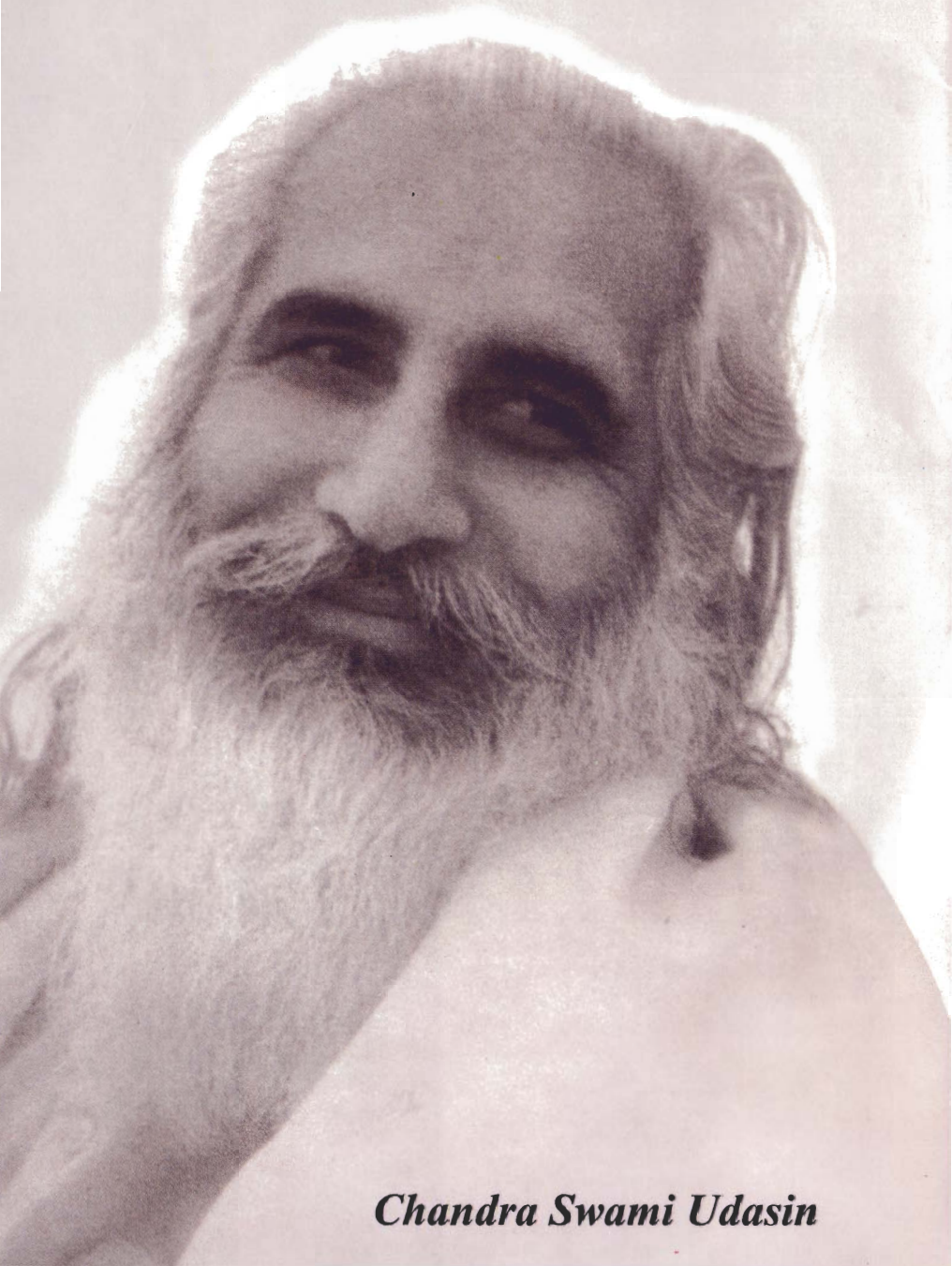


Song of Silence

Volume II



Chandra Swami Udasin

SONG OF SILENCE

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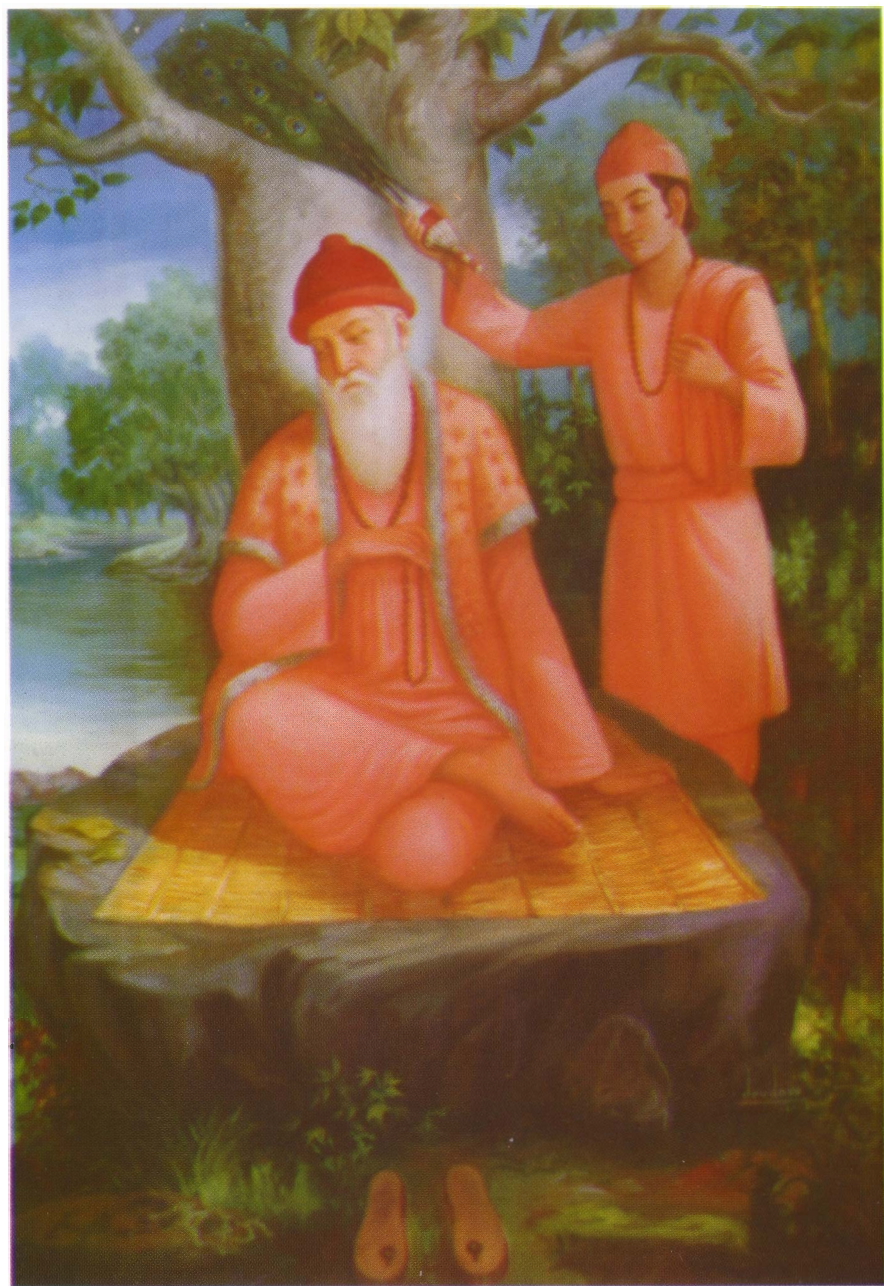
Seekers Trust
Sadhana Kendra Ashram
Domet, Dehradun - 248 125
Uttaranchal, India



Dedicated to
the sweet and loving memory of
Udasinacharya Bhagwan Shri Chanderji
and
Balyati Baba Bhuman Shahji Udasin



Udasinacharya Bhagwan Shri Chanderji
(1494-1643)



Balyati Baba Bhuman Shahji Udasin
(1687-1747)

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Foreword

I remember how deeply moved I was, the first time I read Swami Vivekananda's words in praise of his beloved master, the great saint Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. I remember even now how much I wished that one day, I would be able to share and express the same feelings about someone whom I could love, respect and speak of, the way he did about his master.

I can unhesitatingly say that Shri Chandra Swamiji Udasin is such a man for me today. So, to write a foreword to his book *Song of Silence*, volume two, is a joy to my heart. It offers me an opportunity, while writing about him and his teaching, to try to share and pass on to others, the same blessed feeling that moved me when reading Swami Vivekananda. This is possible because, indeed, here is a man in whom the 'being' and the 'doing' are one. Here is a life that is a teaching, and a teaching that is alive.

I now think I know why I felt the way I did, on reading Swami Vivekananda's words. I had sensed, that not only was he expressing his love and admiration for Shri Ramakrishna, but also the pride that he took in his master. Today, I dare say, that I not only love and admire Shri Chandra Swamiji but I am also proud of him. It is as a devotee, full of gratitude,

that I write these few words about this book. Each and every answer he gives here is fully alive, permeated with divine Presence and pregnant with vision. It is saturated with love and wisdom. Each answer has a powerful potential for the transformation of a willing seeker. Each piece of advice he gives, has a depth and a light that makes it very precious to the earnest reader.

Yet, I feel rather inadequate, shy and hesitant to write about his words. I feel as one does in front of most precious jewels, which are not to be touched and only to be viewed and marveled at. It is in this spirit that I dare to write. I ask the reader to forgive my boldness in the writing of this forward as a response to Swamiji's wish.

