

# THE A-Z OF THE TRADITION WE HAVE INHERITED

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“We have inherited a living  
tradition of pūrṇatvam”



Besides our genetic makeup, we have inherited a living tradition of pūrṇatvam - of  
wholeness.

With what letters can I describe all that we have inherited? I reckon A-Z is a good place  
to start.

This heritage, this tradition that we have inherited, is pointing out to the nature of...

## A - Atma

Atma is I and the nature of 'I' is directly pointed out through Advaita Vedānta with Adi Śāṅkarācārya being the Guru of Gurus. If Atma was a third entity, it is none of my business. Since Atma is I, that makes all the difference. The nature of Atma, I as fullness and limitless is a fact to be discovered through Advaita Vedānta.



## **B - The Blessings**

The Blessings of all these gurus are through what they impart, which is Brahmavidyā. Of course, they can give you blessings for all sorts of other things.

The highest knowledge that this tradition gives you is Brahmavidyā.





## C - Choice

To whom is this Brahmavidyā available? To the one who makes a Choice. It is not available to people who are confused and indecisive. It is available to people who have some capacity to think clearly, who are rational, scientific, modern; who may be traditional and/or religious. Their level of education, however, does not matter.



The capacity to make a choice for this knowledge is what allows the blessings to flow in your life. And that choice to pursue Brahmavidyā cannot be made by your partner, your son/daughter, mother/father, friends, or even by a Guru. Your choice to pursue Brahmavidyā has to be made only by you.

That C for Choice determines how you lead your life; it doesn't remain a decision made at some point in time. The choice that is made converts itself into a Commitment. It is not like a choice that you make when you want to go on a holiday. What we have inherited from the tradition is the glory and the power of choices that we have.

## D - Dakṣiṇāmūrti



All of this has been made possible by the grace of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the Lord of all teachers, the Lord as the teacher. I may not even have heard of Dakṣiṇāmūrti, but the fact that I choose to pursue Brahmavidyā - that knowledge that points out to what my real nature is, that is really the grace of Bhagavān as Dakṣiṇāmūrti.

This tradition has also given us Pujya Swami Dayananda - it is such a grace that we have had this time with him whilst he was with us.

D is also for **Dharma**. The texts we study are Mokṣa śāstras. We get a deeper understanding of Dharma only when we come to the śāstra. Before that, it was 'Be good, do good' or it was about attending a moral science class with a set of dos and don'ts;

nobody explained to us the value of values. I get asked this question a lot and I too had a similar question - 'How do you know what is right and what is wrong?' For someone exposed to Vedānta, it is a no-brainer: That which is not according to Dharma is wrong. However, the majority of the world struggles with this question. If you look at any situation, between two choices from one standpoint this is okay and from another, that is also okay. In the pressure to be politically correct, we refuse to take a stand because dharma is not understood. Moreover, even if one is exposed to Vedānta, it continues to be a question for all of us. This tradition highlights and gives huge importance to Dharma. Dharma is not something floating in the air, nor does it live in the best Universities of the world. Dharma lives in a person and is upheld by a dharmi. A society that comprises of more and more dharmi-s, is a society that conforms to Dharma.

## E - Empathy

One aspect of Dharma is Empathy - the capacity to care for another person, which is again something that we did not learn in school or college. A 2-year-old girl playing with her doll will wipe away its tears if the doll falls down. Though the language may not be well developed for this girl, she senses that since I cry when I fall down, when the doll falls down the doll will also cry and so she wants to wipe away the doll's tears. Also this tradition teaches us about contribution. It is okay to subscribe to Dharma even if I am not religious, i.e. I do not have any religious practices.

For me to be empathetic, I just have to release the barriers that are there that prevent me from caring for another person. The value that has been given to 'giving', born out of Empathy, is very big in this tradition because Dānam is very big - all kinds of Dānam.



E is also for the **Experiencer**. We have enough scope for having all kinds of experiences... without hashish or any other drug, for that matter. If you play with some energies you can have all kinds of experiences - you will see lots of images, see that your body is floating in air, read people's minds, all is possible. However, even in Patanjali Yogasutras it is mentioned that you do not allow these experiences to be an obstacle for you in discovering the Drsta, the Seer.



