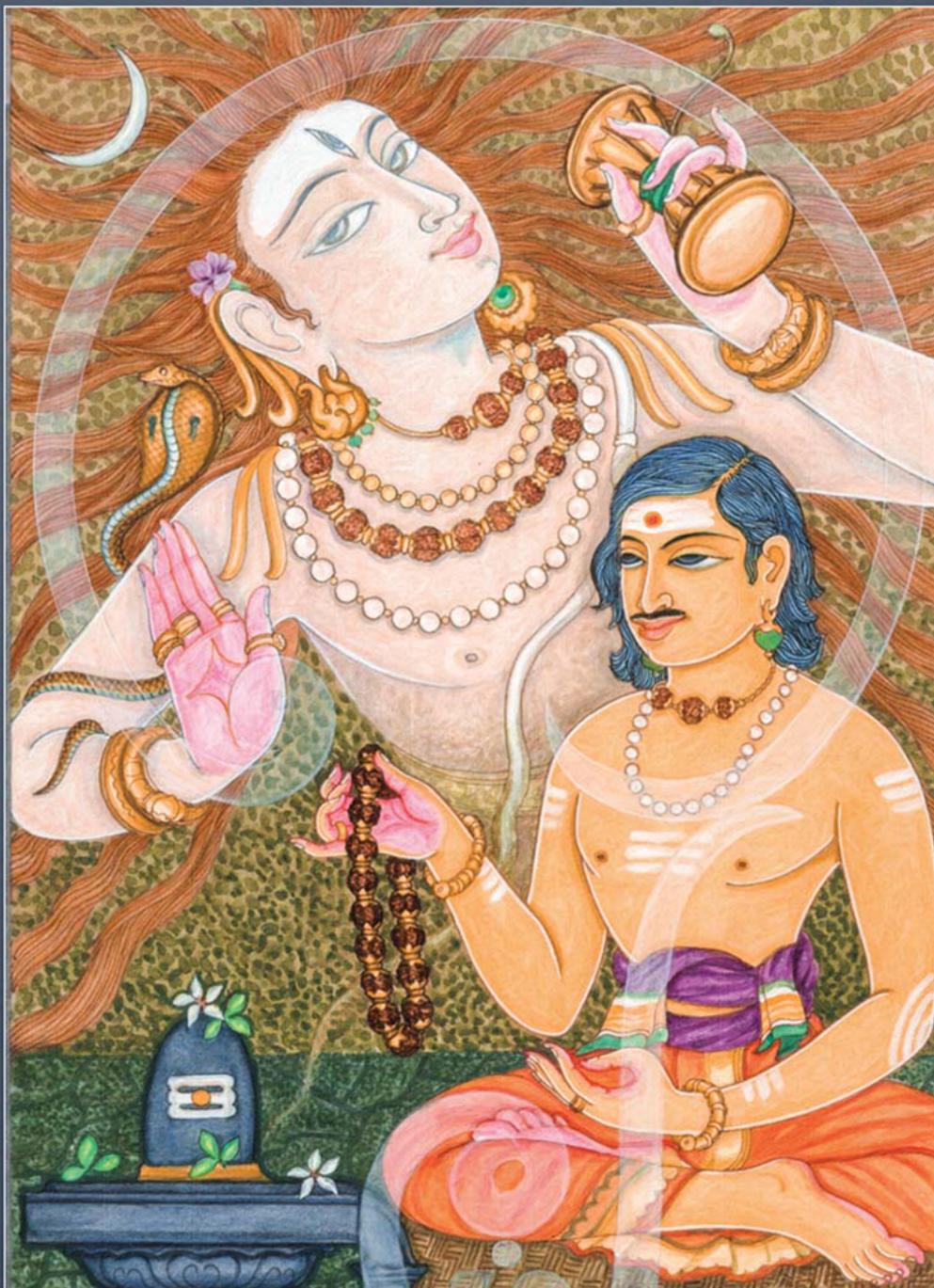


Know Thy Self

14 Daily Enlightenment Lessons

From the teachings of
Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami





EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Know Thy Self

14 Daily Enlightenment Lessons

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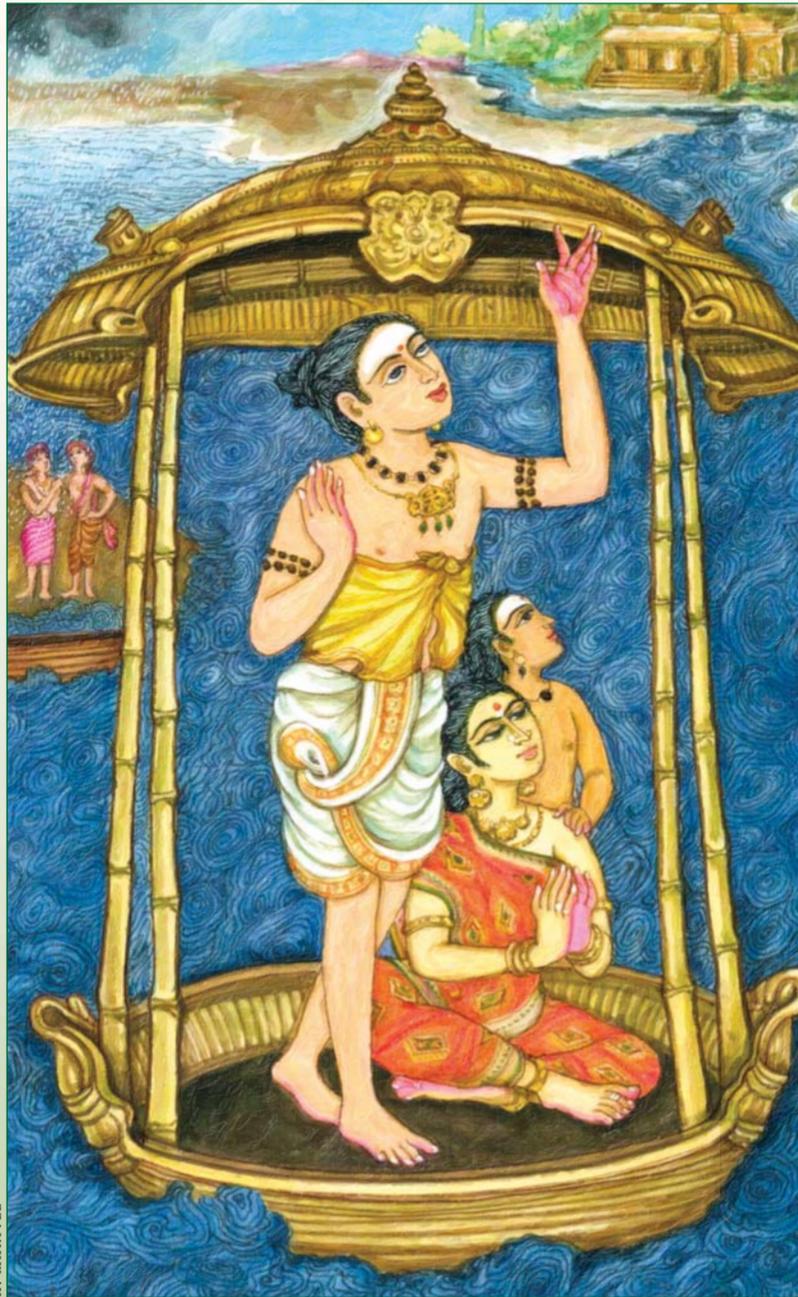


Many are the ways that can lead one to seek enlightenment—a spontaneous moment of ecstatic expanded consciousness, a fear-evoking brush with death, a random meeting with an extraordinary soul or the sudden realization that there must be more to this existence than sex, money, food, clothes and power. It matters little how we stumble upon the inner, spiritual path. What does matter is how we proceed once we discover it, what tradition we embrace, what techniques we employ. ¶ These fourteen lessons are designed to offer seekers a few keys about self-discovery from man's oldest spiritual tradition, one that is unique in its devotional nondualism. It is a simple reflection, neither advanced nor arcane. Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami developed these lessons for seekers on the path who were inquiring about the intriguing metaphysical aspects of self-inquiry, like affirmations, karma, chakras and releasing strained magnetic attachments in life and relationships. Each lesson ends with a challenge to help put these principles into practice. India's great guru lineages teach the importance of knowing the inmost Self, the nondual Reality that exists as the silent core of every soul. ¶ In the East, this is called the Paramatman, or great Self. This is not the intellectual or emotional self. It is not the physical or personality self. This is the Divine Self deep within you. Knowing this Self is the true purpose of life on Earth. On the path to the Self, one thing is certain—change. And

the magic is that by changing your own consciousness and relationship with the world, you change the entire cosmos. ¶ The path requires you to first overcome fear, confusion, anger and selfishness. It then teaches you to live with detachment, with compassion for all other beings and with wisdom based on knowledge that all is right in the universe. Finally, the spiritual quest takes you from darkness to light, from death to immortality. Knowing who you are and what you should do, you naturally live poised in the eternal now, intuitively open, free of illusion and happy in heart. ¶ These fourteen lessons are a summary of life's path, from the beginning to the end. Read them each morning at breakfast. It will be fun for the whole family and give them a great start for the day. Each time they hear a lesson, it will be new and fresh to their mind because deeper insights will come. Take a lot of time with them under a special tree, or in your favorite chair or secret place. Listen to this ancient wisdom as being a message to you and you alone and absorb it into yourself as a one totality. ¶ To know thy Self is the greatest knowing of all knowings. To know thy Self is the greatest security of all securities. To know thy Self is the greatest wealth of all wealths. To know thy Self is the greatest path of all paths. Proceed with confidence; you are on the right path. Awake! Arise! Go forward! The path has been cleared long ago by the Vedas. Its end is in sight. There is much to be learned along the way, but don't tarry. Keep pushing onward, upward and inward.

