



SADHANA PANCHAKAM

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Contents

Introduction to Sadhana Panchakam	4
Verse-1	4
Step-1: Studying the Vedas daily	4
Step 2 - Perform the diligently duties ordained by the Vedas.....	5
Step 3 - Dedicate all actions/duties as worship of the Lord.	6
Step 4 - Let the desire prompted activities be given up	6
Step 5 - Let the multitude of sins be uprooted.....	7
Step 6: Reflect upon the inherent limitations of worldly pleasures	8
Step 7: Entertain desire for knowing the Self	8
Step 8: As soon as desire for Self-knowledge arises, leave the house (or bondage) quickly.	8
Verse 2	9
Step 9: Seek the company of wise men	9
Step 10: Cultivate steady devotion to the Lord.....	9
Step 11: Cultivate the qualities such as <i>sama, dama</i>	10
Step 12: Quickly give up for good desire-prompted actions.	11
Step 13: Approach a wise man who is capable of unfolding the truth of Vedanta.	11
Step 14: Serve the Sandals (padhuka) of teacher daily.	12
Step 15: Ask the teacher to unfold knowledge of Brahman that is one, that is beyond destruction.	12
Step 16: Listen properly to the mahavakyas of the Upanishads.	13
Verse 3	14
Step 17: Analyze the meaning of the mahavakyas.....	14
Step 18: Follow the line of arguments of the sruti	14
Step 19: Refrain from distorted reasoning (opposed to the vision of scriptures).....	14
Step 20: Resort to the reasoning in keeping with (the vision of) the sruti.....	15
Step 21: Entertain constantly the thought "I am Brahman".	15
Step 22: Give up pride at all times.	15
Step 23: Give up the identification from Body	15
Step 24: Avoid arguments with the wise man	16
Verse 4	16
Step 25: May you treat the disease of hunger.....	16
Step 26: Daily take the medicine of food obtained as Bhiksha	16
Step 27: May you not crave for (ask for) tasty food.	16
Step 28: May you be content with what is obtained as a result of Prarabdha.	16
Step 29: May you endure all pairs of opposites: heat and cold etc.	17
Step 30: Avoid speech that is unnecessary.....	17

Step 31: Maintain an attitude of happy indifference (to small problems and anxieties in life).....	17
Step 32: Overlook (do not be concerned about) public sympathy and censure.....	17
Verse 5	18
Step 33: May you sit in a comfortable posture quietly in solitude.....	18
Step 34: May the mind abide in Brahman.....	18
Step 35: May you see the Self, I, the fullness, clearly.....	18
Step 36: See the world as unreal (devoid of reality) in absence of the fullness (that you are).....	19
Step 37: Resolve the sanchita karma (in knowledge).....	19
Step 38: With a proper attitude, remain unattached to new karma.....	19
Step 39: Happily go through the experiences of prarabdha karma.....	20
Step 40: (After the fall of the body) abide in Brahman, the limitless.....	20
Appendix A – Different Types of Karma	20
Karma.....	20

Introduction to Sadhana Panchakam

Sadhana Panchakam is composed by Adi Sankaracharya. Sankaracharya wrote commentaries on Gita, Upanishads, Brahmasutras and has written many texts, hymns expounding on the teachings of Vedanta. In *Sadhana Panchakam* (*Sadhana* - means/practice, *Panchakam* - set of 5 verses), Sankara provides 40 steps as a means/practice to achieve the end goal of Moksha. In these 5 verses, Sankara unfolds the entire teaching of Vedanta. There are 5 verses in *Sadhana Pancham*, each verse having 4 lines and 2 steps in each line making it altogether 40 steps. Each step is like steps in a ladder taking us progressively to attain the goal of *Moksha*. This set of 5 verses provides the means for the end goal of Moksha.

Verse-1

वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयतां
तेनेशस्य विधीयतामपचितिः काम्ये मतिस्त्यज्यताम्।

पापौघः परिधूयतां भवसुखे दोषोऽनुसन्धीयता-

मात्मेच्छा व्यवसीयतां निजगृहात्तूर्णं विनिर्गम्यताम्॥ १॥

vedo nityamadhīyatāṃ taduditam karma svanuṣṭhīyatāṃ

teneśasya vidhīyatāmapacitih kāmye matistyajyatām |

pāpaughah paridhūyatāṃ bhavasukhe doṣo'nusandhīyatā-

mātmecchā vyavasīyatāṃ nijagr:hātūṃam vinirgamyatām || 1||

Step-1: Studying the Vedas daily

What are Vedas?

The word Veda is derived from the Sanskrit root vid which means "to know" and is generally translated as "the treasure of knowledge" or "the source or means of knowledge". Hindu culture is essentially a Vedic culture, called *Vaidika Samskriti*, since it is based on the authority of the Vedas. The Vedas are technically termed 'sruti', and are revealed knowledge. That they are revealed is an important point. They are not the composition of a human being, arrived at through intellectual and logical reasoning, based on sense perception. For this reason, the Vedas are said to be *apauruseya* - not of human origin - and are considered revelations.

The scriptures say: "The Vedas are the breath of God". Just as our breath emanates naturally and effortlessly from us as long as we are alive, the Vedas are considered to be the very breath of the Lord Himself. This knowledge or Veda was revealed by the Lord to those great rishis who had purified, tuned and made their minds single pointed through meditation.

What do Vedas teach?

The subject matter of the Vedas is classified into three parts:

1. Karma Kanda (ritualistic portion)
2. Upasana Kanda (worship portion)
3. Jnana Kanda (knowledge portion)

Vedas point out that the purpose of human life is to realize and to know the absolute Truth, the absolute Reality and not just to live superficially in the world of appearances. In order to know this Truth the mind must be prepared and purified, and so the first portion of the Vedas, the Karma kanda is meant for acquiring this purity of mind.

What does reading/studying Vedas daily mean?

When we act and respond in this world to different situations and experiences, our actions and responses tend not to be objective. They are often prejudiced, colored and conditioned by our personal likes and dislikes, which are expressions of our vasanas (subtle impressions and inherent tendencies) gathered in innumerable lifetimes. When we act, prompted by our vasanas, rather than guided by the knowledge of what is right and wrong, we strengthen these likes and dislikes, which constitute the impurities of mind.

The Vedas provide guidelines of how to conduct ourselves in daily life. Life is all about making choices. When we are ignorant about the goal of life, we end up making inappropriate choices (or in other words violate Dharma). Studying of Vedas provides us with the goal of life and means of achieving that goal. By studying the knowledge revealed in Vedas, we can clarify our goal in life, follow the means to purify our mind and achieve the goal.

