The Way of Knowledge explains Enlightenment. Clarifying the ancient wisdom tradition of Advaita Vedanta, it points the way to deep spiritual knowledge. Meditations and "ponder points" offer an experiential method of understanding this advanced philosophy.

The Way of Knowledge, Meditation Realization Nonduality

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Self Exploration

here are many ways to attain union with the Divine Reality. Devotion, surrender, physical and energy disciplines are a few of the ways. Advaita Vedanta is the Way of Knowledge. It has been called a religion, a philosophy and/or a science. This ancient wisdom has been cherished and freely given by those who have realized it. It is a straightforward approach to find an answer to the most basic question of all. What is the most basic question that human beings ask? Why am I here? This is a good question, but before you can find an answer to this important question, you have to first ask an even greater question. Who wants to *know*? Who is the one that is asking the question? Even more basic than the question, "Why am I here?" or "Why does anything exist?" is the question, "Who am I?" The Way of Knowledge is an answer to all life's mysteries. Your knowledge of everything around you rests on your knowledge of yourself. If you know the secret of "I" there is union with the Divine Reality.

The Way starts with one premise. Existence. The only thing you know for sure: your own existence. If you ponder deeply, there is no way around the fact that the only thing you can *really* be sure of is your own existence. You know you exist without any outside information. Knowing you exist is a *direct* experience common to everyone. You know you exist without even

thinking about it. The Way of Knowledge is a deep exploration into what that existence is.

Ponder Point: Take five minutes to simply feel your existence, whatever that means to you. If you start to think about it, return to simply feeling.

You may have heard the words, "The truth is inside you." This is most profound. In the Way of Knowledge you look inside yourself for the truth. The Way of Knowledge appeals to those who are deeply curious about why they exist. You will find out not only why you exist, but you will know the real meaning of existence. You arrive at the deepest most profound knowledge of existence itself. This is not an intellectual knowledge. In the Way of Knowledge true meaning is found *directly* by the one who wants to know. Ultimately the truth *is* the one who wants to know. It is called enlightenment. In the Way of Knowledge, you know the truth and you *are* what you know.

Nonduality

Nonduality literally means not two. Existence, or the whole of everything, is singular; there is only one existence. This means that all selves are really the same

Self. Just One. One. Without an other. Without any other thing inside of it or around it. One.

Looking at nature one sees unity. When the world is observed, it is clear that things change into other things. A drop of rain may be absorbed by a carrot, eaten by a rabbit, who is eaten by a wolf, whose body goes back to the soil, which eventually washes to the ocean and evaporates into the air and becomes a drop of rain, etc. All life from atomic and cellular levels to the incalculable universes is interconnected to such a degree that it is fairly obvious to those who take the time to look, that everything is made of the same stuff. Forms change and turn into other forms, mutually interdependent. Even in the world of gross manifestation, all is One. If this is clear to you, you are well on your way to enlightenment.

Ponder Point: Feel how all manifest forms, from a molecule to the galaxies, are interconnected.

The term nonduality takes this concept of unity even further and asserts that there is *only* one. The "all" (all the individual forms that are constantly morphing and changing into each other) does not actually exist as separate parts but does exist as the One. The one "thing" that existence is, cannot really be divided. Things (forms) may *seem to be* separate and interconnected but

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in actuality there is only One. It has no particular form since it is all-pervading. Nonduality is formless.

If you can see that everything is interconnected, you can also understand that everything has got to be one whole thing. Everything that exists is really the same existence. *Same exact one*. This is truly wonderful.

The Way of Knowledge urges you to explore who you really are and suggests that your true nature is nondual, undivided and utterly complete. When you take up this inquiry perhaps you will discover you are much more than who or what you think you are. Perhaps you are not a separate entity in a bewildering world, but are totally connected to every single thing. Perhaps a fleshy human form is not who you are. Perhaps all the universes are actually inside you. You may even discover that who you really are *is* the whole. You are the one perfect Self. When you know that who you really are is this nondual whole, it is called enlightenment.

