

The Ladder
to the
Amma Paramatman
Contemplation

©2014 by Ram Das Batchelder

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Rising in Love

My Wild and Crazy Ride to Here and Now,

with Amma, the Hugging Saint

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The Ladder to the Amma Paramatman

Contemplation

“There is only one Self. It is all-pervasive. When we become broad-minded, we can merge in That. Then, selfishness and ego will be gone forever. To one established in that state of supreme Consciousness, everything is equal.”

~ Amma

“When we enter deeply into ourselves, the eye of inner vision is opened and a ladder is prepared by which the soul may ascend to the contemplation of God.”

~ Albertus Magnus

Although the Self is finally beyond words and untouched by the mind, I’ve always believed that words and concepts should be able to serve as a bridge between the realm of thoughts and the pristine silence of the Heart. Once that bridge has been built and crossed, if a map of sorts can be left behind, then others who are deeply interested can cross over that same bridge into Self-Realization.

I hope this contemplation turns out to be such a bridge for you. It contains a model of how the divine puzzle might fit together, a treasure map, you might say, of your true Self. (Of course, the final direction is *IN*, for words and concepts can only point towards the Self, but true freedom lies only in being the Self, which is inherently indescribable and untouched by any models or concepts.)

I'd certainly never say this is the *only* way to complete the divine puzzle—there are probably an infinite number of acceptable ways to fit the pieces together, and as many paths as there are seekers, really. Nonetheless, for me, this model fits all the pieces of the puzzle together harmoniously, and answers every question in a way which makes my heart smile. I have only two 'proofs' that the concepts in the contemplation are in harmony with Truth: (a) it was included within a book which Amma blessed for publication, and permitted me to distribute among her devotees;¹ and (b) whenever I've used it, potent bliss and peace have consistently come to me, no matter how grumpy I may have been before I started my meditation. This points to the contemplation's main benefit: it allows access to bliss and peace through a practice that anyone can learn to do. Those who use the contemplation on a daily basis will gradually grow more peaceful and in tune with Truth, and thereby be enabled to receive growing tastes of the Paramatman, the supreme Divine Self.

I've always been an integrator: rather than say 'This path is the only way' and reject all the others, I'll tend to say, 'This path is *Yin*; that path is *Yang*. Why not let them co-exist in my mind, and see if they don't unite and thereby reveal a greater vision of the Whole?' (To me, the ideal Christmas card would be one showing Jesus, Amma, Buddha, Moses, Krishna, Mohammed and Einstein all sitting together under a Christmas tree, joyfully opening their presents to each other, all eyes on the Buddha as he holds up his new blender.)

The 'Ladder' contemplation is kind of a Hindu-interfaith smoothie: a vision of the Whole combining the essence of all religions, within a model large enough to accommodate anything science may discover. Since it contains an understanding of both God and the Atman, and an

¹ This contemplation was included in my novel in rhyming verse, *Sathyaram Discovers the Mother of All*, which was approved by Amma for sale by the ashram and for free distribution to her devotees. Therefore, although no one should consider this contemplation to be Amma's teachings, *per se*, it can be said to have received her stamp of approval. It is important to note that this contemplation has no relation whatsoever to Amma's special meditation technique, Integrated Amrita Meditation® (IAM), and has never been taught by Amma or her ashram. It is the author's own vision, and should be taken only in that light.

unusual vision of how those two concepts blend together, I hope it will also serve as a connection between the lovers of God and the seekers of the Atman, a bridge between the complementary paths of jnana yoga and bhakti yoga. (Surely Ramana Maharshi and Jesus were drinking from the same milkshake, albeit through different straws!)

The first section of the contemplation is called 'Building the Ladder.' Each new rung we add creates a new level of conceptual understanding of the Supreme Being who you really are. (Once you have understood how the ladder fits together, this section need not be repeated each time.)

Then, once the ladder has been constructed, we climb it, rung by rung, using affirmations and a touch of imagination.

In its final stage, the contemplation metamorphoses into Self-inquiry, wherein all concepts and imagination are dropped, and our entire focus is placed on the pure Being behind the mind, the silent Source of the 'I,' which exists prior to any thought whatsoever. The first portion of the contemplation, although valuable in its own right, actually serves as a preparation for Self-inquiry.²

The contemplation is like building a diving board; Self-inquiry is taking the plunge. Contemplation polishes the mental mirror, turning your mind into a beautiful reflection of the divine Self; Self-inquiry turns your attention away from the reflection and into the direct experience of *being* the Self.

So, let's begin.

² For Self-inquiry purists who may be troubled by the suggestion that the contemplation serves as 'preparation for Self-inquiry,' I would point out that Ramana Maharshi often recommended, as a "very powerful aid to Self-inquiry," daily chanting of the *Ribhu Gita*, a scripture which recites the qualities of the divine Self, and declares again and again, "I am Brahman, there is no doubt of this!" Using the 'Ladder' contemplation is similar in effect to chanting the *Ribhu Gita*.

Section 1:

Building the Ladder

The contemplation begins with the fundamental question, “Who am I?” But unlike in Self-inquiry, in contemplation we give a preliminary answer:

I am not the body, and not the mind. I'm not a separate entity in time and space, not this person with a name, age and gender. I am the Atman, the divine Self! I am infinitely expansive pure Awareness, eternal Peace, ever-new bliss. I am Love itself, Love where there is only One.

This gives us a preliminary idea of our true identity. We'll now make us of a visual image which can help us gain a deeper understanding of what the Atman is, and see how it might interrelate to the other pieces of the divine puzzle.

The Atman is like a gigantic Sun of pure Awareness, bigger than billions of universes put together, zillions of light-years in diameter. The nature of the Atmic Sun is pure Awareness, absolute Oneness, eternal Peace. It's the supreme Bliss, divine Silence; no 'I'-thought, no mind. It's changeless, phenomena-less, non-dual Being. From the devotee's perspective, it's eternal union with all the Avatars, Saints and Sages in the supreme Love. It's total union with the Christ-Self, the Amma-Self, the Enlightened-Self of all beings. It's the original Wholeness, the true Self of all beings.

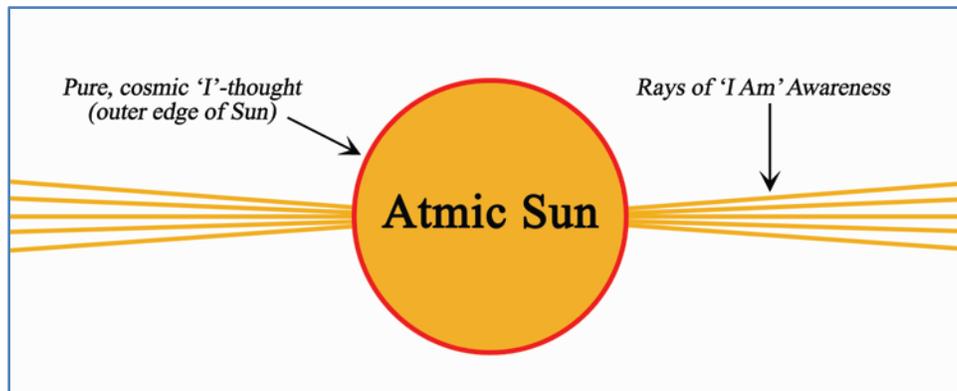


Diagram 1

As you can see in Diagram 1, the outer edge of the Atmic Sun is the pure cosmic 'I'-thought, the first radiance of the divine Self. And the Sun is shining rays of 'I Am' Awareness.

As Diagram 2 reveals, around the Atmic Sun is a magnetic field (as there would be around any huge stellar object).

