep significance of the great statements such as "That thou art." the mind leaves all its preoccupations with its familiar world of objects, emotions, and thoughts and starts exclusively

contemplating upon Brahman. This state of mind unfolds a unique faculty of perception – the eye of wisdom – with which the seeker “perceives” the state of the pure Self, which is Sri Rama’s real nature.

Text V

aham prapanno’smi padambujam prabho bhavapavargam tava yogibhavitam
yathanjasajnanamaparavaridhim sukham tarisyami tathanusadhi mam

O Lord ! I am surrendering at Your lotus feet, upon which yogis contemplate and which can liberate one from the bondage of time. Please teach me the quickest means by which I can cross the shoreless ocean of ignorance, comfortably.

The previous verse declared the student’s acceptance of the teacher as more than a mere person or individual: he recognized in him the very presence of the infinite Self. This kind of a glorification of the teacher is beneficial to the student because the physical presence of the teacher becomes to him a symbol to remind him of the final goal and destination,, the Self. Secondly, it also turns the teacher’s beam of special attention upon the student. Thus, a mutual tuning-in can be brought about between the teacher and the taught for ready and easy communication.

In the Indian tradition, extreme importance is given to showing respect and reverence at the feet of the Lord, and again at the feet of those we love and respect – “touching the feet” of the elders. The teacher stands rooted in Truth. Since the student cannot directly reach this subtle and transcendental Reality, the best he can do is worship the Truth upon a symbol nearest to it, the teacher’s feet, upon which he stands, just as he stands rooted in Truth. Sri Rama’s feet are the object of contemplation of every devoted seeker, every developed spiritual seeker in his seat of meditation.

Time is the medium in which the world of plurality comes to play. The equipments of experience, the body-mind-intellect; our fields of experience, objects-emotions-thoughts; and even the very experience, the perceiver-feeler-thinker, all exist and function in time, Time is ever changing, and therefore everything in time must also constantly change. Caught up in the present state of consciousness as we are, we can exist and function only in the realm of time in the world of change. Nothing is permanent; every experience is ephemeral. Thus, our individual selves are tossed about mercilessly in this endless tide of time. To establish ourselves in the contemplation upon the Lord’s feet is to enter into a harbor safely away from the tyranny of time.

Lakshmana, the student and disciple, after surrendering thus to Rama, his teacher, demanded knowledge and help. He wanted to know what is the quickest means for going beyond the ocean of ignorance.

It is a trick of the human mind – perceptible everywhere and to everyone – that when we don’t know the real nature of something, in our nonapprehension our minds project a newly created reality, and we experience misapprehensions. On a dark, moonless night, when we come across a misshapen post at the roadside, we may not apprehend it properly in the dim light and therefore convince ourselves that we are seeing a ghost: the nonapprehension of the post gives rise to the misapprehension of a grinning, frightening ghost. The nonapprehension of Reality given us the misapprehension that we are the limited, tired, sorrowful individual (ego). This nonapprehension of Reality and the consequent misapprehensions of the same are together termed ignorance (ajnana) in the subjective science of Vedanta.

Lakshmana has pointedly asked what is the quickest means by which one can cross over this shoreless ocean of ignorance, comfortably and effortlessly (sukham). “Teach me that path, instruct me upon this secret means, guide me. O Teacher, to the yonder shores of this boundless state of ignorance.”

English Wording: srutvatha saumitrivaco 'khilam tada praha prapannartiharah prasannadhih vijnanamajnanatamahprasantaye srutiprapannam ksitipalabhusanah

Then, having heard all that Lakshmana had said, Sri Rama— the serene jewel of royal kings, who destroys all sorrows of those who surrender to him – gave out to Lakshmana, who was eager to listen, the Knowledge, for dispelling the darkness of ignorance.

Every teacher becomes extremely happy and enthusiastic when he recognizes the glory, ripeness, and devotion in a student's heart. The guru in Rama finds an ideal disciple in Lakshmana, and therefore he declares pure Knowledge as the most direct means to end ignorance. The teacher represents the infinite Self; to contemplate and meditate upon Him and thus come to surrender to Him is to end all miseries felt by the ego in its own limitations. The knowledge that Rama imparts to Lakshmana is not anything new or original. It is the very knowledge declared in the ancient Upanisads by the masters of yore.

According to the Vedic tradition, once the seeker has purified the mind and intellect and gained a steady consistency in thinking, he or she must strive to employ the mind in a mood of unwavering contemplation, analyzing and discovering the total identity of the essence behind both the individuality (jivatma) and the universal Self (Paramatma). Knowledge then becomes both the means and the goal. Knowledge gathered from the Upanisads (jnana) takes us to a direct spiritual apprehension of the higher state called vijnana. To gain this direct spiritual apprehension of Truth is the last leap of the limited to reach the Unlimited, for the finite to experience the Infinite, for the mortal to arrive at the state of Immortality.

Text VII

adau svavarnasramavarnitah kriyah krtva samasaditasuddhamanasah samapya tatpurvamupattasadhanah samasrayetsadgurumatmalabdhye

First of all, after we have performed all the obligatory duties required of us due to our position in society (varna) and status in life (asrama), and thereby have gained a purified mind, we should give up all these earlier karmas, and thus endowed with the necessary qualifications, we must surrender totally to the teacher in order to attain the Self.

The great rishis of yore have prescribed to the individual in the community certain irrevocable duties in his or her social life, and these are prescribed with an eye to the status of the individual in the society (varna) and the stage of life he or she is in (asrama). When these obligatory duties are performed without any anxieties for their fruits, they tend to exhaust the vasanas and bring the mind to a quiet, vigilant, and alert composure, ready for study and contemplation.

With such sensitive equipment, the student must arrive at the feet of the teacher in order to gain the maximum in his or her interaction with the teacher's words.

Text VIII

kriya sarirodbhavaheturadrta priyapriyau tau bhavatah suraginah dharmetarau tatra punah sarirakam punah kriya cakravadiyate bhavah.

Action is considered to be the cause for the manifested body. He who is extremely attached to the body performs both desirable and undesirable actions, which create dharma and adharma (that produce joy and sorrow), giving rise to another body by which more actions are performed. Thus, like a wheel, nonstop runs the procession of births and deaths – samsara.

Rama is not going to mince words, because the disciple in front of him is fully matured. The teacher in Rama ruthlessly dissects the nature of work and convincingly points out that through work we can never reach the absolute state of inner poise, the Self. Work can only produce yet another lease in the world, with the body as the harvester of the experience in duality. Confrontation of the body, mind, and intellect with the world of objects, emotions, and thoughts is called work. All such physical, mental, and intellectual encounters leave tendencies, called vasanas, as their end result in the doer's personality. These tendencies try to express and exhaust themselves in similar actions.

Those who are striving in the outer world, prompted by their own desire to fulfill their likes and dislikes, come to experience ephemeral moments of exciting pleasure and flashes of painful sorrow.

Righteous actions are those in which our selfishness is at a bare minimum; unrighteous actions are those prompted largely by blind selfishness. These good and bad actions necessarily create moments of joy and regrettable moments of tearful sorrow. The good and bad karmas generate positive and negative tendencies (vasanas). In order to work them out of our system, we have to take an appropriate body-form and manifest ourselves in a conducive environment.

In short, the present is a product of the past, with past karmas providing the blueprint for the present. The future is never a mere continuum of the past; the past is remolded under the pressure of present activities and thoughts.

Thus, work can only guarantee continuation in the field of plurality in an endless array of lives, with different forms functioning in different environments. Actions create vasanas; vasanas mature and become impatient to express and exhaust themselves; and, for this, new forms and new environments may be needed. Work, however sacred and noble it may be, can only yield for us relatively good and bad experiences, never total liberation from the realm of time and space to reach the timeless Essence divine.

Text IX

ajnamevasya hi mulakaranam tadhanamevatra vidhau vidhiyate vidyaiva tannasavidhau patiyasi na karma tajjam savirodhamiritam

The root cause for this samsara is ignorance; naturally, its destruction here is the sole remedy prescribed by scriptural injunction or teaching. Knowledge alone is efficient in destroying that ignorance, never karma (work); for work is said to be the product of ignorance and hence not opposed to it.

The nonapprehension of Reality creates the misapprehension in us that we are limited entities, helplessly panting to seek our fulfillment and total satisfaction from the world of plurality; hence our exhausting and fatiguing work – sweating labor whipped up by our desires, anxieties, and worries.

Apprehension of Reality, knowledge, alone can be the efficient antidote to remove our misapprehensions, ignorance. When the individual awakens to the higher state of Consciousness, the sense of individuality and its world of experience, physical, mental, and intellectual, roll away, just as a dream rolls away on awakening. Karma (work), however noble, cannot end this subjective ignorance, because all actions are undertaken by the individual in the context of his or her misapprehensions. In short, work is a product of ignorance, and it cannot destroy its own cause. Symptoms cannot destroy the disease :

Text X

najnanahanirna ca ragasanksayo bhavettatah karma sadosamudhavet tatah punah samsrtirapyavarita tasmadbudho jnanavicaravanbhavet.

English Meaning:

Work cannot end ignorance nor reduce one's attachment to the fruits of action; on the other hand, from such karmas new, evil (binding) karmas arise, because of which samsara also becomes unavoidable. Therefore, a wise seeker should inquire into and contemplate upon the nature of Knowledge – Reality.

Karma cannot ever destroy spiritual ignorance. Here, ignorance may be considered as the product of ignorance, the ego the sense of limited individuality (the perceiver-feeler-thinker). The sense of doership cannot be totally eliminated from the field of work. In fact, no matter how alert we may be in our work can only fatten the sense of doership in us.

So long as the individual functions with a arrogant conviction of doership, he cannot stand divorced from the desire to enjoy the fruits of his actions. Doership and enjoyership go together, and this is called the ego. Both these misapprehensions cannot be ended through work. Work can only produce its reward, which is to open up for us fresh fields of undertaking and to provide the appropriate equipment to function in those fields. Work creates tendencies, vasanas, which seek their exhaustion through further work, for which, unavoidably, we will have to move from one field of work to another within the span of this life, and move from one body to another after death. Sir Rama therefore concludes with the idea that the wise seeker, after purifying his or her vasanas through selfless work, undertaken in a loving spirit of dedication, "must begin to contemplate upon the nature of Reality." To analyze and to deeply and consistently ponder over the great statements such as "That thou art" is the way of knowledge, the path of jnana, which is to be diligently pursued.

However great and holy the work be, it cannot produce the Reality ever present in every one of us. Selfless work undertaken with love and devotion to the Lord and to our fellow man can indeed, chasten our vasanas; and when noble (sattvic) vasanas become predominant in us, our mental and intellectual extrovertedness is slowly eliminated. Our thoughts learn how to become quiet, alert, and vigilant. Such a purified heart will have the necessary poise for steady contemplation upon the nature of Reality, the Self. As we practice, we become more and more dexterous in maintaining ourselves steadily in the mood of contemplation and a state of ever-expanding joy.

This verse becomes, a it were, an introduction to the text. The teacher has judged his student rightly that he has practiced karmayoga (the path of dedicated action) sufficiently long, purifying his mind in the process, and for such a student to walk

onto the path of contemplation is the next step. Due to its attachment to the teacher, a child refuses to move on to his new classroom, even though he has been promoted to the next grade. Then the parents have to intercede in order to persuade the child and if need be to use the required amount of compulsion, until the child becomes familiar with his new teacher and gathers new friends. Similarly, the spiritual teacher has to slowly persuade his students to leave their fields to work for the seat of contemplation. It has to be done very carefully. To break faith is easy; to create faith is almost impossible.

Sri Ramcandra seems to have known Laksmana's heart through and through; therefore, with a surprising abruptness, he bombshells him with an uncompromising declaration that karma can never release our personality from its misapprehensions: "Knowledge alone can end ignorance; karma is but the product of ignorance."

English Wording: nanu kriya vedamukhena codita tathaiva vidya purusarthasadhanam kartavyata pranabhrtah pracodita vidyasahayatvamupaiti sa punah

Just as the Vedas declare that knowledge is the means for attaining the ultimate goal, with the same emphasis the Vedas also prescribe karmas. Moreover, the karmas prescribed are compulsory for a living being. Therefore, these karmas can be complementary to the path of knowledge. In order to derive home the conviction to the student, Rama here repeats the arguments of others and answers them himself.

The ritualists argue that not only the path of contemplation is prescribed by the Vedas, but that the very same Veda has commanded that karma should be done. Thus, Veda-prescribed karmas must be undertaken along with the practice of contemplation for the final liberation. The argument has legs, because the Veda has an unquestioned authority in spiritual matters.

Text XII

English Wording: karmakrtau dosamapi srutirjagau tasmatsada karyamidam mumuksuna nanu svatantra dhruvakaryakarini vidya na kincinmanasapyapeksete.

The scriptures have even cautioned that by not doing karma one will incur sin; therefore, the prescribed karma. In case you insist that the path of knowledge is independent and quite efficient in achieving the goal by itself and needs no karma – not even in a dream – then ... [the argument continues in the next verse].