Since the essence of each person is this nondual existence, if you find out the secret of yourself, amazingly you also find out the secret of the whole. You find out the secret of God. The truth of you is the only truth there is. The truth of each individual is the truth of the whole. Knowing yourself absolutely is knowing the Absolute. Ponder Point: Consider; all is One.

Enlightenment

Enlightenment is ecstatic knowing of the truth. The truth which is known is your own truth. The truth is not something that anyone else can explain to you or give you. It is known on a deeper, more experiential level than words can convey. Enlightenment is not for special people, it is for ordinary people who yearn to know the truth. The words in this book are not to be believed - but pondered, to see if they fit for you. Then deep meditation is required in order to experience the Reality beyond form. One's search for his or her own truth should result in full and complete Knowledge, perfect happiness and deep peace. Enlightenment is complete Knowledge of the one nondual Reality not only in yourself, but *as* yourself.

It is not possible to experience this nondual Reality as long as one is confused as to who one is. When we mistakenly take ourselves to be individual entities (such as a human being) we cannot experience the nondual Self. In Advaita the ego is referred to as a mistaken identity. The ego defines the vast unlimited Self with the notion of *me*. The vast unlimited Consciousness seems to appear as a separate personal consciousness. It is like the

vast ocean defining itself as a single drop of water. Unnecessary and untrue.

When one systematically and relentlessly pursues his or her identity, no ego or separate identity is found! This is wonderful to discover. The idea that an ego was existent was actually hiding real Existence. The idea of a separate limited consciousness was hiding absolute Consciousness. Misidentification was not allowing the natural peace and happiness inherent in Self.

Advaita Vedanta names the Reality

Existence/Consciousness/ Bliss. This Reality, which is formless and eternal, reveals itself to itself when no falsely assumed ego is present. Once the confusion is cleared up as to what "I" really is, Self Knowledge or Enlightenment shines forth.

Bag o' Bones

The Way of Knowledge does not tell you who or what you are, but guides you into an experiment on yourself to deduce what your existence is. It is called an inquiry. It is questioning yourself and your assumptions about yourself. Spiritual inquiry and practice will be explained later in the book. At this point take a moment to consider the validity of yourself as a human being.

Ponder Point: Consider; "Am I a body?"

Where do you feel the sensation "myself" within the totality of now? Where exactly are you? Draw a line around "myself." Where is the edge of yourself? If your line is around the physical form, the skin, are you really sure the human body is the whole of who you are? Is the body who you were five years ago? 20 years ago? Is it the same body? Is it really you?

Is what is inside that skin completely who you are? If you cut parts of it off, is that part still you? Do you have a fit when the hairdresser throws out your hair? If you are a body, how many parts can you cut off and still be yourself?

If something is really you, it should always be you. You don't even have the same cells you had as a baby; how could you say the physical meat is who you are? The more you look into the claim that you are a human body, the more absurd the notion is. How easily you slip in and out of different identities when you lay down to sleep! You may have been an angel, a molecule or a green monster in the dream state, but when you wake up from sleep, you still insist you were a physical form lying in bed the whole time.

If you say you are inside the body, where exactly are you? In the heart, in the grey matter, in the cells? Are you in charge of all the moving and changing parts of the body? Is there someone in control of all the body's functions? Do you ever exist without a body? Would you be able to experience your body without the body itself? Perhaps you think you are some kind of a soul that is attached to the human form in some way.

Assuming that the human form is who you are is a very big assumption! For most folks it is an unconscious and uninspected assumption that is the root cause of suffering and fear. Delineating yourself inside a skin never feels right because it is not who you are! The fact that a human body is not the whole of who you are may not be perfectly clear to you at this point. But let the consideration of yourself being a bag o'bones or not spur you on to ask more questions about your identity.

Ponder point: Remember a time when you existed but you were not conscious of your body.

Ready?

The inquiry into your identity is called spiritual practice. It is not something that one dabbles in, or approaches casually. How do you know if you are ready for spiritual

practice? Suffering is the number one reason people turn to a spiritual life. Avoiding suffering and desiring happiness is a natural motive. It is the reason people do almost anything in the world. The difference in people who are ready for spiritual practice is that they have exhausted their search for relieving their suffering by worldly actions. Maybe you have tried to find happiness in many ways and never found real peace and happiness. Maybe you have manifested what you wanted in your life and it still wasn't good enough. You intuit there must be something more. If you have hit rock bottom trying to find happiness in the world you are in a good position for spiritual inquiry. There is no problem with fulfilling your worldly goals, but ultimately how fulfilling are they? Even if you are fortunate enough to get and be everything you wanted in life, is it enough? Is this real happiness?