In the fall of 1969, Jean-Luc, John and I, had come to India in search of a Realized master. The teachings of saints such as Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Shivananda and the *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Yogananda Paramahansa, which we had read, had convinced us that *Gurus* really did exist and could be found. We just had no idea where to look for one in the vast geography of India. Thanks to Jean-Luc, who had previously come to India, we went to Rishikesh. He thought it was a good place from which to start our quest. His insight proved true. Very soon after we arrived there and met Shri Chandra Swamiji.

On seeing him, we knew that our search had come to an end and that we had come home. Shri Chandra Swamiji very soon, invited us to come and visit him in the *jhari*¹, a forested island, where he lived in a kind of thatched hut close to the holy Ganga. From then on regularly, almost daily, we

¹ Forest

went there to see him. He would receive the few visitors that came in a little hut which gave shade and shelter by the river. All those who have had the benediction of sitting at his lotus feet there, remember those blessed moments with hearts full of gratitude. We thank the Lord again and again that we have been able to share, in such an elevating environment, the intimacy of a rare mystic and *jnani*. He accepted that we would stay with him and that he would guide us.

Now that our search for the master was over, our life as student began. This was the real work. We were young and knew little of how to approach a saint with respect in the Hindu tradition. We wanted very much to honor the trust Swamiji had shown, in accepting us around him. The more orthodox *sadhus* and saints were often critical of us, since they identified us with the hippies of that time. Thank God Swamiji was not a fundamentalist and that indeed we also found helping sisters and brothers among his close devotees and disciples. They initiated us into the correct ways of respecting the Hindu tradition, particularly within the context of the relationship between a master and his devotees.

We cannot mention here all the Indian devotees; their generosity and hospitality will remain forever in our memories. What a discovery, what a gift, they were for us at that time! Most of them were the generous donors through whom we were able to live near the Swami in those days. Their generosity helped many of the first foreigners to benefit from Swamiji's holy presence and teaching. We shall never forget their kindness.

Today, we can say that their example was part of the teaching we received. In those days of much criticism, about the dangerous cults and the moneymaking '*gurus*', we can

bear testimony to the generosity and solidarity of a spiritual family of disciples, around a holy man from India. We are deeply grateful for all this, and hope we have been worthy of the same. May this be the opportunity, in the name of the foreign devotees, to express our gratitude for all those years of constant sharing, and to say thank you to all of them.

During *satsangs*, Hindi and Urdu were generally spoken. We did not understand much of what was said. But the elevated atmosphere, which we felt strongly, was highly nourishing for our hungry souls. Moreover, Swamiji always arranged to give time to the English-speaking devotees and would answer their questions. Now, looking back over the years, we can see how we were incredibly naive and sometimes arrogant, in the kind of endless questions we asked at that time. We cannot but acknowledge the equally endless patience and generosity of Shri Chandra Swamiji in answering all of them with the same constant love, cheerfulness and equanimity. We did not or could not realize at that time, that Swamiji's real and greater concern was to try to teach us how to be more conscious questioners. This was far more than merely helping us to find an answer to every question. Today as I read his answers in this book, I recognize the same great compassion. Here is a man who can address anyone. Because he himself does not stand anywhere, he can speak and help everyone, everywhere.

I think a very important feature, while reading this *Song of Silence* is that, from the very beginning, you feel accepted as you are and even more invited into what is happening. Here, it is not merely a matter of reading about the reality of a Realized man. It is rather, the recovery of the feeling of oneself as belonging to that reality. One feels this through and through. It is not so much a method that is given but

love in action that is experienced and witnessed. No questioner ever feels excluded from what is happening when reading Swamiji's answers. This experience becomes the ground of a unique relationship of love between the master and the disciple. We recognize ourselves in the stories we read. Then, we suddenly realize that without having changed, without being judged, we have been introduced, through Swamiji's boundless compassion, to the world of God. What a gift! In that new dignity, the feeling of an inner obligation is born. It is a feeling of a higher duty that has to be done, in order to honor the recognition we have received and be responsible for it.

For the last thirty years, all those who stayed with Swamiji, can bear testimony to this fact, or I could say, to this miracle. Whether sharing in his silent presence or listening to his answers, we always found ourselves brought back to the real world and its challenge to honor our real nature. This real nature of which, we have been suddenly reminded, and from which, what we used to call 'the world', appears an illusory distraction.

The gift of a real *Guru* is that everyone is taught, and in the way he most needs, where he really belongs. Through this teaching, what is recovered is an original dignity, and a new life can start. Now, the destination has become the way and henceforth, spiritual life is no longer trying to reach somewhere, but honoring what you really are, wherever you are now.

In the teaching of some other persons, one may feel unworthy to enter the path. In Swamiji's teaching, you are already on the path, because everyone is on the path. You may not know it totally, but neither can you forget it totally;

therefore you have to act accordingly. Consequently, you do not practise 'reaching' but 'unfolding'. There can be no excuse not to live up to it. We walk a path of faith and duty, and we answer the call from the *Song of Silence*. We have been reminded where we belong. We have been reminded of the 'bill' of our origin, through love and compassion. We have to meet the word of the master; we have to honor where we belong.