LESSON ONE

The River Of Life

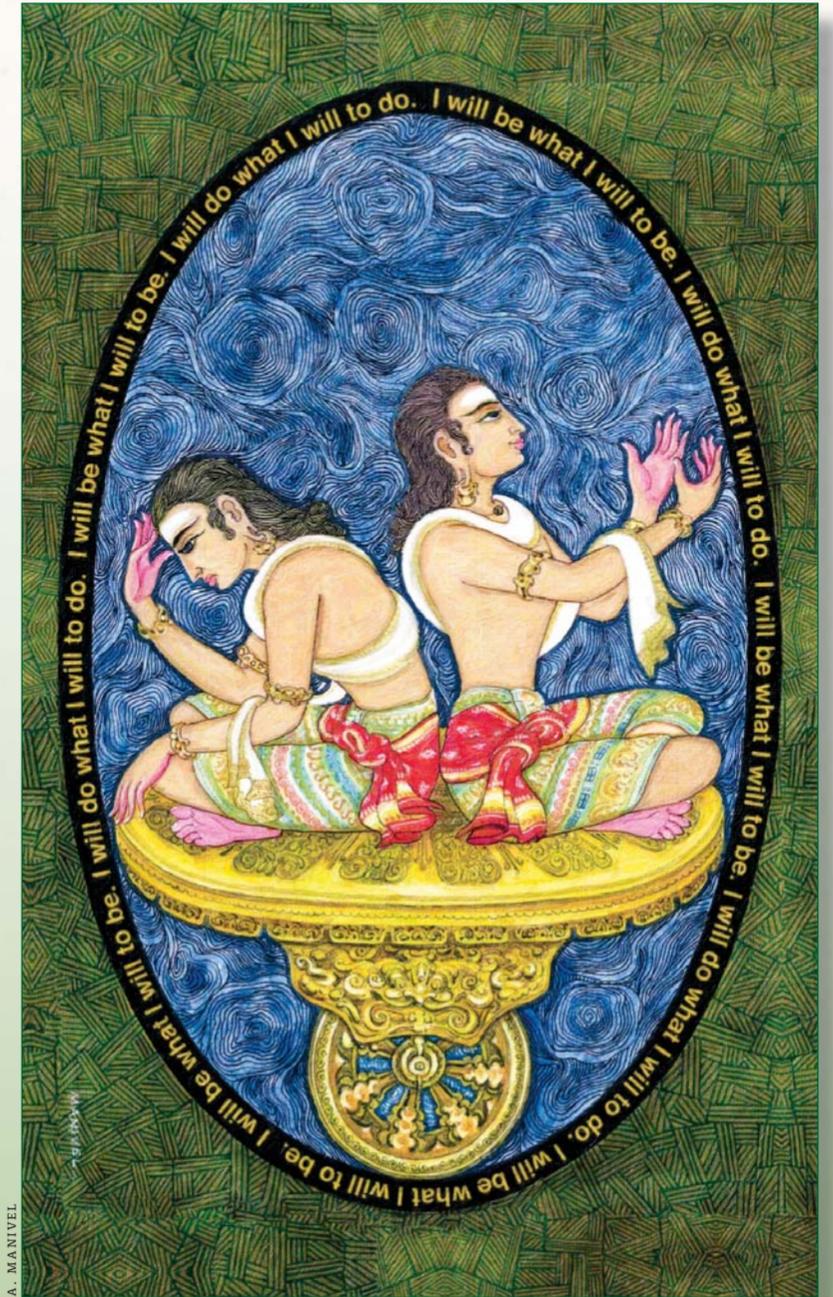


A family floats down the river Ganges in a mythic raft, their faces uplifted in detached trust of the Divine. Behind, two quarreling men are stranded on the banks of the river, unable to progress.

SEEKER: IS THERE A SIMPLE KEY TO understanding life, especially at difficult times? **GURUDEVA:** Yes. Meditate on a river. Follow it as a visual image from its source to the end where it merges into the sea. Realize that you have a river of pure life force flowing through you at this moment. Hold that realization permanently within you. You can now clearly see where you have been clinging to the bank of life's river. Openly observe just how long you have been clinging to various negative attachments by holding awareness in the area of fears, worries, doubts of the future and regrets about the past. To perceive our attachments is the first step we take toward being a detached and independent spiritual being. Through the power of affectionate detachment, we separate awareness from that which it is aware of. We lovingly let go of negative attachments. But being detached does not mean running away from life or being insensitive. When we have the ability to let go, we can at last live in the eternity of the moment. We are warmer, more friendly, more wholesome, more human. **SEEKER:** Why do we become attached? **GURUDEVA:** We become attached because we do not stop to understand that the experiences that conceived the attachment were only a rapid, a waterfall or an old tree trunk blocking one of the little rivulets as it tried to merge with the great stream ever merging into the ocean. Learn to let go of the banks of the river. Let go the past. Let go the future. Let go reaction. Live in the eternity of the moment and say to yourself, "I am the master of my body, my mind and my emotions." Satguru Yogaswami declared: "Let happiness and sorrow come and go like the clouds." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Go to a river or a stream, sit beside it in a quiet place alone and see the water as your own life force. Watch how it flows past all obstacles, accepting every change it meets, as it moves steadily toward its goal. Aum.

LESSON TWO

The Power Of Affirmation



A seeker is seated on a fabled one-wheeled chariot, representing his mind's movements. The power to move toward gloom and failure or upliftment and success—lies in his words and thoughts.

SEEKER: WHAT CAN I DO WHEN OLD attitudes fight my spiritual convictions? **GURUDEVA:** When we start on the spiritual path, the past, held in our subconscious mind, is there as a friend or an enemy to our quest. For years we have repeated statements and attached meaning to them in our thoughts and words. This has programmed our subconscious and helped form our life as we know it, for the subconscious brings into manifestation the impressions we put into it. To succeed on the path, we must change the subconscious and remold its magnetic force with new ideas and new concepts. This can be done through the power of affirmation. An affirmation is a positive statement repeated to oneself to create a specific effect in the mind. **SEEKER:** How does one choose the right affirmation? **GURUDEVA:** First we must realize what we do not want. Then we must take steps to change it. For example, if you feel "I can't," you cannot. But you can reverse this pattern and change the flow of magnetic mental force by saying orally and feeling through all the atoms of your body "I can. I will. I am able to accomplish what I plan." Repeat that statement fifty or a hundred times a day. Your subconscious may counter with feelings of "I can't. I won't. I am not able." But you must not give up saying "I can. I will. I am able" until you find the subconscious actually creating situations in which you can and are able to be successful, happy and acquire what you need, be it temporal goods or unfoldment on the inner path. Satguru Yogaswami reminded us, Whatsoever you think, that you become. That is the great secret." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Repeat the affirmation "I'm all right, right now" each time you find yourself worrying about the past or the future. Gently but firmly bring your awareness back to the present and reaffirm the fact that you really are all right, right now. Learn to live in the now. Aum.