Step 2 - Perform the diligently duties ordained by the Vedas

As we saw in Step 1, the Vedas teach that the purpose of human life is to realize and to know the absolute Truth, the absolute Reality and not just to live superficially in the world of appearances. In order to know this Truth, the mind must be prepared and purified. Therefore, the first portion of the Vedas, the Karma kanda, is meant for acquiring this purity of mind.

Karma Kanda prescribes 5 types of Karmas - Karmas that are to be performed and Karmas that are to be avoided. All these karmas (actions) are to be done in the spirit of offering, spirit of duty.

1. **Nitya Karma** – The daily duties, Nitya Karmas, are to be performed. Nitya Karma is done in the form of 5 yagnas (also known as Panch Maha Yagna). Yagna means offering.
Brahma Yagna - Prayers to Guru, Rishis, Vedic scriptures. We need to show reverence and gratitude to our Vedas and Guru; it is because of them we grow. Prayers to Guru can be performed through rituals like Pada Puja, studying the Vedas, reflecting on the teachings and following the teachings in our life. Contribution in the form of preserving their teachings and spreading the teachings.
Deva Yagna - Any form of worship of God – Puja, Rituals, Visiting Temples etc. Devas are Sun, Moon, Air, Space, water etc. who govern our life.
Pitru Yagna - Prayers to parents, forefathers and ancestors. Taking good care of ones parents is a Yajna. Parents should be treated like GOD and we need to serve them with the same attitude of service to God. For the deceased parents and forefathers, one should perform rituals like Tarpanam and Sradham.
Manusya Yagna - Service to humanity is also an important Yajna. Service through our work, charity, teaching etc.
Bhuta Yagna - This includes service to plants, trees, the animal kingdom as well as one's environment. Nowadays, not harming the environment in itself is a great service. One can grow trees and plants, feed cows, dogs, crows or even provide/keep a bowl of water for thirsty birds. All these help in ecological balance. By all means we should resist cutting trees and try to do our part in refraining from polluting the atmosphere by exercising control on our consumption of gas, electricity and various usage of gadgets etc., in our daily life.
2. **Naimittika Karma** - Occasional duties like Marriage, Upanayanam (Thread ceremony), Sraddha/Tarpanam.
3. **Kamy Karma** – Reduce desire prompted actions. Desire prompted actions are those that are done for personal fulfillment like accumulating excess wealth, working for name and fame. Any egoistic activities that are done for selfish reasons.
4. **Nisiddha Karma** – These are karmas that are to be avoided. All adharmic actions are to be avoided. Any choices or actions that transgress universal values like hurting others, cheating etc... are to be avoided.
5. **Prayaschitta Karma** – If one has transgressed Dharma, they can perform Prayaschitta Karma or actions done for atonement. One can follow Prayaschitta Karmas prescribed in the scriptures or one can choose actions like chanting Japa, going to temple, performing rituals etc. as atonement.

Why should we perform all these Karmas and Pancha Maha Yagnas?

Vedas teach us to live a life of Dharma. Our life is supported by other human beings, other animals, devatas, our forefathers and sages/saints. All these 5 types of beings contribute to our life. It is our duty in turn to contribute to other beings. Krishna in Bhagavad gita teaches that those who don't contribute back and only consume are like thieves. All of life is interconnected and interdependent, so we need to play our role in contributing back. We are recipients of others' services, so we should participate in the spirit of returning that favor.

What happens if we don't contribute back and only fulfill our personal needs and wants?

Vedas say that when we don't perform our duties we are violating Dharma and will incur sin. Sin means papa or unfavorable situations. Papa is that which inhibits our true nature and joy in life. This does not mean that we should perform our duties out of fear. The idea is to understand the big scheme of things and realize our role. Teachings of Vedas is "*what we sow is what we reap*"

Step 3 - Dedicate all actions/duties as worship of the Lord.

In Step 2 all the duties were performed as obligations. In step 3, going one step further, all actions/duties are performed as an act of worship of the Lord. Going another step further and doing all actions as act of worship. We are usually worshipping our ego. We are constantly planning how to gratify our ego, concerned about our security and happiness.

If we observe our mind, we will know whom we are worshipping – our ego or god. We are constantly focusing on – my needs, my security, my happiness, my interest etc. Replace all these thoughts/attitudes with worship of Eshwara. Gradually this will result in turning our minds towards Eshwara.

Who is the Lord? Why should I worship the Lord?

Source of all beings, source of everything in creation is the Lord. It is because of the Lord that the whole creation is functioning. It is the Lord who gives us everything in our life. We don't create anything. We are just an instrument in the hands of the Lord. By offering all our actions as worship, we gain purity of mind.

What does it mean to offer our actions as worship to the Lord?

We are performing actions every day, but those actions are meant for personal fulfillment. Converting all those actions as offering – *Eshwarpana Buddhi*, it becomes worship. Offering our actions as a service to people around us. Also when we receive the results of our actions if we have acceptance – *prasada Buddhi* it becomes worship. Usually we get excited or depressed when we don't get the results we want. By having *prasada buddhi* we recognize the Lord as the giver of the results. Whatever actions we do, they need be following *Dharma* and should not transgress Dharma. When we follow Dharma, we are worshipping the Lord, since Lord is in the form of Dharma.

What do I gain by worshipping the Lord?

By tuning the mind towards Eshwara, we gain a lot. Not only will the Lord care of our needs, but we will also gain a steady, composed mind that will be prepared for Self-Knowledge.

Step 4 - Let the desire prompted activities be given up

As we follow the first 3 steps, we will become mature and desire prompted activities will drop off naturally. We cannot give up desires by will. Performing our duties brings inner transformation and inner contentment and slowly desire prompted actions drop off as we gain maturity.

Wholeness is our nature. We are whole and complete. We don't know that our true nature is whole and complete. We attempt to gain fullness through desire prompted actions. With the spirit of service and sacrifice we gradually discover our true nature.

We seek external success. Success is a state of mind. True success is in discovering composed, peaceful state of mind. External success not only makes us more and more dependent but also does not give lasting satisfaction.

True happiness and success cannot be there as long as we have negative tendencies. True success is to stop being a demanding person, a competing person, stop being angry, greedy and jealous.

Gaining emotional maturity, ego-based desires dropping off, becoming sensitive to others' needs are some signs of growth. We become kind, generous, forgiving, and compassionate.

What is wrong in pursuing desire prompted activities? Without desires there is no motivation to work? Krishna teaches in Gita that desire prompted actions have defects.

