

Śankara Bhagavadpāda's

|| 'Tat Tvam Asi' Meditations ||

A week-long meditative journey into the knowing, calming and silencing of the *self*, leading to Self-realization

Being the heart of a longer 'Tat Tvam Asi' *Yatra* in South India



“I worship the two Divine Swans, *Śiva* and *Śakti*; who reside in the lake of consciousness of the illumined sages; the two Swans, who ever delight in the nectar of the fully blossomed lotus of the *Anāhata Chakra* of Divine Knowledge; the two Swans from whose *samvāda* (conversations) arise the 18 *Vidyās* (sacred disciplines of learning); the two Swans, who distill *Brahman* from *Māya*, even as milk is separated from water with which it is often mixed.”

- Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya [509 BC to 477 BC] (Sloka # 38, in 'Soundarya Lahari')

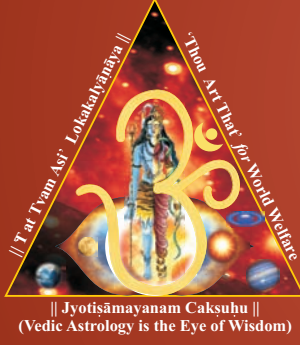
Part I (abridged version)

|| ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ Meditations ||

Under the Aegis of

|| ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ ||

(An Indian Charitable Trust for Dharma & Moksha)



|| Vedic Flower ||

(A Latin American Foundation for Vedic Teachings)



and

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Śankara Bhagavadpāda's

|| ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ Meditations * ||

A Meditative Journey in *self*-Knowing & Self-Realization
With Simultaneous Spanish and Portuguese Translations

Venue: The Beach Resort, *Le Pondy*, in Pondicherry, South India

Dates of the Retreat: February 15th to 21st, 2016

Part I : Introduction (abridged version)

* We should pay close attention to some important Sanskrit terms. *Yajña* is used here in the sense of an auspicious sacrifice or ‘negation’ of the ‘*self*’, for the ‘Ātmic’ welfare of the individual and the world and this is done through the offering of the ‘*self*’, into the fire of *Ātma Jñāna* [Self-realization]. *Ātma* is of course, *the imperceptible Inner Self*, nameless, formless, Presence of the Unmanifest Divine as Truth (*Sat*), Awareness (*Chit*), Joyful Fullness (*Ānanda*). *Yatra* means inner pilgrimage. For want of a more effective word, ‘Meditations’ has been used, rather than *Ātma Jñāna Yajña*.

Introduction:

It was felt that, rather than abruptly beginning with the content of the 'Tat Tvam Asi' retreat, it would make more sense to make the entry into 'Tat Tvam Asi' more gradual, by giving the background story, so that the basis of 'Tat Tvam Asi' would become intelligible. So this is what is being done here. What follows is an abridged version of the full version of the Introduction, which constitutes Part I.

Thus, we enter directly into the timeless Hindu spiritual goal of 'Tat Tvam Asi', starting with the spiritual phenomenon of *withdrawal and return* and then taking up *the 'master key' of the calming and silencing of the self*. We study it from a certain perspective and come to learn, under what conditions, a seeker will actually be able to make the authentic 'discovery' of 'Tat Tvam Asi' and *what it takes* to come upon this spiritual 'discovery'? We also give a clear picture of what 'Tat Tvam Asi' means for Sankara Bhagavadpada (hereafter Sankara, for short) and how he came to make 'Tat Tvam Asi', the goal of these retreats.

Withdrawal and Return in Spiritual Traditions:

In many religious or spiritual traditions we see examples of serious seekers *decisively withdrawing from the world and going into solitude and seclusion, for pursuing a contemplative enquiry - whose time has at last come*. Naturally, this kind of a *turning inwards* (i.e., *antarmukha*), happens only at certain momentous times in the lives of seekers. Sometimes, it may be misfortunes which make us turn inwards and in this way too, we may be ushered into the spiritual life as seekers - whether we had actually sought this or not. The withdrawal is invariably from an active mundane or spiritual life in which the seeker would have been engrossed for many years.

One further point may also be noted: the withdrawal into solitude and seclusion does not certainly imply a monastic life, nor seclusion in an *ashram*, or seminary, etc. *So long as one has turned away from the all consuming sensory and worldly life (it will go on, anyway), and has at last had the courage and detachment to yield to the deeper spiritual appetites, one must deem that a withdrawal into seclusion and solitude has actually happened.*

Significantly, such a contemplative enquiry is never finished in a matter of few weeks or months, but may go on and on at its own pace, for several years at a stretch, if not for an entire life time. If all goes well, the contemplative enquiry is expected to take them to the rock bottom of the Truth, or the Divine or the Self, whichever way you wish to put it. Clearly, it is only in such *antarmukha*, that there would be the inner and outer freedom so necessary for going to the very end of such a journey. *By contrast, when seekers are still under the pressure of some mundane compulsion i.e., familial, social*

or professional, they will naturally not be able to devote themselves to the farther reaches of the spiritual quest - a fact that will be readily acknowledged by all.