The beauty of the tradition is that you can have any experience you want but we will point out to you the nature of the Experiencer, for which Enquiry is required.

All the wellness programs (Yoga is also a wellness program as it is marketed now), all the spa treatments confirm that you are the Experiencer, because you felt so nice and felt so good, etc. But this tradition points out to the reality of the Experiencer and that is the glory of it. And when this is pointed out, then what kind of life do I have?



## F - Freedom

It is a life of Freedom, great freedom from rāga-s (cravings) and dveśas (aversions), freedom from the many concepts, ideas that limited me, freedom from the many judgments that I had about myself. Some people say that I don't really have many judgments about myself but people have them about me. The point is that if people have judgments, let them have them. I have to let the external be external. Instead, I internalize what is external. It is this tradition that teaches us how to have this Freedom from insecurity.





## G - Guru

All of this is made possible by the many Gurus. So... a Guru is not a middleman. I have seen this criticism and it is a very convincing argument: 'Why don't you go straight to your God?' 'Why do you need a middleman?'. A Guru is not a middleman. A Guru is the one who wields a means of knowledge, and he is not a permanent Guru. It is a relational term. If you think the person has something to teach you, then you approach a Guru. A Guru is another friend; it is just another person really speaking.

The means of knowledge i.e. the Veda cannot be used by myself; just cannot be. Not because I am not intelligent or successful. I may have an IQ of 170, it doesn't matter. It's because I have self ignorance, that is why I can't use the means of knowledge. It has to be used by someone else. That is how it is. A Guru is never a permanent Guru. It is just a positional relationship, temporary, until you get the knowledge. After sometime, you don't need a Guru; it is just for old time's sake that you relate to the person. You see the role of the Guru in your journey and the role of so many Gurus who have been there in this tradition and who have given and only given.



So, this is a tradition of Giving. From Śrī Kṛṣṇa's time through pretty much the whole teaching, he tells Arjuna " यथा इच्छसि तथा कुरु " "Do what you want to do". A Guru gives with just one expectation: that the student will attempt to understand. Period. Not even that the student will totally understand, because so many factors are involved in the understanding. So, I am not one of those fools who will teach without any expectation. I definitely expect that the students will make an attempt to understand - understand themselves, not me, because anyway there is not much to understand about me. If you understand, then you will know that the truth of you and me is the same.

This tradition of Giving without any agenda continues to this day.. And it is not the giving of a martyr or a victim-like giving - I just have to keep giving and giving.... This Giving is out of fullness. So all these Gurus - Pujya Swamiji, Swami Chinmayanandaji, Swami Pranavanandaji, Swami Taranandaji.....we might not even know their names; they wrote for their own clarity. They didn't need to write or do a lot of things, but they just did. They wrote, taught, did pujas, did pādayatras and so much more because of the tradition.

## H - Hindu

Of course, long ago we didn't need to identify ourselves because there were no other religions. Now we are referred to by the term 'Hindu'. Being a Hindu is a vision and also a way of life. It can't be a way of life without a particular vision and that vision is of Oneness. 'Sanātana Dharma' is what we really mean when we use the word Hindu.

To be a Hindu is not an ordinary thing because if you are exposed to this, then you can embrace this vision and way of life. Negating traces of Hindu phobia that we may have or we see others having. Hinduism has to be redeemed from all that is spoken of in the name of being a Hindu. If there is one thing that defines what it means to be a Hindu, it is really that all that is here is Ísvara.



## I - Ísvara

Ísvara is not someone sitting in Timbaktoo nor is he only available at a particular time e.g. during Rahukala or not available at a particular time. Nothing of the sort. This abiding awareness, that all that is here - my mind and body included is Ísvara, is what we have inherited from this tradition. And one who knows that and has assimilated well is a J.