The opponents continue their arguments. In their eloquence they are not able to stop the flood of their words. If karmas is not done, the default can bring sin and consequent punishment. Not only by commission but also by omission sin can be incurred. Thus the argument that the jnana path needs no karma to complement it is a dangerous lie. These are the words of the Samuccaya Vadins, repeated here by Sri Ramacandra. The teacher in Sri Rama wants his disciple Laksmana to know about the existence of such an argument.

Text XIII

na satyakaryo'pi hi yadvadadhvarah prakanksate'nyanapi karakadikam tathaiva vidya vidhitah prakasitair-visisyate karmabhireva muktaye.

It is not so. Just as the Vedic rituals, though meritorious in their results, depend upon many accessories such as the doer, and so on, so too the path of knowledge

becomes capable of giving liberation with the help of those karmas that are revealed by the Vedic statements. The Vedas describe rituals very elaborately, and eloquently promise rewards for those who follow the strict discipline the rituals require, performing them properly at the right time and place, using the right materials and mantras.

Those who support the integral path (Samuccaya Vadins) argue that just as we need many accessories to perform karma properly, so also those who pursue the path of contemplation need the support of the path of karma. Each blesses the other, and the seeker gains his goal. In these three verses the arguments of the Samuccaya Vadins are vigorously paraded. According to them, contemplation and karma must be pursued together. When each strengthens the other, we have a sure means for our personality liberation. The path of knowledge (jnana) is not independent : jnana will fruitfully lead us to the state of spiritual freedom only in combination with karma. These are the arguments of the Samucaya Vadins.

Text XIV

kecidvadantiti vitarkavadina stadapyasaddrstavirodhakaranat
dehabhimanadabhivardhate kriya vidya gatahankrtitah prasidhyati.

So argue some men of erroneous logic; but that, indeed, is false because of the obvious contradiction. Action is performed (increases) due to identification with the body, whereas Knowledge is realized at the elimination of the ego, that is, of body identification. Sri Ramacandra, having summarized the arguments of the Samuccaya Vadins, answers them all. With one powerful word he smashes down their array of arguments: he declares their stand as a mere delusion, and then supports his conclusion by showing the inherent weakness in their elaborate arguments.

Karma is performed by the ego with noble, not-sonoble, or stark-selfish desires. The ego asserts itself in all karmas. The ego is the doer-experiencer entity in each one of us.

Jnana, the path of contemplation, starts when the ego is curbed; in the final stage of the path, the ego disappears totally as we glide into the state of pure Consciousness, the Self. Movement into the state of Self-Awareness is not possible unless we leave the ego of the previous state. The dreamer-ego can never perceive or enter the waking state. The waker-ego must end in sleep. The waker-dreamer-sleeper ego must cease to be when we realize the Self.

Therefore, to claim that karma and jnana are to be pursued at one and the same time is a misconception. In the path of karma, the ego must play, while in the path of knowledge, the ego must disappear.

These opposed conditions exist in the very working of these two paths. Through karma we gain inner purity, and such a purified mind gains its necessary poise in contemplation. The process of contemplation purifies the mind more and more. The quieter the mind, the more intense becomes the contemplation; the higher the intensity and steadiness of contemplation, the quieter becomes the mind.

In this cycle, a state should come when the mind is totally quiet. Thoughtless mind is Brahman, the absolute Self. Karma and Jnana can never be practiced together; they must be taken serially. First, perform karma as a sadhana, then follow the path of contemplation. After realization, again perform karma as a selfless expression of the siddha, a man of wisdom.

Text XV

visuddhavijnanavirocanancita vidyatmavrttiscarameti bhanyate udeti
karmakhilakarakadibhir – nihanti vidyakhilakarakadikam

The exclusive thought of the Self, arrived at through contemplation with a purified heart, is called knowledge (vidya). Karma rises from its various (five) causes, while vidya demolishes all these instruments of karma. Sri Ramacandra clearly defines what is meant by the term “knowledge. ”vidya. As a result of exhaustive pondering upon the deep significance of mahavakyas (great spiritual statements) such as “That thou art.” the student’s mind, in deep contemplation, comes to dwell upon the thought of the Self, exclusive of all other thoughts. This thought of the Self dies away by itself on realizing the state of the Self.

Just as fire, having consumed the fuel, disappears into its unmanifest or, just as the dreamer and his world of dream merge and disappear upon awakening, so too the ego, as our sense of individuality (ahamkara vrtti), disappears into the experience of the supreme state, Brahmasaksatkra. I and my sole desire to sleep disappear when I enter the deep-sleep state. The “dreamer-I” and my dream world dissolve and disappear into the “waker-I” upon awakening.

Karma and jnana cannot be lived at one and the same time because of their opposite natures. Karma springs from its unavoidable five essential factors:

the body, which is the basis of actions;
doership and enjoyership together called the individual;
the instruments, the sense organs;
the various functions in the body; and
the presiding deities of the sense organs,
which are the conditions necessary for each sense organ to function efficiently. The path of knowledge has its destination in direct apprehension (jnana), wherein all these factors and the sense of doership end.
Thus, because of their essentially contrary natures, karma and jnana can never be practiced at one and the same time by the same seeker – as the Samuccaya Vadins recommend and fanatically argue to prove their viewpoint.

In this verse, Sri Rama applies an axe to the very root of all the arguments of those who recommend integral yoga. We can pursue a variety of karmayogas – service of the people, prayer, worship, and so on. But work and contemplation cannot be pursued at one and the same time. In karma, the mind is active and turned outward into the field work, while in contemplation, the mind’s attention is turned away from the outer world, and the mind is exclusively engaged with thoughts of the nature of the Self, seeking to realize the total identity of “I” (ego) with the divine Self.

Text XVI

tasmattyajektaryamasesatah sudhir – vidyavirodhanna samuccayou bhavet
atmanusandhanaparayanah sada nivttasarvendriyavrttigocarah.

Therefore, let the pure-hearted learn to drop all activities; as activities are contrary to knowledge, their combination with knowledge is not possible. Quieting all activities of the senses and mind perceptions, one should always be engaged in contemplation upon the Self.

Since Samuccaya is not possible, let the one who has purified his heart through

selfless, noble work, learn to drop all activities of the sense organs and the mind. The body-mind-intellect equipment gushing out into objects-emotions-thoughts to possess, embrace, and enjoy them constitutes all our physical and mental activities. We must withdraw all our attention from this childish preoccupation with the world of plurality; we must cease from all activities. This is a precondition before we can hope to be successful in contemplation. Since karma and jnana cannot be practiced together as they are contradictory to each other, having purified our inner equipment, let us stop work and dive into contemplation – a state where we are exclusively alert to the knowledge of what lies behind the mind, at the very foundation of our personality.

Nobody can give up work totally. Work is the signature of life in the individual. But the Gita explains that when we work “without anxiety for enjoying the result of work” (that is, without desire or an ego-sense), our work is “not-work.” When the desire to enjoy the rewards of work is eliminated, our minds gather a unique poise, and in this inner peace, steady contemplation becomes easy and extremely enjoyable.

This is not a free sanction to give up work altogether. Having awakened to the Self, then give up work, says the Gita. As long as body-consciousness is with us, we must keep on doing the prescribed noble work – but without the desire to enjoy its rewards.

Train yourself to turn your entire attention to contemplation upon the nature of the Self, until you realize the absolute identity of the ego-sense in you with the supreme Self. First, do selfless service of the society (karma), then worship the Lord (upasana). Through these, when the mind gets purified, it detaches itself from all pursuits of sense objects and from all sensuous thoughts (visaya cintana). Such a mind alone can steadily contemplate upon the Self (brahma cintana). Once you experience the joy arising out of a quiet, alert, and vigilant mind, you will never stop your contemplation sessions. They are always so rewarding, so full, so very fulfilling.

Text XVII

English Wording: vavacchariradisū mayayatmadhi - stavadvidheyo vidhivadakarmanam netiti vakyairakhilam nisidhya ta - jñatva paratmanamatha tyajetkriyah.

As long as one identifies with one’s body as a result of the play of Maya, so long one must perform the sacred work prescribed by the Vedas. Thereafter, with the help of the sruti declaration of negation -”not this, not this”-one must learn to rise above one’s body identity and realize the Self-and then give up all work.

The earlier verse that daringly asserted that “all work should be renounced, ”though very logically arrived at, can shock the seeker and undermine his faith. This is suicidal for the seeker’s spiritual life. Hence, in this verse, Sri Rama, with endless patience, explains what he meant by his apparently cruel rejection of all that the culture had been insisting on and the seeker had been practicing perhaps for many years now.

As long as you have the “I am the body” Feeling, as long as the delusory misapprehension that “I am the body ”persist, so long perform selfless, devoted works as prescribed in the scriptures. The ”I do ”Mentality is the ego (ahamkara). When as a result of following spiritual disciplines the ego and its desire promptings have thinned out, then start contemplation. Learn to rise above that which you are not, indicated so vividly in the Upanisads by the words of negation: ”Not this, not this

”(neti neti). When you have arrived at pure Consciousness, when the Self is realized, then all work becomes meaningless, empty, and purposeless.

Having woken up from a dream, what duty have you toward your dream family? Once you reach sleep, how can the sleeper continue the effort of the waker, who was then but trying to compose himself to sleep.

All work ceases when the ego -I wakes up to the “I am the Self awareness. When a river reaches the ocean, its flow ends as it merges to become the ocean.

Non apprehension of the true nature of the Self created in you the misapprehension that you are a limited helpless, and tearful individual. Your non-apprehension of Reality (avarana) and the consequent misapprehensions (viksepa) are together called delusion (Maya). On apprehending the Self (jnana), all your misapprehensions (ajana) end. On realizing this grand goal, in that state of Self, no work is possible, no work is possible, no work is required. It is not really a question of your renouncing all activities -all activities simply slip off from you!

tasmattyajektaryamasesatah sudhir – vidyavirodhanna samuccayou bhavet atmanusandhanaparayanah sada nivttasarvendriyavrttigocarah.

Therefore, let the pure-hearted learn to drop all activities; as activities are contrary to knowledge, their combination with knowledge is not possible. Quieting all activities of the senses and mind perceptions, one should always be engaged in contemplation upon the Self.

Since Samuccaya is not possible, let the one who has purified his heart through selfless, noble work, learn to drop all activities of the sense organs and the mind. The body-mind-intellect equipment gushing out into objects-emotions-thoughts to possess, embrace, and enjoy them constitutes all our physical and mental activities. We must withdraw all our attention from this childish preoccupation with the world of plurality; we must cease from all activities. This is a precondition before we can hope to be successful in contemplation. Since karma and jnana cannot be practiced together as they are contradictory to each other, having purified our inner equipment, let us stop work and dive into contemplation – a state where we are exclusively alert to the knowledge of what lies behind the mind, at the very foundation of our personality.

Nobody can give up work totally. Work is the signature of life in the individual. But the Gita explains that when we work “without anxiety for enjoying the result of work” (that is, without desire or an ego-sense), our work is “not-work.” When the desire to enjoy the rewards of work is eliminated, our minds gather a unique poise, and in this inner peace, steady contemplation becomes easy and extremely enjoyable.

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Text XVIII

yada paratmatmavibhedabhedakam vijnanamatmanyavabhāti bhasvaram tadaiva maya praviliyate 'njasa sakaraka karanamatmasamsrteḥ

English Meaning:

When the shining, direct knowledge of the Self -the destroyer of the difference between Paramatma and jiva -arises in the heart of an individual, then alone Maya, the cause for the jivs's samsara, disappears instantaneously, along with its effects, all misapprehensions.

The Lord (Paramatma), the individual ego- sense, and the world of plurality created by God and perceived by the ego, all these three are destroyed by the direct experience of the higher Self (vijñana). Then , in the inner equipments of mind and intellect, arises (avabhati) the resplendent (bhasvaram) Self.

Just as on waking up from the dream the entire dream rolls away instantaneously, so also the delusory world of plurality rolls away when the contemplative student arrives at the direct knowledge of the self. All non apprehension and misapprehensions are instantaneously wiped out. The individual, the, universe perceived, and the Creator (God) all merge into the one experience divine.

It is profitable to remember that Laksmana's demand was how he could cross over the ocean of nonapprehension instantaneously (verse 5). Here Sri Ramacandraji uses almost the same word (anjasa) and takes pains to explain how the seeker can instantaneously go beyond his delusions and come to apprehend Reality.

Text XIX

srutipramanabhivinasita ca sa katham bhavisyatyapi karyakarini
vijñanamatradamaladvitīyā - stasmadavidyā na punarbhavisyati.

Once Maya, (ignorance) is totally destroyed by the process expounded in the struti (the valid means of knowledge), how can she (Maya) even be capable of creating various delusory effects ? Since the Self is absolute Knowledge, pure and nondual (and is realized by the wise one) avidya will therefore not rise again.

There can still be a lingering doubt in the student's mind that Maya, even if destroyed once, might again do her trick of projecting delusory misapprehensions. The teacher is denying this possibility because the misapprehensions were caused by the nonapprehension of Reality. When nonapprehension is destroyed in the direct apprehension of Reality. Maya folds her magic kit and disappear, never to come back.

