

Sankara's *Sadhana-Panchakam* ("Five Steps to Perfection")

Translated by Swami Tyagananda

1. Study spiritual texts ("Vedas") regularly and put into practice their teachings. Worship the Divine in that manner and give up the thought of desires. Wash away the negative habit-energy and examine the defects of worldly excitement. Hold on to the awareness of the Atman and leave at once your own limited identity.

2. Remain in the company of the holy (thoughts, words, deeds; books, music, art; people) and strengthen your devotion to God. Cultivate the qualities such as self-restraint and give up all work prompted by selfish desire. Approach those who are wise and holy, and serve them. Seek only the Imperishable Being ("God") and hear the words of the scripture.

3. Reflect over the meaning of the scripture and take refuge in its perspective. Keep away from vain arguments and follow the reasoning of the scripture. Always be aware that you are Brahman and completely give up all egoism. Eliminate the thought of "I" connected with the body and don't argue with the wise ones.

4. Through the daily medicine of alms, treat the disease of hunger. Don't hanker after delicious food; be contented with whatever comes of its own. Forbear the polarities such as cold and heat and do not utter useless words. Do not expect kindness from others and abandon all harshness toward others.

5. Live happily in solitude and focus the mind on the God. See carefully the infinite Self and notice how it eliminates this fleeting existence called the world. Through the power of consciousness, dissolve your past karma, remain unaffected by your later karma, and experience your present karma. In this way, remain established in the awareness of the Supreme Self.