The miracle of the *Guru's* grace is at work. A faith that has been asleep for so long has been taken out of its slumber. It is no longer a belief, in some far away ecstatic experience or heavenly future that is leading the journey. It is rather, a faith in a present and permanent possibility, which has been recognized through his grace. Once the grace of the *Guru* has awakened the memory of where we belong and the decision to answer the call, it does not leave us there. The real master does not abandon the disciple, to the uncertainties of that new and unsettled condition. No, he is there, then and always, for the newborn disciple, and for that very important path of the way to come. He directs and accompanies the disciple, on a path of practice and awareness, a path of devotion and service, a path of prayer and meditation, in order to help him grow in the realm of pure Consciousness.

How priceless then are his answers, and how unwavering a determination from the disciple is required. How precious is the book in your hand, and how constant a discipline needed! How decisive is the silence of the beloved and how steadfast the longing of the devotee! How great then their meeting and how unique their parting! For the greatness of such a master is not in the many near him, but in the few

who one day, full of gratitude, walk forth on their own, having become forever humble servants of his words of life.

The teaching presented in this new collection, I should say, a harvest of answers, may not look revolutionary; but let me tell you the secret of Swamiji's words: "The honey is in the flower, the butter is in the milk". Therefore, I invite each and everyone, with all my heart, to read them carefully, and to put into practice, through proper effort, the divine message they contain. They can indeed contribute greatly to the real revolution we are looking for.

Today, it is my joy and my testimony, to express my eternal gratitude to Swamiji for having whispered, into our young and unworthy ears, such words of love and wisdom. They found their way to our souls.

Thank you Gurudev, thank you!

Thousands and thousands of salutations at your lotus feet,

*Gordes (France),
21st May, 1998*

Yvan Amar
(Swami Ananda Chetan)

Life Profile of Shri Chandra Swamiji Udasin

The great sage, revered Shri Chandra Swamiji Udasin was born on 5th March, 1930, in the village Bhuman Shah, District Montgomery, now in Pakistan. The village is named after one of the greatest sages and mystics of the eighteenth century, revered Baba Bhuman Shahji. This great sage is the master of our beloved Shri Chandra Swamiji. Swamiji, who has the most sacred and mystical relationship with Babaji, attributes all his herculean efforts and achievements to the latter's unreserved grace. Swamiji, who has had an irresistible inclination towards spirituality from his early childhood, is believed to be a very advanced *yogi* of many previous lives.

In the year 1947, Mahant Girdhari Dasji, the tenth master in the line of Baba Bhuman Shahji, initiated him into the much-respected *Udasin* tradition. This took place through the direct and mystical intervention of Babaji.

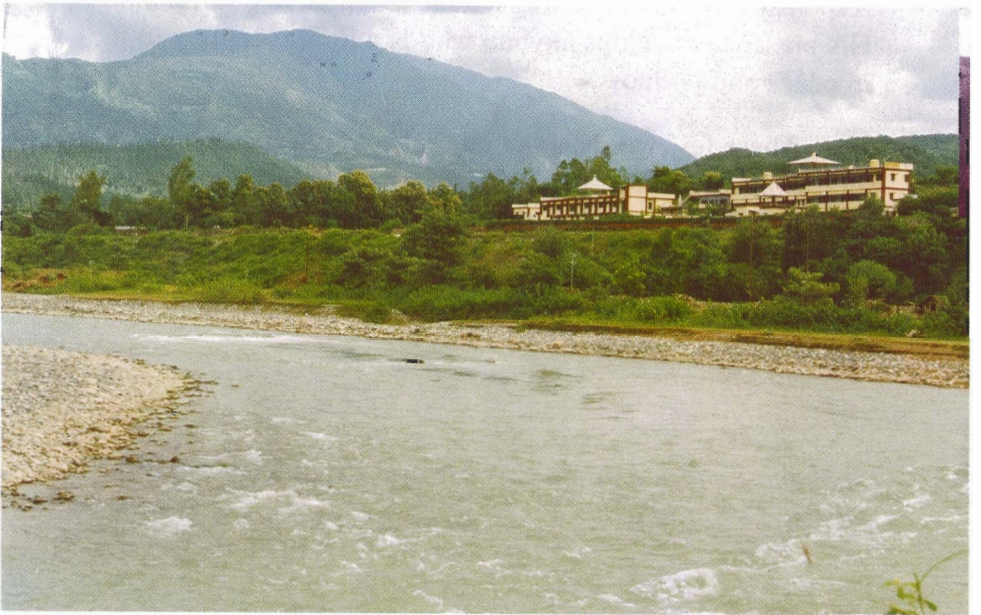
In his student days he was an extraordinarily gifted and accomplished sportsman and excelled in many events. While he was pursuing his postgraduate studies in science, a very powerful longing for the Divine drove him to seek a first-hand and integral Realization of the Divine in this very life. Possessed by a strong dispassion, he abandoned his postgraduate studies, severed all worldly ties, and took to a

secluded and monastic life. This was in the year 1952 when he was twenty-two years old.