First defect (PAIN) - Desire based actions like acquiring wealth, name and fame all involve a lot of effort, struggle. There is PAIN involved in acquiring and there is PAIN in protecting what we acquire. What we gain also doesn't stay with us forever, so there is PAIN involved in loss.

Second defect (DISSATISFACTION) - Desire based actions don't produce lasting satisfaction. When we don't have thousand dollars, we long for thousand dollars. Once we gain thousand dollars, we long for ten thousand dollars. We feel dissatisfied and want more.

Third defect (ATTACHMENT) - Desire based actions also creates bondage (or ATTACHMENT). When we don't have comforts and luxuries, we long for it. Once we acquire comforts and luxuries, we get used them and get attached. Even thinking of losing the acquired comforts and luxuries can cause fear and anxiety. Attachment means we become dependent on the world for our happiness.

Selfish desires lead to anger, greed, jealousy, pride, delusion and fear (six enemies within).

Krishna does not teach us to drop all desire-based actions overnight, as that is not possible. (Since we are under the spell of our gunas Rajas and Tamas), Krishna teaches us to slowly REDUCE desire-based actions and focus on performing our duties.

Step 5 - Let the multitude of sins be uprooted

Sin is any action that violates Dharma. Sin or Papa means a Dharma. Papa creates conflicts, sense of guilt etc. When I deliberately tell a lie, I do something wrong which in turn creates sense of guilt and hurt.

In general, our likes and dislikes, anger, jealousy, greed, competition, self-centeredness, negative tendencies are all results of papa. All our self-centeredness, all negative tendencies are result of papa.

If our life becomes a life of duty, (Dharma), then negative tendencies will be slowly subdued. We can perform deliberate actions to transform our life. We can convert our greed into being generous by donating and being charitable.

Goodness is our true nature. Sin is that inhibits our true nature. Sin is that which inhibits our true nature of kindness, generosity, compassion, forgiveness to manifest. We all want to be a helping person, but we become a hurting

person. Papa denies our true nature. By performing acts of kindness we can transform our life. For being kind, forgiving and compassion all we need is ourselves.

As negative tendencies drop off, we can discover greater and greater joy and satisfaction in ourselves. We can transform from having a reacting mind to thinking mind. Rajas and Tamas drop off and flowers into Sattva.

Step 6: Reflect upon the inherent limitations of worldly pleasures

- See the defect in worldly desires/pleasures.
- Until we see the defects in worldly desires, our priorities in life are not going to be set appropriately.
- We don't question what the true source of happiness is. We have false conclusions that the world (objects, people, situations) makes us happy.
- Reflect on the moments when we gain happiness. We seem to get happiness when listening to music or reading a book or when we are with a friend or when we get what we want. We don't question if music or a person or a situation is the true source of happiness.
- Before we gain the objects, person or situation of our liking, we entertain the desire for them and have a sense of "lack" or the feeling of "I want". At the moment when our desires are fulfilled, temporarily the sense of "lack" goes away and we are comfortable with ourselves. The happiness we gain when our desires are fulfilled is not because of the object, person or the situation. The happiness we gain is because we are comfortable with ourselves at the moment when our desires are fulfilled. Without knowing this, we have false conclusions that objects, persons or situations bring happiness and seek after them.
- If we reflect whether objects, persons or situations bring happiness, we can recognize they don't bring happiness *consistently*. The same object or person whom we may enjoy today may be source of misery tomorrow. However, whenever we gain happiness, *the Self that is comfortable is always present*.
- When we have the sense of lack, we don't accept ourselves as we are. We have self-rejection; we are not comfortable with ourselves. At the moment when our desires are fulfilled, this sense of lack is temporarily suspended, so we are comfortable with our self, we accept our self and there is no self-rejection.
- When we recognize that happiness is in the Self (not in objects or person), then we can realize the true source of happiness and as well as the defects and/or limitations in seeking worldly pleasures.
- Even the desires that get fulfilled in our life is because of Punya Karma. Without punya karma, we won't even get the objects, people of our liking.

Step 7: Entertain desire for knowing the Self

- Behind all the desires we entertain, there is desire for Self. We don't seek objects or people for their sake. We seek desires to please Self. Whatever is dear to me is because the Self is dear to me.
- It is said in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad – "*Atmanastu kamaya sarvam priyam bhavati*" - Nothing is dear for its own sake; whatever is dear to us, is dear only for the sake of the Self.
- Once we recognize all our desires are for the desire for Self, then our primary desire is to know the Self.
- Generally, we are not accepting of our self. We feel inadequate, insufficient, we have lots of wants and have a sense of incompleteness. We identify with our body, mind and intellect and take ourselves to be a limited being. Because of this false perception, we don't like our self. We feel limited.
- When our desires are fulfilled, momentarily we drop all the notions and are comfortable with our self. Pleased Self is our nature. Unhappy Self is wrong conclusion. Happiness is where limitless is. Limitless is where happiness is. When we have this *viveka*, then the desire for Self-Knowledge arises.
- At this stage desire for Self-Knowledge becomes firm.

Step 8: As soon as desire for Self-knowledge arises, leave the house (or bondage) quickly.

- As soon as the desire for Self-Knowledge arises, one needs to leave the house quickly. Leaving the house is not to be taken literally. Leaving the house means to be free from attachments.
- Attachment is an obstacle for gaining Self-knowledge.

- As long as we are at home, we are occupied with so many engagements and duties. We are so attached to these preoccupations and duties.
- To gain Self-knowledge, we need a mind that is free from all entanglements and a life as simple as possible. Need to be free from emotional dependency, free from attachments to family members, free from social obligations.
- We need to be like a guest, having no sense of ownership, but like a steward/trustee.
- Giving up attachments does not mean – “stop caring”. Giving up attachments mean to stop depending on others for happiness.
- Once we have the desire for Self-knowledge, need to make this pursuit a priority and give up everything else.