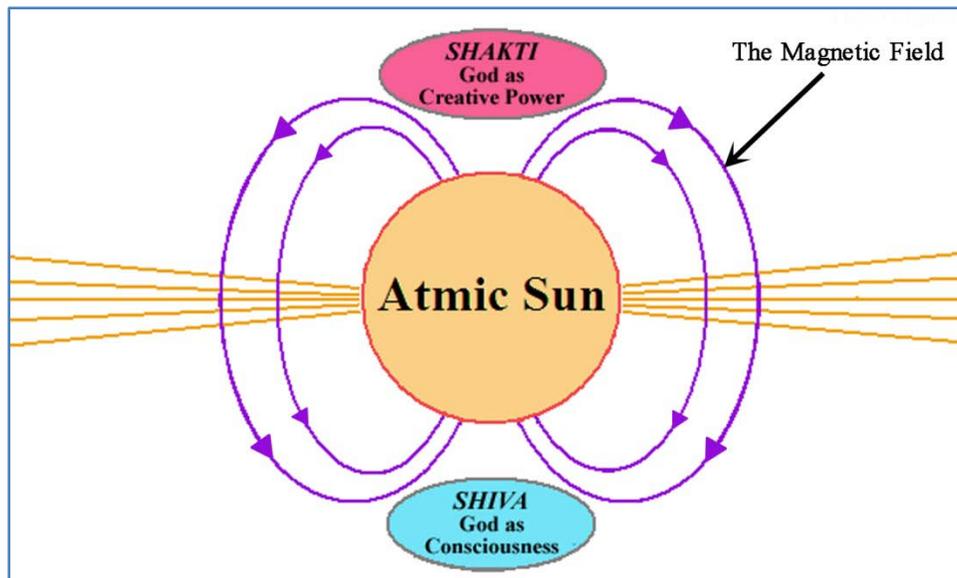


Diagram 2

At the Sun's upper pole, where the energy of the magnetic field emanates from the Sun, is God the Creator, or Shakti, as this aspect of God is sometimes called in Hinduism. This is the creative power of God, the omniscient, all-powerful Author of the universal play. And at the lower pole

of the magnetic field, where the energy goes back into the Sun, is Shiva, or God as Pure Consciousness, the witnessing principle underlying the whole realm of duality.³ From Shiva emanates an Ocean of divine Consciousness,⁴ which fills the lower half of the magnetic field, as you can see in Diagram 3.

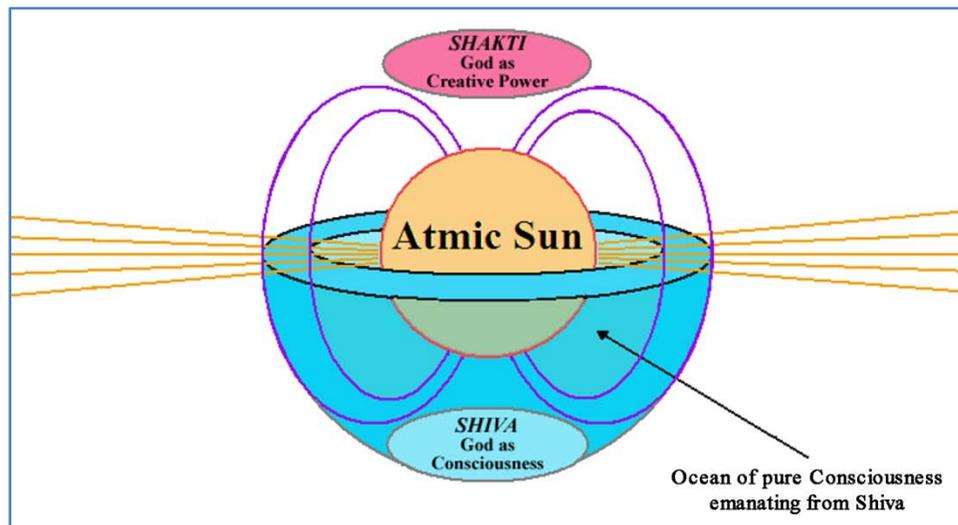


Diagram 3

Upon the surface of that still Ocean, Shakti, the omnipotent Creator, manifests the play of the waves, each tiny wavelet being an individual soul. The surface of the Ocean of Consciousness is the realm of God's creation, the realm of embodied souls, the realm of the Universes.

In Diagram 4 you can see small circles upon the surface of the Ocean of Consciousness.

³In Hinduism, Shakti (God as Creative Power) is considered to be the feminine aspect of God, while Shiva (God as Consciousness) is masculine; and so for convenience we'll refer to them here as she and he. However, please keep in mind that this is *not* about Hindu 'mythology,' and not about 'gods,' but rather about irreducible aspects of the Supreme Reality: Consciousness and its inseparable counterpart, Divine Power. The various names of God in this contemplation are only the author's personal choices; you are welcome to come up with others which speak more clearly to your heart. By all means, feel free to improvise and make the contemplation your own.

⁴The difference between the Ocean of Consciousness and the pure Awareness of the Atman is that Awareness exists *prior* to the cosmic 'I'-thought, while Consciousness comes only *after* the cosmic 'I'-thought has emerged. The distinction between Consciousness and Awareness is important, because ultimately only pure Awareness can be called real.

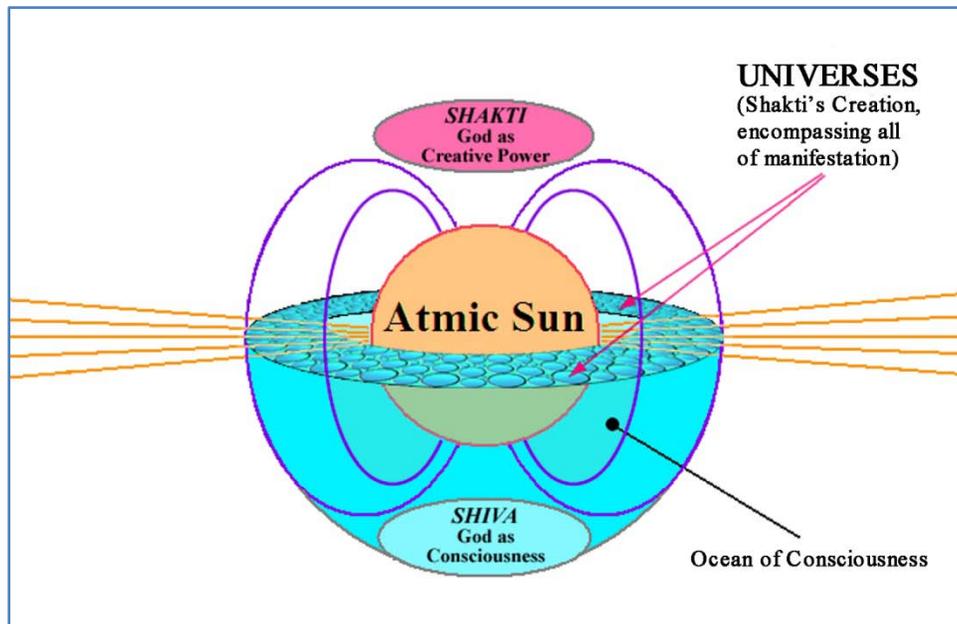


Diagram 4

Each circle represents a universe—and there are billions of them, floating upon the Ocean of Consciousness, orbiting the Atmic Sun at a distance of zillions of light-years.⁵ And within each universe, Shakti has created countless infinitesimal wavelets: these are the individual minds, the separate souls in the realm of transmigration such as animals and people, known to the Hindus as *jivas*.

As a person, what you are is an ephemeral little wave upon that Ocean of Consciousness, and therefore, the Consciousness within you, that is, the sense of being which arises with the thought ‘I,’ is the same essential substance from which the whole universe is made! And when, through the practice of meditation, Consciousness is discovered to be your true identity, your Self is found to be literally all pervading.