## J - Jivanmukta

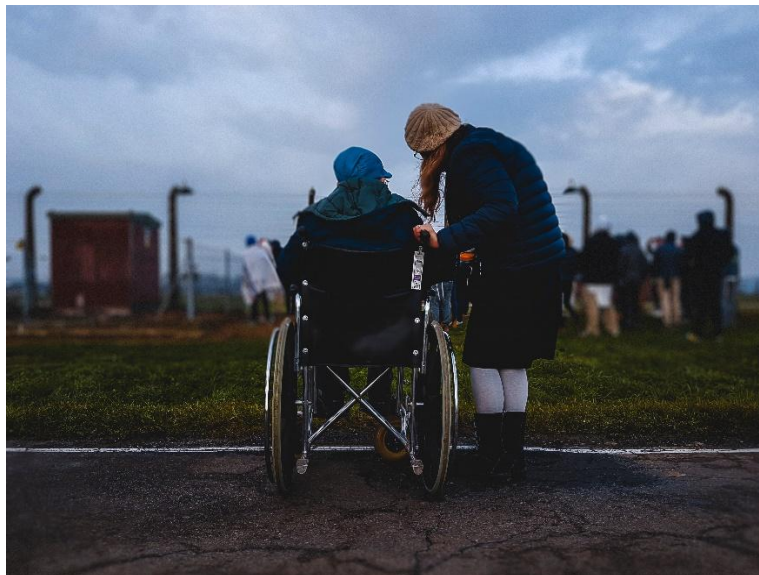
A person who is liberated, who knows the truth, here and now. One doesn't have to wait until the end of one's lifetime, like how our ancestors used to save up money 3/4 generations ago and say, 'we will enjoy ourselves after retirement'. Now they are just sitting on lots of money and don't know what to do with it. So...it might just go to the son-in-law whom they don't particularly like. :)

This postponement buddhi is not there is our tradition, that one fine day I will get liberation. I keep doing some good stuff here and then I will enjoy myself in svarga. There are takers for svarga. But this tradition also allows for the ones who are impatient because impatience is also a very nice virtue. So, the ones who want Mokṣa here and now, they are not willing to compromise, to postpone, delaying the here and hereafter; just not willing to do it. That you can have fulfillment here and now, this is the great thing about this tradition.

## K - Karma

This tradition has given us the understanding of Karma. And I truly believe that nothing clinches our understanding of life, if you are looking at the events of your life, as karma does. Everybody goes through the 'Why me?' phase. And there are many methods that can be used to deal with difficult situations - our past, stuff that we regret or where we have been hurt very deeply or things that others have done, have not done to us or the kind of people you met or the split decisions that were taken for us... so much.

You can analyze your life from so many different perspectives but nothing clinches the perspective on life situations like karma does. The situations that I am going through are really the results of my own choices, much of it in this lifetime as well as choices made in previous lifetimes. So, neither can I blame myself because I don't really know under what circumstances I made certain choices in previous lifetimes, even in this lifetime. Perhaps I was more foolish in my younger days, but given the intelligence I had at that time, the guidance I had at that time, I made certain choices and so I can't really blame myself. No. Maybe the world is to be blamed. No. The people and the situations in my life are because of the choices I have made. All that karma helps me to do is make me a very, very proactive person, an extremely dynamic person because I don't take choice as a casual matter. So many people just discover so much 'śānti' when they look at their life from the standpoint of karma .



## L - Love

This tradition has analyzed 'Love' in a very, very sophisticated way. No other tradition has such a deep, sophisticated understanding of Love in that 'Love is not a verb, it is a noun'. Really speaking, whom we love the most is ourselves and there is nothing wrong with it. This is how it is. There is nothing selfish about it. It is just that certain conditions and people, because of the traits they have, help us discover that I am loving. There is much happiness when one finds oneself to be loving. You will discover that it is not dependent on the conditions outside.

Right now, for some of us, being loving is dependent on whom we are in relation to. With them, we don't have those inhibitions of our cravings and aversions and so we relate in a particular way. But when you discover yourself to be loving, then the way that love manifests for your partner, your children, colleagues, friends, satsangi-s, will be just different forms. You just experience and show a lot of kindness, care and commitment to their growth. This tradition talks about it, it does not shy away from it.



## M - Mahāvākya

One of the great things about this tradition is the Mahāvākya-s which are statements that point to the Oneness between the jiva, individual and Ísvara. The equation is of identity. Much of this tradition can be summed up in one sentence - in the form of any of the Mahāvākya-s. There is scope for brevity - just one sutra - terse 3 words, that's it! And there is scope for elaboration too, where the same few words have to be unlocked.