LESSON THREE

Five Steps to Enlightenment

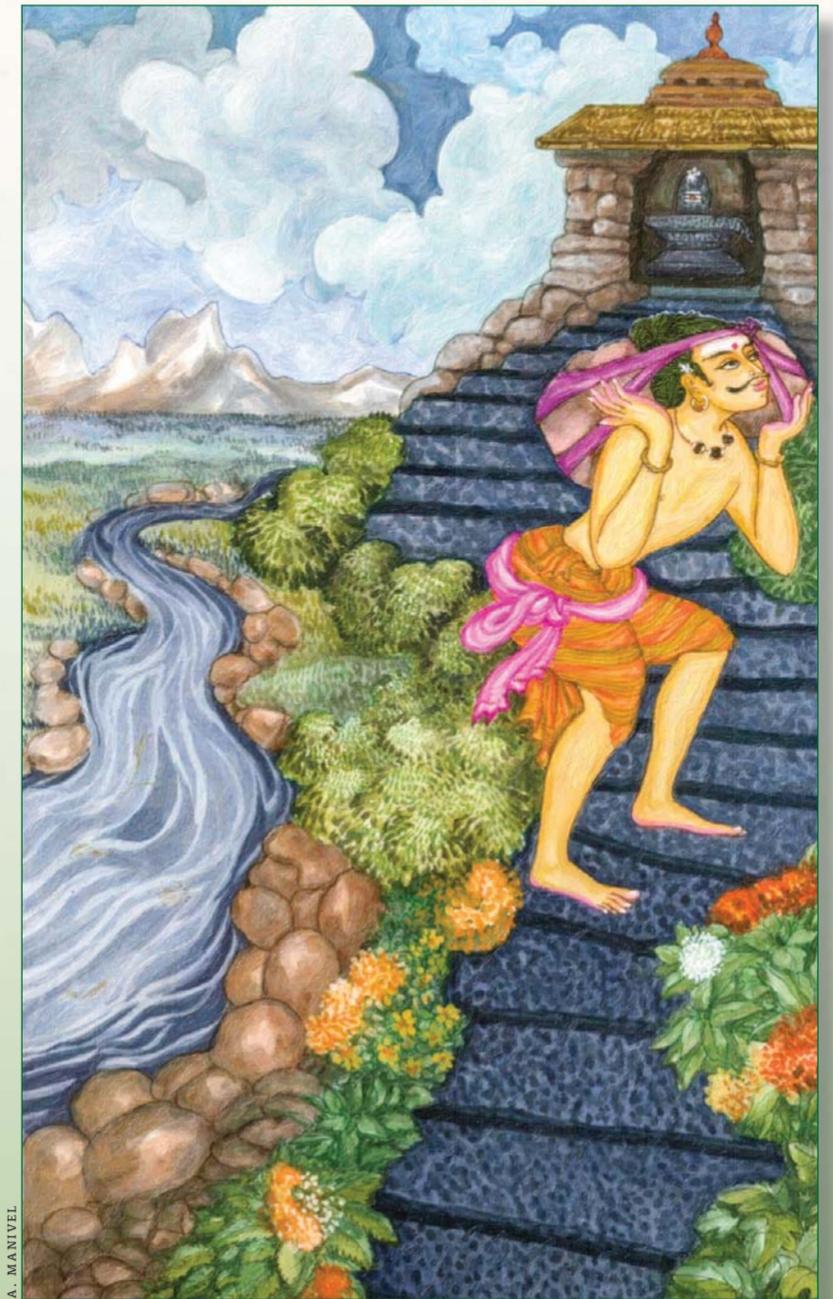


A Sivabhaktar strides boldly along the path, moving toward Self Realization, assured of Siva's loving closeness. All the while, Siva is within him, symbolized by the reflection in the lotus pond.

SEEKER: ARE THERE DEFINITE STEPS ON THE inner path? **GURUDEVA:** Yes, there are five steps on the path of enlightenment. These steps are really regions of consciousness, each more refined than the last. As awareness becomes refined and detached, as it comes under the conscious control of the spiritual will, we are able to penetrate each layer in succession until the final goal is reached. **SEEKER:** What are the five steps? **GURUDEVA:** Attention is the first step. It is the ability to hold awareness steady, centralized in the area that we choose. From this point we evolve naturally into the next step, concentration. The hummingbird poised over the flower begins to concentrate on it, to study it, to muse over it. Through the abilities of concentration, meditation slowly becomes available. In meditation you are seeing the flower as it actually is. New knowledge is flooding through you from the inside, and you are joyously alert and content. From sustained meditation, we enter contemplation. We plunge deeper, deeper, deeper within, beyond the external form into the energy and the life within the cells of the flower. We are absorbed in that energy. We become that energy that pervades every atom of existence. Ultimately, contemplation leads to Self Realization, to the very deepest samadhi, wherein you, in a sense, go within one atom of that pure energy and into the Primal Source of all. There is nothing you can say about it, because there are no areas of the mind in which the Self God exists, and yet, but for the Self the mind would not exist. It is unspeakable Truth, known only by the knower. Satguru Yogaswami put it simply, "First step, second step, third step—and so on, till you come to the top." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Find a quiet place. Put a flower in front of you and concentrate on it. Try to think ten consecutive thoughts about the flower without interruption. Keep trying. Keep trying. Aum.

LESSON FOUR

Willpower, the Fuel of Attainment

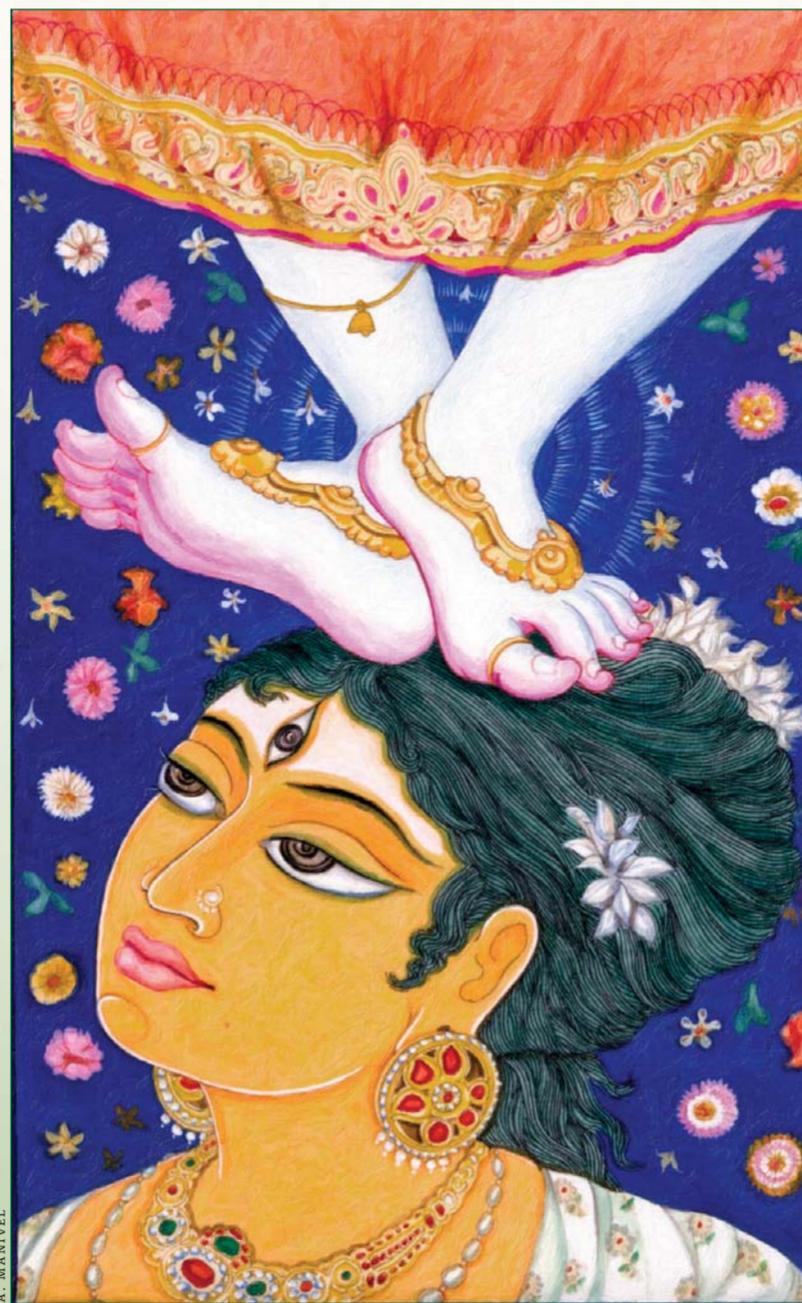


An indomitable will is required on the spiritual path. Here a man has vowed to build a temple atop a remote hill. Each stone must be carried from the river below. Only his willpower sustains the effort.

SEEKER: I HAVE BEEN MEDITATING FOR YEARS, but with little success. Why? **GURUDEVA:** Unfoldment doesn't take a lot of time. It just takes a lot of willpower. Someone with minimal willpower may sit at attention and concentrate and meditate every day for years and years and years and constantly be distracted and constantly be unsuccessful. Another person can be extremely successful in a short period of time because he has willpower. The previous way he lived his life gave a great strength to his will, and he goes soaring within on that power. Will is the fuel which carries awareness through all areas of the mind. It is that spiritual quality which makes all inner goals a reality. The will has to be cultivated, just like you would cultivate a garden. The energies have to all be flowing, in a sense, through one channel, so that everything you do is satisfying, complete, beautiful. **SEEKER:** How can I strengthen my willpower? **GURUDEVA:** The more willpower you use, the more you have to use. It is an unlimited power within you. Finish each job that you begin. Keep each promise that you make. Fulfill each plan that you have set in motion, provided it is true, kind, helpful and fulfills a need. The right thing for you to do may perhaps be the hardest. This, then, is the very thing you should impel yourself to accomplish. Do this and experience your will becoming stronger and every part of your nature responding beautifully. Do a little bit more than you think you are able to do. That also exercises the will. Every time you exercise your will, you strengthen it. Yogaswami told devotees, "Resolve and act. Whatever you do, do it with all your might." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Pick a task that you have left unfinished for a long time and resolve to complete it. Schedule the time, then stick with great determination to your plan and complete the project even better than expected. Aum.