Verse 2

सङ्गः सत्सु विधीयतां भगवतो भक्तिर्दृढाऽऽधीयतां
 शान्त्यादिः परिचीयतां दृढतरं कर्माशु सन्त्यज्यताम्।
 सद्विद्वानुपसृष्यतां प्रतिदिनं तत्पादुका सेव्यतां
 ब्रह्मैकाक्षरमर्थ्यतां श्रुतिशिरोवाक्यं समाकर्ण्यताम् ॥ २ ॥

saṅgaḥ satsu vidhīyatām bhagavato bhaktirdṛḍhā''dhīyatām
śāntyādīḥ paricīyatām dṛḍhatarām karmāśu santyajyatām |
sadvidvānupasṛpyatām pratidinam tatpādukā sevayatām
brahmaikākṣaramarthyatām śrutīśirovākyaṁ samākaraṇyatām || 2||

Step 9: Seek the company of wise men

- Seek the association of wise men who are well versed in Scriptures. Being in satsanga with wise men is conducive for our spiritual growth.
- If we cannot find wise men around us, we can always go to them.
- If we cannot gain physical proximity of wise men, we can listen to their teachings or watch their teachings in Video. (These days we have the advantage of getting Audio/Video of teachings from Swamiji's)
- Learning through books, Audio and Video cannot replace physical proximity. In physical proximity with the guru, we can not only learn the Knowledge, but also see their devotion and see their life as an example. We can see how the saintly people are happy without any possessions. We can see from their example how they lead a simple life and yet happy.
- If we cannot find wise men around us, then we can be in the company of like-minded people. We can be in company of like-minded people, who have similar values, value for knowledge and who are committed for inner growth.
- The kind of people we associate with contributes to a conducive environment.
- When we go to temple, devotion is invoked. When we go to a restaurant hunger is invoked. In the same way by the keeping the company of true seekers, we can develop our *śraddha*. In addition, Bhakti for the teacher, for Eshwara, for the Sastras will be invoked and encouraged.
- Seeking the company of like-minded people does not mean that other people are bad. It is just that other people may have different commitments that may not be conducive for our growth.
- The spark in us for Self-knowledge can be protected and made to grow into a flame in the company of wise men and like-minded people

Step 10: Cultivate steady devotion to the Lord.

- Devotion is important to gain knowledge.
- When we perform all actions as offering, we are already a devotee.
- People may think that bhakti is not required. However, devotion is important to gain Self-knowledge.

- Right now we may be part-time devotees, praying when we are in need. We need to convert this into full-time devotion to gain Self-Knowledge
- We need to perform special actions that are conducive for devotion. Puja, Japa, Cintanam.
- Apply all faculties to devotion. While doing Puja – body, mind and speech are involved.
- When we do explicit acts of devotion like doing Puja, it is easy to invoke devotion and maintain devotion. This helps to convert all actions to be done with spirit of devotion.

If we are offering all actions as worship, why should we perform explicit acts of devotions like Puja, Japa etc..?

The World has an uncanny knack of pushing our buttons. Other people have likes and dislikes and push our likes and dislikes. This inhibits our love and devotion for the Lord. So we need to explicitly invoke devotion by doing Puja, Japa, and Cintanam etc. This helps our mind to be centered on Lord.

- Make the devotion firm. Have utmost devotion to the Lord.
- To develop oneself in the path of bhakti, nine types (nava-vidha bhakti) are prescribed in the Srimad Bhagavatam Such as: sravanam, kirtanam, smaranam, padasevanam, vandanam, archanam, dasyam, sakhyam, atmaniVedanam.
- *Sravanam* is to listen to the glories of the Lord. Example: Pariksitā, and Narada
- *Kirtanam* is singing the glories of the Lord.
- *Smaranam* is to remember the Lord always throughout the day and night in mind and heart.
- Pada-sevanam is to serve the divine in all respect.
- *Archanam* is to worship of the Lord in Puja.
- *Vandanam* is prostration to the Lord with love and respect.
- *Dasyam* is when the sadhaka thinks himself as a servant of god.
- *Sakhyam* a mental state when a sadhaka thinks himself to be the most intimate friend of God.
- *Atma nivedanam* is absolute self-surrender under the feet of the Lord.

In devotion, mind, intellect and our whole personality gets integrated and purified. We gain a mind that is ready for Self-Knowledge.

Step 11: Cultivate the qualities such as *sama, dama*.

Gain the four fold qualifications as taught in Tattva Bodha

- Viveka – ability to discriminate between real and unreal
- Vairagya – dispassion towards unreal
- Shat Sampati (sama, dama, uparama, titiksha, sraddha, samadanam)
- Mumukshatvam – longing desire for moksha, freedom
- Sama – Mastery over mind.
- Dama – Restraint of sense organs.
- Uparama – Abidance of mind
- Samadanam – Concentration of mind or gaining equanimity
- Titiksha – endurance
- Sraddha – Having faith in the scriptures and teachers.
- Develop a mind that is equanimous and that does not get affected by internal/external situations.
- Develop a mind that is free from reactions. Avoiding reactions to favorable or unfavorable situations.
- Mind that maintains tranquility, serenity, and equanimity.
- Equanimity in honor/dishonor, praise/criticism, success/failure, pleasure/pain

How to develop equanimity, tranquility in our mind?

Whatever comes in our life is from Eshwara. All are given by Eshwara. Honor & Dishonor comes from Eshwara. Eshwara is like a postman delivering the results of our actions. Ultimately it is Eshwara who gives us the results. So whatever comes in our life, if we accept as prasada, then we gain equanimity.

Instead of having the attitude *what comes in our life*, if we have the attitude *where it comes from* (from Eshwara), then we won't react as much. (When we see a child kicking us, we consider that as playing and don't get insulted) By bringing Eshwara into our life, we neutralize the likes and dislikes. We become free from likes and dislikes. Sama and Dama are cultivated by being Alert & by developing Pratibhaksha Bhavana.

How to develop Pratibhaksha Bhavana?

- When there is Kama (Desires), replace it with Control (Dama). Not blind suppression, but sublimation
- When there is Krodha (Anger), replace it with Compassion (Daya).
- When there is Lobha (Greed), replace it with Charity (Danam)
- There is no indulgence or no suppression. Need to have healthy attitudes and values.
- Where there is Matsarya (Jealousy), replace it with Appreciation.
- Where there is Pride (Mada), replace it with Humility.

Step 12: Quickly give up for good desire-prompted actions.

- When actions are disciplined (Body), Bhakti in heart, Mind is tranquil and steady (Mind) and desire for Self-knowledge (Intellect), then Karma has done its part and now the person is ready for Sanyasa or dedicated pursuit of Self-Knowledge.
- When the person is ready for pursuit of Self-knowledge, even duties can be an obstacle. Duty is an obstacle for the contemplating mind.
- When there is commitment for Self-knowledge and there is maturity, then the person is ready for renunciation (or) Sanyasa. Here Sanyasa does not mean running away from the family. Here Sanyasa means having renunciation in the mind – Vairagya (dispassion).
- The householder plays lot of roles. These roles can be demanding. These roles are used intelligently for Self-growth.
- By performing these roles and duties, dispassion will be cultivated in the mind. When the mind becomes dispassionate, one is ready for renunciation.
- Example be like Nachiketas – When Nachiketas was offered 3 boons by Yamadarmaraja, Nachiketa used the first 2 boons to benefit his father and community. For the third boon, he asked Yama to teach Self-Knowledge. Even though Yama tempted Nachiketa with worldly things, Nachiketa was unwavering in seeking Self-Knowledge. Such a person is ready for renunciation

Step 13: Approach a wise man who is capable of unfolding the truth of Vedanta.

