

15. Eschew selfishness, conceit, and pride

People create and develop in themselves an abounding variety of selfish habits and attitudes, causing great discontent for themselves. The impulse for all this comes from the power complex, the greed for accumulating authority, domination, and power, the greed for things that can never be eternal and full. In fact, it is impossible for anyone to attain them to the level of satiation. Omnipotence belongs only to the Lord of all (*Sarveswara*).

A person might feel elated to become the master of all arts, owner of all wealth, possessor of all knowledge, or repository of all the scriptures (*sastras*), but from whom did the person acquire all these? They must indeed be greater. One might even claim that one earned all this through their own efforts, labour, and toil. But surely someone gave it to them in some form or other. This one cannot gainsay. The source from which all authority and all power originate is the Lord of all. Ignoring that omnipotence, deluding oneself that the little power one has acquired is one's own —this indeed is selfishness, conceit, pride (*ahamkara*).

A person who is a genuine vehicle of power can be recognised by the characteristics of truth, kindness, love, patience, forbearance and gratefulness. Wherever these reside, ego (*ahamkara*) cannot subsist; it has no place. Therefore, seek to develop these.

The effulgence of the *Atma* is obscured by ego. Therefore, when ego is destroyed, all troubles end, all discontents vanish, and bliss is attained. Just as the sun is obscured by mist, so the feeling of ego hides eternal bliss. Even if the eyes are open, a piece of cloth or cardboard can prevent vision from functioning effectively and usefully. So too, the screen of selfishness prevents one from seeing God, who is, in fact, nearer than anything else.