A period of intense *sadhana* followed. He went to Jammu & Kashmir and spent about eight years there in a cave and on the mountains. Then, from 1961 to 1970, he came to live in a secluded forest island near Sapta Sarovar, Haridwar, on the banks of the holy river Ganga. It is here that he had the highest and never waning integral spiritual Realization. Many visitors going to his hut found that they had encountered a truly Realized soul.

In 1970, at the earnest request of his devotees, he shifted to a small *ashram* 'Sewak Niwas', in Sapta Sarovar, Haridwar. He lived there for twenty years. Then with the passage of time, as the spot became crowded, noisy and commercial, he began to look for another more secluded place, and found one in the year 1989. The place was located in the quiet, remote and hilly village of Domet on the banks of the holy river Yamuna, some fifty kilometres away from Dehradun. Immediately, the construction of the building was begun. In 1990, Swamiji moved to the partly constructed Sadhana Kendra Ashram.

The new *ashram* was built under his direct guidance. It has been developed as a place of *sadhana*. The *ashram* is open to all seekers of Truth, irrespective of their caste, creed or race. Four sessions of meditation are held daily, in the presence of Swamiji himself, throughout the year. Sincere seekers of Truth from all over the country and abroad, visit the *ashram* for *sadhana* and to have *darshan* of this God-man. They come in large numbers, even though there is no advertisement or publicity made by the *ashram*. Word about Swamiji is spread by the love that the devotees have



Sadhana Kendra Ashram

for him. The *ashram* also serves the poor and the needy in various ways, especially in the areas of education and medical care.

God inspired, Swamiji has been in unbroken silence for the past eighteen years. To date, the silence continues and its duration is unknown even to Swamiji himself. His silence is more eloquent than words. To see him is to believe him. A free spirit, humble, simple, tender, non-dogmatic and unobtrusive, he is the very embodiment of spirituality.

Swamiji is an unbelievably charming person with divinity descending down to the physical level. His pleasing countenance which, is at once peaceful and beaming, his penetrating and meditative eyes, his strong and regal figure, his gentle yet firm demeanour, his alertness and awareness in day-to-day activities, all bring an air of quiet and responsible freedom, making it a sheer delight to be with him. His presence envelops anyone who is a little receptive to it, in peace and holiness.

These few words about our beloved master are simply an expression of gratitude to him in introducing the second volume of the *Song of Silence*. A more detailed account of his life is to be found in volume one of the *Song of Silence*.

With many, many prostrations and ever at his holy feet,

Sadhana Kendra Ashram
Domet, Dehradun

Swami Prem Vivekananda

Editor's Note

The second volume of *Song of Silence* is a further collection of responses by Shri Chandra Swamiji Udasin to questions asked by various devotees during the daily meeting with him. It covers the period from 29th March 1994 to 25th October 1995.

Yvan Amar (Swami Ananda Chetan), beloved disciple and spiritual son of Swamiji, sent us the foreword for this volume in June 1998. We had expected to publish the book soon after we received the foreword. However, due to various reasons, this was not possible. Meanwhile, on 18th June, 1999, Yvan peacefully left his body after a long illness. With the publication of this book, we remember him with love, in the divine Spirit.

To Yvan's touching foreword, we can hardly add anything, except to agree deeply with the conviction, that it is in the savouring, assimilating and practising of the Teaching found here, that we will have constant inspiration and grace for our spiritual growth.

We take the opportunity to mention here that most of the questions asked in this book are from Western people. As a consequence, Swamiji's answers have been given with this fact in view, according to their respective culture. Also, the same questions posed by different seekers at different

times may come again and again, out of their search for the Truth. Hence, Swamiji's answers may sometimes seem repetitive, but they are actually directed to the personal needs of the seekers and have been retained as such in this book.

Now and then, readers will find an abrupt shift in the nature of the questions. This is due to the variety of questions of distinct hues and colours, during the same meeting. Therefore, Swamiji also has to answer those questions in the same sequence and deviate inevitably from the current topic.

Moreover, we would like to draw the readers' attention to the fact that all references to Scriptures or other texts, made in this collection of spiritual conversations, are done strictly in the specific context of the questions and answers and are only meant to give spiritual insight to help the seekers in their *sadhana*.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to all the friends who have assisted in the editing of this book.

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Chapter One

“Silence is gold. Speech is silver. Silence is needed to know and to communicate with oneself. Speech is needed by common men to communicate with others. Silence is much more powerful than speech. Speech takes you out and makes you extroverted. Silence brings you within. Speech is useful in dealing with the world. Silence is helpful in realizing what is timeless. Everything, the whole universe comes out of silence and goes back into silence.”