Go to a guru or a teacher

- Who is well versed in the scriptures (Srotriya),
- Who is well established in Self-knowledge (Brahma—nisthah)
- Who comes from proper lineage
- Who knows how to communicate
- Surrender to such a guru.

How can we find a guru?

In our current state of ignorance, even if a guru appears in front of us, we may not be able to recognize. So, all we need to do is develop intense desire for Self-knowledge by living the instructions taught in scriptures like Bhagavad Gita. When the desire for Self-Knowledge is strong and when we are ready, we will be blessed with a guru.

How to approach a guru?

Mundaka Upanishad (M.U) gives an example of how to approach a guru. In M.U, the student takes 'samit' or dry twigs as collection/bundle that are offered in vedic rituals, to offer to the teacher. Here the dry twigs may not mean much; it is symbolic of offering oneself. Here the dry twigs symbolizes seva bhava of the student. Student approaches the teacher and prostrates at the feet of the teacher. Prostration shows humility and letting go of ego. When a person falls completely at the feet of the teacher, there is no shadow, which symbolizes, willing to surrender my ego. Prostration shows humility on the part of the student and giving oneself to the hands of the teacher. Another example from Gita, where Arjuna surrenders to Krishna and asks him to teach.

When the student surrenders to the teacher, it shows confidence and trust the student has in the teacher. For Self-knowledge to take place the student needs to have a disposition of mind that is receptive. When listening there should not be any resistance. Mind needs to be receptive, absorbing. There needs to be reverence, faith in teacher. Student should be able to see what the teacher is teaching. Student needs to be at the same wavelength as of the teacher. All this is indicated by the way student approaches the teacher with Sraddha (Faith), Bhakti (Devotion), Surrender and Trust.

Step 14: Serve the Sandals (padhuka) of teacher daily.

- Serving the Sandals or feet of the teacher means serving the teacher.
- Serving the teacher is a beautiful tradition.
- Actually Guru does not need anything from us. Guru's needs are very less. Guru does not have possessions or position to take care of.
- Guru out of his love for us allows us to serve his needs. In this process sadhaka's likes and dislikes become neutralized.
- Serving a teacher needs alertness, observation. By serving the teacher, sadhaka can let go of his likes and dislikes.
- Serving a teacher is like meditation on the teacher, constantly thinking about the needs of the teacher. (Acharya Upasanam). For example when a mother is expecting for a son to return home after several years, she meditates on his son and looks forward to seeing him.
- A true teacher will not exploit the student. True teacher does not need anything, except renouncing of Student's ahamkara, likes and dislikes.
- By serving the teacher, sadhaka can gain teacher's heart.
- Once the teacher is pleased with sadhaka, he can now ask questions. Student needs to wait for the right time to ask questions.
- Serving guru's feet also means following the teachings of the guru.

Step 15: Ask the teacher to unfold knowledge of Brahman that is one, that is beyond destruction.

- After serving the guru, when the time comes, ask the guru about Self-knowledge.

- Sanyasis and guru are respected as their sankalpas come true. They gain respect because of satya sankalpa.
- So seek their favor and ask for Self-knowledge. Ideally ask for knowledge where you can be free from all needs.
- As in Mundaka Upanishad, ask for the knowledge – knowing which everything becomes known. It is this knowledge that makes us free,
- By gaining Self-knowledge, we can be comfortable with everything, understanding everything.
- Body, mind and intellect functions as sentient, even though they are inert. By gaining Self-knowledge, we know what causes sentiency.
- Ask the questions
 - What is bondage?
 - Where does it come from?
 - How does it continue to exist?
 - How to be free from bondage?
 - What is the nature of Self?
 - What is the nature of non-Self?
 - How to differentiate between the Self and Non-Self?
 - Ask about Truth?
- Truth has to be one. Ekam. Everything springs from one source, ask for that knowledge to be revealed, gaining which one gains everything.

Step 16: Listen properly to the mahavakyas of the Upanishads.

- Upanishads contain the entire Self-knowledge. Upanishads is also considered Head of Vedas, as it is the most important limb.

Teachings of Upanishads reveals Self-Knowledge. There are 4 mahavakayas (declarations of the Supreme Truth)

- Prajnanam Brahma – Consciousness is Brahman
- Tat Tvam Asi – That Thou art
- Ayam Atma Brahma – This Self is Brahman
- Aham Brahma asmi – I am Brahman
- When a qualified student comes to teacher, the teacher should teach. When the student has no other agenda except Self-knowledge, the teacher teaches.
- It is not easy for the teacher also to get that kind of student like Nachiketa, so the teacher praises such students. In Kathopanishad, Yama praises Nachiketa for being a prepared student.
- Respect for the teacher and the student goes both ways in our culture.
- Upanishads teaches – you are limitless. Everyone is limitless. There is nothing, but limitless.
- We find ourselves to be limited being with sorrow. Our conclusion is I am small, limited being. By becoming CEO, millionaire, I will become significant is our notion.
- The fundamental problem we have is our false notions and conclusions that “I am small limited being.”
- Upanishads teaches us that – You are Brahman, You are already free. You are not a samsari.

Verse 3

वाक्यार्थश्च विचार्यतां श्रुतिशिरःपक्षः समाश्रीयतां
दुस्तर्कात्सुविरम्यतां श्रुतिमतस्तर्कोऽनुसन्धीयताम्।
ब्रह्मास्मीति विभाव्यतामहरहर्गर्वः परित्यज्यतां
देहेऽहम्मतिरुज्झयतां बुधजनैर्वादः परित्यज्यताम्॥ ३॥

*vākyaṛthaśca vicāryatām śrutīśiraḥpakṣaḥ samāśrīyatām
dustarkātsuviramyatām śrutimatastarko'nusandhīyatām |
brahmāsmīti vibhāvvyatāmaharahargarvaḥ parityajyatām
dehe'hammatirujjhyatām budhajanairvādaḥ parityajyatām || 3||*

Step 17: Analyze the meaning of the mahavakyas.