Lasting happiness cannot be found in the world. That is just the way it is. The reason is because things in the world don't last. Everything objective including the events of life and human relationships are impermanent. You are ready for spiritual life if you long for what is permanent and ultimately fulfilling.

Ponder point: Remember something you really desired in your life -- maybe it was a job, or a house, or a relationship. Remember something you strived for and did acquire. Did the happiness of getting that thing last? Was it complete and perfect happiness? Will it last forever?

It is not wise to put off spiritual understanding until after you fulfill your worldly goals. The best time to start spiritual practice and spiritual enjoyment is always right now. Some say, woe to those who take the first step, because they will be ripped off of everything they ever believed about themselves! Some say the truth will destroy your life. What these statements refer to is that your ordinary life as a human being pales in comparison to the complete happiness and profound peace of ultimate truth.

For those of you who have done quite a bit of spiritual practice, why not finish the job? What are you waiting for? Old age? Death? When you actually *experience* what ancient scriptures and modern spiritual teachings are pointing to, you will find great freedom. If this teaching is for you, it will speak to you like cool water after being lost in the desert. When you discover that the limitless wellspring of peace and joy is actually within yourself, you will never be the same. Enlightenment is for those who are done with lifetimes. The worldly adventure is not satisfying, and the desire to continue playing as a human being has wound down. Death is the end of every human drama and death is unacceptable. It is unacceptable because we rightly intuit that something in us transcends death. The Way of Knowledge challenges the assumption that a human form of flesh, blood, and bones—the meat body - is who we are.

The ancient teaching of Advaita Vedanta asserts that everything moving, changing and impermanent is unreal and illusory, like last nights dream. This means your current life drama is no more or less than last night's dream. Are you willing to explore that possibility for yourself? At some point you are done with dreaming and you yearn to wake up. Only the dreamer (no one else can do it for you) can awaken from the dream. This book is for you who have the courage to explore your own existence; who are willing to give up all ideas about yourself and find out something wonderful; who you *really* are. There is no merit in waiting. The Reality is now.

Singular Intention

You may say you want two things, to be enlightened *and* something else. If this is your point of view, you may end

up with the something else, but not enlightenment. If you have places to go, people to meet, things to do, come back later. There is plenty of information out there on how to manifest what you want in your life. If you really want to have a great life, then that is how you will spend your time, trying to have a great life. You do have a chance of fulfilling your worldly goals if you are persistent and focused and have enough time. Still there are many unseen factors and no guarantees. Even if you have a great life, the fact that it comes to an end can feel tragic. Certainly things don't work out exactly according to your plans. Expecting your life to fulfill you inevitably ends in disappointment. It is a misunderstanding of where real happiness is.

If spiritual practice is a journey you must take, get on with it. If you are suffering then you have definitely outgrown your box. Looking to the world to fulfill your longing for truth or relieve your suffering simply does not work. Instead of changing your circumstances one more time, why not try this: turn around and look to see *whose* circumstances they are. Before trying to fix the life, find out whose life it is!

When you are ready for real happiness you will take up spiritual practice as the driving force in your life. You will have singular intention for fulfilling your own happiness, your own liberation. Ponder point: Consider what you want, not what society or anyone else thinks you should want, but what you really want. What is it that will be truly fulfilling?



Six The Illusion Of Mind Discerning the unreal from the Real et us delve deeper. Deeper still. What is the reason the nondual Self is not readily known by most people? Why are suffering ignorance, and

most people? Why are suffering, ignorance, and delusion so prevalent? The reason is mind. The definition of mind here is not a location in the head, or what is emitted from a human brain. Mind refers to all manifest experience. Sri Ramana Maharshi helps us understand by simplifying the whole matter. He explains that the whole array of human experience is just a bundle of thoughts.