In direct apprehension, all misapprehensions end; thereafter, in the state of the direct vision of the Self, nonapprehension cannot rise. Therefore, the individual in never more caught up with enchanting misapprehensions. Sri Ramacandra thus concludes. "Therefore, this Maya (avidya, ignorance) can never again arrive to delude the bosom of such an accomplished spiritual seeker."

Text XX

yadi sma nasta na punah prasuyate kartahamasyeti matih katham bhavet
tasmatsvatantra na kimapyapeksate vidya vimoksaya vibhati kevala.

If Maya, once destroyed, cannot ever rise again, how can the idea "I am the doer of this karma" ever rise for the realized person? Therefore, knowledge is independent and does not need anything else. By itself, it is capable of giving liberation. Sri Ramacandra is still trying to make the Samuccaya Vadin feel ridiculous at his own false assertions and arguments. If Maya, once destroyed through the apprehension of Reality, can no more bring any misapprehensions, how can the delusory sense of "I", the sense of doership, arise ? Therefore, karma and jñana can never be performed at one and the same time by the same individual. Integral yoga is a palpable contradiction in terms. Knowledge alone removes ignorance. Apprehension alone ends nonapprehension. Thus, the path of knowledge is totally independent of all other help, and indeed self-sufficient in itself.

sa taittiriya srutiraha sadaram nyasam prasastakhilkarmanam sphutam etavadityaha

ca vajinam srutir-jnanam vimoksaya na karma sadhanam.

The famous Taitiriyā sruti declares clearly and emphatically that all sastra-prescribed karmas are to be given up entirely. The Vajasaneya scripture (the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad) also declares, by statements such as “This alone is immortality,” that the means to total liberation is knowledge (jnana) and not work (karma)

What has been already established through logic and reason is now being reaffirmed by the declarations in our famous scriptures. Other than direct knowledge (pratyakṣa) and inference (anumāna), Vedānta accepts as a third source of knowledge scriptural declarations (apa-vakya). Therefore, when an idea or point of view is logically established and that idea is found supported by the rishis in their Upanisadic declarations, that idea becomes an authentic conclusion.

That karma is not the means to liberation and that jnana alone is the effective and sole means has been proven so far on the strength of mere arguments and common-sense logic. Here, that very same conclusion shown to be doubly valid because the Upanisads also clearly declare the same idea.

In the Taittiriyāranyaka, we read the rishi clearly declaring : “Immortality, and timeless Essence, can be realized not through karma, nor through children, nor through wealth; it is gained only through renunciation.” This is not done to insult the Vedas, but to show the way to liberation. Through karma, one who has already quieted and purified the inner equipments (antahkarana) must now give up all activities and compose oneself into deep contemplation upon the nature of the Self.

This declaration gets again reconfirmed in the bold statement of Yagnavalkya to Maitreyi in the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad : Liberation is to be achieved by the process of negation (netinēti). Practice negation, and you arrive at the state of Self. This path of contemplation requires no help from any action (born of duality).’

Lakṣmana had asked, “Please tell me what is known to you as the most direct means to realize the timeless Self.” Sri Ramacandra has just elaborated upon the path of knowledge (jnana marga) in answer to Lakṣmana’s question.

From these two different scriptural declarations, it becomes clear beyond all traces of doubt that karma, the product of “nonapprehension” cannot take us to the direct apprehension of the Self. It can only create more and more karma, and ultimately tie us down to the level of the ego and its vanities of doership and enjoyership. “I do” and I-experience” are the constant whisperings of the ego. Jnana (apprehension) alone can end ajnana (nonapprehension).

This direct apprehension is independent, and need no support from any karma. Where the physical, mental, and intellectual karmas cease, the Self becomes self-evident in its own effulgence.

Text XXII

vidyasamatven tu darsitstvaya kraturna drstanta udahrtah samah phalaih prthaktvadbahukarakaihkratuh samsadhyate jnanamato viparyayam.

The example you had given to prove the similarity between karma (yajna, and so on) and jnana (knowledge) is not proper, because each produces different results. Also, karma (yajna) can be performed with the help of many accessories, whereas knowledge is opposite of this.

In verse 13 we heard the Samuccaya Vadins thundering their argument and hammering it tight by an example. Just as yajnas are performed with the help of many things, jnana needs the support of karma to accomplish itself, they said. This lame argument has no legs to stand on. The Samuccaya Vadins can never prove what they are supposed to assert, the jnana needs the support of karma.

You had tried to show the similarity between karma and knowledge, but your example fell flat, proving nothing. Why? Only because the two have contrary results. Karma can produce only more and more karmas, to fulfill which new bodies have to be taken to play them out in ever-widening fields and pastures new.

Also, the accomplishment of karma is accompanied by many accessories. But vidya (knowledge) is free and independent of all accessories. Therefore, karma and jnana are contrary factors: karma springs from body consciousness; while vidya comes to be when this body-consciousness is eliminated.

Text XXIII

sapratyavayou hyahamitanatmadhi - rajnaprasiddha na tu tattvadarsinah tasmad
budhaistyajyamavikriyatmabhir - vidhanatah karma vidhiprakasitam.

“If I don’t perform karma, I will incur sin.” This erroneous notion about oneself is true only in the case of ignorant ones and not for a seer of Truth. Therefore, wise men who have realized their nature to be the actionless, changeless Self should renounce all karmas prescribed by the Vedas.

The Samuccaya Vedins had argued earlier that the scriptures have declared that it is a sin not to perform karmas. Sri Ramacandra is now trying to explain the implication. The idea “I will be committing a sin in defaulting on my prescribed karmas” belongs to them who have identified with their own misapprehensions, never to those who have ended their nonapprehension. To the limited ego, such fears are natural.

The wise man, in his actionless state of contemplation, renounces all actions – even those prescribed by the Vedas. In Vivekacudamani, Sri Sankaracarya brings it out very vividly. Only those who are conscious of the body through their identification with it experience joy and sorrow and evaluate things as auspicious (subha-punya) and as inauspicious (asubha-papa) But he from whom this body consciousness has left, who has merged himself in the Self-how can he recognize these vivid experiences of the ego ?

Therefore, he who has reached the state beyond the body, beyond the gunas (the three thought textures), beyond the emotions of joy and sorrow, to him even the prescribed Vedic rituals are empty and should be renounced. In that higher state of Consciousness, it is not possible to undertake any work.

Text XXIV

sraddhanvitastattvamasiti vakyato guroh prasadaadapi suddhamanasah vijnaya
caikatmyamathatmajivayoh sukhi bhavenmerurivaprakampanah.

A man of pure mind, endowed with faith, through contemplation of the great statement “That thou art,” with the grace of the teacher comes to realize the perfect identity between the Paramatman and jiva, and then gains supreme happiness and becomes like the Meru Mountain, unperturbed under all circumstances.

Sri Ramacandra, demonstrating the art of a perfect teacher of Vedanta, beautifully maps out the stages on the spiritual path for the benefit of Laksmana, his disciple.

Having purified the mind, through desireless activities, into a complete steadiness, the seeker gathers a fresh momentum in his growing understanding—and so in his faith in the higher Reality. Thereafter, through steady and deep contemplation upon the pregnant suggestions of the great statement “That thou art,” he becomes supremely happy, and, like the Meru Mountain, is steady under all circumstances.

That which functions as conscious individual ego (jiva), that which expresses itself as the world of plurality (jagat), and the Creator of it all (Isvara) are all expressions of the one Essence, the Self. To realize this essential identity between the ego and the Self is the final goal and true destination of all spiritual seeking. To reach this goal means to achieve a state of blissful Consciousness (citananda), a state possible only for the extremely pure mind.

Text XXVI

adau padarthavagatirhi karanam vakarthavijnanavidhau vidhanatah tattvampadarthau paramatmajivka - vasiti caikatmyamathanayorbhavet.

It is well known that according to the rules for understanding the true meaning of a given sentence, understanding the meaning of individual words is the initial means. (In the sentence “That thou art,” the words “That” and “thou” indicate the Paramatman and jivatman, respectively, and the word “art” indicates the total identity between the two.)

In the earlier verse, Sri Rama suggested that one must analyze and examine the deeper significance of the great statement “That thou art.” This verse reveals how this analysis is to be undertaken and shows the technique of discovering the deeper significance of the terms employed. In order to grasp the silent and secret suggestiveness of the mahavakya, in the beginning (adau) each word is to be thoroughly examined with the help of the scriptures, as guided by the ancient teachers. Knowing the exact import of all the words employed in a sentence reveals the total idea communicated by the sentence.

Free thinking may not help in exact sciences like mathematics. Every theorem in mathematics has its own definite significance. By the grace of the mathematics teacher alone can the student of mathematics hope to learn this precise meaning.

The term “That” (tat), in its direct word meaning, indicates the omnipotent, omniscient, ever-free God Principle (Isvara), which has for its conditioning the Total Mind (Maya). The word “thou” (tvam) indicates, in its direct word meaning, the individual entity (ego), which is limited in its power (if not completely helpless), and conditioned by a total sense of nonapprehension of Reality, indicated in the scriptural texts as spiritual ignorance (avidya).

To say that these two, the God Principle and the individualized ego, are identical is to talk through the hat. The direct word meanings of these two terms do not signify this essential and total identity declared in the mahavakya. Therefore, Sri Rama employs the very expressive phrase “now” (atha), meaning that this identity is to be realized not through superficial, direct meanings of the words, but through their implied suggestiveness (laksana).

English Wording:

pratyakparoksadi virodhamatmanor - vihaya sangrhya tayoscidatmatam samsodhitam laksanaya ca laksitam jnatva svamatmanamathadvayo bhavet.

Rejecting the difference of nearness and remoteness and so on, between jivatman

and Paramatman, one should know one's own nature as that of pure Consciousness, arrived at through inquiry and implied by the method of implication. Thereafter, realizing one's own true Self as Brahman, one should merge to become one with it.

Give up the confusions that might arise in accepting the direct meaning of the terms tat and tvam. The direct meaning of tat is the Creator, who is not perceivable by our sense organs or comprehensible through our emotions or rational thinking. The direct meaning of the word tvam is the individualized ego; we perceive its calamitous confusions at very close quarters. To say that the ego and the Creator are identical will not withstand the scrutiny of reason because of their contrary natures. It is in the suggestive meanings of the two terms that their identity is justified, and we can arrive at this understanding only through a careful and exhaustive investigation into these suggestive meanings. When we examine tat and tvam closely (samsodhitam) and successfully derobe them of their conditioning, avidya and Maya, we come to recognize the pure state of Consciousness, which is the one enlivening Essence behind both the ego and the Creator. The difference between the two is only between the equipments of the individualized mind and the Total Mind. The contemplative student, in the final stages of his contemplation upon the mahavakya, comes to realize the perfect identity between the essence in him (jiva) and the essence behind the universe (Isvara).

After gaining direct knowledge of this sacred and divine identity (atha), the seeker merges to become one with the infinite Self: the river loses its distinct name and form and merges with the ocean to become one with it. On awakening from the dream, the dreamer folds up his dream world and his experience in the dream and disappears to become one with the waker. In an effortless movement in moments of intense contemplation, the individualized ego glides into a new dimension of consciousness and there disappears to become one with Brahman. At this moment one could declare that one has "reached the Goal", but that statement is meaningless, just as it is meaningless to cry out that we "got" the key – which was, during our entire search for it, lying quietly in our pocket !

Text XXVII

ekatmakatvajjahati na sambhave- ttathajahallaksanata virodhatah so
yampadarthaviva bhagalaksana yujyeta tattvampadayoradosatah.

Since the suggestive meaning of the terms tat and tvam indicates their total identity, the jahati method cannot be employed. Neither can we use the ajahati method, because in the direct meaning there is total distinction between the two. Here the method of bhaga-tyaga is to be applied without fear or any misapprehension, as in the case of the sentence, "He is this man."

In our daily communication, we liberally employ the suggestive meaning lying hidden behind sentences. The intelligent listener sometimes rejects what is meant literally by the sentence to make sense out of the sentence heard (jaha laksana); sometimes the intelligent listener will have to add something in order to interpret a statement correctly (ajaha laksana); and sometimes he has to give up some aspect and retain another one in order to recognize the exact meaning of a statement made by others (jaha ajaha laksana).

When my listener hears the statement "My house is right on the sea." he does not conclude that the house is made up of cork and bamboo and is floating on the sea, but he subtracts the sea from under the building and understand that my house is next to the sea, but standing firmly upon its own foundation. This is an example of

ajahati.

When any intelligent listener hears the statement “The guns marched,” he adds a soldier under every gun; this is an example of an ajahati laksana.

“That Devadatta (as a child) is this youth” is a statement wherein a child from a given time an place and of a given size and with other qualities of childhood is shown to have become, after fourteen years, this youth. The listener has to subtract the time, the place, the size, the shape, the innocence in the child and add the new time, place, size, shape, and the mischief of the youth, retaining the person himself, in order to arrive at the perfect identity between the person in the child and the square-shouldered teenager who is now sitting right in front of him. This is an example of jaha ajaha laksana.