- World is experienced through sense perception and inference. However, Self is not available for sense perception.
- For Self-Knowledge Sruti (scriptures) is the pramana. Scriptures reveal Self- knowledge through Sabda (words). These words are meant to convey Self- knowledge through implied meaning (Lakshyartha) rather than direct meaning (Vacharyartha)
- Upanishads teaching are in the form of Teacher/Student dialogue and unfolded through various Prakriyas (methodologies) – Pancha Kosha Viveka (Five sheaths), Avastha Traya (3 states of consciousness – Waking state, Dream sleep, Deep sleep) etc.
- At the heart of Upanishadic teaching is nature of Self/Self-Knowledge that reveals that we are already free.
- Everyone is seeking freedom. We want to be free from all wants and needs.
- Currently we feel limited, imperfect, incomplete and frustrated with ourselves.
- The Upanishads teach us not to consider ourselves to be a limited being. The Upanishads give the right perception that we are already whole, complete and limitless.
- In order to understand the teachings we need to inquire or have vichara. Instead of questioning the Upanishads, we need to understand the knowledge that is revealed.

Step 18: Follow the line of arguments of the sruti

- We entertain wrong perception due to our ignorance. We see that the world is different from me; the Lord is different from me. These are universal conclusions that everyone has.
- Upanishads say that this is not so. Upanishads says I, the individual, the world, and the Lord are not different. It is non-dual Brahman that is essence of me, the world and the Lord. Whatever differences I perceive are only apparent not real.
- The Upanishads teach how to perceive. I am not just body, mind or intellect. I am something beyond BMI. My essence is Sat Chit Ananda.
- Through constant listening (Sraavanam) and removing doubts with the practice of reflection (Mananam) we can gain right understanding of truth or reality.

Step 19: Refrain from distorted reasoning (opposed to the vision of scriptures)

- There are six systems of philosophy or darshans – Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankya, Yoga, Karma Mimamsa, and Vedanta.
- Vedanta/Upanishads teach about non-dual Brahman. However, our experience is duality. We interpret this duality based on habitual error.
- We have to question our beliefs and habitual error instead of questioning the Shruti (scriptures).
- Wherever there is contradiction between my understanding and what Upanishads teach, we need to only question our wrong conclusions and try to understand what Upanishads says.
- Upanishads is valid means of knowledge through a Teacher. Teacher is medium.

- We need Sraddha both in the Teacher as well as the Scriptures.
- Examples of distorted reasoning/questions are – Why did God create the world? Was God lonely and just wanted to enjoy? Why did the one God become many? God created the world for pleasure etc.
- When it comes to material sciences we don't question. We don't have problem.
- We draw comfort from our opinions about the world.
- There are people who have the belief that there is no God and use this belief to justify their actions and behaviors.
- We need to use our skills in logic, reason and grammar to bring out the meaning declared in Upanishad statements.

Step 20: Resort to the reasoning in keeping with (the vision of) the sruti.

- Vedanta/Upanishads teach about Brahman. Brahman is one without second.
- Brahman is Satya. World is Mithya. Example - All pots that are made of Clay.
- Here Clay is Satya and Pot is Mithya. Pot depends on Clay for its existence. In the same way, the manifested world depends on Brahman for its existence.
- However, since we give reality to the world, we are attached to the names and forms.
- Upanishads explain the world of names and forms is mithya and has its dependence on Brahman, which is Satya.
- We identify with the names and forms and feel limited because of our ignorance.
- We take our self as individual and the world as real.
- Upanishads uses Pancha Kosha Viveka (Five sheaths) and Avastha Traya (Three states of consciousness) to show the one Changeless Self, as the substratum of the universe of multiplicity and change.
- Upanishad knowledge can be understood only by a student who has his mind prepared or purified. That is there is lot of emphasis on gaining purity of mind through Karma-Yoga.

Step 21: Entertain constantly the thought "I am Brahman".

- Even after gaining the knowledge that "I am Brahman", habitual identification with body, mind and intellect can still be there.
- We have lived in the false notion that I am the body, mind, intellect for a long time that any amount of study and reflection cannot end our conditioning.
- To overcome deep-rooted identification requires alertness. If you are not alert, will be in the same rut.
- If the identification with body, mind and intellect is there, the knowledge that "I am Brahman" does not bless me.
- Need to abide in the awareness that "I am Brahman" and not the limited body, mind and intellect equipments.

Step 22: Give up pride at all times.

- After gaining knowledge that "I am Brahman" if the wisdom is not gained, there is the possibility that pride is there.
- In the process of studying Vedanta one gains knowledge, well informed, gets adept in giving discourses, teaching etc. All this can give rise to pride.
- Intellectual knowledge can give rise to pride. I can chant, I can recite etc. Wisdom cannot give rise to pride.
- Identification with ego gives rise to pride. Vedanta appeals to intelligent and egoistic people.
- Pride means ignorance. So give up pride.

Step 23: Give up the identification from Body

- We have been identifying with the Body for many life times. Now after learning that "I am Brahman", give up the identification with Body
- We spend lot of time in taking care of the body. The body is meant only for the service to others. Our body is not meant for us. It is an instrument to serve others.
- Our responsibility is to purify the mind/body equipment so that we directly come to experience the supreme state of pure Consciousness.

Step 24: Avoid arguments with the wise man

- We approach wise men of scriptural knowledge for our own benefit. They are not gaining anything by teaching us the glory and nature of the Self. They teach us entirely for our gain.
- We should not get into debate/arguments.
- If there is tendency to win or gain pride, or prove that I am right we may argue with the wise.
- We should approach wise men for learning from them instead for debates.
- We need to respect other learned people and go on establishing ourselves in Brahman.

Verse 4

धुब्धाधिशु चिकित्स्यतां प्रतिदिनं भिक्षौषधं भुज्यतां
स्वाद्दन्नं न तु याच्यतां विधिवशात् प्राप्तेन सन्तुष्यताम् ।
शीतोष्णादि विषह्यतां न तु वृथा वाक्यं समुच्चार्यता-
मौदासीन्यमभीप्स्यतां जनकृपानैष्ठुर्यमुत्सृज्यताम् ॥ ४ ॥

*kṣudvyaḍhiśca cikitsyatām pratidinaṁ bhikṣauśadhaṁ bhujyatām
svādvannaṁ na tu yācyatām vidhivaśāt prāptena santuṣyatām |
śītoṣṇādi viṣahyatām na tu vṛthā vākyaṁ samuccāryatā-
maudāsīnyamabhīpsyatām janakṛpānaiṣṭhuryamutsṛjyatām || 4 ||*

Step 25: May you treat the disease of hunger.