Diagram 5 helps us understand how the Divine Mother is constantly creating her play.

⁵ As the Sage Vasishtha said, “It is impossible to count the number of universes that exist.” Paramahansa Yogananda stated that God is literally taking care of billions of universes.

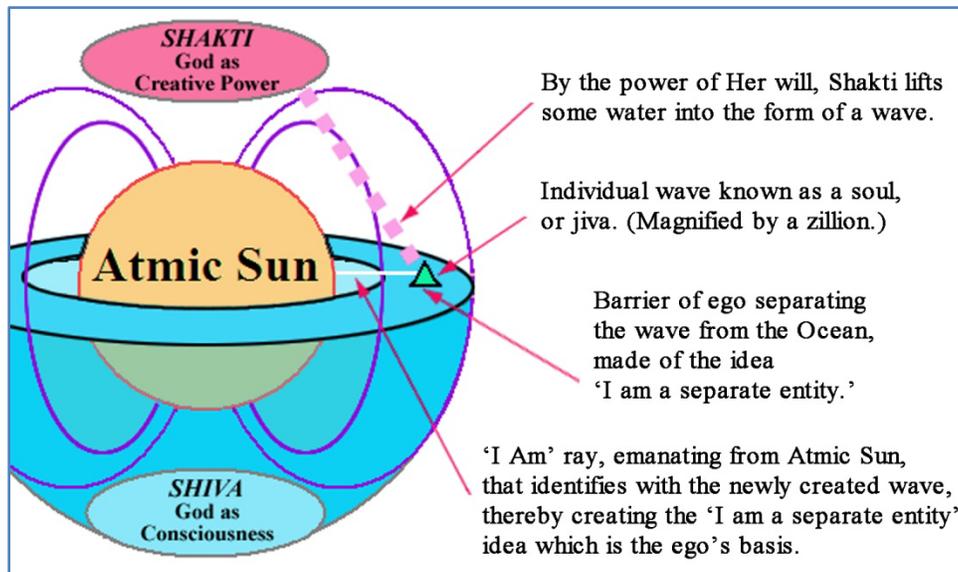


Diagram 5

When Shakti lifts a bit of water into the form of a wave, that wave is immediately lit upon by one of the “I Am” rays emanating from the Atmic Sun. And in that moment, the Ray, which is then zillions of light-years away from the Sun, forgets its true nature (which is the Atmic Sun itself), and says, ‘I am *this!* This little wave, this separate entity is what I am!’ This misidentification of pure Awareness with a limited, separate entity is what creates the barrier between the wave and the ocean known as the ego-mind. See that triangle around the wave in Diagram 5? That’s the ego, a barrier made of thoughts, each of which is rooted in the false idea, ‘I am a separate entity.’ That one thought is the root of every other thought within our minds.

Shakti then creates a physical body to match that newly formed ego-mind, and *Presto!*—a brand new soul! We can call him Joe Amoeba.

Now, let’s say a few words about reincarnation. The Hindu Sages tell us that when the body of a separate entity dies, the essence and accumulated tendencies of that entity’s mind remain intact, in the form of a subtle body, which survives the death of the physical body, and goes through various experiences on the astral plane, the realm after death.

In the model presented in Diagram 6 (below), what happens at the time of death is that the little triangular barrier around the wave, the ego-mind, goes under the surface of the Ocean for a while, into the astral plane, and then, after some time, re-emerges on the Ocean's surface (the physical realm) in the form of a new wave.

When Joe Amoeba dies – after his long lifespan of 24 hours – he spends perhaps a day on the astral plane, and then takes a new birth in the form of another wave, this time perhaps known as Sally Protozoa. This is what's known as reincarnation: the rebirth of the essence of the individual mind in a new physical form.⁶

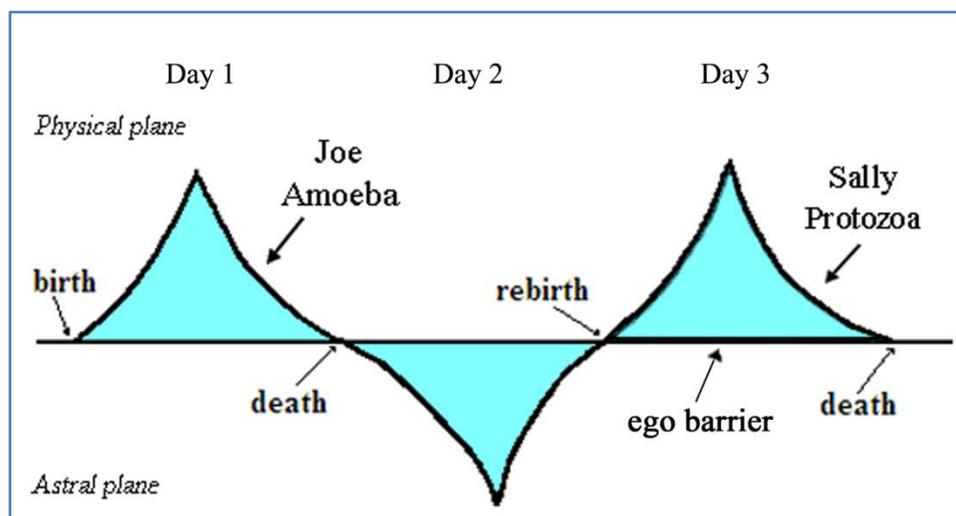


Diagram 6

⁶The theory of reincarnation is now gaining increasing respect in the West, even in the scientific community. In his book *Old Souls: the Scientific Evidence For Past Lives*, Tom Shroder, a *Washington Post* editor, reviews the research of Dr. Ian Stevenson, a clinical psychiatrist and Director of the Department of Personality Studies at the University of Virginia, who performed detailed investigations of the accounts of people who claim to remember details of their past lives. Mr. Shroder finds the evidence in favor of reincarnation hard to refute. Some researchers believe that reincarnation was also taught by Jesus, but that, in attempt by an early Roman council to exclude the Gnostic Christians (who were putting special focus on reincarnation), those teachings were edited out of the *Bible*, and replaced with the 'heaven or hell after one lifetime' dogma, which was then used to facilitate conversions to Christianity. I personally have found the concept of reincarnation to be an essential key to understanding how God's creation works.

Since each thought and action done with a sense of doership by the wave strengthens the ‘I am a separate entity’ idea which is the essence of the ego, with each new incarnation the barrier of ego gradually gets thicker.

Finally, after incarnating through millions of life forms, that mind will be given the opportunity to take a human birth, which holds the greatest opportunities for liberation into the true Self. However, it’s in the human realm that we frequently see the thickest egos, increased in density and width by the human intellect (or lack thereof): ‘I’m so-and-so, and I’ve done such-and-such! I’m *much* more important than those other waves! And don’t tell *me* any nonsense about an Ocean! It’s just a *myth!*’

Here he is, on the left in Diagram 7: Joe Human Bean.