This tradition has given **Mantras** and **Meditation**. So many people across the world, who have nothing to do with this tradition, chant Mantras and gain from them because a Mantra is not an ordinary sound, it is a sacred sound. Much of it is not really understood, but it works. And there are many, many forms of Meditation, thousands of them, different types for different purposes.



The tradition accommodates all forms of Meditation, understanding very well that every type is for a certain purpose. So there is no confusion on that. People who are not exposed to the tradition will have some confusion, like 'What should I try? 'Which should I do?' But hey, what do you want? So the emphasis on what the person wants is more important than just rushing in to give a solution.



## N - Name (and Form)



This tradition helps us to see that everything is Name and Form. We see the basis. We are surrounded by different names and different forms. And through all these names and forms, you have an understanding of the absolute reality that you are. Or if that is not clear, then the absolute reality that Ísvara is. The one word to indicate Ísvara is Om̐.

## O - Om



Om is a sound. It is not a Sanskrit sound, it encompasses all possible sounds in all possible languages and all possible dialects to indicate Ívara. If you were to try to open your mouth and make a sound, it would be 'aa', now try to close your mouth and make a sound, it would be 'mm' and 'uu' - which can stand for any sound in between. So, aauumm - Om.

This word which is analysed very deeply in Mandukya Upanishad is a word that is present before every Mantra. Most Mantras are not complete without the word Om. This tradition has given the world Om.

## P - Paramparā



The systematization/ institutionalization of this tradition, without big buildings or fancy structures, has been possible because of the Paramparā of the People who have been a part of this unbroken lineage - one student after another, one Guru after another - a very long lineage of this Guru śiṣya Paramparā and all of this teaching is available to us because of this. There is much outrage (and rightly so) when monuments and temples are destroyed. It hurts, it angers. So many monuments, structures destroyed across the world and the outrage is absolutely understandable.

But this Paramparā is alive, a living tradition and because it is so, it has survived the onslaught of so many divisive forces. The paramparā has survived because of Gurus who have been committed and because of students who have been equally committed because of the tradition. So, it is absolutely fascinating to understand that despite so many divisive forces, the things that were taught 500-1000 years ago, or even before that, can still be taught now. And so many Gurus- Ramana Maharishi, Swami Vidyananda, Sadananda...wrote 200-300 yr old texts, prakarana granthas that highlight certain topics. These texts are no less valid; they are reflecting the truth of the Upanishads. These Gurus have contributed to our understanding. And for the ones who are not prepared, the Puranas are very much there -18 Puranas. If you look across India, the stories of the Puranas are what people of India live their life by. These used to



be the stuff of bed time stories. Not about red riding hood or Hansel and Gretel. Not that there is anything wrong with that. Still, there is much to be learnt from our Puranas.

## Q - Questioning

This tradition also highlights Questioning. There is no scope for belief. In fact, if you are a believer, then you will struggle to be a part of this tradition. You and your questions are welcome because your questions mean that you want to understand. Because understanding implies knowledge, it means that there is something to be understood. I don't need to believe that I am a human being; I know it to be true. Like Swami Chinmayananda was told by Tapovan Maharaj 'Young man, you have a lot of questions, when will you turn your questions into a quest?' It is good to have questions and in time they turn into a quest. The tradition encourages questions. In fact, the structure of every text, all Upanishads, is really a dialogue and all of them start with a question by a student except for Chandogya Upanishad, where the teacher tells the student to first go and meditate for 32 yrs. So there are also tough teachers. This kind of encouragement of questions is there.





## R - Rṣi



All this is available to us due to the Rṣi-s. Most of us can identify our family gotra that will be in the name of a Rṣi-s. Because of the Rṣi-s, this is a tradition of Responsibility. It is not built on Rights. It is a tradition of Responsibility. I do what I can, do what I need to and I make myself so strong that my strength comes from what I do, it comes from fulfilling my responsibilities. People respond, people don't respond, it is none of my business, it is their business. They will do what they have to do in life. I am on my own journey. The Rishi-s exemplified this because they need not have done anything, they could have just enjoyed. They were mantra drṣtas, they could have just reveled in themselves. Why did they need to share it with anybody? They need not have shared it. But they did.