Q: How should I meditate?

Swamiji: Meditation is like swimming. You learn swimming only when you go into the water and exercise your hands and feet to keep yourself above the water. Some instructions may be helpful but unless you go into the water and exert yourself you cannot learn swimming. In the case of meditation the process is similar. You sit down and follow some method of meditation. Only after a long and regular practice are you able to meditate rightly.

The methods are many. They can be classified into two groups: the passive and dynamic ones. In the passive method, you don't have to do anything; you have simply to watch your thoughts, your breath, or to fix your gaze on some point of your body, without thinking or feeling anything. On the other hand, in the dynamic method, you have to do something and at the same time remain alert to that something being done. *Japa* and concentrating on a particular idea or a particular feeling come in the category of the dynamic method.

If you follow a certain method for quite some time, you become accustomed to it, and it is not so easy to change it. When your subconscious mind takes up a certain practice, it is much more difficult to leave that practice.

At first, you do not have to stop the thoughts, but you have to stop the sequential thinking. When you think, there

is a chain of correlated thoughts making a sequence. It is a process in itself. This process has to be stopped. Even when the process of thinking is stopped, some stray thoughts do come into the mind. But if you do not get involved in those stray thoughts, they also subside in due course of time. The first thing you have to do is to stop the thinking process, and not the thoughts. It is easier to watch your breathing process than to watch your thoughts because thoughts are more subtle than breath. Simply watch your breathing process. If any thought comes, do not follow it. Ignore it and it will go away or subside.

Q: How many hours should one sleep when doing *sadhana*?

Swamiji: A balanced life is most appropriate for a long and regular *sadhana*. Moderate sleep — which the body/mind requires — must be taken. Early in the morning, say two to three hours before sunrise, is the best period for meditation.

Q: What happens when we stop practising for a while? Do we start each time from zero?

Swamiji: If you stop practising for a while, it takes some days to again reach the stage where you had left off. But it is easier; it is like remembering what you have forgotten.

Q: I do not know my real spiritual motivation and sincerity. I have a lot of doubts about my own research. What should I do?

Swamiji: Spirituality means the Realization of the Spirit which is the ground of the body/mind. Man is tripartite,

consisting of body, mind and Spirit. From the spiritual point of view, the Realization of the Spirit alone can bring true happiness and freedom to man. If you have some doubts, you should try to get them dispelled. Sincerity is most important in making any effort. Without consistency of purpose, no one can succeed in any venture. If you can feel the oneness of the seeker and the sought, then you do not need to meditate. Finally, the practice of meditation, leads to a non-polar experience in which the subject and object, the seer and the seen become one. This is the highest spiritual experience one can achieve through meditation. The Realization of this non-polar experience is not the path. It is the end to which the path leads.

Q: Can I follow my feelings, or do I need to resist my ego's wishes and desires?

Swamiji: Ego is the first and the last obstacle in the path of Self-Realization. The ego/mind has first to be tamed and finally got rid of. The inordinate desires, attachments and negative emotions have to be abandoned.

Q: Ordinary life is meaningless, but I am not ready for *ashram* life. I doubt everything. I have never experimented with the Divine. I just feel that 'something bigger' exists. What can I start with? What shall I believe in?

Swamiji: What is ordinary life and what is special life? By ordinary life do you mean sensual life and by special life do you mean spiritual life? It is not necessary to live in an *ashram* to lead a spiritual life. One can live alone, or one can live in one's family and yet one can lead a spiritual life.

You feel, as you have written, that there is ‘something bigger’ that exists. You have to realize what that ‘something bigger’ is. To have the experience of that ‘bigger thing’ you will have to totally withdraw your mind and interest from the smaller things, situations and relationships. When your mind becomes empty of what is smaller, it will be filled with what you call ‘something bigger’.

Q: Is it necessary to have a master on the spiritual path?

Swamiji: The Divine is the spiritual master residing in the heart of one and all. If you can directly communicate with the Divine who is sitting in your heart, you don’t need any other master for guidance. If you cannot do that, you should have a master who can guide you on the spiritual path.

Q: Can we do *sadhana* outside the *ashram*?

Swamiji: Yes, *sadhana* can be done everywhere. One has only to adjust oneself rightly in the situation and practise the essentials of *sadhana*.

Q: Would you tell me how to meditate?

Swamiji: Sit down quietly and watch your thoughts, without identifying yourself with them. If you find it difficult, then watch your breathing process without thinking anything.

Q: Outside the times of meditation, how can I maintain alertness?

Swamiji: Whatever you do in the day, do it attentively, with alertness. Do not do anything mechanically. When you walk, be conscious of the activity of walking. When you sit, be conscious of sitting, and so on. Thus you can practise alertness in all day-to-day activities.

Q: This is very difficult.

Swamiji: First be alert and vigilant during your four meditation sessions per day, that means four hours. Then, during the day, whatever you do, do it with a total mind.