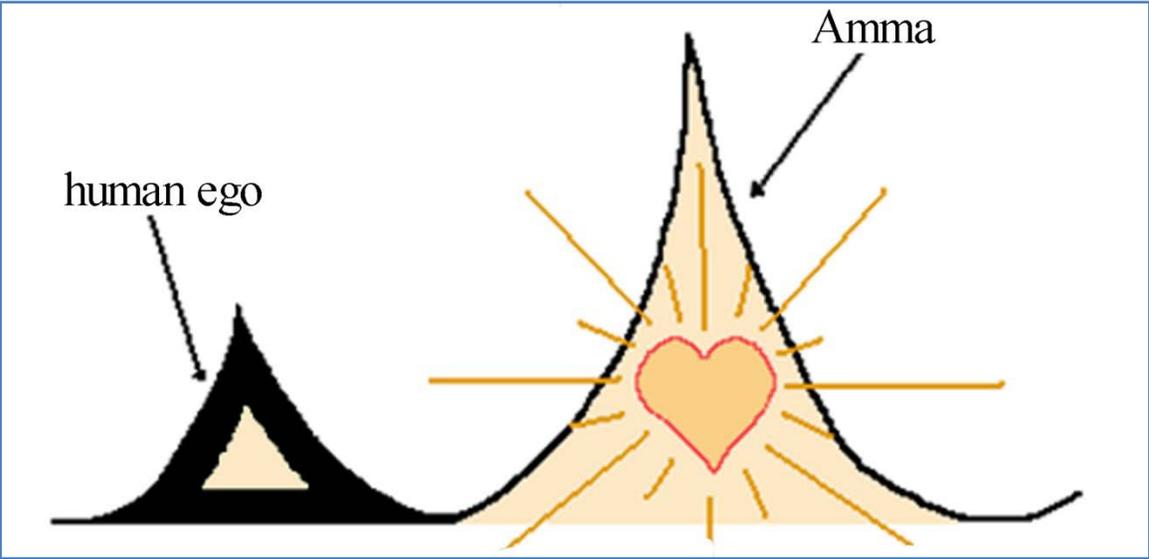


Diagram 7

As we all know, human waves are subject to lots of suffering as they move from lifetime to lifetime, ignorant of their true nature, pursuing desires and sense-pleasures which all too often result only in pain and sorrow.

However, God has not left us in this predicament without help, and keeps the world supplied with God-Realized Masters, whose teachings and grace have the power to dissolve the ego completely. Sometimes God himself takes birth within the play, in full power and glory, giving us extraordinary opportunities for awakening into our true divine nature.

Divine Incarnations such as Jesus, Krishna, Buddha and Amma are very different from ordinary human waves. As you can see on the right side of Diagram 7, the Amma Wave has no barrier of ego at all; and so though Amma may *appear* to be like an ordinary wave, in truth she is the whole Ocean of Consciousness! She is therefore literally omnipresent, for she embodies the Consciousness within *every* wave, and is therefore always present within each one of us. So it's no wonder that she knows everything about us—she *is* us!

Now, let's take a look at Diagram 8, which shows a soul liberated by the Guru's grace:

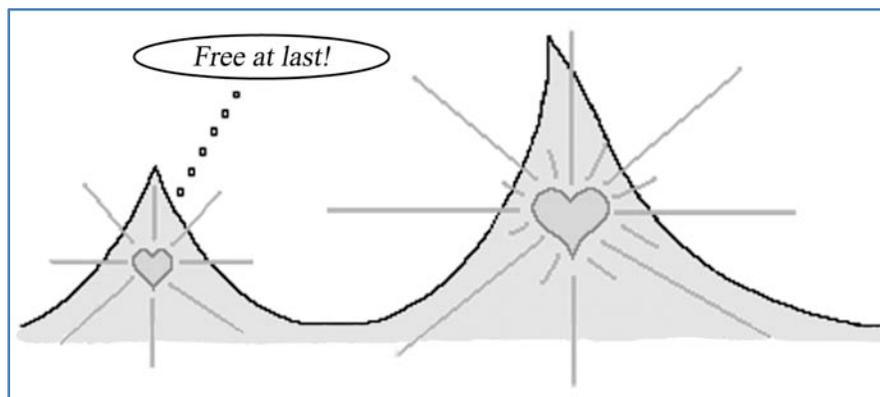


Diagram 8

When a human wave is fortunate enough to love and serve a Divine Wave, the love and devotion of the human wave brings forth grace, the mysterious power which gradually dissolves the barrier of ego. Finally, when the ego has dissolved completely, the wave discovers its true nature: all-pervading Universal Consciousness. The divine identity thus discovered includes both Shiva and Shakti, as well as the pure Atmic Awareness underlying and transcending all duality. The final stage of the ego's dissolution is Self-Realization: the permanent revelation of one's true

Being as limitless, eternal, non-dual Awareness, the one and only Reality, known in the Hindu scriptures as Brahman, or the Paramatman.

Self-Realization is the goal of life, and the ultimate destiny of every soul. Although the path may be long, stretching through many painful incarnations, we are all eventually headed for Enlightenment and eternal union with God. This is the great good news Hinduism offers to humanity.

As we can see in Diagram 9, transcending Shiva and Shakti is what I call Ishwara, God as supreme Love and compassion.

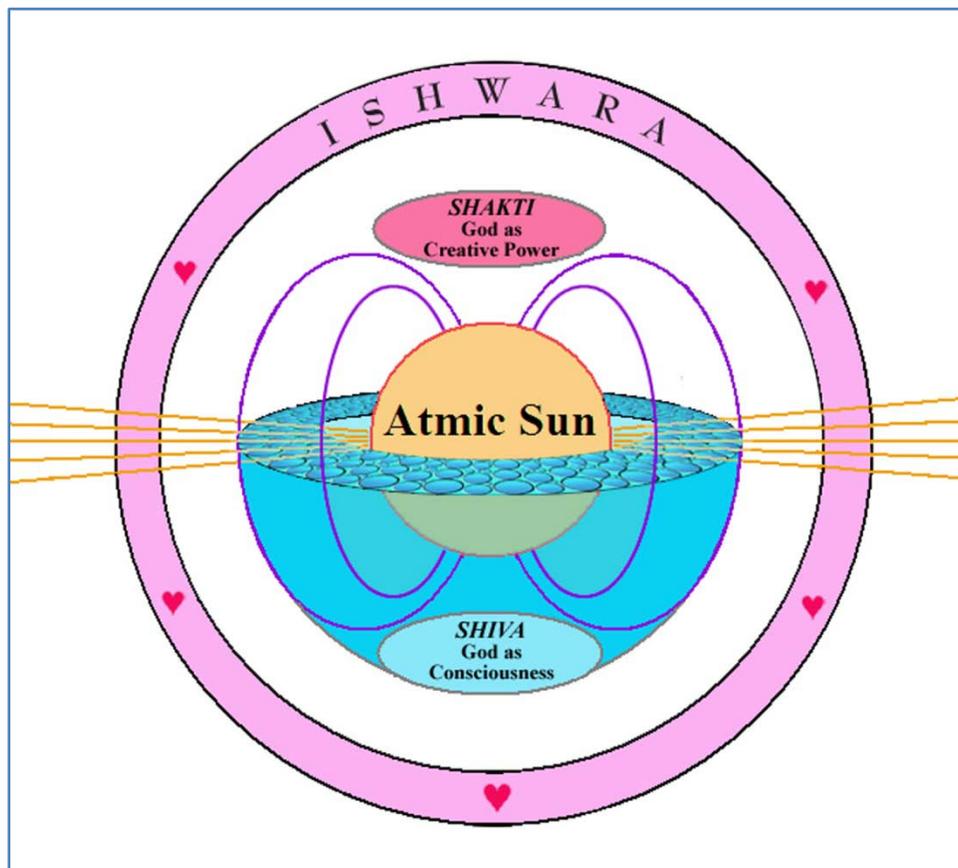


Diagram 9

Ishwara is the compassionate audience of Shakti's play, who sees everyone as his own children, feels all the suffering within the play to be his own; and in his intense yearning that all

beings may be happy, *it is Ishwara who takes birth within the play as all the Avatars in all the universes throughout all time.*⁷ Ishwara's only desire is that all beings may attain Self-Realization, and that peace, righteousness and divine wisdom may be established throughout the Universe.

Now let's move up to the next rung. Transcending Ishwara is what I call the *Amma Paramatman*, shown in Diagram 10.