Sri Ramacandra is elaborately explaining to his dear brother Laksmana that to grasp the significance of the mahavakya, we have to use the method of jaha ajaha laksana, which is also called bhaga laksana. Because jiva and Isvara are in essence nothing but the one Self (ekatmakattvat), jahati laksana cannot be used.

Similarly, in trying to understand the significance of tat tvam asi, we see the word meanings to be the supreme Lord of the Universe, the Creator (Isvara), and the limited ego (jiva). They are different in their expressions because of the difference in their equipments, ignorance (avidya) and total vasanas (Maya).

We cannot employ jaha laksana and conclude that avidya is Maya – this is not the goal of Vedanta. To pursue such a goal would be a wasteful expenditure of human energy.

Similarly, we cannot use the ajaha laksana method by merely analyzing and concluding that avidya, conditioned Consciousness, is jiva and that Maya-conditioned Consciousness is Isvara. The student is not arriving at the direct apprehension of “I am Brahman.” Therefore, ajaha laksan is not an adequate method for apprehending the spiritual Essence.

We will have to use bhaga laksana (also called bhaga-tyaga laksana), wherein the contradictory factors, such as avidya and Maya are removed, and we understand that the Self that expresses itself through these two equipments, manifesting itself as jiva and Isvara, is one and the sme Essence.

Pure Maya is extremely sattvic. When it is disturbed by rajas and therefore muddied by tamas, it becomes avidya. At this moment, avidya is the equipment in the seeker. When he quiets the mind and eliminates the rajas that creates the misapprehensions and the tamas that creates nonapprehension. Sattva increases in his inner equipment; and when this process is continued, the mind becomes more and more quieted inits creative poise (sattva). Sattva by itself can never exist except in combination with rajas and tamas. When all rajas is removed, in that pure sattvic state, the nonapprehension created by tamas ends, and the individual goes beyond sattva to realize his own pure Self.

Text XXVIII

rasadipancikrtabhutasambhavam bhogalayam duhkhasukhadikarmanam
sariramadyantavadadikarmajam mayamayam sthulamupadhimatmanah

Made up of the five gross elements, for example, the earth, a hut of all experiences, fashioned by one’s own past actions, having a beginning and an end, a product of

Maya – is the gross body. This is considered to be the gross equipment of the Self. The Self is not readily available for our recognition because at this moment it is conditioned by – is expressing or functioning through, is wrapped up in – its equipments (upadhis). In this verse and the following two, Sri Rama defines and describes the nature and function of the gross, subtle, and causal bodies, which are the three equipments enlivened by the Self. In this verse, he gives an exhaustive definition of the gross body. The material from which the gross body is made is a happy mixture of the five gross elements. The process by which the subtle elements (tanmatras) become grossified is elaborately described in our sastras. The gross material from which bodies are made, whether they belong to plants, animals, or humans, comes from the same five gross elements. However, the same material can be structured in many different ways, and the blueprint is determined by the individual's own past actions. The past actions recorded in our personality are called vasanas; and these vasanas determine the shape of the gross body (of a plant, animal, or human): its healthy or unhealthy condition, its size and shape, its color. We have taken this present body in order to exhaust our past impressions, known collectively as parabdha.

All bodies, all names and forms, are conditioned in time, and therefore they are perpetually in a state of change. They are finite: they have a beginning and an end.

Nonapprehension of Reality creates misapprehensions, and the three equipments, the gross, subtle, and casual, are all products of this nonapprehension, avidya. This gross body, described so elaborately, is the gross equipment in which the Atman, the Self, is conditioned to become the ego (jiva).

In these three verses, Sri Ramacandraji is trying to dissect and expose the significance of the term “thou” (tvam) in the mahavakya. The Self (Atman) is a mere witness, itself unaffected by the equipments. But we, identifying with the equipments, express ourselves as limited entities. The gross body is not the Self. It is only an equipment through which the Self apparently expresses itself.

Text XXIX

suksmam manobuddhidasendriyairyutam pranairapancikrtabhutasambhavam
bhoktuh sukhaderanusadhanam bhava- cchariramanyadviduratmano budhah

Consisting of the mind, the intellect, the ten organs (of perception and action), and the five pranas, and structured from the five subtle elements, this serves as the instruments for the jiva to gather its experience of joy and sorrow – this equipment of the Self is declared by the wise as the subtle body.

The gross body is supported by the subtle body, which consists of the mind and intellect, the faculties in the five sense organs of action and perception, and the powers called pranas, which govern and control the five physio-logical systems.

These seventeen items together constitute the subtle body, which once again is structured from the five subtle elements (tanmatras). The subtle body is the instrument that serves the individual in contracting the world outside and gathering experiences of joy and sorrow.

Text XXX

anadyanirvacyampiha karanam mayapradhanam tu param sarirakam
upadhibhedattu yatah prthak sthitam svatmanamatmanyavadharayetkramat

The timeless and indescribable Maya product body constitutes the third equipment

of the Self, which is declared by the rishis as the causal body. Since the Self is separate from these different equipments, let the seeker learn to recognize his true Self in the heart (negating the equipments) in stages.

In his dissection of the human personality – while trying to point out tous the Self, which is beyond the personality – Sri Rama describes the third and last of the equipments, the causal body (karana sarira). Because it consists of vasanas, we are justified in calling it the casual body, since vasanas determine the nature and the quality of the individual's gross and subtle bodies, as well as the environments and circumstances that those bodies confront in the form of objects, emotions, and thoughts. This subtlest of equipments functions in one's body in deep sleep; it is pure state of nonapprehension, because of which all misapprehensions arise. Therefore, it is right to name it the causal body.

The nonapprehension of Reality and the consequent misapprehensions are together called ignorance (avidya or Maya). Thus, even though the three bodies are all together expressions of the same avidya, for purposes of analytical study, they have been depicted as three distinct entities, Essentially separate (prthak stitha) from these three is the pure Self, which enlivens them all by its mere presence (sannidhimatrena).

Sri Ramacandra wants Laksmana to grasp this idea and firmly make it his own personal knowledge. The Self is the Consciousness that illumines our equipments, they being nothing but Consciousness itself grossified, just as the objects in our dream are projections of our mind stuff.

English Wording:

kosesvayam tesu tu tattadaktir - vibhati sangatsphatikopalo yatha asangarupo yamajo yato 'dvayo vijayate 'sminparito vicarite.

Just as by the contact of a red flower, a crystal glass looks apparently red, so too, this Self, unattached and unborn, when in contact with the five kosas (sheaths), appears to be of their characteristic individual nature. But when one discriminate intelligently and thoroughly, then one realizes that the Self is unborn and not attached to anything, since it is nondual.

If Atman, the Self, is unborn and not attached to anything, how is it that it appears to have no existence other than in the form of gross, subtle, and causal bodies ? Such a question would be natural in the mind of Laksmana. Anticipating such a doubt, Sri Ramacandra explains this phenomenon of delusion-superimposition.

A crystal glass is spotless and colorless; but when we place a red flower near it, the glass appears to have red color. Against a blue background it appears blue. When it tests upon a yellow tablecloth, it appears yellow. These colors are not its own. It has no color in itself. Yet, it reflects whatever color is in contract with it.

In the same way, while functioning through the five kosas, the Self, Consciousness, appears to have gathered to itself all the properties of the kosas. This apparent illusion created upon a substratum is called superimposition. The Self is ever unattached. That which is unattached can never get contaminated by anything; yet, the Self appears to be of the nature of the kosas (personality sheaths), in which, at any given time, it happens to function. When it is playing in the gross body, it appears to have for itself all the properties of the gross body – the body appears fat, lean, black, white, healthy, and so on. This gross body is called annamayakosa (the food sheath).

The subtle body consists of the pranamayakosa (vital air sheath), the manomayakosa (mental sheath), and the vijñanamayakosa (intellectual sheath). The causal body is called anandamayakosa (bliss sheath). In whichever kosa Consciousness functions, it temporarily appears to be entirely of the nature of that particular kosa. When we intelligently reconsider this situation in all its total implications, we can distinguish the Self from the not-Self. Discarding the not-Self, the seeker can realize his own ego as nothing other than the pure Self, ever unattached and nondual. This is accomplished by intelligent contemplation upon the great statement (mahavakya) "That thou art."

This Self is unborn, ever present, and uncontaminated by anything that exists in it. Therefore, it is advaya; the Chandogya Upanisad confidently proclaims that the Self is one without a second. Only when it functions through the equipments does it appear to be many. This is to be rightly realized.

Text XXXII

buddhestridha vrttirapiha drsyate svapna dibhedena gunatrayatmanah anyonyato 'sminvyabhicarato mrsa nitye pare brahmani kevale sive.

The intellect comes under the sway of the three gunas; therefore, it has three states of consciousness, such as the dream state. Since the experiences in the three states contradict each other, they are by themselves illusions and they do not exist in this eternal, supreme, non-dual, ever-auspicious Brahman.

The intellect comes under the sway of the three gunas: sattva, rajas, and tamas. Tamas creates "veiling," incapacitating the intellect to know the Truth. This nonapprehension creates misapprehensions projected by the mind, expressing themselves as rajoguna. When tamas and rajas are reduced, the mind and intellect enter into a calm domain of creative poise called sattva. The waking, dream, and deep-sleep states are thus all experienced by the equipments and not by the Consciousness, the Self. These three states are conditions of the intellect and not of the Self, which is the same Consciousness ever present in all the three states of vivid experience.

An intelligent person, however, can detect the obvious fact that the three states contradict and cancel each other. The security of one's well-to-do existence in the waking state can, for instance, be contradicted by the object poverty in one's dream. And the experience of both the waking and the dream states are entirely negated in the peaceful state of deep sleep.

Truth is something that cannot be contradicted at any time or at any place. That which can be contradicted is false; it is an illusion, a delusion. The Self is never contradicted in the three periods of time. In the Self, which is beyond the three bodies, the five kosas, and the three states – in the pure, nondual Self, the individuality as we now experience it can never be. Recognizing all these as the not-Self, reject them all and be in the pure state of the blissful Self.

Text XXXIII

dehendriyapranamanascidatmanam sanghadajasram parivartate dhiyah vrttistamomulatayajnalaksana yavadbhavettavadasau bhavodbhavah

The inner equipments, presided over by the Self, come to identify with the body, the sense organs, prana, the mind, and so on. This complex makes the intellect dance in endless thoughts. Because thoughts stem forth from tamas, they are of the nature

of ignorance. As long as the intellect remains, so long remains this birth in samsara. In the Self, in pure Consciousness, there is no perception of plurality, as it is one without a second. Consciousness has no senses to perceive, no mind to feel, nor an intellect to think. But when the inner equipments are presided over by Consciousness and Consciousness floods through that complex, perceptions and feelings start and the intellect is made to dance to their tunes. Electricity by itself does not produce light or heat or sound, but explodes into expression when it functions through various equipments – a bulb, a heater, or a radio. The play of dancing thoughts springs from nonapprehension of Reality (tamas), creating all misapprehensions (rajas). Thus tamas creates rajas; that is, nonapprehension (tamas) creates all misapprehensions (rajas).

As long as thoughts are dancing in the mind and our attention is dissipated into the world outside, so long the world of plurality appears to be real. The seeker who is thus perceiving plurality maintains an ego-sense (jiva-bhavana). This limited ego must necessarily get tossed about helplessly in the midst of its endless imaginations and fancied experience of joy and sorrow. The experiencer can only experience the miserable world of plurality and cannot comprehend, nor ever spiritually apprehend, the one Self, the One without a second. Only when the sense of individuality gets merged in the higher state of Consciousness can the world of perceived plurality totally cease to persecute the individual ego.

Until we discover the rope, the imagined serpent-in-the-rope, with its dreadful fangs, will frighten the deluded.

Text XXXIV

netipramanena nirakrtakhilo hrda samasvaditacidghanamrtah tyajedasesam jagadattasadrasam pitva yathambhah prajahati tatphalam.

After rejecting all the equipments with the help of the famous scriptural statement “Not this, not this” and experiencing the immortal, changeless mass of pure Consciousness in his heart, the wise man, having enjoyed the existent, blissful Self, should discard the entire world, just as one throws away the empty shell of a tender coconut after having enjoyed the sweet water of the fruit.

The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad concludes that the outer vehicles of life are not the Self and thus indicates the pure Self through a process of repeated negation of the not-Self : When an individual, through the process of negation (“Not this, not this”) dismisses the entire perceived world and frees himself from all equipments of experience as well as the fields of experience, he – in his quiet, alert, vigilant mind-intellect equipment – comes to experience the state of pure Consciousness, Brahman, the Blissful. Thereafter, he renounces everything that was seen and experienced in the state of misapprehension – he rejects them all for all time to come.