That bundle of thoughts makes up *all* human experience. Everything objective is mind. Everything perceived and conceived is this bundle of thoughts. So everything most people take to be the reality, the cosmos, the world, the people, the plants etc. are made of mind. Study and contemplation of the nature of mind is key to knowing yourself. You will gracefully come to discover the difference between your real existence and your mind. Upon deep inquiry you will understand that the whole expanse of manifest form we call the world is not happening outside of a human person but is (appears to be) occurring *within* mind. Again understanding this is a matter of knowing who you are through focused self inquiry.

Advaita explains that the whole expanse of manifest form (the world) is composed of mind. The world is composed

of mind and is actually unreal, like a dream. The whole play of mind (which is a bundle of thoughts) is illusory. Illusion is unreal. Your real "identity" is the perfect nondual Self or Existence/Consciousness/Bliss and is *very real*. The truth of who you really are is very real. It is the one and only Reality. In order to know this truth it is imperative to discern the real from the unreal.

Reality Must Always Be Real

Ponder Point: What is real for you? Is it *always* real?

What makes something real? Can a thing be real for part of the time and unreal at other times? Worldly thinking would have us believe that what is real has physicality, or that what is verifiable through human senses connotes reality. Advaita proclaims that for something to be real it should *always* be real. Consider this for yourself. What kind of reality is one that comes and goes? Do you want your reality to be temporary? Do you want your reality to be based on faulty human perceptions? Have you ever believed something to be real and found out it was actually unreal or ceased to be real over time? Was that thing actually real or just appearing to be real?

Upon inspection it is clear that a fleeting reality is no reality at all. You cannot depend on something that is here one moment and gone the next. Reality can't be existing sometimes and not existent at other times. What is not existent is not real. What is real is constant. What is truly real is always real. There is never a single moment when it is not.

Likewise, a fleeting identity is no identity at all (like a dream character in a dream). If you agree that for something to be real it should always be real, then it is wise to use this criterion to inquire into your own existence. Find out what is real in your own existence by experiencing what is always present without a moment's interruption. Is your personality always present? Is your body always present?

When fully pondered it will be obvious that everything seen and experienced is temporary and fleeting and not of the Reality. This should not leave you stranded or hopeless, quite the contrary! The good news, the joyous discovery is that there is a Reality that is constant. What is real is of the nature of the Seer and not the seen. There is a Consciousness, an Existence that is aware of all the temporary appearances but is not involved in them. The Reality that is always real without a moment's cessation is who you really are.

Ponder Point: What is always existent about yourself? What is temporary? Commit to understanding what is constant in yourself. For a period of 24 hours inspect your experience, notice everything that is changing. Is there something that does not change? What in you does not change? (Note: Doing this with great intention and earnestness is sufficient for enlightenment.)

Reality Is Unchanging

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of Reality to understand is its unchanging nature. People seem willing to accept that the Self is pure consciousness and that the Self is eternal but they want the Self to be able to change. To the ego the nature of Reality appears to be change. But is the changing life experience what is real?

Consider this. Even in your experience as a person in the world there is a quality of changelessness to your actual existence. That awareness that is in the baby is the same awareness of the child, the adult, and senior. Even though the body is constantly changing and the cells are different than the ones you started out with, the feeling of *being* does not change. Your body and your personality, what we call ego, goes through all kinds of change but Real Existence remains the same. This Existence is what

is real (the one and only reality) throughout the whole lifetime.

Ponder Point: Feel how your real Existence has never changed. Simply BE.

There is no way to fully comprehend the unchanging nature of the Self without deep profound meditation. Once your inquiry becomes fruitful in the manner of being deeper than thought and beyond mind, then the unchanging nature of the Self becomes apparent. Again we are speaking of nonduality. The nature of the Self, the nature of Reality, and the truth of "T", are all one and the same. In meditation when one seeks and finds the source of "T" using the inquiry "Who am I", one is experiencing what is changeless.

Only the Reality is changeless. Everything else is fraught with endless change. The nature of duality is change. Nonduality is changeless. What is real does not change. Who you really *are* never had a beginning and will not have an end. You will never die. Existence/ Consciousness/Bliss is changeless.