LESSON FIVE

Superconscious Mind Of Light

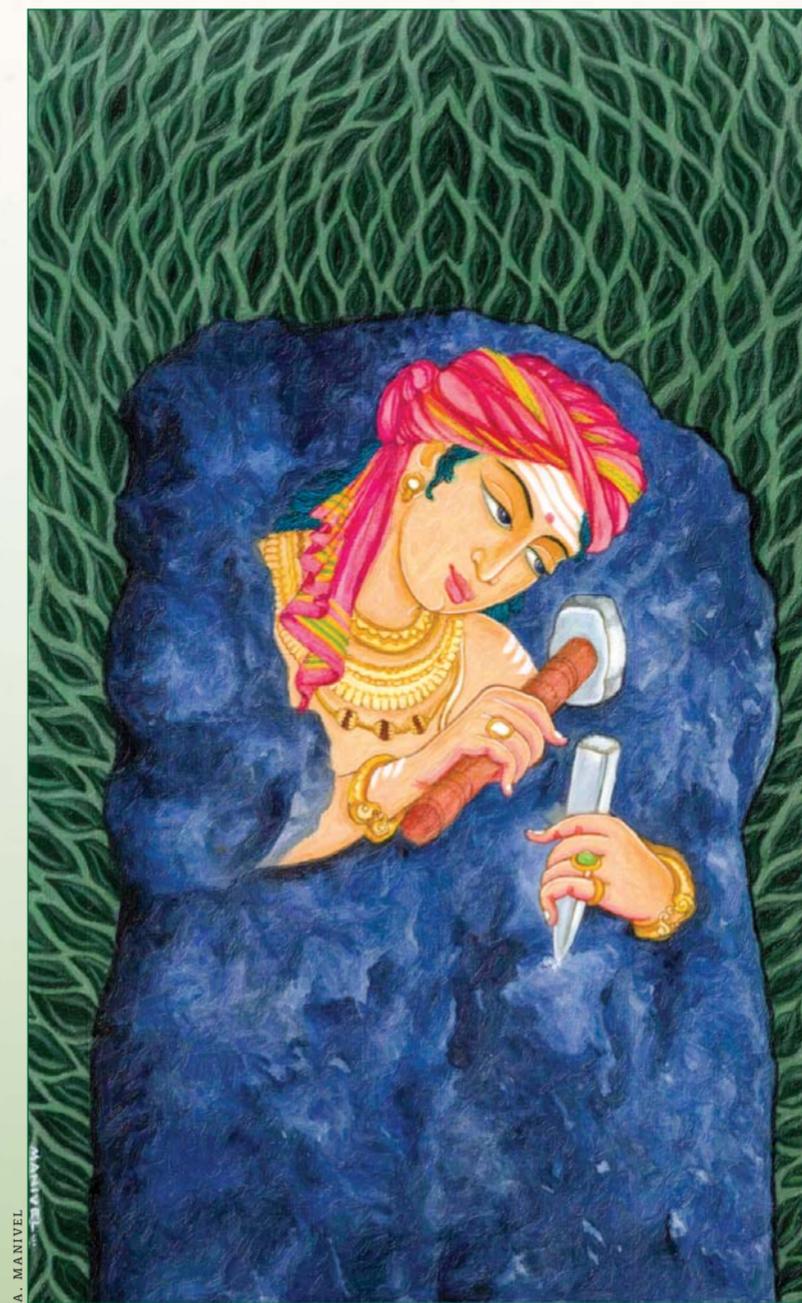


As the superconscious awakens, the seeker's third eye, the ajna chakra, reveals a world of light and sound, inner peace and mystical experience. This woman inwardly sees Siva dancing on her head.

SEEKER: WHAT IS THE SUPERCONSCIOUS mind? **GURUDEVA:** Out of Parasiva, Absolute Reality, ever comes the first manifestation of mind—superconsciousness or infinite knowing. The superconscious mind is the mind of the soul—the mind of God Siva. The superconscious mind is the most wonderful area of the mind that there is, but we're not always aware in the superconscious mind, because we're generally in the subsuperconscious, aware of the conscious mind. Or we are aware of our own subconscious mind or that of another. But the more we detach awareness from subconscious binds, from conscious-mind attachments, the more we become superconscious. The superconscious acts in the now. All superconscious knowing comes to you intuitively, in a flash out of the nowhere. Intuition is more direct than reason and far more accurate. **SEEKER:** How do we know when we are superconscious? **GURUDEVA:** When we feel as if we are living totally in the moment, when we subconsciously identify ourselves as an intense, vibrating entity of the eternal now, that is superconsciousness. Occasionally, in deep meditation we see the head filled with clear white light. That is superconsciousness. When you are superconscious, you may see yourself as pure life force flowing through people, through trees, through everything. When you are in contemplation, so engrossed in the energies within you, you dynamically feel that peace of the central source of all energy. You realize that you are the source of all energy, the center of all consciousness. That, too, is superconsciousness. Satguru Yogaswami explained, "The source of knowledge is mine. The key of existence lies in the palm of my hand." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Sit quietly in meditation. Relax your body, regulate your breathing and seek the light within your head. This light which lights your thoughts is the light of superconsciousness. Aum.

LESSON SIX

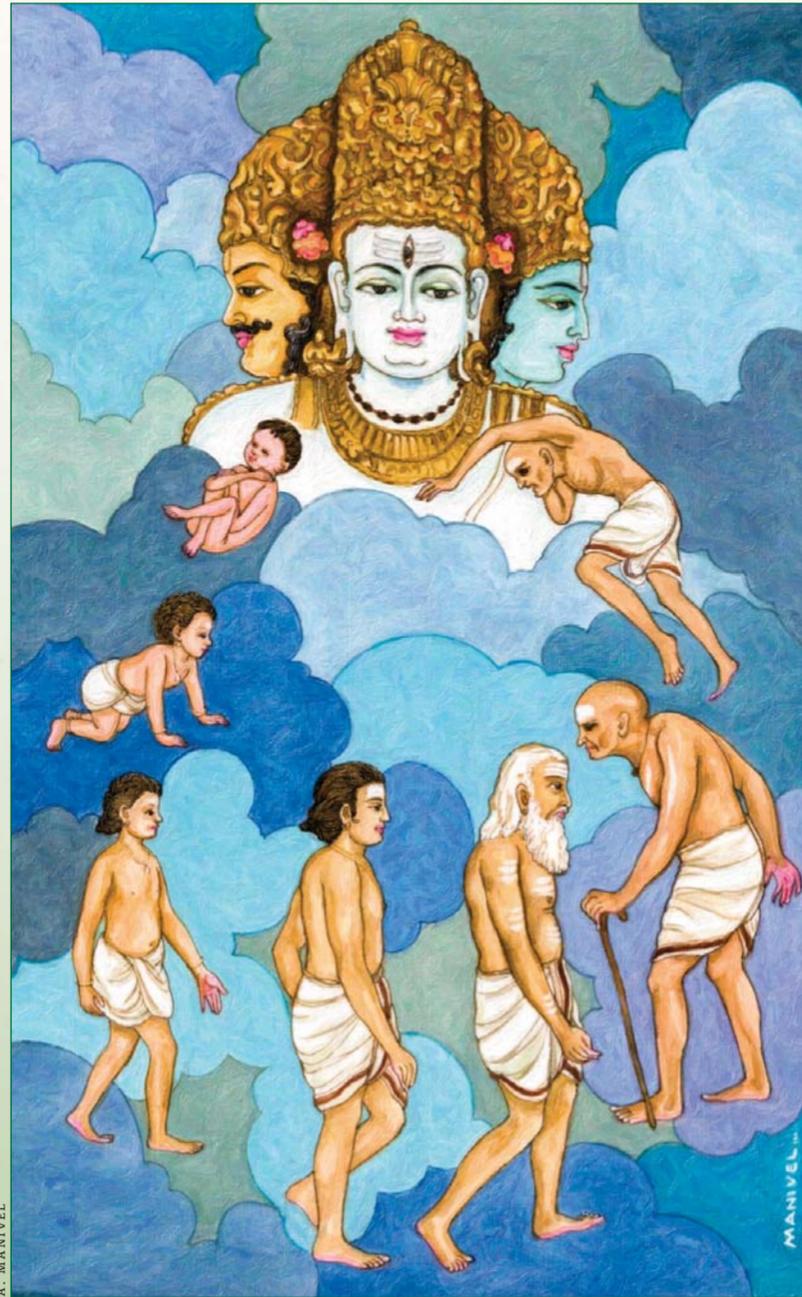
Karma: Rules of the Game



Each soul is responsible for his own karma, a concept symbolized here by a sculptor's carving himself out of a granite stone, just as we create experiences through our thoughts, words and deeds.

SEEKER: WHAT IS KARMA? **GURUDEVA:** Karma is the law of cause and effect. Every action that we perform in life, every thought that we think, has its reaction. People often ask, "Why is this happening to me? It doesn't seem fair!" Were they able to observe more deeply, they would see all the ingredients that came together out of the past to create the conditions they are passing through in the now. They would observe that every action is like planting a seed. The fruit of that seed, harvested perhaps years or lifetimes later, is reaction. We face those reactions through other people and through our own actions. We throw a boomerang. It travels out into the air, turns around and comes back to us with equal force. In a similar way, our actions and thoughts, be they loving or hateful, set up patterns of reaction that return to us with equal force. **SEEKER:** How should we face our karma? **GURUDEVA:** By applying the wisdom of the sages to the experiences encountered in life, we resolve our karma rather than create new karma. By gaining conscious control of thoughts and attitudes, by right action, we can control the flow of karma. Then we stop creating uncomplimentary karma and can consciously face the reactions of the past without the confusion of additional day-to-day reactions. Face each challenge by telling yourself, "This is the karma I was born to face. I came here to spiritually unfold, to face and accept the karmas of this and all my past lives." Life is the classroom. Karma is the teacher. Yogaswami summarized, "The present is the result of past action. Man is the architect of his future." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Today, each time you find yourself mentally blaming others, stop. Let go of all feelings of resentment, helplessness and injustice. Act on this knowledge: all that comes to you, good and bad alike, is self-created and contains a lesson to be learned. Learn the lesson and be free. Aum.

Reincarnation: Ocean of Lives



Here Siva, as Trimurti, guides the reincarnation process as a soul is embodied, grows to manhood, then declines into old age and death, to be reborn again to experience the world and evolve.