Q: What is the ‘thought process’?

Swamiji: The ‘thought process’ refers to the thoughts flowing in a sequential order. This flow is usually mechanical. The thought process is not absolutely constant. Between one thought and the other there is a thoughtless moment. Moreover, it is desire, which keeps your mind moving. When there is no desire, there is no thought.

Q: Can you tell me what the experience of ‘blankness’ in meditation means?

Swamiji: ‘Blankness’ means that there is no thought, no image and no word in the mind. The mind is totally empty.

Q: How can I practise *mantra japa*? I find it very difficult.

Swamiji: *Mantra* is to be recited mentally by keeping one’s attention focused on the heart-centre. There should be no difficulty in doing that. What is the difficulty? *Mantra* can

also be recited by synchronizing it with the incoming and outgoing breath. It has to be done consciously.

Seeing the words of the *mantra* as if written on the forehead cannot be called *japa*. It is a sort of contemplation. You should not recite the *mantra* and try to see the words of the *mantra* written on the forehead at the same time. If you do so simultaneously, your mind will be divided in reciting the *mantra* and seeing the mental-image of the words. There will be no concentration on the recitation of the *japa*. *Japa* and contemplation should not be practised simultaneously.

Q: What about tension? I feel very tense during meditation.

Swamiji: There is tension when concentration is forcibly practised. Don't practise with so much force that creates tension. Supplement love of God with your practice.

Q: There are many elements of investigation in my search for God.

Swamiji: God should be loved and the world should be investigated. A scientist investigates gold without loving it. A miser loves gold without investigating what gold is. Your attitude towards the world should be like that of a scientist towards gold, and your attitude towards God should be like that of a miser towards gold.

Q: What is the meaning of silence?

Swamiji: Silence is gold. Speech is silver. Silence is needed to know and to communicate with oneself. Speech is needed

by common men to communicate with others. Silence is much more powerful than speech. Speech takes you out and makes you extroverted. Silence brings you within. Speech is useful in dealing with the world. Silence is helpful in realizing what is timeless. Everything, the whole universe comes out of silence and goes back into silence.

Q: Yesterday, I read a book in which a disciple (who has now become a master himself) was saying that his master abused the trust and faith of his devotees and misused his Enlightenment!

Swamiji: Can an Enlightened One misuse his/her Enlightenment? An Enlightened master can never abuse the trust and faith of anyone!

Q: What if the master does something bad?

Swamiji: You mean an Enlightened man can be a bad man? An Enlightened person is the embodiment of all goodness.

Q: Surely we have to know beforehand what is good and what is bad in order to know a real master!

Swamiji: You may not know who is a real master, but you can certainly know who is a fake master!

Q: My mind is full of thoughts. How can I drop them?

Swamiji: First, you should be free of useless thoughts. If you become thoughtless you cease to be a human being.

Q: Before coming here I could not meditate. Since I have been here, I can concentrate. Is this because of your presence?

Swamiji: It is because of yourself that you can now concentrate here more than before. The outer favourable conditions are helpful only if you are open and receptive to them. So ultimately, you yourself are the primary factor for your good or bad meditation.

Q: How can we increase the desire for God-Realization?

Swamiji: There are three basic obstacles, which hinder your spiritual growth or dilute your aspiration for God-Realization. They are:

- The longing for the sensual pleasures. We have five senses with their corresponding objects: our eyes long to see the form; our ears long to hear the sound; our noses long to smell odours; our skins long to touch through contact; our tongues long to taste flavours.
- The longing for wealth, pelf and power.
- The longing for name and fame.

If you can give up these three basic desires, the energy, which is spent in these desires, is transformed into aspiration for God-Realization. Jesus said that you have to die to the life of the flesh to be able to come to live in the life of the Spirit.

Q: This place is special for the practice of meditation.

Swamiji: Special cannot be universal, ordinary can be. Meditate regularly wheresoever you are living.

Q: I have read in a book written by Shri Poonjaji that Shri Ramana Maharishi had said, “You don’t have to do any practice. You only have to be what you are. You are already free!” Then follows the story of the little lion that was raised among sheep and behaved like a sheep. Afterwards, he came to know that his true nature was that of a lion — hence the title of the book *Wake Up and Roar*². Why is it so difficult for most of us to know what we are? Is it because our faith in God and love for God are not strong enough?

Swamiji: This story of the lion having been brought up in the company of sheep is a very common story known to Indian religious people. Here, even a child brought up in a religious family knows this story. In India, the essential nature of God, soul, nature, matter and energy, have been debated for thousands of years, as it has never been done in any other country. The monotheistic philosophers in India would use this story to emphasize the truth of their theory and speculation that man in his true and essential Nature is divine, and all that is not divine in him is the superimposition of the lower qualities of *Prakriti*.