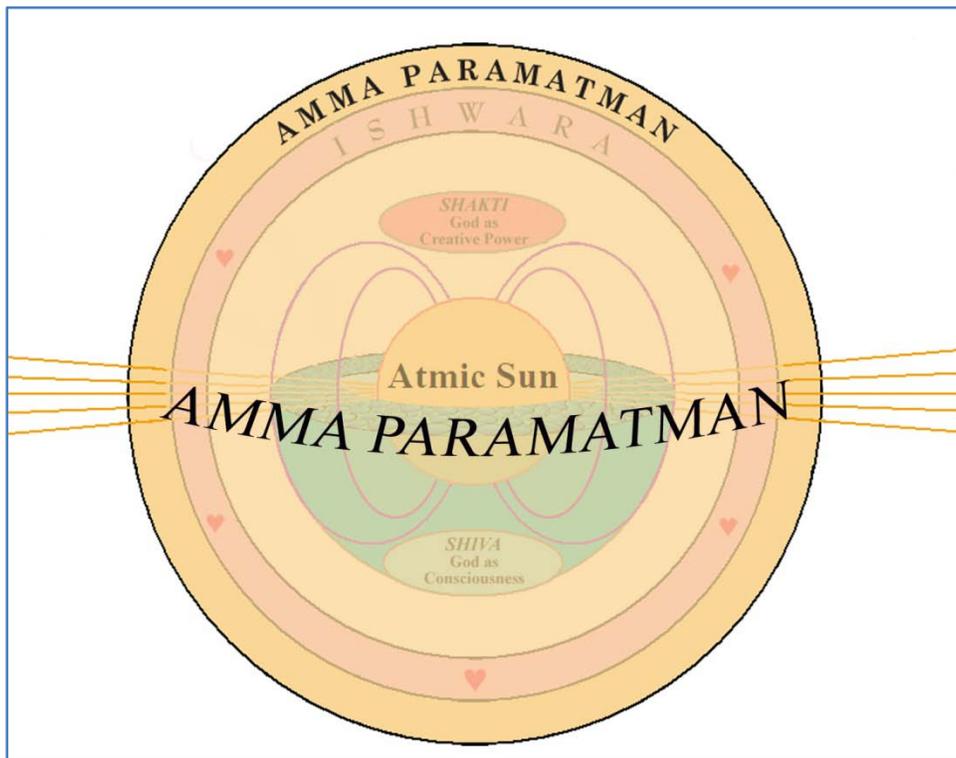


Diagram 10

⁷ When Ishwara incarnates in Shakti's play as a divine Incarnation, he becomes a character in the play, and has his or her lines to say just like the rest of us. The primary value of the Ishwara level is that it allows us to relate to the divine Incarnations with full love and gratitude, rather than blaming them for the problems in the world. Shakti, as author, producer and director of the play, may indeed be considered the author of the Holocaust, as well as the author of the eventual moment of Enlightenment of each soul that died in the Holocaust. But Ishwara and the Avatars, being nothing but pure compassion, cannot be blamed for world events or our personal suffering. The Avatars are our rescuers, diving in to save us from the swirling waters in which we find ourselves drowning, and as such, deserve our fullest love and gratitude, never blame.

The Amma Paramatman is virtually identical in nature to the Atmic Sun: eternal Peace, divine Silence, perfect Oneness—the only difference being that the Amma Paramatman pervades and transcends the realm of creation, whereas the Atmic Sun exists prior to any creation. The Amma Paramatman is all-encompassing, all-transcending pure Awareness, which (as we'll discover at the end of our contemplation) turns out to be the only Reality and our true Self.

The base of our ladder to Enlightenment has now been built. More rungs, and the Infinite Self beyond all rungs, will be discovered as we climb it!

Section 2

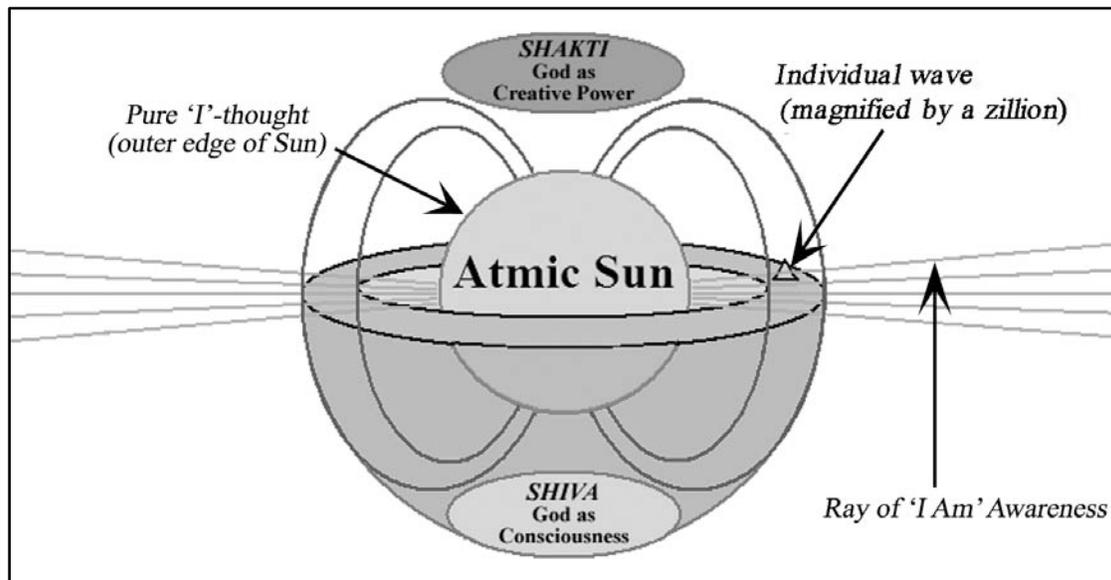
*Climbing the Ladder*⁸

In order to begin our ascent to the supreme Truth, we must first step off of the ground of our primary ignorance, which is the 'I am the body' idea. So, I start out by using a variation of the affirmation we began with: "I'm not the body, not the mind, not a person! Pure Spirit I Am, eternal Oneness I Am, Atman I Am!" And with this, I imagine that I'm leaving behind the personal identity, the little wave of the body-mind (and the whole realm of suffering that stems from that one misidentification).



⁸ Once Section 1, 'Building the Ladder,' has been fully understood, you can start the contemplation here, at Section 2, and just start climbing.

And in my imagination⁹ I fly down the ‘I Am’ Ray, back towards the Atmic Sun which is my true Being, visualizing a blissful journey down that Ray (‘I Am, I Am, I Am!’¹⁰). And finally, I feel myself approaching the Atmic Sun itself, joyously reach its outer edge, and *merge* in that divine ‘I’.¹¹



First Rung: The Outer Edge of the Atmic Sun

Here, at the outer edge of the Atmic Sun, I receive the joyous loving welcome from all the angels, Ascended Masters and Beings of Light! Here I receive the infinite-Love eternal embrace of Amma and all the great divine Incarnations. Here is the glorious re-awakening into my own true Nature: infinitely expansive Love and Light, eternal Bliss and Peace, perfect divine Silence, absolute Oneness.

⁹ The imagination used here is only a preparatory tool. At the end of the contemplation, all imagination will be dropped completely, as we step behind the mind in Self-inquiry, where no imagination is used at all.

¹⁰ As God said to Moses, regarding His name, “‘I AM Who I AM.’ [...] Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I Am has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14.)

¹¹ To quote Ramana Maharshi: “‘I’ is the name of God. It is the first and greatest of all mantras. Even OM is second to it.”

Second Rung: *The Center of the Atmic Sun*

Now, I dive joyously into the supreme peace of the Atmic Sun, blissfully sailing all the way into the very *center* of the Atmic Sun.