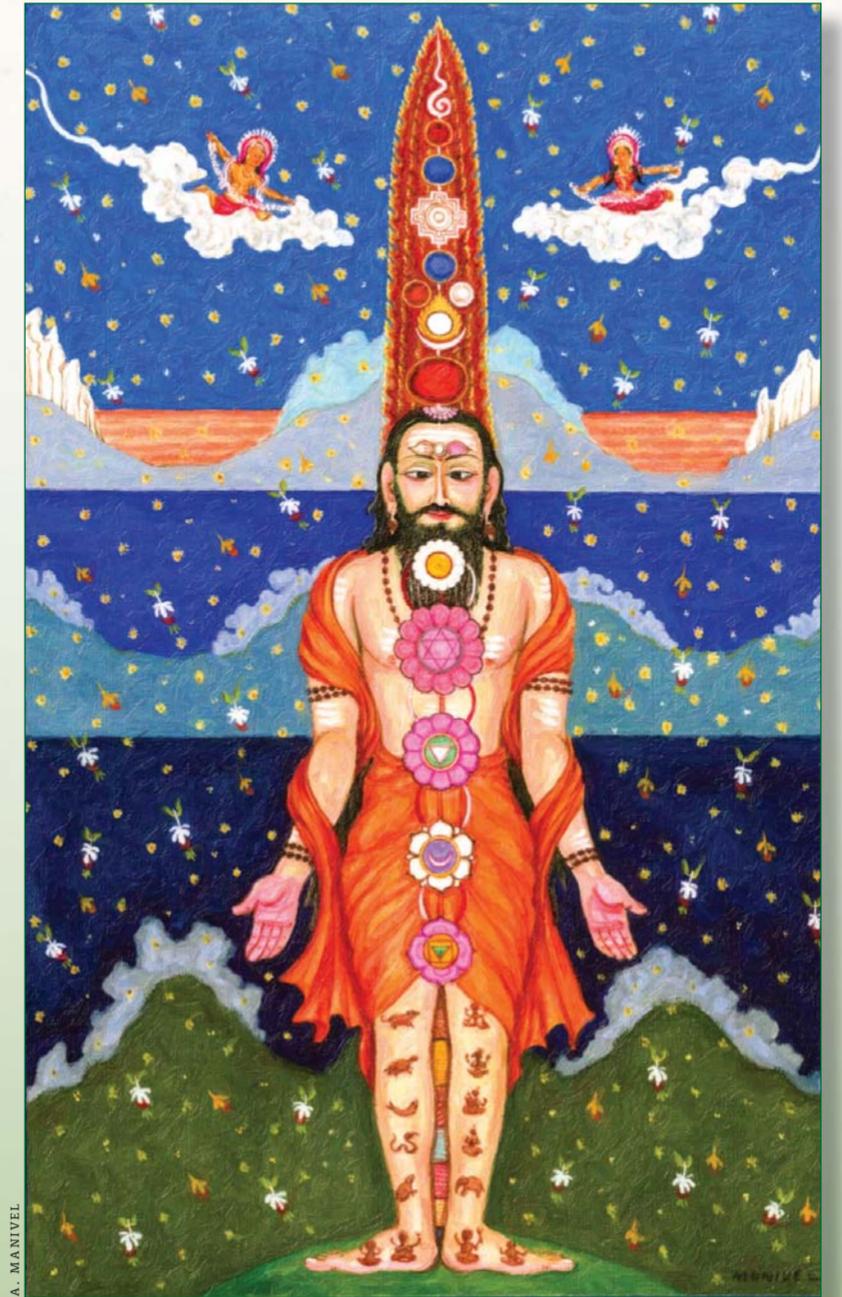
SEEKER: WHAT IS REINCARNATION?

GURUDEVA: Reincarnation is the natural cycle of birth, death and rebirth. We are not the body in which we live, but the immortal soul which inhabits one body after another on the Earth during its evolutionary journey. Like the caterpillar's transformation into a butterfly, physical death is a most natural transition for the soul, never to be feared. The belief in reincarnation brings a great sense of peace. Knowing that the soul evolves from life to life gives a remarkable insight into the human condition and appreciation for all men in all stages of spiritual development. **SEEKER:** What happens when we die? **GURUDEVA:** We simply step out of the physical body and we're in our astral body, and we carry on as usual in various refined force fields according to where we are in the mind at the time of death. There we see people who have also "died" and others who have left their physical body while sleeping. On the astral plane we relive many experiences of our earthly life, creating for ourself heavens or hells. When our lessons have been learned and our reactions resolved, we slough off the astral body, then enter a new physical body. The conditions we reincarnate in depend on how we have conducted ourself through our many lives and what we were thinking about when we died. The actions and reactions we set in motion in our last life form the tendencies in the next. Reincarnation ceases when all karmas have been resolved, dharma has been well performed and God fully realized. This is known as moksha, or liberation from rebirth. Yogaswami lamented, "Oh, the endless anxieties of endless births! When will these delusions end?" **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Observe in one day: a pregnant woman, a newborn infant, children at school, a wedding, an elderly person and a cemetery. Encompass the complete cycle the soul passes through, life after life. Aum.

SEEKER: WHAT ARE THE CHAKRAS?

GURUDEVA: The chakras are great force centers or nerve ganglia in the physical body, the astral body and the body of the soul. When inwardly perceived, they are vividly colorful and can be heard. Chakra is a Sanskrit word meaning "wheel," as these are spinning circles of energy and regions of mind power. The muladhara, the foundation or "root center" at the base of the spine, governs memory. Above it are six chakras which control reason, willpower, cognition, divine love, divine sight and illumination, respectively. Below the muladhara are seven lower chakras, realms of the instinctive, animal nature, making fourteen major chakras in all. **SEEKER:** Are the chakras connected one to another? **GURUDEVA:** The chakras are interconnected by three major psychic nerve currents or nadis through which flow all forces of life and mind. The ida nadi is passive-feminine; the pingala nadi is aggressive-masculine. Directly through the spinal cord runs the sushumna nadi like a shaft of pure energy. When ida and pingala are balanced, the chakras all spin at the same velocity, and awareness is released to soar within. This is accomplished through hatha yoga, controlled breathing and meditation. Finally, through sustained states of intense contemplation, the cosmic energy within sushumna, the kundalini or "serpent power," which is at this time playing up and down the spine like a thermometer, rises to the 1,008-petaled chakra at the top of the head, and we go beyond consciousness and become the Self, in total Self Realization. Yogaswami prayed, "O, cave-dwelling shakti, universal energy lying coiled and dormant within me, arise!" **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Study the people around you. Try to intuit who is functioning primarily in the higher chakras of love and understanding and who is functioning in the lower, instinctive animal nature. Aum.

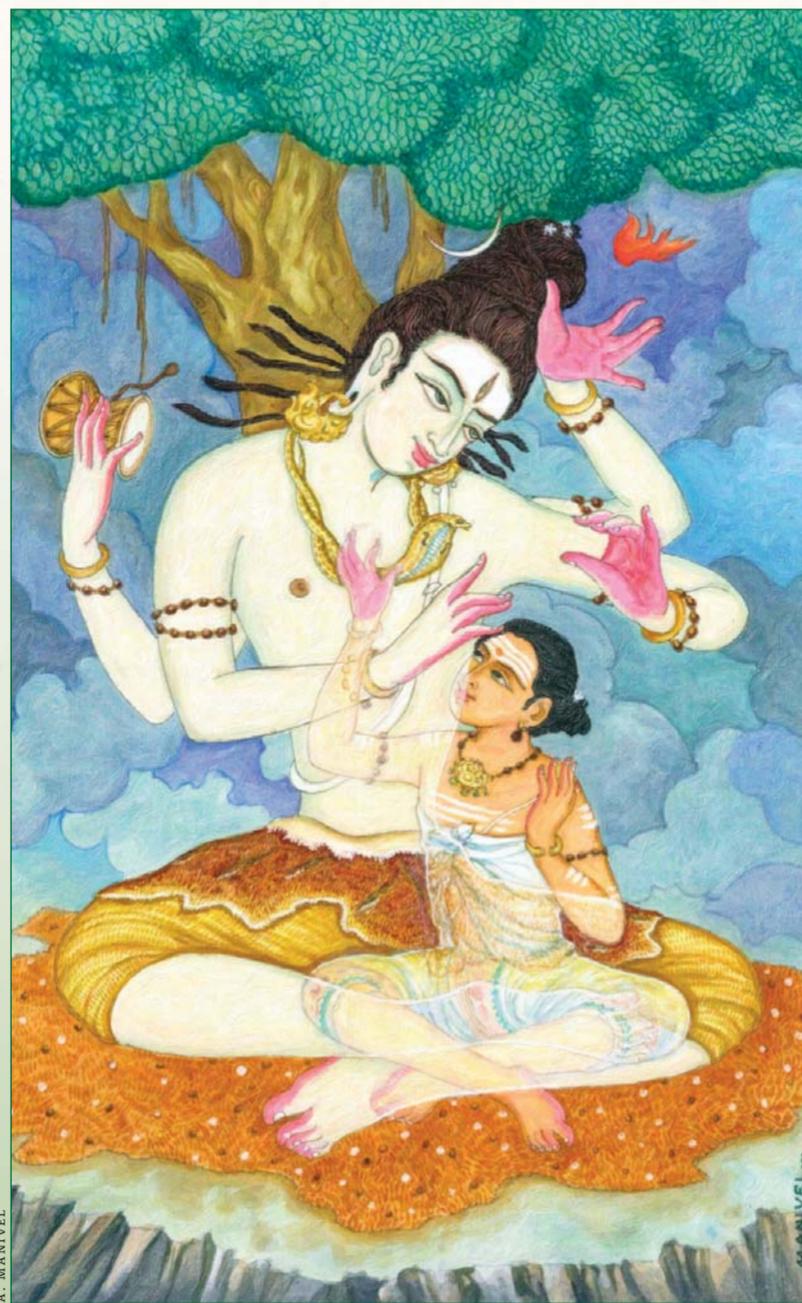
Chakras, Centers Of Consciousness



Seven instinctive chakras are depicted here in the legs and feet, seven central chakras, and seven subtle chakras above the head. Their realms of consciousness are shown as shaded bands.

