

THE LADDER TO HEAVEN

By
AiR
Atman in Ravi

Discover a step by step way to God

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Discover a step by step way to God

UNIFICATION

LIBERATION

WINNING THE WAR WITHIN

REALIZATION OF THE TRUTH

GOING BEYOND KARMA

OVERCOMING IGNORANCE

IMPORTANCE OF A GURU

SILENCE AND CONTEMPLATION

GOING ON A QUEST

LOVE

ENTHUSIASM

TRUST

HOPE

FAITH

PRAYER

BELIEF

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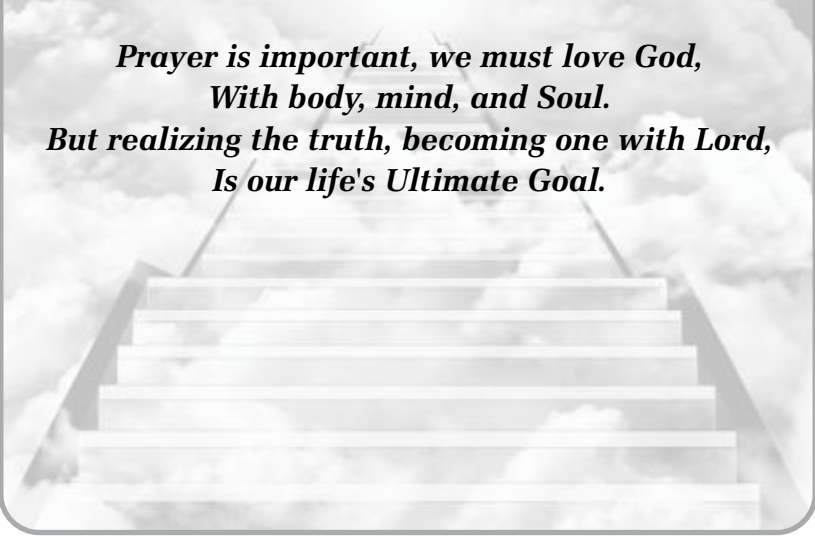
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*Many of us believe in God,
But we never start our search.
All we do is pray to our Lord,
In temple, mosque or church.*

*Prayer is important, we must love God,
With body, mind, and Soul.
But realizing the truth, becoming one with Lord,
Is our life's Ultimate Goal.*





Preface

Even as an 8 year old child, I used to visit God in the temple. I was devout in my belief and used to fast every Monday to please my God. As a child, I had faith, hope, and belief that one day I will go to heaven.

We all want to go to heaven. We all want to become one with our Lord. Whether we are Hindus who call God, *Bhagwan* or Muslims who refer to God as *Allah* or Christians who pray to the *Heavenly Father*, we all pray to God for a reason.

Some people pray because they are helpless. They have no choice. They are suffering in misery and pain. Thus, they pray to God to save them. Others are fortunate and while they are not suffering, they have desires and aspirations, and they go to God with folded hands to make their dreams come true. Most of the world prays to God, barring a few who are atheists - they don't believe in God or they are agnostics - they are not sure about the existence of God. The rest of humanity prays to a God, a power who is the Creator and the preserver of this universe.

While we pray to God, calling God by different names, the vast majority of humanity believes in God and aspires to go

to their God in heaven one day. Some hope to see their God in a Divine Vision while others wait to be liberated and to be united with God after death. It doesn't matter what our religion is, there is a way to reach God. There is a Ladder that can take us to Heaven.

Religion is only a kindergarten to Spirituality. It teaches us the basics about God and helps us start our journey to heaven. But Spirituality is a university. It helps us graduate in the subject of theology and makes us realize the truth about God, helping us with the Ultimate Goal of God-realization, Liberation, and Unification.

In my journey, I have experienced all the steps of the Ladder to Heaven. I have been blessed to realize several truths about life. This book is an effort to help genuine seekers of God to climb the Ladder to Heaven. It shows a way to God-realization as we pass through self-realization, overcoming the ignorance that we live with.

Come, let us start this journey!

Introduction

My relationship with God started early in my childhood. My grandfather used to hold my hand and take me to the Shiva temple that was near our home. He taught me the meaning of faith and showed me how to pray. He made me realize the power of God. For about 45 years now, I have been fasting every Monday, eating only one meal in 24 hours. This is a sure way to remember God all day long, week after week, just as doing the *Aarti*, a religious ritual that involves body, mind, and Soul is. For the last 25 years, I have not missed doing the *Aarti* even on a single day. Such has been my faith in God.

Over a period of time, my faith evolved. From 8 to 18, I was an innocent kid praying to God, guided by both my father and grandfather. By then, God had become the most important aspect of my life. Like most of the world believes, I too thought that one could not live life without prayer. I believed that God gave us life, just as he controls everything that happens to us. To me, faith had magic. It could make the impossible, possible. Every passing day made my faith grow, till I was in love with my God.

When I started my journey as an adult, I achieved success

after success. It was the story of my school motto, Fide et Labore - Faith and Toil. I always said to myself, "Do your best, God will do the rest!" So, I went about my work, with faith and without fear, climbing one peak of success after another.

My faith made me overconfident as I deleted the word 'impossible' from my dictionary. My trust in God was unquestionable. To make each dream come true, I used to remind myself, "Work as if everything depends on you and Pray as if everything depends on God!" My unshakeable faith made me super successful.

When I was 27, with a lot of achievements in my bag, I had a vision. The Divine vision directed me to build a temple. The temple would have a mammoth statue of Lord Shiva sitting in meditation. As depicted in mythology, it would even have the river Ganga flowing out of the Lord's matted locks. This vision came from God, but I did not have anything to make this happen. I did not have the money, nor the land. I had no idea which sculptor could make such a vision come true. I had no clue what to do and how to make it possible.