And here, in the center of the Atmic Sun, for zillions of light-years in every direction there is only the supreme Love, bliss and peace! Here, there is eternal union in supreme Love with all the Avatars, Saints and Sages throughout all time, eternal union with the Amma-Self of all beings in infinite Love. And I just relax here completely into my true nature, effortlessly abiding in supreme Peace and Bliss, as pure Awareness, as the very essence of God, the changeless immortal Self of all beings.

And I let myself rest in that perfect Peace for as long as I want, until I feel fully established in That as my true Home.

Third Rung: *I Am the Entirety of the Atmic Sun*

Then, when I'm ready, I gently step up to the next level.

I now let this perfect Peace, Bliss and divine Silence effortlessly expand out zillions of light-years in every direction, and now embrace the *entirety* of the Atmic Sun as my true being, including the cosmic 'I'-thought (the outer edge of the Sun), and the 'I Am Rays' as well. And via those rays, I am shining out into every heart! Within all the zillions of beings in all the billions of universes, I alone am the indwelling Self! I am the 'I' within all beings!

I am the *entirety* of the Atmic Sun! I am the Atman!

Fourth Rung: *I Am Shiva*

And I am the whole magnetic field around the Sun as well. I am Shiva, God as Consciousness, the divine Witness underlying the whole realm of creation. And I now take a few

moments to experience myself as Shiva, as all-pervading Consciousness, witnessing, from within, all that occurs everywhere, while remaining ever unaffected by any occurrence.

I now move up to the next rung.

Fifth Rung: *I Am Shakti*

For not only am I Shiva, I am Shakti, the all-powerful creator of the whole billion-universe play! As Shakti, the Creative aspect of God, my power is the one cause of the whole creation! My will is the one and only factor in every single moment of the whole cosmic play! My Love for all beings is the great cosmic magnet by which all beings are evolving, through numerous lifetimes and adventures, into the supreme Realization of the divine Self. And I am the giver of that Enlightenment, that Self-Realization, to every single soul in due course.

Sixth Rung: *I Am Playing Every Role in God's Creation*

As Shakti, I am not only the Author, but also the actor within every character in my vast cosmic play. For this is my great divine adventure: to experience the entire drama of evolution from within every possible perspective, to evolve within an infinite number of separate souls all the way from amoeba to God-Realized Master, while remaining beyond the play, enjoying every moment of the divine love story!

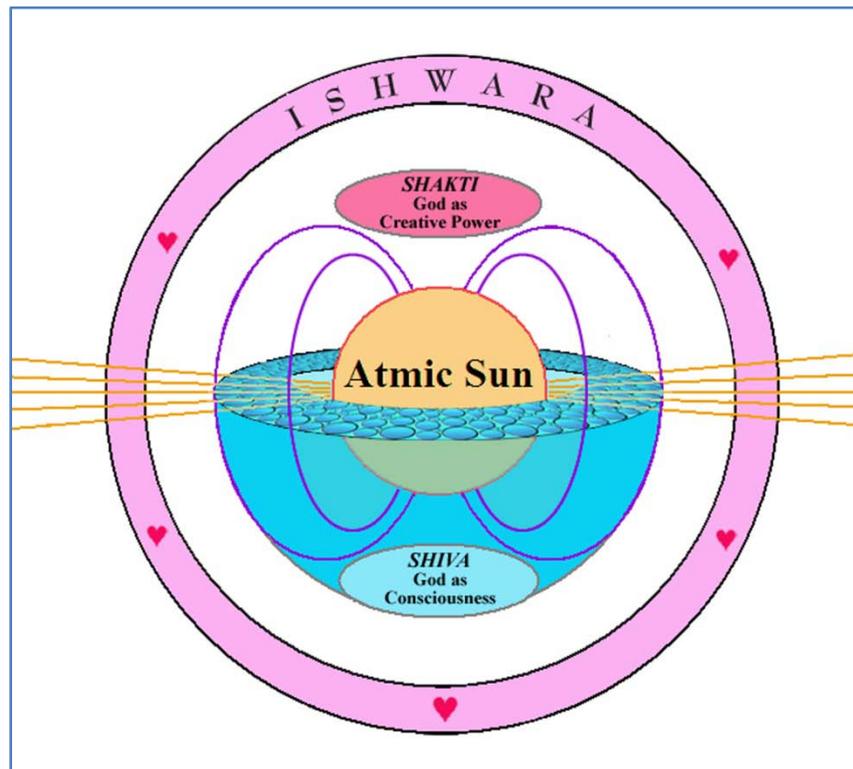
Yes, I am playing *every* role, just the way I, as Shakti, wrote it: I am living as every plant, every animal and every human being in all nations, on all planets, in all universes, throughout all time! I am doing all actions, and reaping the fruits of all actions: all pain and all pleasure, all happiness and all sorrow, all pride and all shame in all universes are my own...

And it is I within every soul who will eventually awaken to the Truth of the divine Self; I, doing all prayer, meditation, worship, and Self-inquiry; I, surrendering to God within every religion; and it is I, within every soul, who will finally overcome all obstacles and attain the

supreme Realization of the divine Self! Yes, it is I who will ultimately attain full God-Realization, within every single soul.

Seventh Rung: *I am Ishwara*

Above Shiva, Shakti and the creation, I am Ishwara: the compassionate Audience of Shakti's play.

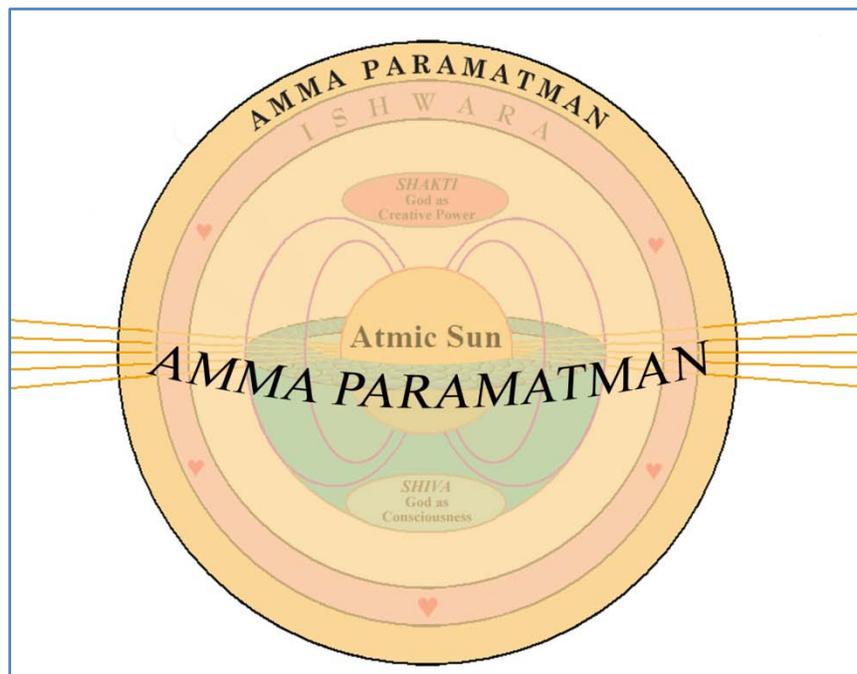


As Ishwara I am loving every character within Shakti's play with the most intense divine compassion, seeing every character as my own child, feeling all the suffering in the play to be my own, and in my intense yearning that all beings may be happy, it is I, Ishwara, who have taken birth within the play as all the Avatars on all planets, in all universes, throughout all time! It is I who took birth as Lord Rama, Sri Krishna, Lord Buddha and Jesus Christ! And I who have incarnated now as Amma, to spread infinite Love around the world and awaken millions through my embrace! It is I who have come from age to age, to establish upon the Earth Truth,

Righteousness, Peace, and Love, and to lead my children all the way to God-Realization, that they may merge in me and be free!