Having enjoyed the pure Self, which is the substratum for all plurality (atta sadrasam), reject the sorrow-ridden names and forms, urges Rama. He brings this subtle idea to his dear brother’s mind through a simple but brilliant example: A traveler opens up a tender coconut. Having drunk of its ambrosial sweetness and feeling refreshed, he, without any regret, easily drops the useless, empty shell. So too, having experienced the blissful Self, with effortless ease and ready comfort, drop the delusory shell of names and forms that constituted the world of sorrows in your past.

Text XXXV

kadacidatma na mrto na jayate na ksiyate napi vivardhate 'navah
nirastasarvatisayah sukhatmakah svayamprabhah sarvagato 'yamadvayah

This Self is never born, never grows up, never decays, and never dies, It is not new; that is, it is most ancient, devoid of all attributes of the equipments. It is blissful, self-effulgent, all-pervading and One without a second.

In the previous verse, Sri Rama indicated that we must learn to enjoy the pure Self, the substratum of the pluralistic world, and having enjoyed this blissful Presence, we must throw away the pluralistic, finite, ever-changing world of names and forms, just as we throw away the shell after enjoying the delicious coconut water.

Since Atman, the Self, is beyond the intellect, it is timeless and therefore also changeless. It is ever the same in all the three periods of time. Thus, it was never born. It is not an effect that has come out of any cause. It is both changeless and unborn.

The Self never grows. If it was not even born, how can any growth or modification come to it ? Neither does it decay. How can a thing that is not born ever come to decay ? Being changeless and immutable, it can never die. That which was not born can never die. And that which has neither birth nor death is infinite, permanent.

The Self cannot be called new because it was, is, and shall ever be. Thus, Rama uses a very forceful word, a-nava, "not new." The Self is perpetual (sasvata) and most ancient (purana). These are the terms in which the Katha Upanisad declares the nature of the Self.

When we discover the gross, subtle, and causal bodies and their objects as mere whiffs of our delusory fancies, and reject them all by the Upanisadic technique of "Not this, not this," what remains as the substratum is the Self.

This state of the Self is one of blissful beatitude. It is self-effulgent, all-pervading, and nondual.

evamvidhe jnanamaye sukhatmake katham bhavo duhkhamayah pratiyate ajnanato
'dhyasavasatprakasate jnane vilijeta virodhatah ksanat.

In this pure Self, which is of the nature of pure Consciousness and infinite Bliss, how can one perceive a pain-ridden world of names and forms ? It appears only because of the nonapprehension (of the Self) and consequent misapprehensions (of the body-mind-intellect equipments). When Knowledge (realization) takes place, ignorance disappears instantaneously, it being contrary to Knowledge.

If Atman is, indeed, blissful, how do we experience this pain-ridden, endless misery of a pluralistic world ? In the changeless, immutable Self, which is ever of the nature of pure Knowledge and infinite Bliss, how can there be even a whiff of perception of samsara, the endless flood of birth and death ? If the Self is blissful and One without a second, how do we perceive and experience the world, which is of opposite nature – riddled with pain and full of plurality ? In the nonapprehension of the Self (ajnana), our misapprehension of the equipments arises; superim-posing the nature of the not-Self upon the Self, we experience illusory world of endless miseries.

Illusion, or Maya, expresses itself in us as the veiling power (avarana) in the intellect, and as agitations (viksepa) in the mind. When our true nature is thus veiled from our direct perception, an entire chain of miseries is generated, including our sense of ego, from which our bondage and its endless sorrows and pains arise.

Is there an escape from this calamitous state ? The teacher points out that knowledge alone can wipe out ignorance – instantaneously, effortlessly. All the names and forms projected by ignorance suddenly disappear to become the one, all-consuming experience of the Self.

Text XXXVII

yadanyadanyatra vibhavyate bhrama-dadhyasamityahuramum vipascitah
asarpabhute 'hivibhavanam yatha rajjvadike tadvadapisvare jagat.

To perceive a thing to be something other than itself and to recognize the thing to be only what you perceive it to be is called by the wise the phenomenon of superimposition. Just as in the rope, which has no serpent, we see the serpent only, so too we see world of plurality (superimposed) upon the Lord.

To recognize the world of plurality (ajnana) on something other than itself (anyata), meaning Brahman, due to delusion (bhramat), we imagine (vibhavyate) Brahman to be nothing other than world of plurality. Vedantic literature calls this phenomenon superimposition (adhyasa). This is vivified by the classical example repeated by Rama: upon a rope (and other round, long things which have nothing to do with a serpent), in delusion, one perceives a crawling serpent with its hood spread, ready to bite.

Similarly, upon Brahman, which has none of the qualities of the finite world of plurality, the deluded individual, through an act of superimposition, recognizes a world of ever-changing names and forms. In the snake-rope example, nothing but the rope, in fact, exists, but due to the dim light of the gathering gloom of dusk, we misapprehend it as a snake, which quite naturally elicits fear. In truth, nothing but Brahman exists, One without a second, blissful and perfect. Yet, in the nonapprehension of this Reality, we entertain the misapprehension of a world of plurality riddled with sorrows and clothed in imperfections. In Vedanta-sastra, this delusory vision of the serpent in the rope is called the vivarta-theory.

When a thing, without losing its own essential nature, provides experiences other than itself, it is called vivarta. The snake is the vivarta of the rope. This world of plurality is the vivarta of Brahman. In Aparoksanubhuti, Sankara explains this theory very clearly:

Just as the blue color in the sky, just as the illusion of mirage waters in the desert, just as the ghost in the post, so too the world of happenings upon the pure Self.

Just as in a lonely place a deluded one may get frightened of a terrible face (vetala), just as in an idle moment one detects an entire city among the clouds (castles in the air), just as due to a defect in our eyes we may actually see a pair of moons in the sky, similarly, in truth we perceive the dynamic world of happenings.

Earlier Sri Rama had demanded that his disciple recognize Brahman, enjoy its delicious sweetness, and throw away the world of plurality as we do the empty shell of a tender coconut. Now, the moment he reaches the understanding that the snake is only a superimposition (adhyasa), the student recognizes the rope: there is no thing else for him to throw away ! Similarly, on awakening to Brahman, there is, in fact no world to be rejected. Brahman is all-inclusive. Vedanta rejects nothing, accepts everything, but keeps nothing.

Text XXXVIII

vikalpamayahite cidatmake – ‘hankara esa prathamah prakalpita adhyasa evatmani sarvakarane niramaye brahmani kevale pare

In Brahman, which is untouched by the projections of Maya – in that pure Consciousness, the Substratum of all, which is untainted and ever pure, first arises an egocentric self-consciousness. This is a mere superimposition upon the Self.

From the pure Self, how can a world of plurality arise ? The Self is without the thought-agitations of the mind, and from this thoughtless state of pure Consciousness – which is of the nature of pure Knowledge unmuddied by the sorrows of the world – from this Self, a conceptual sense of an individualized ego is imagined. Thus, ego is the first misapprehension projected by Maya, the nonapprehension of Reality. The misconception that “I am the body, mind, and intellect,” and, therefore, “I am the perceiver, feeler, thinker” is the sense of doership and enjoyership that constitutes the individualized ego, which is the very first superimposition. In fact, there is no ego. There is nothing but the pure Self.

Text XXXIX

icchadiragadi sukhadidharmikah sada dhiyah samsrtihetavah pare yasmatprasuptau tadabhavatah parah sukhasvarupena vibhavyate hi nah.

The endless desires, the innumerable attachments, the varieties of pleasure are all the various conditions of the intellect and are the causes of samsara that always appear in the supreme Self. They belong to the intellect only, since they are absent in the state of deep sleep when the intellect is absent; at that time we experience the Self, which is of blissful nature.

In deep sleep, when the intellect is folded up, none of the various conditions of the intellect disturb the deep sleeper; he experiences only the bliss of sleep. Once the ego rises, the intellect, veiled by its nonapprehension, encourages the mind to project with its agitations a world of delusory objects. Thus, we come to misapprehend pure Brahman.

These misapprehensions are mere superimpositions upon Brahman, as the snake is superimposed on the rope. This process is the cause for the experience of the world of plurality. Desires and desirelessness, attachment and detachment, pain and pleasure – these pairs are indicated by the addition of adi (etcetera) to each of these words; indeed, without a doubt, they all belong to the inner equipment (buddhi). The term sada (always) indicates that these pairs are not of the nature of Brahman but belong to the inner equipment only, at all times and under all conditions. Identifying with these, the individualized ego comes to suffer the tossings of the world of plurality.

Students will not easily accept the fact that these pairs of opposites belong only to the inner equipment; therefore, the teacher reminds the student that proof lies in his own experience. In deep sleep, when the inner equipment quiets itself, all these urges of doership and enjoyership end. The individual in sleep experiences a vast expanse of bliss, which is the nearest experience that the deluded can have of the nature of the supreme Self. Upon awakening, we all have a strikingly similar response: “I had a good sleep. I enjoyed it well. It was blissful sleep.” Atman, the Self, as Consciousness, is the illumining factor in our lives. It is ever present, even in sleep, to illumine the absence of things, which we apprehend as joy, which is the very nature of Atman. Only in deep sleep does the buddhi no longer function, and thus no longer creates the illusions of desire.

Text XXXX

anadyavidyodbhavabuddhibimbato jivah prakaso 'yamitiryate citah atma dhiyah saksitaya prthak sthito buddhyaparicchinnaparah sa eva hi.

The light of pure Consciousness reflected in the intellect, which is born out of beginningless ignorance, is called jiva, the individualized ego. The Self as a mere witness ever reveals as separate from the intellect. That which is thus not conditioned by thoughts is, indeed, the Paramatman, the supreme Self.

The direct word meaning of "thou" in the famous mahavakya "That thou art" is the individualized ego, which is the subject of Sri Ramacandra's discussion in this verse. Out of the nonapprehension of Reality, which is recognized as timeless ignorance, is born the thought-flow, the buddhi, which represents the entire inner equipment. The light of Consciousness caught up in the play of these thoughts is the individualized, conscious ego. This is the direct meaning of the word "thou" in the mahavakya.

The individualized ego is limited in its knowledge and power. It recognizes itself as the doer and the enjoyer, the happy and unhappy entity. Just as the sun is reflected in a bucket of water and appears to be the sun-in-the-bucket, so too the light of Consciousness caught up in the web of our thoughts appears to be the individuality.

In short, our thoughts glowing in the borrowed light of the Self is the intelligent, individualized ego. This reflected consciousness (cidabhasa), the ego, is that by whose glory the intellect has its intelligence with which we can observe, analyse, and come to our endless decisions and rational conclusions. This sense of ego in each one of us is considered by us as our true self, and we refuse even to try to apprehend the real Self beyond it.

The true Self is that which stands as a witness, uncontaminated by the intellect and its thoughts, merely illuminating them. This illuminator of the thought flow is a mere witness, totally unattached by all the convulsions of the inner equipment. The unattached Self is ever immaculate: it never gets contaminated by the quality, quantity, or condition of the inner equipment (asango na hi sajjate).

The Self, without any modification, ever remains as something other than the flood of thoughts; when the sun in the bucket appears to be dancing, the sun in the sky is unaffected by the movement of the water in the bucket.

The Self is beyond the inner equipment; it merely blesses it with its own life. It is not conditioned by the quality or nature of the thoughts. Ever unconditioned by them is the pure Self.

cidbimbaksatyatmadhiyam prasangata- stvekatra vasadanalaktalohavat anyonyamadhyasavasatprutiyate jadajadatvam ca cidatmacetasoh.

Consciousness of the Self and the inertness of the intellect, due to their mutual proximity, get mutually superimposed, just as iron pieces glow in the fire. The product is the intelligent ego, a product of illusion.

When the self-effulgent supreme Consciousness and the inert inner equipment, a product of subtle matter, remain very near to each other (prasangatah), they combine together (ekatravasat), and the result is the intelligent and consciousness ego. To bring it out clearly for Laksmana's full understanding and appreciation. Rama uses the classical example of iron and fire:

Iron is cold to the touch and black in color; but when different pieces of iron, beaten out in different geometrical shapes, are put into fire, they become hot to the touch and golden in color. This becomes an example of the phenomenon of mutual

superimposition. The heat and golden color of the fire are superimposed upon the black, cold iron, and the geometrical shapes of the iron pieces are loaned out the fire. Together, in their unholy wed-lock, the iron and fire present themselves to our perception as golden, fiery pieces of precise geometrical patterns.

In the same way, thoughts of the intellect shining in the light of Consciousness give us a vivid illusion of an intelligent sense of individuality. This impossible marriage between the Consciousness of the Self and the inert inner equipments gives rise to the feeling “I am my thoughts.”

Text XXXXII

guroh sakasadapi vedavakyatah sanjatavidyanubhavo niriksyā tam
svatmanamatmasthanupadhivarjitam tyajedasesam jadamatmagocaram

When, through the grace of the guru, and also by deep contemplation upon the suggested implications of the great Vedic statements, the direct experience of Brahman is gained, the individual comes to “see.” in his own heart, the pure Self, which is devoid of all conditionings. Thereafter, let him give up the entire inert world perceived through the sense organs.