An Irreversible Calming and Silencing of the self, is the 'Master Key'

As a result of the contemplative enquiry in antarmukha, a first-hand meditative understanding of the Divine, the world, and the self is expected to dawn on the seeker. Though we are using the term, 'meditative understanding', the traditional name for this is 'Realization'. An important precursor to this meditative understanding is an irreversible calming and silencing of the self. It is this which is probably the most important milestone and the 'key' to the door of moksha. It must also be noted that without being detached from the world and our own persistent desires, we will never be able to come this far - where the self irreversibly falls silent and become self-composed.

On account of the relentless nature of the contemplative enquiry, usually this calming and silencing of the self is followed by that other momentous discovery - that this calmed and silenced self is itself somehow already 'into the lap' of the Divine - in its Unmanifest aspect. We may wonder, how the calmed and silenced self, encroaches into the territory of the Unmanifest Divine?

To find the answer to this question, we will have to pay close attention to the following important phenomenon in our consciousness. If a wave of 'innocent' aspiration, uncontaminated by any craving of the 'self', were to spontaneously arise in the lake of this calmed and silenced self, it immediately seems to move the heart of the Divine to such an extent, that the Divine in a swift and compassionate move, seems to 're-set the wheels of It's creation' so to speak, in an attempt to alleviate the momentary yearning and it is this which descends as a blessing upon that 'innocent' aspirant.

Putting it differently, the speedy response of the Divine, to this momentary yearning from a pure heart-if we may call it that-is more like the Divine shifting in It's own seat ever so slightly, if only for alleviating a twitch, a sudden bout of sneezing, a cramp, or an itch, that has momentarily befallen the Divine Itself! Upon examining this phenomenon closely, we will come to discover that the Divine in Its Unmanifest aspect is somehow already in unison and rapport with this calmed and silenced self. So much in rapport and solidarity that no one knows, where the calmed and silenced self ends and where the Divine actually begins.

The 'catch' here is that, even this calmed and silenced self, will not be in a position to come upon this discovery, without further study and preparation. Our

consciousness which is habituated to sensory perceptions since birth, will of course make the fatal mistake of looking for the Divine, as we would look for some object, in some space-time location, for it has not yet learnt from the Yoga Shastras and the Upanishads that the Divine is not a material object to have a space-time location.

To overcome this blunder we will have to study the Advaitic Hindu scriptures (like the Bhagavad Gita, for example) and at the same time also observe the subtle phenomenon centered on the calmed and the silenced self, not once, not twice, but again and again-for it is this repetitive observation that gives us that irrevocable conviction. Once we do this and are also able to abide as the calmed and silenced self, we will not have much difficulty in digesting the fact that the calmed and silenced self has somehow already encroached into the territory of the Unmanifest Divine. Because of the sheer impossibility of drawing a dividing line between the calmed and silenced self on the one hand and the Unmanifest Divine, on the other; the self in this 'innocent' state is in fact not at all separate from the Unmanifest Divine, but actually, already one with it. This is the basis for the validity of 'Tat Tvam Asi', the Upanishadic sutra.

Return to the World:

Once this culminating 'discovery' has been made with irrevocable conviction, the whole quest for *moksha* comes to its inevitable end. Seekers are then known to walk out of *antarmukha* and energetically *return to the world* for sharing these insights and discoveries, for the benefit of fellow-seekers whose seeking may not have reached as yet, such a culminating finale. This kind of a pattern in the life of seekers can be seen in many religious traditions and bears the general name of *withdrawal and return*.

Sankara's Method of Arriving at 'Tat Tvam Asi':

It was by the close observation of this extraordinarily subtle phenomenon (which has been explained above) in his consciousness that Sankara had arrived at 'Tat Tvam Asi'. When he came upon this extraordinary truth(after the calming and silencing of the self had become a reality for him), he did not know that 'Tat Tvam Asi' sums it all up, better than in any other way. Many years later, when he studied the Chandogya Upanishad, he realized, this was the discovery of the Upanishadic sages. So, he adopted the Upanishadic sutra, because it was also his 'discovery'. For him it became an irrevocable conviction, because of a direct firsthand experience.

By 'Tat Tvam Asi' is meant that you (Tvam) are (Asi) verily 'That' Unmanifest Divine (Tat)- provided of course that the self has been calmed and silenced. While the authentic 'discovery' of 'Tat Tvam Asi' can be made only in the meditative states when the self has been irreversibly calmed and silenced, it is obvious that 'Tat Tvam Asi' is

valid even in our distraught condition of consciousness. The difference being that while the silence and sacredness are palpable only when the self has been calmed and silenced, in our normal distraught condition we would not be experiencing any of the sacredness of the Divine. The inherent difficulty of this meditative 'discovery' is sourced in two things: In the calming and silencing of the self, and secondly in identifying the invisible, intangible and Unmanifest nature of the Divine.