But God didn't just give me the vision. He also gave me everything to make it happen. Soon after the Divine message came to me, God gave me so much success and money that I

could buy a piece of land to build the temple. It seemed like I was doing it, but I knew that it was the Divine working through me. I was just His instrument! I found an artist who I believed could make the vision real. The vision came to me in 1993, we acquired the land in 1994 and started work immediately thereafter. On the 27th of February, 1995, the temple was inaugurated.

Even the inauguration was a miracle! We had invited about 3000 people, but it so happened that His Holiness, the Shankaracharya of Sringeri happened to be in Bangalore. He made a rare appearance and consecrated the Shiv Linga. Over 3,00,000 people appeared from nowhere to pray to Lord Shiva on that Maha Shivratri day. There was Spiritual ecstasy in the air as the temple became the most powerful Shiva temple in the world. It was the work of God, not of man!

The sculptor who made the temple became famous overnight. He was commissioned to make the statue of Lord Shiva in several other places. It is another miracle that while he could make beautiful statues, he was not able to replicate this statue again, despite his best efforts. I have no doubt that it was the work of the Divine because the magnificent statue was made without a blueprint, a plan or even a measuring tape. It was Divine magic!

This was a turning point in my life. Till I was 30, it seemed that my faith in God was everything! But after the building of the temple on Old Airport Road in Bangalore, my life transformed. While I continued to achieve success in business, God gave me a lot of money through the temple to utilize for God's work. I had, by then, already started a charitable home for the destitute and the temple collections only made our humanitarian work multifold. Today, we have 3 homes, with over 600 people of all ages, gender, and religions. At first, caring for the poor and destitute was an act of compassion and love. But today, we serve each human being as a manifestation of the Divine.

It has been 25 years since the temple was inaugurated and these two and half decades have transformed my life completely. It has created a metamorphosis. Today, I believe I am not Ravi V. Melwani who built the temple, but rather AiR – the *Atman* in Ravi or the Soul in Ravi. What caused this metamorphosis?

My life journey experienced a path that is so Divinely unique. It started with 10 years of innocent belief that built a foundation. Then I built pillars of faith, trust, hope, and enthusiasm. These made my life grow and ultimately, led me to love God. I call this journey 'The Ladder to Heaven' because it led me from one step to the next, each step leading me closer to the Ultimate Goal.

My love for God made me go on a quest for the Lord whom I was so passionate about. The Lord blessed me with a Spiritual Master who guided me along the way. As I investigated several questions about life and God, I realized the Truth.

Looking back upon my life, I realize that for four decades I was living in ignorance. While my faith in God was unconditional, I was not moving forward in my Spiritual journey, but rather just going around in circles. Then I realized several truths which changed my paradigm of life.

But Realization is not just knowledge. It is an intuitive experience that leads to liberation. We human beings are prisoners that live and suffer pain of the body, misery of the mind, and agony of the ego. While we experience joy and sorrow in cycles, our ignorance makes us suffer this triple suffering. Liberation not only makes us escape from suffering as we live in this world, but it also makes us escape from the cycle of death and rebirth which leads us to our ultimate destination – Unification with the Divine.

Since I was blessed to realize the Truth about self and God and because I had climbed this Ladder to the Divine, step by step with the grace of Lord, I decided to share my journey with the world through this book – The Ladder to Heaven.

STEP

1

Belief

“ Everybody has a choice,
To believe or not to believe!
Those who believe, they achieve. **”**



BELIEF

The first step on the ladder to heaven is Belief. It starts our ascent to heaven but not everyone is fortunate to grow up as a believer.

We are born, but we have no choice to decide who our parents are, and when and where we will be born. It seems that we don't choose the circumstances of our life. Whatever be the religion our family follows, we tend to follow the same as we grow up. Of course, we are influenced by our school and our friends, and we learn more about God from the world around us.

No child is blessed with an intellect to decide whether to believe or not to believe. It seems to be a Divine will that starts our relationship with God. Some children are taught to pray every day because their parents do. Others may not be so religious because the circumstances of their life have not given them an opportunity. Whether we are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, or believers of some other religion – this is how we start to pray and believe in God.

However, this changes as we grow into our teens and become mature. Then, we begin to decide how much to pray, and which God to believe in. I was a staunch believer in Lord Shiva since I was 8, but by the time I was 12, I was greatly influenced by the Jesuit institution where I studied. My faith in

God experienced an amalgamation of what my grandfather taught me and what the priests in my school advocated. As a kid, I saw the difference between my God and their God and accepted it without question. I did not pay much attention to investigating how many Gods existed. As I grew up, I believed in the power of faith and did not find it wrong to go to the church in my school whenever I got the opportunity to. However, my devotion belonged to my God, Lord Shiva.

I consider myself lucky that I grew up in an atmosphere where God was an important part of my life, both at home and in school. By the time I passed out of school, my faith in God was very strong. I was blessed to grow up with the belief in Lord Shiva, just as I imbibed the values of the Christian faith. I was fortunate, not to have any conflict in my mind regarding the two.

Today, as I look back at my teenage years, I realize that we have a choice as we grow up. The choice to believe or not to believe in God. As I reflect upon this, I feel grateful that my life started with believing in God. If I look at some atheists, those who don't believe in God, I feel sad for them, because they have missed a very important truth of life. They probably didn't get an opportunity to be mentored well in their early, formative years and lost this blessed privilege of believing in God.

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