Having heard the science of Reality from the teacher through the great statement tat tvam asi, the student does his own reflections and deep contemplations, and comes to directly perceive the experience of Reality. The verse indicates the standard classical sequence of spiritual learning: listening to the teacher, reflecting upon the significance of what has been heard, and practicing deep and continued contemplation upon the same subject. The final end result of all this is direct experience. The experience of what ?

That which words cannot express, but which is the very substratum of our personality is experienced by the seeker in his own heart. That pure Self is experienced as devoid of all entrapments such as the gross, the subtle, or the causal bodies.

When once this experience has descended upon the student of contemplation, let him thereafter totally stop entertaining the gross, inert world of objects, emotions, and thoughts.

Text XXXXIII

prakasarupo ‘hamajo’hamadvayo ‘sakrdvibhato ‘hamativa nirmalah
visuddhavijnanaghano niramayah sampuna anandamayo ‘hamakriyah.

I am self-effulgent, I am unborn. I am the One without a second. I am the ever-resplendent light of Consciousness. I am extremely pure, the uncontaminated mass of pure Consciousness. I am holy, infinite, blissful, and actionless.

All the words used here by Sri Ramacandra are words borrowed from the Upanisads. Each one of them has very great significance. It is with these deep meanings for the terms employed that the teacher is able to communicate to the purified heart of the student the entire science of Reality (brahma-vidya).

When seekers successfully turn their entire attention in the direction indicated by these words and all their pregnant suggestions, they arrive at the gate of Truth and themselves “disappear into the vision” of the Supreme – just as a river, on arriving at the shore of the ocean, effortlessly disappears into the ocean to become one with it.

This verse and the following one give us a chart on how to perform nididhyasana, deep and continuous contemplation:

I am the source of all light, to know Me, no other light is necessary. I am self-effulgent. I am without birth, and therefore beginningless. I am One without a second; in Me there are no distinctions. (The Chandogya Upanisad) insists that the Self is one alone, with no otherness).

I am like the sun, ever resplendent with the light of Consciousness. Never does the light of Consciousness cease to be. Even when there are not objects for it to illumine, as in deep sleep or under chloroform, Consciousness illumines the very absence of everything !

I am never immaculate, with nothing to veil My intellect. Nothing can create agitations in the mind. Both these are products of Maya; therefore, I am beyond Maya.

I am unborn and continuous, the ever-present experience of bliss. I am without any activity, meaning that I am ever the same, with no modifications. There can never be any change in Me. Action can rise only as a result of nonapprehension, and it feeds and gets fed by our likes and dislikes. Since I am a pure mass of objectless Awareness, the all-pervading substratum for all names and forms, there can never be any action.

This verse is specially meant for contemplation. It provides ten arrow marks indicating the direction in which the student of contemplation should hold his entire attention. All the ten terms employed here indicate, from different angles of understanding, the one essential spring of all life, the Self.

The following verse enumerates additional exercises in contemplation.

Text XXXIV

sadaiva mukto 'hamacintyasaktima - matindriyajnanamavikriyatmakah anantaparo 'hamaharnisam budhair - vibhsvito 'ham hradi vedavsdibhah.

I am ever liberated. I am the power behind the universe which no intellect can comprehend. I am that pure Knowledge which is beyond all sense organs. I am immutable, endless, and shoreless. The erudite scholars of the scriptures meditate upon Me, day and night, in their hearts.

This verse supplies six additional arrow marks that indicate the direction in which a student in his seat of contemplation must hold his mind's entire attention. In short, this verse constitutes another set of exercises in contemplation:

I am ever liberated – in the past, present, and future; in the waking, dream, and deep-sleep states; in all places, at all times, and under all conditions. Never have I been bound, nor can I ever be in bondage in the future.

My power is immeasurable: in fact, I am the source of the omnipotent Lord; being the creator, sustainer, and destroyer are all minor expressions of my total power.

I can never be the object of the sense organs, nor of the inner equipments. In short, I do not belong to the category of objects, emotions, or thoughts. (I am so described in the Taittiriya Upanisad.)

I am without any change: none of the six modifications ever touch Me. Birth,

existence, growth, decay, disease, and death are the six modifications through which all forms must necessarily pass, but none of them can ever bring about any change in Me.

I am infinite : neither time, place, nor objects can ever condition Me. I pervade them all. Since I am infinite, no-thing can limit Me. I go beyond all limitations, and thus I am shoreless. It is this infinite nature of Mine that is continuously contemplated upon by great saints and sages in their quiet, alert, and vigilant hearts, suffused with a sattvic mood.

Both this and the previous verse are aimed at students of contemplation for their daily practice of lifting their attention toward the state of pure Consciousness.

Text XXXXV

evam sadatmanamakhanditatmana vicaramanasya visuddhabhavana
hanyadavidyamacirena karakai rasayanam yadvadupasitam rujah.

If we continuously expose the mind to the thought “I am Brahman.” the special knowledge that arises removes, in a sudden flash, all spiritual ignorance and its consequences, that is, the perception of plurality – just as medicine taken regularly removes the disease and itself gets eliminated, all by itself.

The benefit of practicing what has been advised in the previous verse is spelled out here. By holding the mind exposed to this infinite Self, the nonapprehension of the Self (avidya) and the consequent misapprehensions (ajnana) are both blasted out, and the pure Self reveals itself. But we may ask: are we not again creating a “thought” during our contemplation ? Instead of thinking thoughts about the world of objects, are we not merely substituting them with thoughts of the Self? If thoughts are still with us, will not the mind continue to survive, and entangle us within its meshes? Will not golden chains bind us as efficiently as iron shackles?

These are valid doubts of an intelligent armchair-Vedantin who lacks the heroism to slip his seat of contemplation. However, Vedanta is a subjective science, and any amount of mere study and argumentation will not bring a clear understanding.

When a mind gets fully engaged in the practice indicated in the previous verses, the quiet mind, uncluttered with thoughts of the world of objects, expands to embrace the concept of the infinite Self, the sole substratum of the entire perceived world of experiences. In this thoughts of the infinite Self, thought is no more a thought: the thought-wave becomes a wave with no amplitude, and therefore becomes a no-thought wave. Thus, when one arrives at the Self, thoughts cease to be thoughts. The individuality merges into the vision of the Reality.

The very “thought” of “The Self am I” (aham brahasmi iti vrtti) is a “no-ware” (no vrtti); it merges to disappear in the direct experience divine. This idea that the thought will merge and disappear by itself is not easy for the intellectual student to grasp, and hence Sri Rama offers one of the classical examples often used in Vedanta :

The medicine (rasayanam) taken by the sick corrects the disturbance in the physical system (rujah) and then itself gets eliminated from the system, all by itself; so too the brahmakara-vrtti (the thought “Brahma am I”) ends all by itself when the seeker arrives at the realization of the Self.

vivikta asina uparatendriyo vinirjitatma vimalantarasayah
vibhavayedekamananyasadhano vijnanadrkkevala atmasamsthithah

Settling oneself down in an undisturbed place, quieting the sense organs from all disturbances of sense objects, holding the body steady and unmoving, calming the mind from all its oscillations – established in the pursuit of steady meditation and withdrawn from all other yoga-means – one should steadily contemplate upon the one Self, the spring of life within.

Sri Rama explains a scheme consisting of five adjustments for the contemplative student to strive for and successfully achieve in establishing himself or herself on the path of contemplation. Newcomers to the path must very diligently attend to all five adjustments:

Select the right place and time for your practice of meditation. Choose a quiet place: there should be no disturbances, at least not from the outside.

Clam the senses, and disengage them from all their preoccupations with sense objects.

Learn to sit firmly (sthira) and to hold the body without any swinging movement (acala). When the body is thus held firm and steady, the mind automatically enters into a state of inner poise and balance.

Many other yoga-means may have been pursued at one time or another by the student: Dedicated service to others (karmayoga), devotion to the Lord through worship of Him at the altar (bhaktiyoga), even serious and laboriously concentrated efforts to study and reflect upon the subtle declarations of the rishis in the Upanisads (jnanayoga), and so on. Memories of these might come up in the contemplative student's mind as he sits in his seat of meditation. Let him learn to rise above these thoughts, and bend his entire attention to the nature of the Self, exclusively.

Let him then contemplate solely upon the one infinite Self, without allowing any other dissimilar thought current to crisscross his mind pell-mell.

These five adjustments are repeatedly indicated in many places along the vast expanse of Upanisadic literature. Thus gathering all the wandering rays of the mind, turn its entire attention to the one Self and learn to merge into the higher state of Consciousness.

Text XXXXVII

visvam yadetatparatmadarsanam vilapayedatmani sarvakarane
purnascidanandamayo 'vatisthate na veda bhayam na ca kincidantaram

English Meaning:

This dynamic world of things and beings perceived by us is nothing but the supreme Self. One should merge it into that Self, the cause of all. He who accomplishes this in himself is merged into the limitless, blissful Self, and remains "knowing" nothing of his outer or inner worlds of plurality.

This dynamic world of names and forms is perceived by our instruments of experience: the body, the mind, and the intellect. The experience of this world of plurality is the perceiver-feeler-thinker entity, who, in his present state of consciousness, perceives the world as a march of events, a clamoring, noisy field of happenings. The individualized ego feels persecuted by the tensions and struggles brought to him by the merciless situations in his environment. Sri Rama is advising Lakshmana that in the seat of meditation the student must try to recognize that the entire world of plurality, the endless crowds of confusing names and forms, are all but a disturbance in the infinite Consciousness.

The roaring, thunderous hosts of oceanic waves are all nothing but their own essential substratum, the serenely tranquil ocean.

One who accomplishes a full awakening into his own real nature merges into the Self to become the Self. From that realm of pure Consciousness, removed from all inner and outer pluralities of objects, he revels as the one objectless Awareness.

Names and forms are the interpretations of our sense organs. In deep sleep none of these names and forms disturb us. In the mood of contemplation, the mind rises above the inner and outer worlds of plurality and arrives at a unique state of consciousness where the Self alone is. It is a state wherein all the mental and intellectual fluctuations have disappeared; therefore, the mind-intellect (dhi) has become thoughtless, totally undisturbed (sama). In this samadhi-state, thoughts cease, the mind-intellect withers away, and the Consciousness that was caught in the web of thoughts gets released totally from all its encumbrances. In this total state of liberation one recognizes neither an outer world of names and forms, nor an inner world of emotions and thoughts. The individual and his world of plurality merge to disappear in the experience of the substratum, the Self.

Text XXXXVIII

purvam samadherakhilam vicintaye – domkaramatram sacracaram jagat tadeva
vacyam pranavo hi vacako vibhavyate 'jnanavasanna bodhatah

Before reaching this state of total absorption (samadhi), contemplate upon the entire universe of names and forms, the moving and the unmoving as nothing but Omkara. Om is a sound symbol representing the entire world. This (duality) appears due to ignorance and not after direct Knowledge. This practice is valid only before direct Knowledge; never afterwards.

Now Sri Rama is trying to explain how to take the mind to the state of total absorption (samadhi). Samadhi is of two kinds, with thoughts (savikalpa) and with no thoughts (nirvikalpa). The former is popularly known as the state of contemplation, and the latter is called the state of meditation.

In the state of contemplation (savikalpa), the contemplator has an awareness of the subject-object relationship, technically called the triputi. When the subject and object are merged into one awesome state of infinite Existence, that state is called total absorption (nirvikalpa).

Sri Rama now indicates how to persuade the mind to enter into these states of partial and total absorption. He first advises Lakshmana to contemplate upon the entire world of perceived names and forms as Om or Omkara. The Mandukya Upanisad indicates how the three sounds that constitute Om (or Aum), a, u, and m, represent the experience of our individual waking, dream, and deep-sleep states. The silence between two successive Oms (amatra) represents the pure Self.

Names and forms have a validity only when we are conscious of them. One Consciousness illumines all names and forms, as well as all perceptions of the outer world and of the inner mind. When we shift our attention to the pure Consciousness, the names and forms merge, as it were – just as in the waker's mind the dreamer and his entire dream world merge.

To stimulate the condition of steady mental poise, which is the immediate precondition for samadhi, contemplation upon Om is very useful. Contemplation is neither necessary nor valid once the individual has merged into the pure Self and

directly lives the state divine.

Text XXXIX

akarasamjnah puruso hi visvako hyukarakastajjasa iryate kramat prajno makarah paripathyate 'khilaih samadhipurvam na tu tattvato bhavet.

The rishis of the Vedic period declare that a-kara represents the waker, u-kara represents the dreamer, and ma-kara, the deep sleeper, and all their respective experiences. These distinctions are all valid only before samadhi, never in the absolute nature of Reality.

As was mentioned in the commentary for the previous verse, the three sounds that together constitute Omakara represent the three states of consciousness through which every one of us moves during each twenty-four-hour day of our lives. The sound a represents the waking-state world of the waker; u represents the dreamer and his dream world; and m stands for the deep sleeper and his experience of the absence of things.