Reality Is Not Dependent On Anything

Ponder Point: Is the world dependent on anything in order to exist? Are you dependent on anything to exist? Is existence itself dependent on anything else?

It stands to reason that what is real cannot be dependent on something else to be real or to exist. If that were the case then that other thing would be the source and origin of what is real and more real than the first reality and dual. Advaita teaches that there is only one sole-existent Reality. In discerning the unreal from the real, it is very useful to ponder what depends on what in order to exist. Everything that seems to exist in the world seems to depend on something else to exist. All the varied names and forms of manifest existence seem to come from something else. Cause and effect is the mainstay of worldly thinking.

The Way of Knowledge asserts that Reality is beyond the confines of (and never affected by the illusory appearance of) cause and effect. All phenomenal forms, everything that appears in the world or in dreams or in the mind is dependent on the Reality of Existence/ Consciousness/Bliss for its existence. There is no world appearance without Self, but Self is always existent with absolutely no dependence on the world. Who you really are, the Reality, the Self, did not come from anyplace or anything. It is not dependent on anything else in order to exist. The Self exists, and only the Self exists.

When you fully contemplate this matter of reality, you come to the conclusion that there can only be one real "thing." That one real thing has been called many things but can never adequately be described. That one real thing can be called Existence and it not only exists but it is Conscious. For Existence to be Conscious of Itself is Bliss.

Who you really are is eternal, changeless, and not dependent on anything, completely and utterly free. If you are not perfectly clear as to who you really are, inspect thoroughly who or what you are mistaking yourself to be. Mistaking yourself to be a separate entity creates a world of illusion.

Everything That Is Not Self Is Illusion

Since the Reality is not dependent on anything, *knowing* the Reality is not dependent on anything either. Again, knowing the Self is a *direct* experience. You don't need any special awareness or special powers to know the Self. You do not need thoughts to know the Self. You do not even need spiritual practices to know the Self. Self Knowledge is the direct experience and truth of

everyone. Everyone already is shining as the Reality. Then why is it not clear to everyone, and why all this talk of spiritual practices?

Instead of directly experiencing the reality of Self, most people are mistakenly believing themselves to be something separate. That something separate starts with the feeling of "I." That first arising of a separate "I" is the beginning of illusion. From this ego-I, all illusion occurs. Ego is simply the mistaken notion that the real Self has qualities. I am such and such. I am somebody. I have a name and a form. When that illusory somebody looks outward it starts experiencing the illusion of an environment around that somebody (the cosmos, the world, all appearances etc.)

The illusion of ego seems to create the illusion of the world. As long as an identity is assumed, there will be an environment around that entity. A duality is created between the entity (ego) and its environment. All duality is illusion, because Reality is undivided. There may be an appearance of separate parts, but such is illusion. When self inquiry is practiced correctly the illusion of the entity and its environment both disappear. The Reality of Self is immediately and directly experienced.

Consider for a moment your ego or who you *think* you are. I am such and such. *Any* quality you define yourself

by no matter how subtle is ego. Is experiencing the ego a direct experience? Who is the consciousness that is aware of this ego? Can the ego stand on its own? What is the source of ego? Self inquiry involves delving into your sense of "I." Find your own source. It is without qualities. It is directly experienced. In every moment of real self inquiry you experience Self directly without the illusion of an ego with qualities. This Knowledge is the same as Existence itself. Reality and identity return from the illusory ego to natural and joyful Existence/Consciousness. This natural egoless state is the undivided whole of Self Realization.

Practice in the Way of Knowledge is simply *recognizing the illusion as illusion* and returning to the nondual Reality (which you have never really left). So it is a matter of discerning through the inquiry "Who am I" what is real and what is illusory regarding your existence. We spoke earlier about the Real always being real, similarly the unreal is always unreal. Illusion is always unreal and can never even for a single moment be real. The nature of illusion is nonexistence. The dreamlike ego and its world have *no* reality when you discover the solid truth of who you really are.