## S - Śravaṇam

Rṣi-s shared consistently, systematically, with the main Sādhana being Śravaṇam. So much clarity and understanding about what the goal is, the Sādhyam - what it means, the Sādhana. The main means for us is Śravaṇam - the capacity and the willingness to listen to the śāstra. The tradition highlights Śravaṇam, not Pathanam, not reading.

It is difficult to listen. Generally, in a conversation we find that we get distracted, or we try to formulate our own response, look around or think of some other thoughts. If you are talking to someone who talks a lot, then you just zone out. Not all of us are deep listeners because we have so much pressure to express ourselves and the tragic thing is, that despite of our expressing ourselves so much, a lot of us feel that we are not understood. To all the people whom we have expressed ourselves to, are we completely understood by them? No. Not because they cannot understand but because we change, people change, times change and people change with the times and that is the truth of it and that is okay.



This Śravaṇam is not ordinary listening because in time, it will grow to looking at: 'What is the whole message of the Shruti? What is spoken of in the beginning? And what is spoken of in the end? What is the message that is repeated? What is unique about this? What is it that is praised? It also gives us the vakya of 'Satyam jnanam anantam - which reveals, gives us, our true nature.

## T - Trust

This tradition teaches us to Trust - a capacity that we were given when we were children. We were born with a lot of capacity to Trust and then along the way, it got eroded and then we kept looking for someone to Trust. And only when you start to appreciate Íšvara, you start to Trust life.



That even despite fear, you are able to Trust the way things are working and the way things will work out. In fact, we say that, especially in India - sab thik hoga, everything will be okay, don't worry. Now, you can call it either a statement of encouragement or of reassurance, but all over India people say Íšvara ki kripa hai - There is grace of God or God is great, all will be okay. You rediscover that capacity to Trust because you become a lot more mature as a person.

Trusting doesn't mean that everything will work out okay in your life. You trust that whatever happens, it is pure grace, anugrah and you see your whole life as liquid grace. You just see that all these different, different situations have contributed to who you are as a person. And given that you have a commitment to Mokṣa, think that all the different streams you have experienced, the rivers and streams of circumstances, all have contributed to your freedom and that is a beautiful thing.

## U - Upanishads

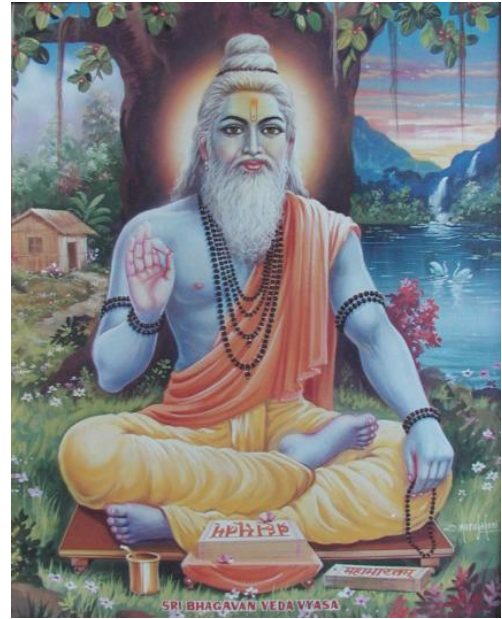


Much of all this wisdom is contained in our Upanishads and so this vision of Fullness, Oneness, Pūrṇatvam in a very tiny section, may run into just 2/3 pages in any Upanishad. There is nothing to say about the length of the Upanishads. Vedānta is nothing much to brag about in terms of size, really a very tiny section, but still if we are looking at what the Upanishads give us, it is not just something for this life, it basically takes care of all of our lifetimes. That is huge when we are talking about millions of lifetimes, and then when you look at what the knowledge of the Upanishads does for us, it is huge.



## V - Vyasa

V for Vyasa, Veda. What he has done for this tradition is unimaginable. He has codified, put everything together. It was a huge, more than 12 yrs project. He undertook it singlehandedly. All these mantras were all over the place and he brought them all together. His work is phenomenal. Making the words of Bhagavan, making these revelations available to us; these revelations which are not dogmatic, not belief based, a means of knowledge, is the beauty of this. Anybody who is intelligent, who has a questioning mind, who values knowledge, can embrace this. It has nothing to do with your religious identity and that is beautiful. You can still hold on to your religious identity that you have, and still the more and more you expose yourself to this, you are just enriched by the whole thing.