All these pluralistic concepts prevail only before samadhi. Once the mind is transcended, when the thought flow has ceased and the mind is in state of total absorption, that is, has the vision of the realized saint, there is neither the waker, the dreamer, nor the deep sleeper; neither the individual nor the world of plurality (Virat); neither the Creator (Hiranyagarbha), nor the Lord (Isvara), the Creator-Sustainer-Destroyer, the Intelligence behind the cosmos. In the one Self there is neither the microcosmic world nor the macrocosmic expansion of the same.

Text L

visvam tvakaram purusam vilapaye - dukaramadhye bahudha vyavasthitam tato makare pravilapyata tajjasam dvitiyavarnam pranavasya cantime.

The a-letter sound in Aum represents the visva-jiva that expresses in a thousand ways, along with its microcosmic expression as Virat, and it may be merged into the u-letter sound, representing the tajjasa-jiva, along with its microcosmic expression as Hiranyagarbha. Now the u-letter sound, the second letter in Aum, may be merged into the m-letter sound, the last of the triple sounds that make up the Aum symbol.

The process of contemplation, how to fold up all the delusory manifestations of our perceived world of plurality by using Om-upasana (Om-worship), is being explained in this verse and the next. Both the microcosmic expressions of the Self in the individual, visva (waker-I), tajjasa (dreamer-I), and prajna (deep-sleeper-I); and the microcosmic expansion of the Self, Virat (total gross world of forms), Hiranyagarbha (the Creator, the womb of the universe), and Isvara (the Lord), are to be merged into the Aum sound-symbol.

This process is called upasana (worship). To recognize a mighty vision in an insignificant symbol is called the art of worship. To see the Mother Divine in an ordinary river Ganges; to see Siva in a stone idol; to see the son of God and His sacrifice for man's sins in a wooden cross – this is upasana. In Om-upasana we try to seek the waker-I (visva) and the total universe of names and forms (Virat) in the a sound. Then we merge this private gross world (visva) and the universal gross world (Virat) into the subtle world of the dreamer-I (tajjasa) and the total womb of forms (Hiranyagarbha). Let this then be merged into the last sound of Aum, the m sound, representing the deep-sleeper-I (prajna) and the universal cause of both the gross and the subtle worlds, the Lord (Isvara).

makaramapyatmani cidghane pare vilapayetprajnamapiha karanam so 'ham param

brahma sada vimuktima - dvijnanadrn mukta upadhito 'malah.

Let the m-letter sound in Aum, representing the prajna-jiva, which is the very cause for both visva-jiva and tajasa-jiva, be then merged in the supreme Self, the mass of Consciousness. Come to live this Knowledge: "I am the supreme Substratum for the universe, Brahman – ever free, untouched by the filth of Maya, unconditioned by the equipments. This very Eye of Wisdom am I. Continuing to expound upon the orthodox method of Om-upasana., Sri Rama says that, having merged both the gross and the subtle into the causal principle of Isvara, let it be merged into the pure Self, the one Brahman. The individually that was flittering about as I (the waker, the dreamer, the deep sleeper) now merges into the universal One, and the seeker comes to realize. "I am the supreme mass of Consciousness; I am the supreme Substratum for the universe, Brahman.

After merger with Brahman, there can no longer be any equipments to condition the seeker, and therefore he becomes ever free (vimuktimat), fully liberated from all the persecutions of his earlier body-mind-intellect equipment (upadhittah muktah).

Since this state is beyond even the taints of vasanas, in this pure state of Consciousness there is neither nonapprehension (avidya), nor the consequent misapprehensions (dvaita pratiti); therefore, Sri Rama indicates it as amalah (immaculate). In the pure, infinite Self there is neither tamas (nonapprehension) nor viksepa (agitations caused by misapprehensions). The mind-intellect becomes supremely sattvic; in fact, the Self transcends even sattva. Thus it is glorified as being beyond the gunas – gunathita (amalah). These are not mere objective descriptions of a unique state of consciousness. In the fulfillment of Om-upasana, the student has a subjective realization that he is the Self (so 'ham parabrahma), the very eye of wisdom, the one light that makes every experience shine (vijana drk).

Text LII

evam sada jataparatomabhavanah svanandatustah parivismrtakhilah aste sa nityatmasukhaprakasakah saksadvimukto 'calavarisindhuvat.

A seeker who, through the above process, realizes directly pure the nature of the Self becomes supremely contented in that blissful state of the Self. He totally forgets all the experience of earlier jiva-hood and rises above them. He remains effulgent and lives in the unbroken bliss of the Self. Supremely free, he becomes like a stilled ocean.

Laboriously, Sri Rama is trying to communicate to his brother the end result of Self-realization. For the person who has realized the nature of the Self and who has totally identified with it, the whole world of plurality (constituting the misapprehensions that rise out of the nonapprehension of Reality) suddenly disappears – so totally that even its memory cannot return back to him.

Such an individual's mental condition is being described here in terms of our worldly experiences, because we can understand the mind of the man of realization only in terms of our own mind. Picture to yourself the roaring, thunderous ocean, ever frothing and fuming in the continuous clash of waves. If by the waving of a magic wand the waters of that ocean could suddenly be transformed into utter stillness, the awesome beauty of that silence, the majesty of that stillness perhaps could convey to your mind a vague picture of the boundless state of hushed joy that the realized one experiences when the mind becomes totally absorbed in the bliss of the silent Self (acala vari sindhuvat).

Text LIII

Sanskrit Wording:

evam sadabhyastasamadhiyogino nivrttasarvendriyagocarasya hi
vinirjitasesariporaham sada drsyo bhavayam jita sadgunatmanah

He who thus sincerely and regularly practices this yoga of contemplation, he who has withdrawn himself from the entire world of perceived objects, he who has won a total victory over all the inner enemies, he who has lifted himself from the six main urges of the body – to him alone I, the Supreme, am directly available in an effortless act of perception.

Sri Rama points out four adjustments necessary for the spiritual seeker:

To one who thus regularly practices samadhi, meaning who is regular in his practice of meditation, in him the vasanah get burned up, and consequently his mental agitations become increasingly fewer. To the extent that rajah (misapprehension) gets eliminated at the mental level, to that extent tamah (nonapprehension) also gets lifted at the intellectual level. The mood of the mind-intellect under such a situation of inner peace and alertness is called a sattvic mood. A sattvic mind settles easily into a steady, contemplative mood.

The source of disturbance in the mind is its engagement in the world of sense objects. The mind gushes into the fields of objects only when it is whipped up by the desires in the intellect. The desire to possess, embrace, and enjoy sense objects comes out of the foolish values we entertain – the erroneous misconception that an object contains a certain amount of joy-content. Those who examine intelligently the nature of the world of things and beings and realize for themselves that finite entities are impermanent, sorrow-oozing, mind-dissipating, and therefore not desirable, end their unproductive efforts at gaining them.

The inner enemies are six in number: desire, anger, and so on. These six are the horrible faces of rajah, and they are the destroyers of the sattvic poise of the contemplative mind. When sattva increases, the rajoguna qualities that prompt one into continuous fields of work and exhausting anxieties naturally clam down and disappear.

One who has successfully escaped the six urges of the body – both gross and subtle – discovers an evergrowing intensity in one's daily contemplation. These six physical and mental urges are exhaustively examined in the Upanisads, and the rishis have declared that hunger and thirst belong to the physiological system (prana), sorrows and passions belongs to the mind, and old age and death belong to the body.

To those who accomplish the above four necessary adjustments, to them Sri Rama declares, "I am directly available for their personal experience" Sri Rama, the supreme Self, explodes into the vision of such a contemplative mind.

Text LIV

dhyatvaivatmanamaharnisam muni-stithetsada muktasamastabandhanah
prarabdhamasannabhimanavarjito mayyeva saksatpraviliyate tatah.

Through such steady and continuous contemplation the 'spiritual-seeker-shall become ever liberated from all bondages. Thereafter, he lives his share of destiny without the sense of "I am the body," and in the end he merges into Me, the pure Self.

Here the nature and mode of behaviour of a man of realization are being hinted at. A more exhaustive picture of the man of perfection is elaborately painted in the Bhagavad Gita.

A true student and seeker continues to practice contemplation as advised in the previous verse, slowly bringing into his life the fulfillment of all the four conditions. These four cannot be achieved all of a sudden: the seeker has to put forth much conscious effort at self-discipline and learn to ease his way slowly toward the state of pure Self. It is slow, at times exhausting, evolutionary progress.

Once successful, the Self-realized individual remains ever liberated from all bondages. The equipments of experience (body-mind-intellect) and the fields of experience (objects-emotions-thoughts) can no longer condition him. In short, he is no more the little ego (perceiver-feeler-thinker). This egoless state becomes natural to him. In the beginning, such a state can be frighteningly shocking, confusing to those who have no devotion to the Lord. It is a new dimension of experience: no ego – yet, we experience with the “no-experencer” in us ! One is then no more in the objective world of things and beings, but within a realm where the objective world is not and yet is fully included. Nothing is excluded from the Self.

Such a Self-realized master’s mere existence in this world is in itself a blessing to the people and their whole era.

If the Self-realized one has no identification with his equipment, if he has no vasanas to exhaust – he wants nothing, desires nothing, expects nothing – if he has gained all that is to be gained, why does he live on ? Why shouldn’t his body fall off ? What propels such a master to continue living to vigorously and continuously work for the spiritual upliftment of the people ?

Following the Upanisads’ own assertion, Sri Rama declares that such an individual “lives his share of destiny” (prarabdham-asnan). Everyone of us is living to exhaust our past vasanas, but the master lives without any identification with such happenings – he passes through such events without ego and its selfishness. Success or failure, joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure do not affect him. He does what is to be done as best as he can. He lives on, rejecting nothing, accepting all, reflecting everything, keeping nothing – like a mirror.

At the end of the body’s allotted time, when it falls off to rest in peace, the master merges to be one with Sri Rama, the supreme Self.

Text LV

adau ca madhye ca tathaiva cantato bhavam viditva bhayasokakaranam hitva samastam vidhivadacoditam bhajetsvamatmanamathakhilatmanam

Understanding this samsara to be the cause of fear and grief in the beginning (childhood), in the middle (youth), and similarly also in the end (old age), the seeker should give up all identification with the equipments. Renouncing all other sadhanas prescribed in the Vedas, let him learn to contemplate steadily upon the Self in him as the one infinite Self everywhere.

In the earlier days of the spiritual sadhana, in order to learn how to fold up his or her attention from the outer world of dissipation, every student must have diligently followed, for a long period of time, the various yogas recommended by our scriptural textbooks – karma, bhakti, jnana, worship of the Lord through elaborate rituals, and so on. The samskaras (innate tendencies) are so powerful that even after the mind has become single-pointed and quiet, a seeker generally hesitates to leave his old desires and enter into a pure state of contemplation.

Sri Rama unhesitatingly insists that the student should totally give up (hitva

samastam) what has been prescribed by our sacred books as something that we must diligently pursue (vidhivat coditam).

With the integrated mind and intellect rendered single-pointed, quiet, alert, and vigilant, let the seeker exclusively turn his entire attention to the Self within (sva-atmanan) and realize that it is Self everywhere (akhila-atmanam bhajet).

In the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad, Yajnavalkya insists that “this Self is to be ‘seen’: you must hear, reflect, and meditate upon it.”

Through such steady practice, when the successful seeker satisfies the four necessary conditions of the mind, he or she glides effortlessly into the higher state of the pure Self, the Rama-state. The individual becomes fully liberated from all the encumbrances of the body-mind-intellect – the equipments of experience – and is forever freed from all shackles of objects-emotions-thoughts—the fields of experience. Never can these conditionings entrap him again, as he has awakened to the state of the Self. He lives blessing the world with his pure holiness, even if he is not “doing” anything: his mere presence is an inspiration to the rest of society.

If he is thus liberated from all equipments, why are the equipments not falling away dead, when their owner, the ego, has been liberated ? The answer is that the force of its prarabdha karma keeps the body alive. The body is the product of our own karma (vasanas), and it is also a product of the karmas of others. One can redeem oneself of all one’s own karmas, but the body still lives and functions, sustained by the karmas of others. This macrocosmic vasana (samasti karma) is the equipment of the Lord (Isvara). Thus, a man of perfection is functioning under the Lord’s will only. Without any sense of “I-do” (ahankara) and any attachment (asakti), he appears to be functioning in the world, himself ever living the experience of the infinite Self, Sri Rama.

Once his share of destiny is exhausted, he merges into Brahman. This state is called videha-mukti. Even earlier, when others were considering him as a member of the community, he was already a liberated person (jivan-mukti).

atmanyabheden vibhavayannidam bhavatyabheden mayatmana tada yatha jalam varinidhau yatha payah ksire viyadvyomnyanile yathanilah.

Just as when water is poured into the ocean, as milk is poured into milk, as space is merged into space, as air is merged into air to mingle together and become one indistinguishable sameness, so, too, when the seeker contemplates upon this world of plurality as identical in essence with the Self, he comes to realize and live his total oneness with Me, the Self.

In the seat of meditation, through intense contemplation, the seeker persuades his individualized self to entirely drop all its identifications with the body-mind-intellect. He then effortlessly glides into the higher state of Consciousness and becomes indistinguishably one with it. When a river reaches the ocean, it loses both its name and form and becomes one with all the oceans around the world.

