



## **A window to your soul** by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar

We lead life through three states of consciousness — waking, dreaming and sleeping. In the waking state of consciousness, we experience the world through the five senses, be it sight, smell, touch, hearing or taste. We seek elevation and joy from these senses.

For instance, we only want to look at something that is a source of joy, not at something likely to sadden us. If any one of the senses is missing, the entire dimension of that sense is lost. One who can't hear is bereft of the whole arena of sound. Similarly, he who can't see is deprived of all the beautiful sights and colours. So the sense is more important and much bigger than the object of the sense.

Each sense has a limited capacity to enjoy — after all, how much can one see or hear or touch? However beautiful a sight, one cannot keep looking at it. The senses get tired after a short period of time. The eyes close and we want to go back into ourselves because every experience is an expense of energy.

Rated higher than the sense is the 'mind'. The mind is infinite; its desires are many. But the capacity of the senses to enjoy is small. This imbalance in the system will remain. Greed is wanting more and more sensory objects — even though a person can eat only so much, he wants all the chocolates in the world; though the amount (of money) that can be spent by an individual during a lifetime is limited, he wants all the wealth in the world. This is greed. This is what is prevalent in the world today.

Giving too much importance to sensory objects leads to greed, giving too much importance to the senses leads to lust and giving too much importance to the mind and its desires leads to delusion. We hold on to the concepts of the mind and want things to happen in a certain way. Thus, the concepts in our mind impede us from perceiving the infinite consciousness that's a part of us.

I'm not saying that the senses or the mind are bad. But we must learn to discriminate between things and be aware of what is happening at all times; that is when clarity dawns on us. This is the first step towards the higher state of consciousness.

Then fourth (or the higher) state of consciousness is somewhere in between the waking, sleeping and dreaming states; wherein we know "we are" but we don't know "where" we are. This knowledge that I "am" but I don't know "where" I am or "what" I am is called "Shiva". This state gives the deepest possible rest that one can experience. The mind becomes fresh, delicate and beautiful.

In the waking state, one is constantly engaged in looking, smelling, eating, etc. The other extreme is the sleeping state where one is completely cut off

and dull. The dullness and heaviness linger even after waking up. The more one sleeps, the duller one feels since a lot of energy is expended in sleep. Hence, the fourth state, where we are awake and yet at complete rest, is worth knowing. And we enter this state only during meditation.

### Holding on to infinity

Every cell in the body has the capacity to hold infinity. While a worm also eats and sleeps and wakes and performs its daily activities, there is no point in living like that. We must tap the full potential that nature has bestowed on us, the potential to hold infinity in every cell of the body. For that we must practise meditation regularly. It only takes few minutes every day. And once imbibed into the daily routine, meditation is no more a burden or a chore.

Meditation is like a seed. The better a seed is cultivated, the more it flourishes. Similarly, the more we practise meditation, the better it cultures the entire nervous system and the body. Our physiology undergoes a change and every cell in the body is filled with “prana”. And as the level of “prana” in the body rises, we bubble with joy.

The culturing of meditation into our system is normal. Some people call it the higher state of consciousness, I call it the normal state of consciousness since we are endowed with the ability to live in that state. Meditation helps in two ways — it prevents stress from getting into the system and simultaneously helps release already accumulated stress.

Regular meditation also leads to happiness and fulfillment; to sensitisation of the sensory organs (thereby intensifying the experiences of seeing, tasting, feeling, etc.); and to greater intuitiveness.

With the assimilation of meditation into daily life, the fifth state of consciousness, called cosmic consciousness, dawns. Cosmic consciousness is perceiving the whole cosmos as part of oneself. When we perceive the world as a part of us, love flows strongly between the world and us. (Love again is not an emotion but a state of being. It is not a melodrama expressed by endearments but our very existence.) This love empowers us to bear with the opposing forces and the disturbances in our lives. Anger and disappointments become fleeting emotions that occur momentarily and then vanish.

Usually we tend to let go of pleasant emotions and cling to the unpleasant ones; 99 percent of the world population is prone to doing this. But when the consciousness becomes free and cultured with meditation, this tendency of holding onto negative emotions is the first thing to disappear. We start living in “the moment” and let go of “the past”. This is important because no matter how good the people we interact with, there are bound to be misunderstandings in any relationship. Once a little misunderstanding crops up, our emotions get distorted and a host of negativities follow.

But if we are able to let go and focus on the ability of consciousness to reveal

in the glory of every moment, we are shielded from all the above. The truth that every moment is supportive and complimentary to our growth dawns on us. Thus, attaining higher states of consciousness does not require any complicated strategisation; one just needs to learn to let go.

A person in a higher state of consciousness is expected to know everything. But while the mind and the consciousness possess the ability to know everything, do they really need to know everything? “All knowing” simply means being conscious of the essence of all you know. In this state, both knowledge and ignorance co-exist and complement each other. For instance, while playing a game, it is not knowing the result beforehand that makes the game sincere and fun. If one knew the result even while playing, the players (and the game) would lose their intensity.

Similarly, if you know that a friend is going to let you down in ten years’ time, it will affect your relationship with that person today. If everything in life progresses smoothly and as per plan, life won’t be fun. After all, the fun of a story is in its suspense. And anyway, what is the big deal about this one life? Just 60-80 years? It is nothing. You have had many such comings into this world, inhabited many bodies, done many things. One life is negligible.

When you realise this, little things will cease to bother you. Every up and down in life makes this play of life more interesting. When you open yourself to the consciousness in any particular moment, you perceive the innumerable activities taking place in the universe in that very moment — people are waking, sleeping, preparing for bed, driving, working; chicken are hatching, frogs croaking, virus and bacteria are infecting people — zillions of things are happening in that one moment in this infinite creation and yet the consciousness knows everything.

Deep inside, each person knows about everything in this world. This knowledge is present in every person. You are a part of this whole phenomenon. As your consciousness opens and the whole system gets physically, mentally and spiritually elevated, your life becomes worth living.

A higher state of consciousness will not drop on your head from heaven one fine morning. The sapling of consciousness is within you — it needs to be nurtured with simple techniques of meditation. Some palm trees yield in three years, some in ten years. And those that are not nurtured never yield! They simply exist...

The confluence of knowledge, understanding and practise makes life complete. When you grow into higher states of consciousness, you find that you are no longer thrown off balance by different situations and disturbances. You become beautiful yet strong — a soft, delicate and beautiful blossom capable of accommodating different values in life without any conditions.