- According to Sankara hunger is a chronic disease of the body natural to all living creatures and it must be treated as all other diseases.
- Hunger is not an occasion to enjoy food. While the body is ill, treat it and bring it back to normal health.

Step 26: Daily take the medicine of food obtained as Bhiksha

- Food is to be taken to care for the body. Food should not be taken for pleasure.
- Take food as medicine.
- Sanyasis take only food that is obtained as Bhiksha. Guidelines are to go to five houses for Bhiksha and take whatever food comes from Bhiksha.
- Don't plan for your food, nor complain the food reaching you.
- Whatever food is obtained offer it to Lord with devotion before taking the food.
- Idea of taking food as medicine is not to give much importance to the food.

Step 27: May you not crave for (ask for) tasty food.

- The idea implied in the earlier advice is again re-emphasized. Don't demand any enjoyment.
- The term food though primarily means 'what is enjoyed through the mouth', all sense-stimuli are foods for the sense organs. Thus, we satisfy eyes with color and form, ears by sounds, skin by the touches and nose with smells.
- Abide in Brahman seeking the inner joy, than indulging in sense gratifications.

Step 28: May you be content with what is obtained as a result of Prarabdha.

- Whatever we meet in life is ordered by our past and how we meet them alone determines the future progress and growth of our inner personality.

- To be at peace with ourselves and in a joyous sense of inner contentment and satisfaction, ever ready to face the world as it is and act, is the right way of life for a seeker.
- Learn to live in the inner joy of a peaceful mind rather than in the excitements gained through sense-gratifications.

Step 29: May you endure all pairs of opposites: heat and cold etc.

- Life is experienced through opposites. In order to know heat, cold is needed. In order to know sweet, bitter is needed. We cannot experience one without the other. Life is full of opposites.
- Heat and cold, joy and sorrow, success and failure, pleasure and pain and such pairs of opposites are all experienced by the human mind.
- We get attached to one aspect of life and get disturbed when we don't get what we want.
- In order to gain Self-Knowledge, we need a mind that is tranquil and steady. So the scriptures suggest enduring the pair of opposites. Enduring all life experiences is titiksha.
- By shifting our identification to the Self, the Lord, we no longer get tossed by the opposite experiences of life.

Step 30: Avoid speech that is unnecessary.

- Speech is one of the ways we dissipate our time and energy. If we can master our speech, most of our relationship problems can be avoided. Here austerity of speech is suggested to master the mind and abide in the Self.
- Unnecessary speech causes a lot of problems.
- Idle talk is generally on four main topics – women, wealth, pleasures and enemies. When people meet, these are generally the subjects that they talk about. These topics detract from the spiritual path and derail our journey. Therefore, avoid such wasteful talks.
- Krishna talks about austerity of speech at length in Bagavad Gita chapter 17, Verse 15.
- Speech needs to be truthful, should not cause agitation, should be pleasing, beneficial and one should repeat the Vedas daily.
- If we follow the teachings of Krishna 90% of our speech can be filtered.
- If we follow the earlier step to keep good association or Satsanga (step-9), our talks be focused on the spiritual topics such as
 - Nature of Reality
 - Ways to attain liberation o Means of mastery of mind o Glories of the Lord
 - Sufferings of this life of Samsara
- Speech is also a wealth, so use it properly.

Step 31: Maintain an attitude of happy indifference (to small problems and anxieties in life).

- It is the glory of a spiritual seeker to feel sensitive at the sorrows of others. But not at the cost of one's own inner balance and poise.
- There are a million happenings around us, especially in these days of fast communication, which are brought to our awareness. When things happen over which you cannot yourself do anything effectively, let us learn to surrender it to the Lord of the universe with a humble prayer.

Step 32: Overlook (do not be concerned about) public sympathy and censure.

- Refuse to come too much under the obligation of another. This may chain you down in an emotional entanglement and compel you, at times, even to compromise with your own way of life.
- Sometimes people will be favorable to us and sometimes they may be cruel to us. Sometimes people may praise and sometimes they may criticize. Overlook praise and censure and others' opinions.

- Don't work for getting praise.
- Have an open mind, which is ready to learn.
- Our priority is to lead a life of discipline, contemplate and have a tranquil mind.
- Pleasing others is not our priority.
- All these instructions are meant for a Brahmachari. If you are a householder and working in the society then you may care about others opinion, since you have to get things done through them.

Verse 5

एकान्ते सुखमास्यतां परतरे चेतः समाधीयतां
 पूर्णात्मा सुसमीक्ष्यतां जगदिदं तद्वाधितं दृश्यताम् ।
 प्राक्कर्म प्रविलाप्यतां चित्बलान्नाप्युत्तरैः श्लिष्यतां
 प्रारब्धं त्विह भुज्यतामथ परब्रह्मात्मना स्थीयताम् ॥ ५ ॥

*ekānte sukhamāsyatām paratāre cetah samādhīyatām
 pūrṇātmā susamīkṣyatām jagadidaṁ tadbādhitaṁ drśyatām |
 prākkarma pravilāpyatām citibalānnāpyuttaraiḥ śliṣyatām
 prārabdham tviha bhujyatāmatha parabrahmātmanā sthīyatām || 5||*

Step 33: May you sit in a comfortable posture quietly in solitude.

- May you sit in a comfortable posture quietly in solitude and meditate on para Brahman.
- The solitude mentioned here is not a state of physical loneliness. To be in a place where nobody else is able to disturb you is not a solitary place; even in such a lonely place you can be jostled by a crowd of thoughts and stormy emotions whipped up by your own memories.
- To be in solitude means to be centered in alone, divine with one point attention in end goal.
- Sit in solitude also means to be free from possessions (aparigraha) and free from desires.
- Only agenda for the Sadhaka is to gain Brahman. So this step is to have an environment that is conducive – solitude, clean, pure and sacred.
- Being in solitude, establish the mind in contemplation on Para Brahman.

Step 34: May the mind abide in Brahman.

- Mind driven by our passions and desires runs into the world of sense objects, emotions and thoughts and consequently mind dissipates its entire vitality.
- Gather the wandering mind and steadily rest the mind in contemplation upon the splendid nature of the Self.
- A quiet-alert vigilant mind automatically enters into meditation.
- Through meditation mind gets more and more quietened in the supreme Lord.

Step 35: May you see the Self, I, the fullness, clearly.