Antarmukha - Twelve Years [1999 - 2011]:

In Sankara's case, withdrawing from his 16 year long period of intense dedication to the spiritual mission of his master Sri Sri Bhagavan (1983-1999), he turned inwards or to put it differently, 'went into *antarmukha*' between 1999 and 2011. After 12 yrs of such an *antarmukha*, in 2011, he returned from this *introverted and contemplative phase*, very much invigorated and with a new *élan vital*, affirming that the mysterious nature of *moksha* has at last been *meditatively understood* by him and that he would therefore now like to communicate this to those still searching. *He called this, the path of understanding and emphasized that it is the essence of what is wrongly, but customarily called, the path of knowledge.*

Sankara's 'Tat Tvam Asi':

In 2011, when Sankara was 63, there commenced a new chapter in his life. He called it 'Tat Tvam Asi' (referring to a *sutra*, describing Self-realization, in many of the *Upanishads*. It may be translated as, 'That Thou Art'. 'That' is naturally the *Unmanifest Divine*, and 'thou' is the *self*, which though we may be, yet, we have no clue as to the origin and real nature of this identity of ourselves, as the *self*). In the same year he started offering two-day spiritual retreats, calling them 'Tat Tvam Asi' Meditations. In these retreats, he was opening a clearly charted path to *moksha*, i.e., the path of understanding (the path valid for him), *but always emphasizing that each seeker has to cut his/her own unique path and that misfortunes are often the starting points from which a life of authentic spiritual seeking and spiritual discovery commences.*

In his endeavour to bring home to seekers, the importance of 'Tat Tvam Asi' he had conducted five retreats in India (till date) and several retreats in North and South America in 2012, 2013, and 2014.

‘Tat Tvam Asi’ India *Yatra* 2016:

‘Tat Tvam Asi’ [India] & ‘Vedic Flower’ [Latin America] Join Hands:

This retreat is an outcome of a *continuing fruitful collaboration between the Indian spiritual master Sankara Bhagavadpada and the Chilean life-coach Ricardo Bravo in the last three years. ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ Meditations is the heart of the ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ India Yatra 2016. This was envisioned by Ricardo and Natalia, his wife, way back in 2014 during Sankara’s visit to Latin America. The samkalpa of Ricardo and his wife Natalia is now manifesting as the reality of this ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ India Yatra.*

‘Tat Tvam Asi’ Meditations will have an international character, as the participating seekers will be drawn from Latin America, India and many other Eastern and Western nations. It is an especially marvelous opportunity for Spanish and Portuguese speaking Latin American seekers to participate in Sankara’s week - long ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ retreat in South India, as the intuitive, faithful and ‘magical’ translations of Ricardo Bravo (Spanish) and Marcos Woortman (Portuguese), bring home these teachings in the two European languages.

In addition to ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ Meditations, which is the heart of the ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ India *Yatra*, Latin American seekers will also have the timely opportunity to imbibe the Hindu spiritual ethos of ancient India, especially, as exemplified by the life and teachings of two illustrious departed Indian spiritual luminaries:

- Sri Ramana Maharshi
- Sri Aurobindo (and the Mother)

Though both masters and the Mother have long since shuffled off their mortal coils, the spiritual fragrance of their life and teachings have left their indelible impression on countless human hearts the world over.

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Other relevant 'Tat Tvam Asi' documents you can ask for:

- ★ 'Tat Tvam Asi' Meditations, Part I (full version)
- ★ 'Tat Tvam Asi' Meditations, Part II (full version)
- ★ 'Tat Tvam Asi' Meditations , Part II (abridged version)
- ★ 'Tat Tvam Asi' Meditations, Fruits and Blessings
- ★ 'Tat Tvam Asi' Meditations, Safety and Security Guidelines

Śankara Bhagavadpāda Clarifies the Origin of his Name:

“The name, Śankara Bhagavadpāda was bestowed on me by my master Śri Śri Bhagavan, as a spiritual blessing. This happened, as far back as in 1991- some two years after the commencement of his spiritual mission. My responsibility in his mission during those early years was enormous. This bestowed name actually happens to be that of the highly venerated historical figure of *Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya* [509 BC to 477 BC]. In my view, my master selected this name because, ever since his younger years, the illustrious, historical figure of *Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya* was very beloved to him. My master’s compassion for me was also very extraordinary, so he gave this name as a blessing.

“Now that I am in public life again as an independent teacher (since 2011), I felt morally obliged to make it known to those who have taken a serious interest in my ‘Tat Tvam Asi’ mission; that neither now, nor at any time in the past, have I ever staked any claim, overtly or covertly, to being connected to the illustrious historical figure of *Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya*, through past-life *samskaras*. To my mind, any such claim would be wholly repugnant and also morally indefensible. Importantly, I feel so deeply self-composed within myself that even a single flutter of thought in that obnoxious direction would not even occur to me. On the contrary, I am very deeply moved by the historical figure of *Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya*, in just the same devotional way in which I have always been moved by my many masters.

“The name change from Shanker Ramachandran to Śankara Bhagavadpāda was published in the Tamil Nadu Government Gazette, dated September 18th, 1991, that is, almost 24 years ago.”

-Śankara Bhagavadpāda, Chennai, India, on June 13th, 2015.
www.Hinduworldastrology.net, www.tat-tvam-asi.org

For more information see these websites :

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|| Aum Tat Sat ||