The beauty about the Veda is that it is a word mirror, especially the last portion of the Upanishads. It is not about another book. Somebody made a criticism that: 'If you want self knowledge, then why are these people studying so many books in the Gurukulam? The books are really a mirror to study oneself - that is the commitment. But this wasn't understood as the person was not exposed to the tradition. If a person approaches the tradition with books and tries to understand the tradition through a book, then the person will just get some letters, that's it.

The Veda, the Upanishad, is a word mirror to see myself - unless I am a mirror specialist. I don't see the mirror to see the mirror. I see it to see myself and that is what the Veda is. So, as you expose yourself to this tradition, you just discover more and more things that will enhance and enrich you, which you can share with the world. If you inherit money, in time it will lose its value or diminish in value because of demonetization or inflation and cost of living. If you inherit property, it will appreciate for sometime but the value of it will go down if a natural calamity happens in the area. But this tradition and knowledge grows only by sharing, by no other way.

## W – Work

Your work is constituted of your karma. Your contribution to the world or the difference you make to the world is your work. This may or may not include what you do professionally. This tradition guides us with the right vision related to our work. There is increasing talk of people getting burn out from working too hard and talk of work-life balance.



This tradition highlights that with all the shakti-s, powers given to us, we must contribute our best effort to what needs to be done in line with dharma. This is called kaushalam in the Gita. Work is a way to gain the maturity of handling anything and everything that life has to offer. Work can be a celebration and the fullest expression of you are if you claim all your powers and contribute to making a difference for yourself and the people around you. That same work when offered as worship is puja. What a beautiful, proactive and practical attitude to work!

## X - X-Factor

There is a popular television programme called the X factor which is a show that celebrates talent. We may or may not have many talents but the X factor for us is the vision of interconnectedness to everything we have. The X that we have is pointed out by the Y.





## Y – Yoga

This tradition has given Yoga. Yoga is not only ashtanga yoga (which finds many a mention in the Yogopanishads). It is an ideal preparation for a student of Vedānta. It is a very good preparation because ultimately your body and mind are your props in Yoga. You learn to work with your body and mind because it is as intimate as it can get. You learn to be non reactive to your body and mind while you are pushing it. You learn the beauty of breath and how much breath can do for you - something that is with you all the time. This tradition has given Yoga to the world.

**Yajña** - the 5 fold relationships that we have with the devatas, ancestors (pitr̥s), Rishis, plants, animals and human beings and that we have a responsibility to each of these sets of relationships. We are interconnected to all of these whether we like it or not. The more in harmony we are each of these five sets of relationships we perform our yajña, reverential actions to preserve and maintain these. Then where is the question of loneliness or isolation.





## Z - Zest



With little exposure to this tradition, or you may be steeped in it, you rediscover a certain Zest for living. There is no more cynicism, skepticism, trying to bring the other person down, because you are operating out of Fullness, you have no other agenda and it's not that you put on a fake attitude, because this tradition cannot be protected by something out there. You live the tradition, the tradition lives in you.

For anybody who is exposed to this tradition, the tradition lives in you and the only way this tradition will pass on is when you pass it on, when you are able to share the many aspects of this tradition, not because you have a pressure to share but because there are certain things to be shared, because you are a very, very proud proponent of this.