LESSON NINE

Our Great God Siva

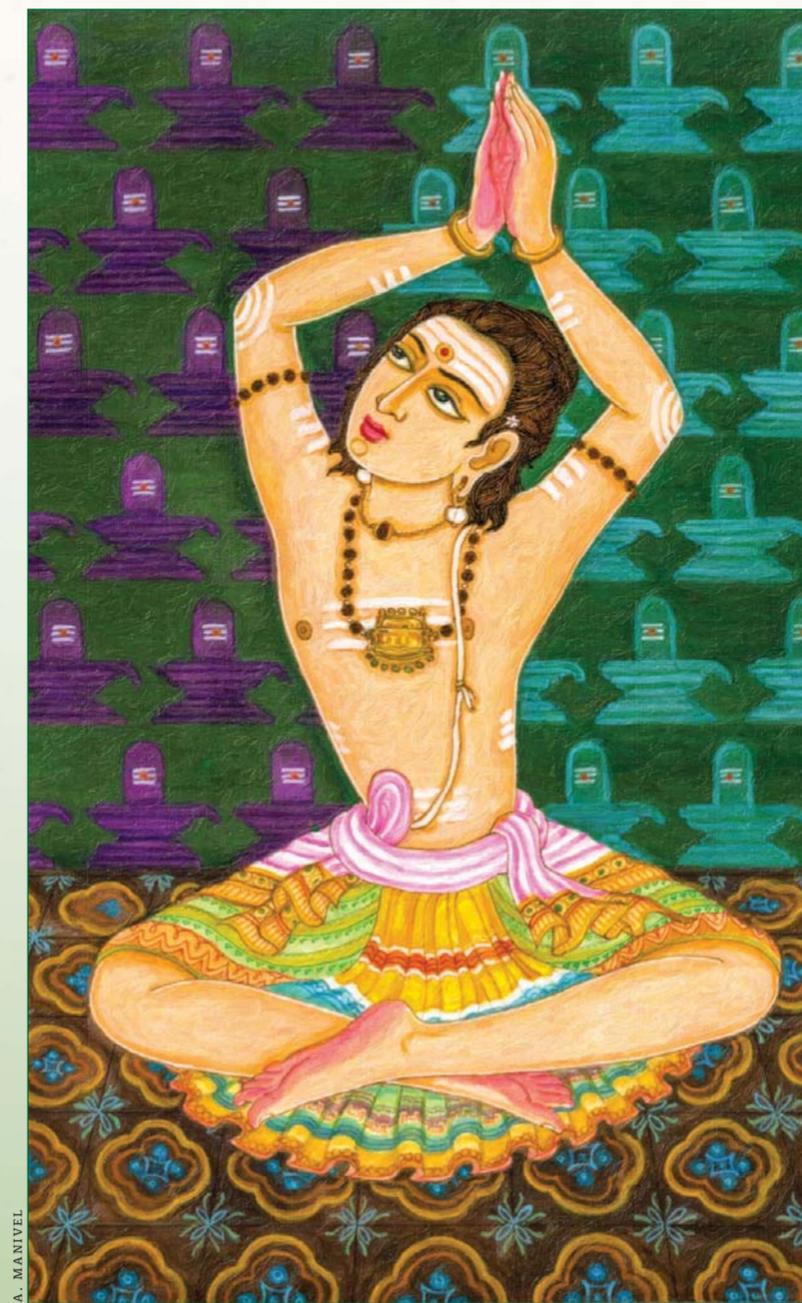


Every soul's ultimate goal, in this life or another, is to realize its oneness with God. That union is depicted here as Lord Siva and a jnani meet and merge beneath a banyan tree.

SEEKER: WHO IS LORD SIVA? **GURUDEVA:** Lord Siva is God, the uncreated Supreme Being. My satguru, Sage Yogaswami, proclaimed: "The Universal One is Siva. That without place or name is Siva. The splendor known as Aum is Siva. That which has no form is Siva. That which is the Truth is Siva." Lord Siva, God, was never created. He has existed forever and has created all things, including everybody's individual soul. God Siva is a one Being, yet we understand Him in three perfections. Parasiva, Absolute Reality, timeless, formless, spaceless, is His unmanifest first perfection. His second perfection, Pure Consciousness, or Parashakti, is all-pervasive, infinite, and is found in every action and particle of His creation. His third perfection, Primal Soul, Parameshvara, is our personal Lord and Ruler of all three worlds. It is comforting to know that Lord Siva is the Divine Father/Mother. That close to us, that watchful and that loving is our great God Siva. **SEEKER:** Does God pervade everything? **GURUDEVA:** Infinite is Siva's all-pervasive, superconscious, exalted mind. His Being is within every animate and inanimate form—simultaneously, all at once, in every inner and outer universe. This unbounded Satchidananda has neither beginning nor end. All is within it. It is within all. Satguru Yogaswami proclaimed: "You will know Siva if you remain still. God is Love. God is Truth. God is all things. God is everywhere. The whole world depends on an unknowable energy for all its activities. It is all the same whether this energy is called God or given any other name." Yogaswami intoned, "Everywhere, all the time and in everyone you can hear the voice of God." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Try to find one place where God Siva is not. Search everywhere, in all seriousness, throughout your home and outside as well. In the process, see if you can prove to yourself that God Siva is All and in all. Aum.

LESSON TEN

Our Pristine, Immortal Soul

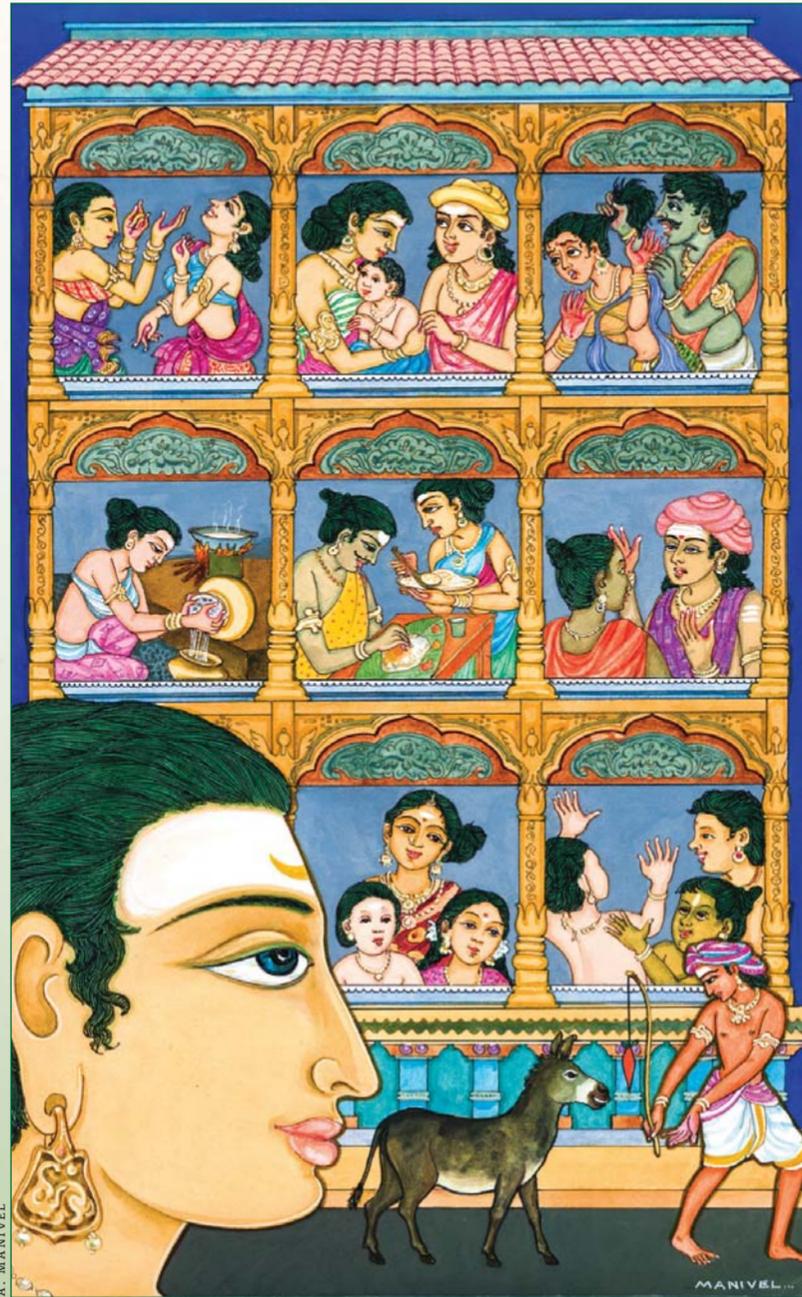


This awakened soul, hands lifted in worshipful awareness, contemplates the formless Parasiva (the purple Sivalingas) and Siva in form as Maheshvara and Satchidananda (the blue Lingas).