- Self is *Pūrnatma* (whole and complete). Having the mind steady in meditation contemplate on the nature of the Self. My nature is Sat, Cit, Ananda – *Pūrnoham* (whole, complete), *Santoham* (peaceful), *Sivoham* (auspicious), *Asangoham* (free) etc.
- After going through the stages of Sravanam and Mananam, this is the stage of *Niddhidhyasanam*. Abiding the mind in Brahman.

- Contemplate on what is “I”?
- What is changeless? Changeless is only called Self. Changeless is the Higher.
- Few ways to contemplate
 - Use the examples from the scriptures – Gold/Ornaments. Ornaments are names and forms having their being Gold. Here Gold is Real and Ornaments are real. In the same way the Self is the Real.
 - Another example - what is common entity in Waking, Dream sleep and Deep sleep. Self or Awareness is the only entity that is common to all these 3 states.
 - After gaining knowledge of timeless Self, see this ever present immutable Self everywhere. Man of Self-Knowledge recognizes the Self-expressing in every form everywhere when his eyes are open. The world is holy to the truly holy-man.

Step 36: See the world as unreal (devoid of reality) in absence of the fullness (that you are)

- The finite world of Body, Mind and Intellect and the ever-changing worlds of experiences are all projections, mere superimpositions, upon the Self. Just as snake is superimposed on rope in darkness, the world is a superimposition on Brahman.
- The world of matter does not have independent existence. World has its existence with Supreme Self as its being. Just as the ocean, waves, bubbles, froth, foam are all nothing but water.
- World (Jagat) is not anything separate from the Supreme Reality. World of things and beings are a false vision of the Supreme Self, when looked at through a disturbed mind.
- Supreme Self is changeless, Self-evident, Self-effulgent. Recognize that the Self transcends the world. Self is both Transcendent and Immanent

Step 37: Resolve the sanchita karma (in knowledge).

- Refer to Appendix A for Different types of Karma
- Human beings perform karma. Animals have no sense of doership and no freewill and therefore no Karma. Animals just exhaust papa Karma.
- Moksha is possible only in human body.
- Jivatma’s journey is fixed until it assumes a human body. Once Jiva takes the human body, the Jiva can take higher form of life or lower forms based on the karmas they do.
- Law of Karma, Law of Cause/Effect produces our present life situations. As long as the notion of doership (ego/ahamkara) is there, cycle of samsara continues
- In order to break the cycle of samsara, the wise man performs noble actions, upasanas prayers, worship, and study of scriptures, tapas, and meditation.
- Once the doership is resolved, all the Sanchita Karma of the jiva gets resolved. It is like when the person dies, the account of the person in the bank is closed.

Step 38: With a proper attitude, remain unattached to new karma.

- Our Sanchita karma (accumulated Karma from previous births) determines our present (prarabdha karma). Our present actions determines the future (Agami Karma)
- The wise man realizes the impermanent nature of life and the suffering caused by ignorance of oneself. The wise man has this burning desire to attain Moksha – freedom from the notion that I am a Jiva.

- The wise man relinquishes the sense of doer ship (ego) and does not create new Karma
- The wise man through the wisdom gained by the study of the scriptures, through upasana and meditation pursues Self-Knowledge/Moksha.
- Through the wisdom that I am not the doer (karta) nor the experiencer (bhokta) – the wise man detaches himself from the future karmas.

Step 39: Happily go through the experiences of prarabdha karma.

- Whatever life situations we are facing in the present is result of our karmas. There are pleasant situations and unpleasant situations. If we get attached to the pleasant and unpleasant situations and act with our notion of doer ship, then we will be creating future karmas (Agami karma).
- Ignorant takes the painful situations as punishment and pleasant situations as reward. The wise man remains unattached to the pleasant and unpleasant and lives a life of graceful acceptance. For the wise man every situation is an opportunity to learn.
- The wise man faces every situation with equanimity and uses the life situations as a means to purify the mind or let go of Raaga/Dvesas (Likes and Dislikes).
- The wise man knows that the prarabdha karma has to be exhausted and lives a life of surrender.

Step 40: (After the fall of the body) abide in Brahman, the limitless

- A Seeker who has realized that the Self within himself is the Self-expressing in all forms is Jivanmukta who has attained moksha.
- Previously as a jiva, one was identified with the body, mind and intellect and lived the sorrowful life of ego (perceiver, feeler, and thinker). Having reached the state of awakening that my true nature is changeless, infinite, timeless and immortal, the seeker gets established permanently in the state of transcendental awareness.
- Jivanmukta lives his life from the level of supreme consciousness.
- Just as a river merges with the ocean, the delusory “I” ends and Brahman alone is for the Jivanmukta.
- “I am Brahman” is the one Bhava that comes to govern thereafter in all his actions, feelings and thoughts.

Thus concludes the 40 steps of instructions – for a Vedantic student.

Appendix A – Different Types of Karma

Karma

Jiva (One who identifies with Body/Mind/Intellect) is beginningless because he is born of ignorance, which is beginningless. During this existence, Jiva assumes different forms and goes through countless births and deaths. While in human form, the Jiva performs actions (Karmas), which are both dharmic, and adharmic. The Law of Karma is that every action is a cause and it will produce an effect in course of time. Action produces either Punya (situations that are favorable) and Papa (situations that are not favorable). As long as ignorance is there, this cycle of birth and death continues for the Jiva.

Sanchita Karma

The results of actions performed in (all) the previous births which are in the seed form to give rise to endless births (in future) is called Sanchita (accumulated) Karma. Punyas and Papas accumulate and come to fruition in course of time. In the countless births in the past, the Jiva has accumulated a large amount of Punya and Papa. This store of Karma is

called Sanchita Karma. Sanchita Karma is comparable to a large fixed deposit consisting of different investments that mature at different times. What is deposited will mature in time.

Prarabdha Karma

The Karmas that have come to fruition at the time the Jiva takes birth are called Prarabdha karma. These are comparable to that portion of the deposit, which has matured. The prarabdha karma determines the form of the body and the type of environment most suitable for its expression. The human body is obtained as a result of Punya. The human body is result of mixture of Punya and Papa in which Punya is predominant. Jiva experiences pleasure and pain as a result of Punya and Papa. Body falls when all the prarabdha karmas are exhausted.

Agami Karma

Jiva performs actions during this lifetime in human form. These actions which are done with the notion of doership (ego) will result in Punya and Papa (in future) is called Agami Karma. When the present physical body is given up, these Agami Karmas get converted to Sanchita Karmas, to be fructified in the future. Agami Karmas cannot be generated unless there is the notion of doership.

References:

Based on teachings & commentary of Pujya Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda.

OM TAT SAT! – HARIH OM! SRI GURUBYHO NAMAHA!