Mind Is A Superimposition On Reality

We discussed earlier how important it is to take your meditation deep enough that you are not following your thoughts. Attention must not be toward thought, but attention should be with "I" or the experience of your own existence. You will now be able to discern clearly in your own experience what is pure Consciousness without thought. Through your meditation practice you will begin to *know* Existence/Consciousness/Bliss, free from thought. This knowledge is the experience of your real Existence. It should be very obvious to you what is the unchanging Reality and what is thought. The Reality exists without thought. Thought never exists without the Reality.

One way to apprehend the Real and the illusory unreal is to understand that all thought comes *after* Consciousness as if it were laid upon it, or superimposed upon it. If you understand that thoughts are superimposed on Consciousness in your meditation, you will also discover that the mind itself is superimposed upon Existence/Consciousness/Bliss. Ponder Point: In meditation when using the inquiry feel how *who you are* is prior to thought. Notice how each and every thought is superimposed upon Existence/Consciousness.

Ramana Maharshi often referred to the parable of the movie and the movie screen. In a movie all kinds of events happen but none of them affect the screen. There may be a blazing fire that seems real but that fire does not affect the movie screen at all. There may be people with anger in the movie, but those people and their anger never affect the movie screen. The movie screen is always constant, clean and blank and not affected by any of the movies played upon it.

The movie in the parable corresponds to mind, the mentally projected "movie" of the thoughts making up your lifetime(s) as a human being. The screen represents Consciousness ever unblemished and always free from any mental projections seemingly superimposed upon it.

What is mind? Mind is just a bundle of thoughts. Mind is all these thoughts that make up the illusion of an ego and a lifetime and a world. The whole movie is occurring in mind! All the changing and varied events that make up your story as an individual are mental projections. Being temporary and inconsistent, all that

arises in mind is illusion. But this illusion is resting upon, dependent upon, projected upon, something *very real*. Are you the character that is acting in your own movie, or are you the screen upon which all the movies are projected?

The World Is Inside You

Vedic Sages have declared, "you are not in the world, the world is inside you." What does this mean?

The *you* they are speaking of is obviously not the human being, but something much more vast and all pervasive. This declaration of the sages highlights the fact that the *you* that takes the form of a human entity is but an illusion, and the real *you* is of the nature of absolute Consciousness. It is important to not only understand the import of the words of the sages but to actually *experience* the world inside you.

You have experienced yourself free from thought in meditation. After some practice you will be enjoying long periods of the bliss of thoughtless deep meditation. In deepest meditation there is no world. In deep sleep, swoon or fainting there is no world. It is of utmost importance for serious practitioners to experience this deep thoughtless meditation. You must experience Self without an ego and without the ego's world. You can exist without the world, but can the world exist without you? Does the world ever exist, if you are not aware of it? Which is greater? Which is more real? In deep meditation, there is no separate "I" and no world, and yet Existence is. Knowing this deeply will rock your world! You know that you are not a separate human being in a world, but the world is actually occurring inside your own mind. You understand that it is you who are aware of the world, the world is not aware of you. It is you who says the world exists, and you who experiences the world. You know that you are unlimited. You know that you have always existed and will never die. You are vast and luminous and incomprehensible and the world (if it exists) is inside you.

Ponder Point: Know yourself as the vast unlimited witness of all that arises. Experience how the world does not arise unless you are conscious of it. Consider how the world depends on you for its existence. Feel the whole world within you.

For Self Realization you must be certain that you are not a little human entity inside a big world. Consciousness is not something happening inside a human brain! From that point of view it seems like the big world is happening outside you. From the point of view of a human being inside a world you are helpless and

temporary. It is important to understand without a doubt who you really are. The world is arising within Existence/Consciousness not outside of it. If you are unclear about this or if you are suffering in any way, keep with the inquiry. "Who am I?" That is really all you need to remember. Stay focused on your own existence. Do not be discouraged; there is no possibility of failure because what you seek is who you *are*. Your desire for liberation will guide you in the right direction. Begin to inquire into your existence twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Way of Knowledge explains Enlightenment. Clarifying the ancient wisdom tradition of Advaita Vedanta, it points the way to deep spiritual knowledge. Meditations and "ponder points" offer an experiential method of understanding this advanced philosophy.

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