SEEKER: WHAT IS THE NATURE OF OUR SOUL? **GURUDEVA:** Our individual soul is the immortal and spiritual body of light that animates life and reincarnates again and again until all necessary karmas are created and resolved and its essential unity with God is realized. Our individual soul is the creation of God Siva and the source of all our higher functions, including knowledge, will and love. Our soul is neither male nor female. It is that which never dies, even when the four outer sheaths or bodies—physical, pranic, instinctive and mental—change form and perish, as they naturally do. The soul body is our innermost form. We are not the physical body, mind or emotions. We are the immortal soul. **SEEKER:** Does the soul actually grow and mature? **GURUDEVA:** For the sake of understanding the mysteries of the soul, we distinguish between the soul body and its essence. As a soul body, we are individual and unique, different from all others. At the core of our subtle soul body is Satchidananda, or immanent Love; and at the core of that is Parasiva, or transcendent Reality. These are the nucleus of the soul, which does not change or evolve. They are eternally perfect and one with God Siva. We may liken the soul body to an acorn, which contains the mighty oak tree but is a small seed yet to develop. The soul body matures through experience, evolving through many lives into the splendor of God Siva ultimately realizing Him totally. Even when God Realization is attained, the soul body continues to evolve in this and other worlds until it merges with the Primal Soul as a drop of water merges with its source, the ocean. My guru affirmed, "It will not be an overstatement if I say that man is God." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Perform this simple exercise. Lift your arm, then lower it again. Ponder, "Is not the energy within my arm the same energy of Siva within all living things?" Aum.

LESSON ELEVEN

The World We Live in



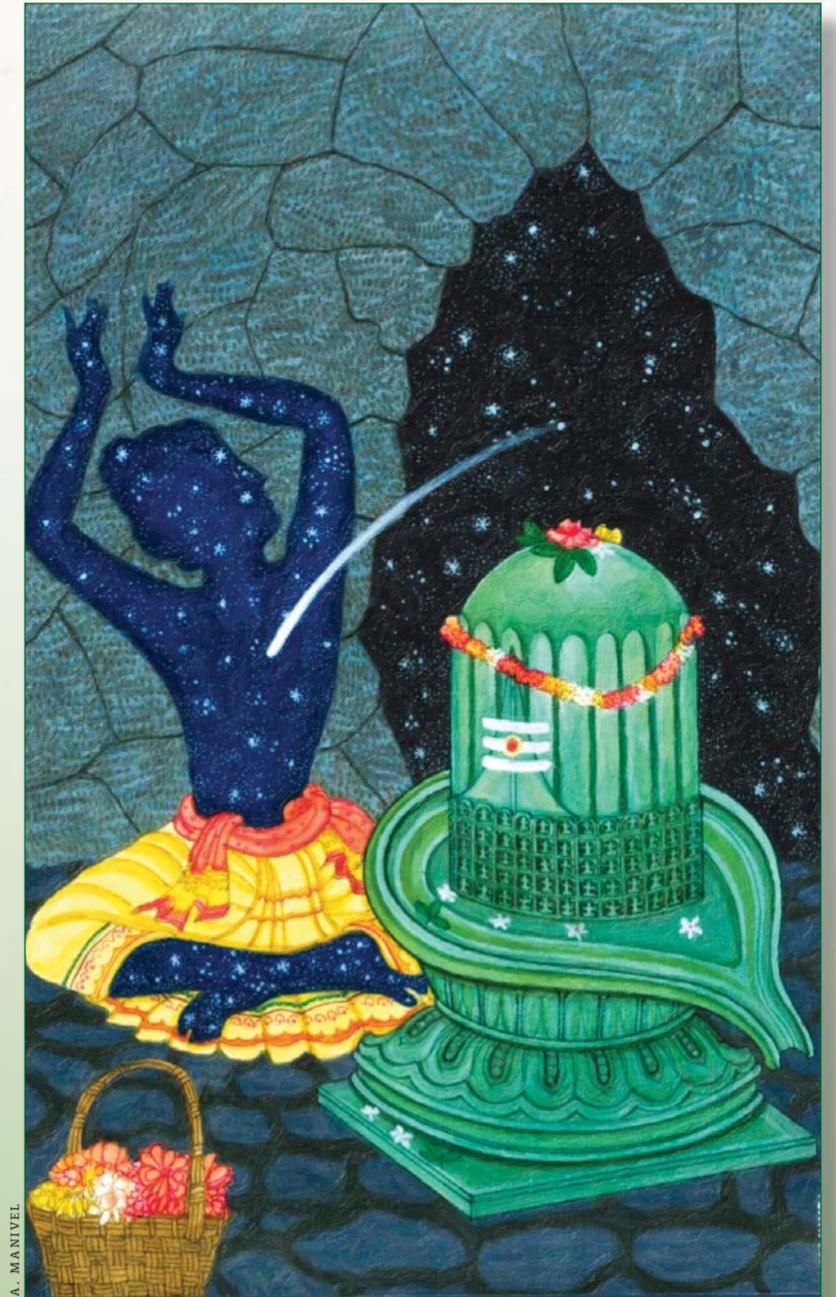
A woman reflects on the world she lives in, a life filled with family, meals, gatherings, duties, conversations, sorrows, celebrations, discoveries, responsibilities and varied relationships.

SEEKER: WHERE DID THIS WORLD COME from? Is it real? **GURUDEVA:** Lord Siva created this and numberless other worlds of relative reality for souls to inhabit as they evolve. This world, and indeed all of existence, is maya, the principle of matter. While God is absolutely real, His emanated world is relatively real. That does not mean that the universe is illusory or nonexistent, but that it is impermanent and subject to change. It is an error to say that the universe is mere illusion, for it is entirely real when experienced in ordinary consciousness, and its existence is required to lead us to God. Therefore, we call it relatively real to distinguish it from the unchanging Reality.

SEEKER: Why is there so much suffering and misery in the world? **GURUDEVA:** The nature of the world is duality. It contains each thing and its opposite: joy and sorrow, goodness and evil, love and hate. Through experience of these, we learn and evolve, finally seeking Truth which transcends all opposites. The world is the place where our destiny is shaped, our desires fulfilled and our soul matured. In the world we grow from ignorance into wisdom, from darkness into light and from a consciousness of death to immortality. My satguru said, "The whole world is an ashrama in which all are doing sadhana." We must love the world, which is God's creation. The world is a glorious place, not to be feared. It is a gracious gift from Siva Himself, a playground for His children in which to interrelate young souls with the old—the young experiencing their karma while the old hold firmly to their dharma. The young grow; the old know. Yogaswami explained, "The world is a training college. Some are in kindergarten. Some are in the B.A. class." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Observe a youth playing, a mother teaching her child, a worker at his task. Strive to see the world as a classroom of experience, an "ashrama in which all are doing sadhana." Aum.

LESSON TWELVE

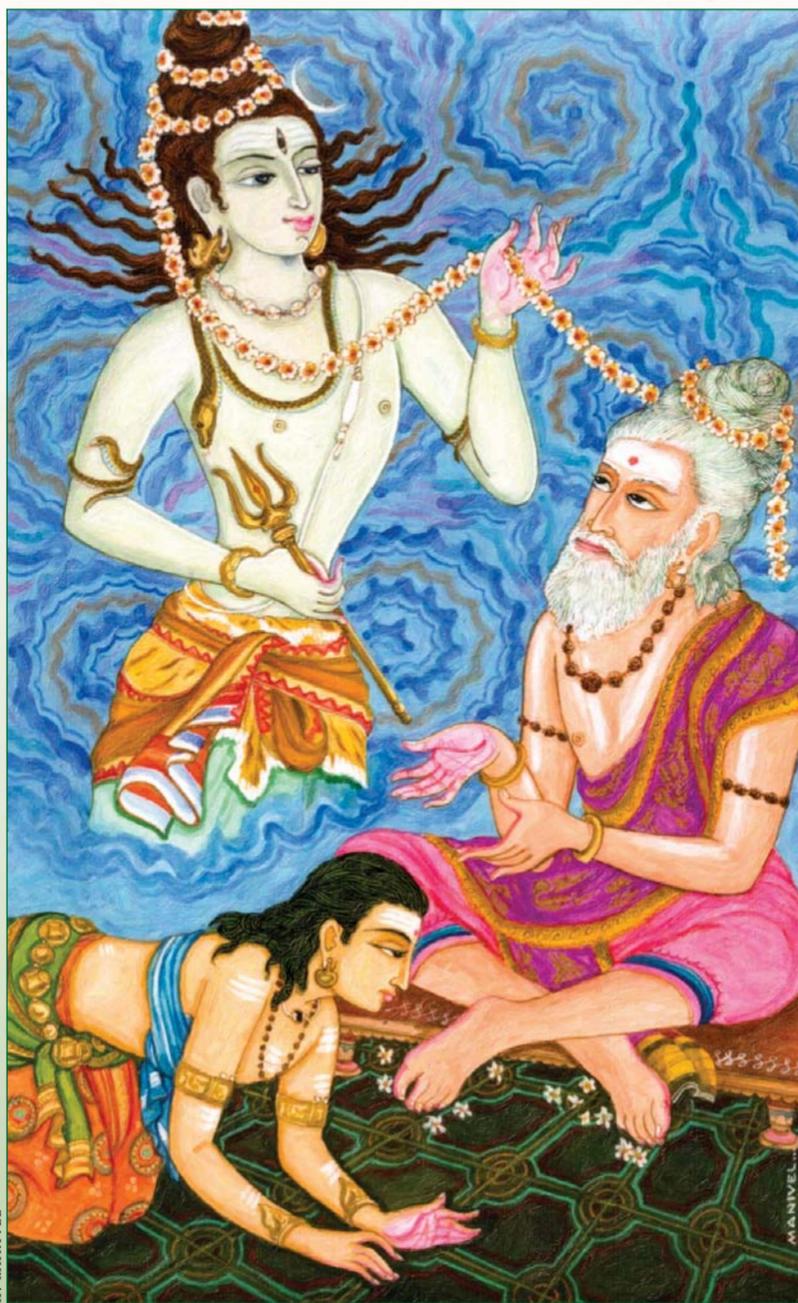
Self Realization: Life's Ultimate Goal



In a mountain cave a yogi, after meditating and worshipping, transcends his mind, realizes the Self God and, elated, holds both hands high knowing he is one with Siva's perfect universe.