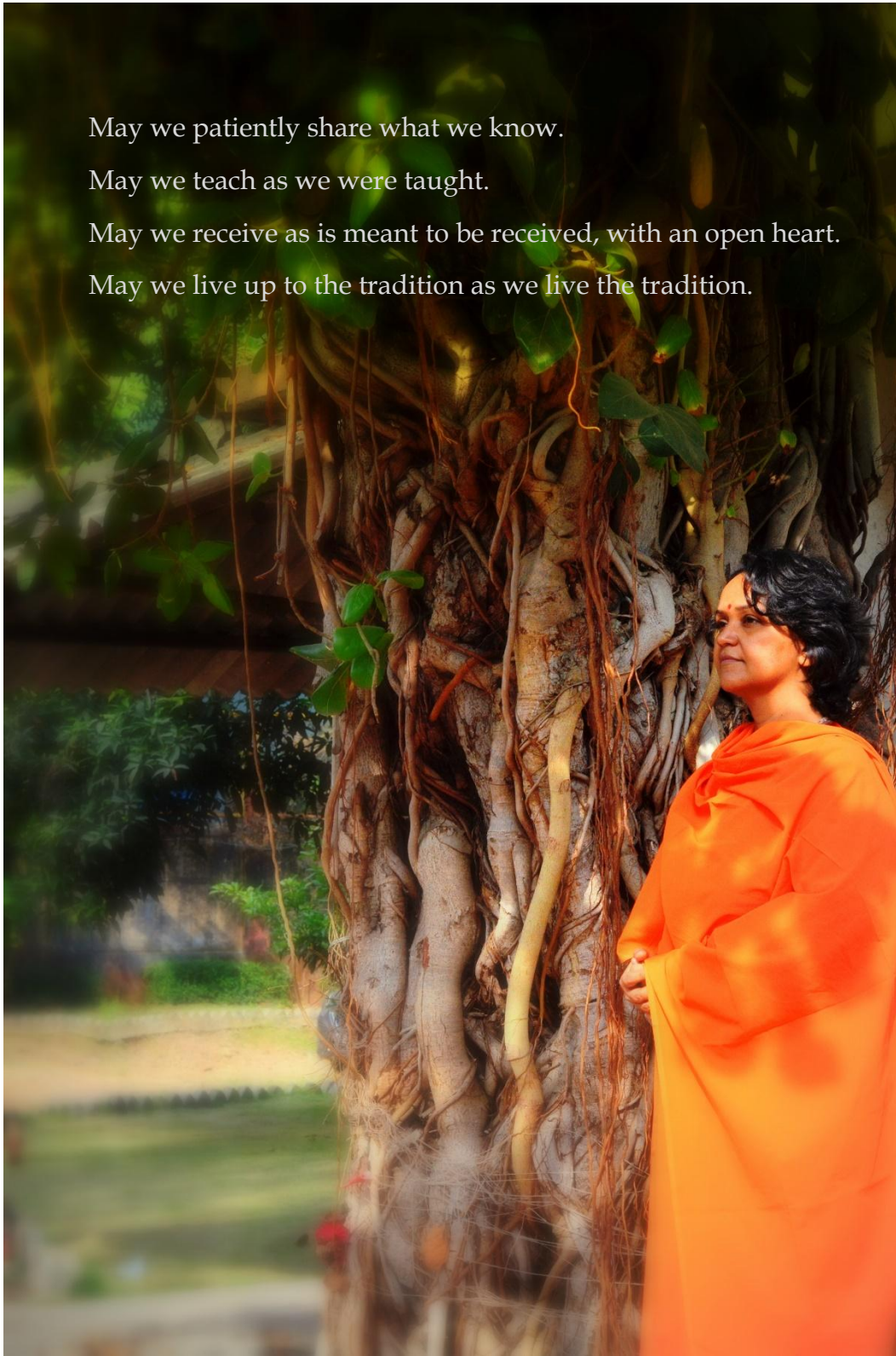
When I say that I am this inheritor, this is my legacy, I have inherited being a part of this tradition that celebrates Guru Purnima. Nowhere in the world is this day given so much respect and reverence. People say that these Indians/Hindus are all about cults - this is not about cults at all because this attitude of reverence just extends to the one who shares this knowledge with you. And because the knowledge that is received is so huge, it takes care of you across lifetimes. The gurus don't need our reverence. But when you live the tradition, you can't help but be reverent and grateful for all that is received. Your life is your offering, your real offering to the Guru. You can do a lot of other things in terms of your relationship, but for the one who is exposed to this tradition, everyday can be a Guru Purnima because every day you are living the tradition, you are practicing those aspects of the tradition that can be practiced.

And my prayers on this day are that may we appreciate the glory of all that we have inherited. I have just stated maybe 26 to 30 things, but there are more, all pointing to Pūrṇatvam /Fullness.

Prayers that we may protect this glorious tradition.

Prayers that we may preserve it and promote it. Not because we want self-aggrandizement or we want to be known, but because there are many misconceptions amongst our own people.

May we patiently share what we know.  
May we teach as we were taught.  
May we receive as is meant to be received, with an open heart.  
May we live up to the tradition as we live the tradition.



Om Tat Sat