Eighth Rung: *I Am the Amma Paramatman*

Above and beyond Ishwara, I am the Amma Paramatman. Here there is no 'I'-thought, no mind, just pure Awareness.



And from the perspective of the Amma Paramatman, a monumental discovery is made: Ishwara, Shiva, Shakti, and the entire realm of creation, is all just a *mirage*, an illusion only! In the same way that a mirage in the desert disappears from certain angles, from the perspective of the Paramatman, the realm of duality doesn't appear at all. What *does* appear is that there is in truth *nothing* but the pure Awareness of the Paramatman pervading all the way to the core of the Atmic Sun, nothing but the perfect peace and bliss at the center of the Atmic Sun extending all the way out to the Paramatman and onwards into infinity!

So now it is revealed that Atman and Paramatman are in fact one and the same indivisible Wholeness, the all-pervading, all-transcending, infinite Divine Self, the one and only Reality, and the only true identity of all beings.

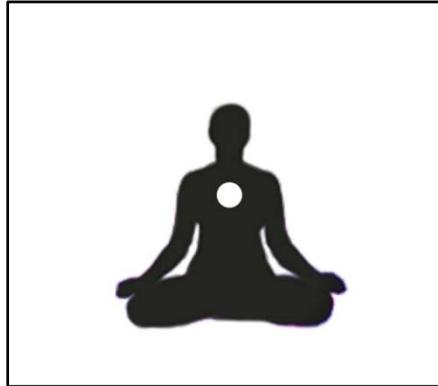
At this point, nothing remains in our treasure map but the super-gigantic Amma Paramatman.

Ninth Rung: Infinite Expansion of the Amma Paramatman

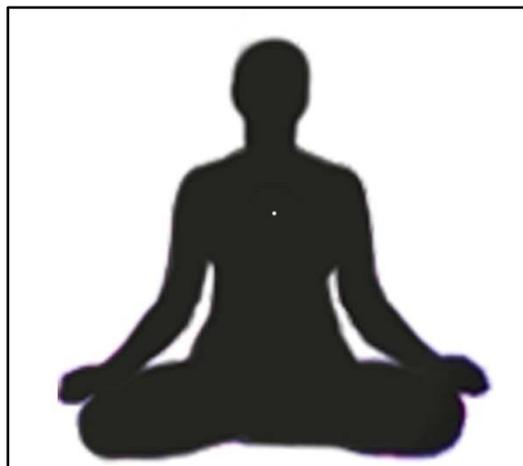
And finally, the outer edge of the Amma Paramatman disappears—for there is inherently no boundary to this glorious divine Being, no limit to the infinite Self. And when that outer edge disappears, the result is instant, infinite expansion of the Amma Paramatman, expansion without limit, in all directions.



To make that expansion more of a direct experience, I imagine that my physical body represents the Paramatman, and the Atmic Sun, zillions of light-years in diameter, is visible within me, about the size of an orange.



As the expansion of the Paramatman begins, the Atmic Sun now appears as a tiny bubble within my heart... and as the Paramatman expands even further, the Atmic Sun appears next as a single speck, a tiny sugar crystal in my heart...



And finally, it dissolves, and disappears altogether.¹²

¹² You may be wondering why, after all this expansion, the imagery has been brought back into the body, with the idea of seeing the Atmic Sun as a 'tiny bubble within your heart.' There is a good reason: you can then carry your true identity around with you easily, even while walking down the street, just by remembering the Atmic Sun disappearing within you like a tiny bubble. Thus, the microcosm of the body becomes the macrocosm of the Paramatman. To quote Nisargadatta Maharaj, "To watch the universe emerging and subsiding in one's heart is a

And what remains? Brahman, your true identity: infinite, changeless pure Awareness. Limitless, phenomena-less, pure Being. The One-without-a-second.

Tenth Rung: *I am Brahman*

Brahman is indeed the only Reality. And it is what you are, here and now: limitless pure Spirit, center everywhere, circumference nowhere; timeless pure Being pervading all of time.

After all we have said, the truth is that *Brahman alone is what you are.*¹³ And only Brahman is real. (As Adi Shankaracharya said, “Brahman alone is real, the world is unreal.”) And in Brahman there is no manifestation at all, nor will there *ever* be. In Brahman there is no Creator, no creation, no time, no space, and no person. You *are* Brahman; and to realize Brahman as your true identity is your glorious and final destiny. As the *Katha Upanishad* declares, “Brahman is the end of the journey. Brahman is the supreme goal.”

Here we have a diagram of Brahman:



wonder.”

¹³ As we have by now discovered, Atman, Paramatman and Brahman are actually synonymous terms, referring only to the all-encompassing infinite Self. The distinctions made between them in the first portions of the contemplation were only for the purpose of developing some initial understandings. Finally, Atman, Paramatman and Brahman are one and the same.

Are you getting the joke? In Brahman there is *nothing!* Not even the word ‘Brahman’! For in Brahman, there are no phenomena whatsoever, and no mind. Brahman exists before seer, seeing or seen—so how could it be shown in a diagram?

From Brahman’s perspective, the person you’ve always thought you were, and the problems of that person’s life, are nowhere to be found! So now you’ve got a very good excuse to never worry about anything ever again. For your true Being has no problems and never will. In Brahman, there is nothing but peace and bliss.

To quote the *Chandogya Upanishad*,

Brahman is life. Brahman is joy. Brahman is the Void.

Bliss, verily, that is the same as the Void.

The Void, verily, that is the same as bliss.

And Brahman is what *you* are, now and forever! While all phenomena appear and disappear, rising and falling in the realm of time, Brahman is timeless and does *not* come and go. Brahman is permanent, changeless and indivisible, the three primary criteria for Reality.

So now we have found our true Self to be timeless, eternal bliss itself, and we can now learn to daily fill our lives with the fathomless bliss and peace of our eternal nature.

Finally, Stepping off the Ladder

Now that we’ve reached the top rung of our conceptual ladder, we’re going to step off of it, and spend some time simply resting the Peace of the Self. We’ll let go of all remaining words and concepts, and let go of any effort, and simply abide in the Peace we’ve discovered to be our true nature. In Brahman, there is no one to make any effort at all, and no one to think. For there’s no ‘I’-thought, and so nothing for thoughts to arise from. There’s nothing to visualize or imagine, and nothing to attain. There’s only Peace itself.

So just relax, and enjoy the perfect freedom and peace of your true Self. Let your humanness bathe completely in your divinity. Breathe deeply, letting your breath carry your divine identity into every cell of your body. Let your mind dissolve in eternal Peace.

Click off your mind, and stay a while!



Section 3

Self-inquiry

Now that we've reached as high as the mind and imagination can go, it's time for Self-inquiry, where at last, we leave the realm of concepts behind completely, and truly enter the divine Self.

It's important to see that everything we've done in the contemplation so far, even that exalted last step, was really only in the realm of mind and imagination, for the tools of contemplation—words, concepts and images—all exist only in the mind. Brahman itself exists *prior* to mind or imagination, and is untouched by *any* experience. The contemplation may have made our minds still, but it has still left us in the mind! It's led us to the doorway, but now we have to cross the threshold into the reality of the Self, the Emptiness which is our true nature, where no words, concepts or imagination can ever reach.

Contemplation is in the realm of time, and relies on memory, whereas Self-inquiry leads directly to the timeless moment, the sacred pre-mind now.