SEEKER: WHAT IS LIFE'S ULTIMATE GOAL? **GURUDEVA:** The goal is to realize God Siva in His absolute or transcendent state, which when realized is your own ultimate state—timeless, formless, spaceless Truth. That Truth lies beyond the thinking mind, beyond the feeling nature, beyond action or any movement of the mind. Being, seeing this Truth then gives the correct perspective, brings the external realities into perspective. They then are seen as truly unrealities, yet not discarded as such. This intimate experience must be experienced while in the physical body. One comes back and back again into flesh simply to realize Parasiva. Nothing more. Yet, the Self, or Parasiva, is an experience only after it has been experienced. Yet, it is not an experience at all, but the only possible nonexperience, which registers in its aftermath upon the mind of man. **SEEKER:** What is the path to the Self? **GURUDEVA:** In each birth we must fulfill more goals leading to the one ultimate goal which after many births well lived will loom before us as the only goal worthy of striving for in this lifetime. We know the Self, which is God and which is ourself, only when we enter the guha, the cave within, as a way of life, not just a temporary, experimental, psychological trial. We know the Self within ourself only when we fully turn into ourselves through concentration, meditation and contemplation, and then sustain the resulting samadhi of Satchidananda in hopes of finding—determined to find—That which cannot be described, That which was spoken about by the great rishis, Parasiva, beyond a stilled mind. My satguru proclaimed, "When the mind and the soul become one with God, it is samadhi." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Sit and visualize above you nothing, below you nothing and all around you nothing, and try to dissolve yourself into that nothingness. Thus deepen your understanding of the Self. Aum.

Satguru: the Spiritual Guide



Life's highest grace is to see, to know, to hear and to commune with a living satguru. A devotee falls at his guru's feet, prayerful that training, protection and perhaps initiation may come.

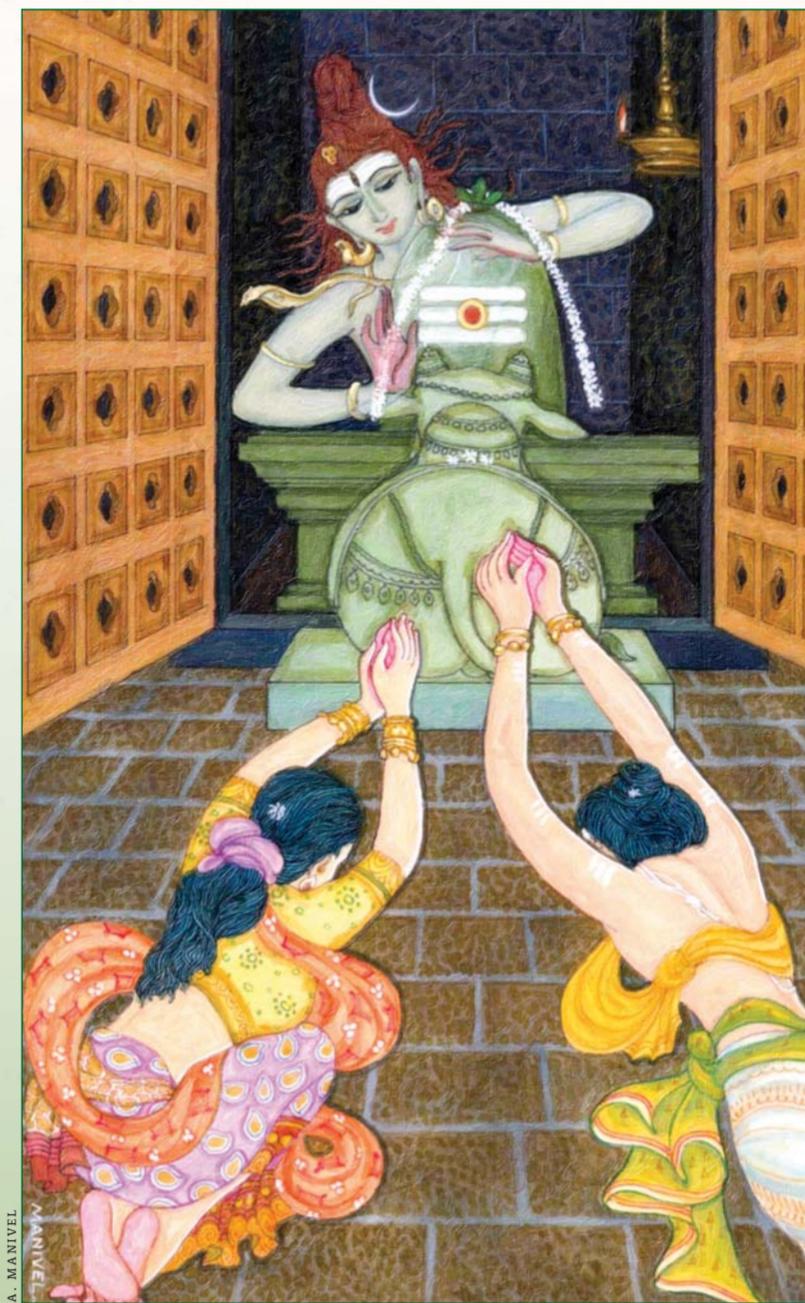
SEEKER: WHAT IS A SATGURU? **GURUDEVA:**

There are many kinds of gurus, who are Lord Siva's instruments in lifting the veils of ignorance to where knowledge exists in its pristine purity—gurus of music, gurus of art, gurus of dance, gurus of philosophy, but most important is the satguru, the yoga guru, the siddha guru of enlightenment. A satguru is a fully matured and realized soul who actively helps us in our religious life and personal unfoldment. Not all gurus are satgurus. The satguru is the jnani, the enlightened being who sees beyond duality and knows the oneness of all. He is the illumined one, filled with light, filled with love. He sees God everywhere, in all men. He is the one who simply is and who sees no differences. That is his difference. **SEEKER:** Does one really need a guru? **GURUDEVA:** With rare exceptions, a guru is necessary to guide the aspirant on the path as far as he is willing and able to go in his current incarnation. The guru is needed because the mind is cunning and the ego is a self-perpetuating mechanism. It is unable and unwilling to transcend itself by itself. Therefore, one needs the guidance of another who has gone through the same process, who has faithfully followed the path to its natural end and therefore can gently lead us to God within ourselves. It is the satguru's job to inspire, to assist, to guide and sometimes even impel the disciple to move a little further toward the Self of himself than he has been able to go by himself. Remember, the satguru will keep you on the path, but you have to walk the path yourself. Satguru Yogaswami taught, "The company of great souls is necessary. Love of the satguru is most praiseworthy." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Seek out and have the darshana, "holy sight," of a special person who lives a sacred life. Afterwards stop and carefully explore the affect that his or her presence had on your mind and awareness. Aum.

SEEKER: WHAT IS BHAKTI YOGA?

BODHINATHA: Bhakti yoga is the yoga of devotion. It is the practice of external worship which begins by attending pujas, ceremonial worship, at the temple and later develops into conducting simple rituals in one's own home shrine. The goal of bhakti yoga is to awaken a deep devotion, a heartfelt love of God that transforms our nature, giving us a softened, mellow heart. A devotee well established in the practice of bhakti yoga profoundly enjoys going to the temple and absorbing the purifying and uplifting blessings that come from the Deity during the puja. **SEEKER:** How does bhakti yoga relate to meditation? **BODHINATHA:** Based on his many years of teaching experience, Gurudeva came to the conclusion that it is a waste of the guru's time to give training in meditation before devotion has been awakened through bhakti yoga. Gurudeva found, time and again, that the attainments achieved in meditation were not sustained except where a foundation of devotion had first been established. One of the reasons is that meditation makes us more aware of our subconscious mind, including any unresolved problems with our family and our own personal ego. Becoming aware of such matters can be quite disturbing. If we are strong in our bhakti yoga, then the blessings we feel when we go to the temple uplift and console us during these challenging times. If we are not, then facing these problems can be very difficult and cause us to give up regular meditation altogether. Yogaswami enjoined, "Cherish the Lord in the recesses of your heart. Everything everywhere is subject to His Will." **TODAY'S CHALLENGE:** Gather eleven flowers in a basket or bowl. Select a picture or statue of Lord Ganesha that inspires you. Offer the flowers one at a time to the image while chanting the mantra "Aum Sri Ganeshaya Namah." Visualize Him blessing you, and feel your devotion flooding out to Him. Aum.

Bhakti: the Yoga of Devotion



A man and wife prostrate before God Siva. This devotional salutation subdues the ego, strengthens humility and opens the doors of rapport between the worshiper and the worshipful.