To vividly portray this total Oneness, Sri Rama repeatedly employs the classical examples that one meets with in the Vedantic tradition. When water is poured into the ocean, you cannot, later on, remove that specific sample of water, as it has merged completely with the oceanic waters. After a cup of milk is poured into a bucket of milk, that specific cup of milk can then no longer be separated from the total quantity of milk in the bucket. When a jar is broken, the space contained in the jar immediately and irretrievably merges with the space in the room, without effort,

readily and naturally. Similarly, when a window is suddenly opened, the air inside the room and outside the room mingles. In all these examples, the idea hammered into the student is that on waking up to the higher state of Consciousness, the Essence in the core of the limited individual is realized as being identical with that which is at the core of the whole universe, the one nondual Self, the sole Substratum upon which the plurality of names and forms appears to dance, creating the illusion of a timebound world of flux.

“The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman,” say the scriptures. The distinctions between the individualized ego (jiva), the world of plurality (jagat), and the Creator of it all, the omnipotent, omniscient God, all merge together to be one Self divine. The Mundaka Upanisad declares clearly. “This world of dynamic action is nothing but Brahman.” This is again supported by the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad. When it declares. “All these are nothing but this Atman.

Text LVII

English Wording:

ittham yadikseta hi lokasamsthito jaganmrsaiyeti vibhavayanmunih

nirakrtatvacchruiti yuktimanato yathendubhedo disi digbhramadayah

Even if a wordly minded person of reflection were to practice this abheda-bhav (experience of nondifference), he, too, shall experience Me, because the world of plurality is indeed a delusion, which is proved by the words of the Upanisads and by logical thinking. The world is a delusion just as the many moons seen, or as the confusion of direction we may experience in a new place. Even if a person of reflection is still earth-bound, still has body-fascination, and is attracted by the fancied charms of sense objects (lokasamsthita), if such a person dwells on the idea that the world of plurality is no-thing other than pure Consciousness, he, too, shall in time develop more and more detachment and move ahead into the spiritual dimension. In the end he will realize Me and My glory, the Self, pure and nondual.

As the spiritual seeker's sadhana gathers momentum, his identification with the body becomes relatively diminished, and to that relative degree his sensuous life of passion naturally transforms itself into the contemplative life of spiritual pursuit: he moves from the undivine world of passions and yearnings into the divine realm of inner peace and fulfillment.

This world of names and forms is indeed a delusion, a misapprehension. The names and forms are impermanent, and therefore false. However, Reality, which is their substratum, is permanent and true. Through the authority of scriptural statements and through our own logical thinking we can come to the conclusion that this world of names and forms is delusory in nature. “Brahman is one without a second.” “In Brahman there is no plurality.” “This dynamic world of happenings is nothing but Brahman.” “This entire perceived world of names and forms is all nothing but Atman.” All these vivid and forceful statements from different Upanisads given out by different masters, in different periods of time, arrived at from different angles and through varying logical approaches, should clearly give authority to the claim about the delusory nature of the world.

Not only the authoritative statements of the scriptures command us, but by careful observation and close study of the data so collected, we can logically and rationally arrive at the same picture of illusoriness of the world of multiplicity. During sleep or under chloroform, when the mind is folded up, the world of plurality is not available

for our experience. That which remains in all the three periods of time is Truth, Reality. In the dream, the waking world is negated. In deep sleep, both the dream world and the waking world are negated. When we wake up, yesterday's dream and the peaceful deep-sleep experience are both totally negated.

Only the Substratum upon which these three realms of experience came and danced and from which they disappeared remains, Waves rise, clash with each other, and disappear, but the ocean upon which they came to play their game was continually there – before the waves took shape, while they clashed, and after they totally disappeared. In order to drive home the idea that names and forms are delusory and the Substratum is permanent and true, the teacher in Rama is tempted to string together some examples. In all these examples, certain entities are as though “seen,” yet, on analysis, our rational mind discovers them as mere illusions: We know there is only one moon; yet, we can see many moons reflected in many pools of water. Also, by pressing the top of the eyeball and thus creating defective vision in our eyes, we can actually “see” two moons in the sky !

Similarly, at dusk, a traveler to a new town in his weariness gets confused about his sense of direction. He will have to inquire of others and realize that what he thought was east is actually north. Once he has ascertained the true east, all his confusions end, and he gains the true knowledge of all the four directions.

Text LVIII

yavanna pasyedakhilam madatmakam tavanmadaradhanatatparo bhavet
sraddhaluratyurjitabhaktilaksano yastasya drsyo 'hamaharnisam hrdi

As long as one is not able to “see” the entire world of plurality as My divine nature, so long one must worship My form with all devotion. In the pure heart of him who is endowed with deep faith and mighty devotion I become self-evident.

When the individual (jiva), in moments of deep contemplation, leaves all his identity capers with the body-mind-intellect equipment, the experiencer-ego awakens to the state of God-Consciousness, the Self. In that state, the familiar world of names and forms, interpreted by the equipments of experience, gets wiped out. The usual world of objects-emotions-thoughts disappears into the vision of the pure, blissful Self, Sri Rama.

As long as this mind-transforming experience of the one Self, without properties (nirguna), has not happened to a seeker, let him engage himself in the worship of Me, in My enchanting form (saguna). Worship nourishes devotion to the Lord, and when love is directed to an altar, the mind gravitates easily, readily, and effortlessly toward it. When we live in an attitude of surrender to Him – “Lord ! Thy will be done, not mine” – the existing vasanas get exhausted, and the inner personality of the devotee becomes extremely quiet and peaceful. In such a purified heart, rich in understanding and in supreme devotion, the Self, which is ever with us, comes to shine out, just as the sun emerging out of the clouds.

Behind the thick wall of our mental agitation lies the Self, apparently hidden, veiled from our direct apprehension. When the mind is de-clutched from its preoccupations with the world of perceptions, feelings, and thoughts, in that still moment of utter silence of deepest contemplation, the individuality disappears into the vision of Sri Rama, the supreme Self.

Text LIX

rahasyametacchrutisarasangraham maya viniscitya tavoditam priya

yastvetadalocayatiha buddhiman sa mucyate patakarasibhih ksanat.

This discourse that I have given you here, dear brother, is upon the great secret, the very essence of the Upanisads, which I have assimilated and ascertained in my life's personal experience. Any intelligent man who reflects upon these ideas shall, too, get liberated from all his host of sins.

"You are dear to Me," says Rama, because Laksmana had purified himself by his selfless service to Rama, with deep and abiding devotion to the Lord. To Laksmana, Rama was never a mere elder brother. He was Lord Rama, the supreme Self.

That which Rama revealed in the Rama Gita is the very essence of all the Upanisads (srutisarangraha). And it is a great secret (rahasya). This great secret of the Upanisads can be ascertained only with the help of a sadguru and through sincere efforts in contemplation by the seeker. Sri Rama confesses to his brother that the theme he is giving out in this Gita is what "I had ascertained in my own subjective, direct realization." You, too, strive with ease to realize this state and be one liberated while living (a jivan-mukta), Rama encourages us.

"Anyone who has your qualities of head and heart," Rama is saying to Laksmana. "and who can seriously reflect upon this science of Reality (Brahmavidya) that I have revealed, can learn to enjoy the state of total fulfillment as a jivan-mukta." Such a person very easily goes beyond all vasanas – both good and bad – patakarasibhih; and it takes no time (ksanat mucyate). When the criminal dies, the punishment for the crimes committed has no bearing; when the doer_I, the ego, ends, all vasanas must cease to be effective.

Text LX

bhrataryadidam paridrsyate jaga - nmayaiva sarvam parihrtya cetasa
madbhananabhavita suddhamanasah sukhi bhavanandamayo niramayah

Brother ! This perceived world of experiences is all but an idle projection of Maya (delusory, not real). Renouncing all identification with this, turn to Me alone with a purified heart. May you become thus ever blissful, with no restless sorrows, continuously happy.

Dear brother Laksmana, the world experienced as objects-emotions-thoughts, through the vehicles of experience (body-mind-intellect) are all mere products of delusion (Maya). Leave your misconceptions that they are real and all the consequent identification which you have cultivated with them. With your thoughts and emotions so purified, quieted and becalmed, turn your attention from the snare of Maya through steady contemplation upon My infinite, divine nature. May you thus become sukhi, away from all the sorrows of plurality; niramaya, peaceful, as you will be away from the vasana-tickled mental agitations; and blissful in the direct experience of the Self. At the end of all nonapprehension, all misapprehension of plurality ends: you will reach the final state of beatitude.

Text LXI

yah sevate mamagunam gunatparam hrda kada va yadi va gunatmakam so 'ham
svapadancitareubhih sprsan punati lokatritayam yatha ravih.

Anyone who contemplates upon My pure, formless nature, or on Me with qualities and form, becomes of My nature, Brahman. Wherever such a fulfilled seeker goes, he makes the place holy with the mere touch of his sacred feet, just as the sun

purifies the earth its atmosphere.

Sri Rama earlier advised Laksmana that in case one was not capable of directly contemplating upon the pure Self in its unconditioned, absolute nature, he could “worship My form.” In order to conceive of the vast, infinite Self, the mind must have the canvas-area to embrace and accommodate the full spread of the all-pervading Substratum of the universe. In its attachments, its limit vision and interests, its petty selfishnesses and laughable vanities, our distorted, stunted mind cannot successfully lift itself to the Absolute.

In the present state of our mind, then, the only available technique is devoted worship of the Self with form and qualities. This worship of an “idol,” a symbol that represents the highest Essence, is a sanctioned technique. In this verse, Sri Ramacandraji places his signature of approval on this method of worship.

“No doubt, in My ultimate nature, “Rama confesses, “I am without gunas – I am beyond gunas. “In fact, Rama is the very Consciousness that illumines all gunas. But in case a seeker, due to the agitated nature of his mind or due to his compelling sensuous nature, is not able to conceive of and contemplate upon this formless, pure nature, the Paramatman (mukhya), let him worship “My lower nature” (gauna), Rama as the son of Dasaratha, with qualities – omnipotent, omniscient, Lord of the Universe, beauty-incamate.

This worship is not to be a mere mechanical, physical routine, but must issue forth from the pure heart (hrda sevate), with ardent prayers, sincere surrender, and steady contemplation. In contemplation upon the pure, unconditioned Self, learn to identify yourself with Me, the Self, or in abiding devotion steadily contemplate upon My form and qualities, says Sri Rama. In either case, you will arrive to realize Me and become Me. The Bhagavad Gita also assures us of this final state. Those who worship the Lord’s form will also reach the supreme state of fulfillment. In the final stages of his intense devotion, the devotee comes to realize that he is not separate from Me; I shall lift him up to this higher state of realization.

Both the devotee of form and the contemplator of the Formless, render everything divine in their inner, direct knowledge; they sanctify whatever they touch, and wherever they roam about, they make the place holy with the mere touch of their feet. Jerusalem, Mecca, Saranatha, Kashi, the Himalayas are all famous and spiritually holy because of the masters whose presence sanctified them. Such masters need not “do” anything: their mere presence is sufficient, just as the sun nurtures, nourishes, and purifies everything it illumines.

Text LXII

vinnanametadakhilam srutisaramekam vedantavedyacaranena mayaiva gitam yah sraddhaya paripathed gurubhaktiyukto madrupameti yadi madvacanesu bhaktih.

This entire science of Reality, along with the techniques of realization (sadhanas), forming the essence of the Upanisads, is sung by Me – the “quarter” that is to be realized only through the Upanisadic declarations. He who with firm devotion to his teacher with ardent faith merely reads or hears this Rama Gita, he, too, can reach My form – if he has faith in My words.

The contents of this Gita, elucidating the supreme Knowledge, is the very Truth enshrined in the Upanisads. It speaks of the nondual Self, the One without a second, and “I, Sri Rama, the Self.” am giving it out. This Self, Sri Rama, is the state to be known through study of and contemplation upon the pregnant declarations of the Vedas.

“I am that quarter declared in the Vedas” – the quarter with which the Supreme supports the entire universe of names and forms. The world of change rests only upon a part of the Infinite, three-quarters of which is untouched by the plurality twinkling in time and space ! The Bhagavad Gita also expresses the same idea: “I am carrying the entire universe with a mere portion of Me.” This quarter is the very support of the entire universe of names and forms, the stage upon which the entire dynamic drama of life is being played out. This Lord of the universe, now acting as Sri Rama, is giving out this Rama Gita.

Whoever (yah) can reflect upon the meaning of these verses and contemplate upon their significance, if he has cultivated deep devotion to the guru, and also the ability to intellectually gain an understanding of the subtle impact of these verses (sraddhavan), even if he only reads or hears this Gita, he too, can gain “My form divine.” Rama-form here is identical with the nature of the Self (Atma-svarupa).

Thus ends the fifth chapter, in the Uttarakanda of Srimad Adhyatma Ramayana – a dialogue between Uma and Mahesvara – Rama Gita, by Veda Vyasa.