So from the imagined experience of being Brahman, which was the final stage of the contemplation, you now ask yourself, ‘Who’s imagining this?’ or ‘Who’s thinking these thoughts?’ The answer naturally comes: ‘I am.’ You then ask, ‘Who am I?’ And **without giving any answer**, simply dive deep into that ‘I,’ aiming for the pure Awareness that is behind the mind.

Rather than say ‘behind,’ perhaps it is more accurate to say that the pure Awareness of the Self is actually the *innermost essence* of the ‘I’. The ‘I’-thought is like an atom: it *appears* to be solid and real, but when investigated it is revealed to be 99.999999999 percent empty, just as physical atoms are. So when we penetrate the apparent solidity of the ‘I,’ we find that at its innermost core there is nothing but silent, pure Awareness, which has never been limited or bound by the apparent solidity of the ‘I’-thought. Pure Awareness is subtler than even the subtlest thought, and inherently all-pervading and all-transcending. The abode of Brahman within each of us, therefore, is the innermost core of the ‘I’ thought. When this is discovered, the ‘I’-thought falls away completely, and Brahman is revealed as the only reality and your only true identity.

The ‘I’ is the one fundamental building block of the mind; after all, each thought has the ‘I’ as its root, as the one who is thinking the thought. When you question that ‘I,’ and dive into its innermost essence, your true Self will gradually be revealed: pure Awareness, untouched by the slightest movement of mind.

It’s important to understand that, unlike with contemplation, in Self-inquiry, you never give a verbal answer to the ‘Who am I?’ question. Any answer the mind might come up with will be inherently false, for the words and concepts in a verbal answer exist only within the mind, and the truth of the Self is *prior* to the mind! (The affirmation, ‘I am Brahman’ is still just another

thought in the mind; in Brahman itself, there *is* no mind!) So, any verbal answer will only be another hiding place for the ego.

Similarly, no experience can provide a legitimate answer to the ‘Who am I?’ question, for all experiences are still in the realm of mind. The one who experiences each experience, no matter how sublime the experience might be, is still just the ego. The true Self remains untouched by *any* experience.

So, if any thought or experience appears, any movement of mind at all, just inquire, ‘Who’s thinking this?’ or ‘Who’s experiencing this?’ When the answer naturally comes, ‘I am,’ you ask, ‘Who am I?’ and dive once again into the ‘I,’ aiming for the perfect Silence behind the mind, the innermost core of the ‘I,’ where no thoughts exist at all. You are no stranger to that perfect pre-mind Peace, for you go there every night in deep sleep, albeit unconsciously. Self-inquiry teaches you to access that same state of deep sleep, consciously and at will, so that supreme Peace can fill your waking state completely.

As you continue using the ‘Who am I?’ question to pull out of the realm of thoughts, you gradually learn to dwell in the pure Awareness behind the mind, abiding ever more deeply in the Silence that is your eternal nature. The outgoing tendencies of the mind gradually weaken and fall away, and finally the inquiry destroys even the ‘I’ that is asking ‘Who am I?’

At that point the ego-mind, completely deprived of its root, dies once and for all. And in that blessed moment, the infinite, immortal Self is permanently revealed to be your true and only identity. That’s the moment of Enlightenment. It’s the end of all suffering, and the revelation of eternal Peace as your true identity. Self-inquiry is a direct path to that supreme goal.

Section 4

Coming out of Meditation

Now, let's say you've been enjoying the peace of Self-enquiry for an hour or so, and you're feeling wonderful. But it really *is* getting close to lunch time, so after a few more minutes, you're going to bring your meditation to a close. Before you open your eyes, though, consider this question: When you *do* open your eyes, what will you be seeing? Where are you?

One answer might be: when you open your eyes you'll be viewing a portion of Shakti's play of the waves, the divinely-created drama upon the surface of the Ocean of Consciousness. And since you now know that you are the *entirety* of that Ocean, you'll recognize your own Being, your own Consciousness, within *every* wave. You are *all* that you see, and you are playing *every part* in the play that manifests before you!

You also know that you *are* Shakti, the Author of the whole play, and that every moment of every scene takes place by your will alone. And you can feel the omnipotent power of the God who you are, the joy of being the Cosmic Playwright, and the thrill of watching your own will unfolding before your eyes in each moment.

You also know that *your* true identity, and the ultimate and only Reality of all you see, is the changeless pure Awareness of Brahman, the Paramatman, and that the whole realm of manifestation appears within the Paramatman like a tiny mirage bubble. So, when you open your eyes, you'll know that everything is made only of, and pervaded by, the pure Awareness of the Paramatman. Within all that you perceive (including the perceiver), there is only the one immortal divine Self. Within every atom of the creation, within all of time and space, within every bit of mind, there is only Brahman. And you are That.

Like shapes carved out of ice cream, the various forms of the world are all made only of the pure Awareness of Brahman, and Brahman is the supreme bliss. So everything you see is made only of the supreme bliss!

In short, everything is God.

As Amma says, “One who is established in *sahaja samadhi*¹⁴ sees the Divine Principle in everything. Everywhere he perceives only Pure Consciousness, free from the taint of maya (illusion).”

As Anandamayi Ma put it, “In all forms and in the formless is He, and He alone.”

As Adi Shankaracharya stated, “The world is Brahman.”

As Nisargadatta Maharaj said, “When you look at anything it is the Ultimate you see.”

As Lord Buddha declared, “Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is indeed form.”

As *A Course in Miracles* says, “God is in everything I see.”

And as the *Bhagavad Gita* says, “One who sees Brahman in all shall surely become one with Brahman.”

*

Now that you know that the whole world exists only within Brahman, and is all truly made only of Brahman, you are now free to love your personal identity totally, with the same love you have for God! You can now embrace your humanness as being fully divine and therefore worthy of the highest love.

So why not take a few minutes, now, to send the same love you have for God to all of *yourself*, and celebrate the supreme divine Being who you are. Let infinite Love flow to every

¹⁴ *sahaja samadhi*: the highest level of spiritual attainment, where meditation is no longer needed. The mind of one who has attained *sahaja samadhi* has permanently merged in the supreme Reality, and remains always absorbed in That, even though the body may be engaged in various activities.

aspect of your body, mind and personality, and let that love be fully received by your entire being.

And now extend that supreme Love to every moment of your past, letting every painful memory be healed by God's embrace. And let that Love embrace everyone else in your past as well, seeing and loving God within all, celebrating, cherishing and forgiving every moment of your entire life. Soak in that Love, and set your entire being free.

And now, let that same infinite Love embrace every moment of your future also, letting whatever may happen to you in the years ahead be kissed with the certainty of God's eternal Love, letting supreme bliss saturate each moment of your life stream to the moment of your Enlightenment—whether it is revealed now, in ten seconds, ten years or ten lifetimes: it doesn't matter! For no matter what may occur in the realm of time, you remain forever as you are, forever one with God, forever immersed in the supreme Bliss and Peace of the Paramatman. And that is always here and now.

For the next step, let the same infinite Love that you've given to yourself flow out to *all* beings. In the same way that you have embraced the entirety of your own life-stream, all the way from soul-conception to Enlightenment, now do the same for all souls. Let your love fully embrace all that exists, all situations and events, even the most ugly and frightening. Let your love shine out to *all*, embracing everything and everyone, excluding nothing in your love for the all-encompassing God who you are!

Now, when you're good and ready to come out of meditation, you can effortlessly radiate the supreme Peace and Love to all beings in every moment, seeing only the one divine Self everywhere.

And since Amma fully embodies the Paramatman, as well as all other levels of the Divine, remembrance of Amma is itself a form of Self-abidance. Her name is a form of the Supreme Being, and chanting her name, or the mantra she gives you, is one of the best ways to remember your true nature throughout the day.

OM Amriteshwaryai Namah!



Shanti, Shanti, Shanti