There is no denying that man in his essential and true Nature is divine. The Realized saints and sages of all the religions have openly expressed this view or have indirectly or implicitly hinted at it, where such sayings or expression were regarded as blasphemy. But no Realized sage has ever said that you don’t have to do anything whatsoever to realize your divinity. Shri Ramana Maharishi has never said that. You read his life and you will see yourself what he himself did to realize his essential divinity and the many sacrifices

² H.W.L. Poonja, *Wake Up and Roar*, 2 vol., Kula (Hawaii), 1992-1993.

he made. He staked all his life on realizing who he was. He never succumbed to any temptation of the world. He never committed any unsocial or irreligious act. He even composed hymns in praise of Lord Shiva. He lived a very simple life. He meditated for days and days without even caring for food. Tell me what he did not do for the sake of Self-Realization? I am simply astonished if someone says that Ramana Maharishi had said, "You don't have to do anything to realize your true Nature". You have to undo many negative propensities of your mind in order to realize your divinity.

If a person is antisocial, should he/she remain antisocial, thinking that he/she is already free? Should a person who is drowned deep in the sea of ignorance and sin take it that he/she is already free, is already God, and so has to do nothing? It seems very ridiculous and not understandable. If you are already what you should be, why have you come here? Why do people go to listen to saints and sages? Is not going to saints and sages doing something?

Q: What is the link, if any, between the spiritual path of *Advaita* and the spiritual path of *Bhakti*?

Swamiji: *Advaita* has been very much misunderstood in the West. The greatest known exponent of *Advaita*, Adi-Shankaracharya, was an ardent devotee of Lord Govinda/Krishna. Whenever he wrote anything, he first saluted Lord Krishna. The *Upanishads* which expound the truth of *Advaita*, the essential oneness of the soul and God, are full of devotion to and admiration for the Divine. There is no contradiction between *Bhakti* and *Jnana*. *Bhakti* is the flower and *Jnana* is the fruit. Can there be fruits without the flowers being there first? *Advaita* is not a philosophy. It is

the highest experience of life, which comes only to those who are, in the words of Jesus, “pure in heart” and “poor in spirit”. We are to be very, very humble, egoless, docile, pure, faithful, trustful and free of all negative tendencies. The seeker has to make himself/herself free of all the impurities and of the instability of the mind, and must realize what he/she already is in essence and truth.

Do not be deluded into believing, that if you do not do anything for your spiritual unfoldment, you will be free. There are thousands and thousands of people in the world who are living on the level of animals and are not doing anything for realizing their divinity. Would you call them free? If you say to a ten years old Indian boy, “Who are you?” He will answer, “I am not this body, I am the *Atman*, the Spirit that never dies”. But will you call that boy a Realized sage?

Freedom is very important. Everyone wants to be free. If everyone were already free, no one would seek to be free. What is freedom? Are we free? Who is free? Who is not free? Why do we want to be free? How can we be free? What should we do or not do to be free? What is the sign of a free person? What is the sign of a person who is not free? Can we call birds or animals free because they have no restrictions on their sexual activities? They have no social responsibilities, they have nothing to do with politics, they are not doing anything to be free, they are satisfied with what they are, they are not even worried about their board and lodge. They don't seek freedom. Will we call them free?

I have never heard from any saint or sage, nor have I read in any scripture that man is already free and has nothing to do to be free. Man is a sleeping God. God is an Awakened

man. But when a slumbering person or an antisocial person declares that he is a Realized and Liberated person, he is indulging in sheer nonsense.

If a lamb is brought up in the company of cubs, could it ever become a cub? It may be able to act as a cub if it lives among cubs for a long time. It may even think it is a cub, but will it become one? How can you realize your divine Nature so long as you are drowned in vices and depravity?

Q: I am confused. If the energy which motivates us to work for Liberation is essentially the energy that brings everything to life, how can blame or responsibility be put on those who don't seek? Is it not the fault of the energy?

Swamiji: The answer to this question is itself hidden in the question. In the question the word 'if' is used saying that, if it is the same divine energy which is moving all the living and non-living beings, then why is a man responsible for his actions? The word 'if' makes the man responsible and liable for what he does, because that action is not authentic; it does not come out of the Realization of the Truth. When you have directly and at first-hand realized the divine power, manifesting, sustaining and moving this universe, you become totally free of all responsibilities. You are responsible only when you are a separate individual and have not realized your oneness at first-hand with the Divine Being.

Q: I notice that ninety-nine per cent of the time, it is my ego/mind which manages my life, and even my spiritual search. This is obvious when I try to meditate. But there must be something in me, which is sincere. Sometimes, I strongly feel

this sincerity but soon my ego takes over again. I feel I cannot progress because of this. What should I do to be truly sincere?

Swamiji: Mind or ego is not a bad thing, as you may think. It is nature, which has evolved the ego, with a labour of thousands and thousands of years. It is because of your ego that you are higher than a stone or a vegetable or an animal.

Mind/ego is of two types, the pure and the impure, just as there is pure and impure water. The impure water is injurious to your physical health, but the pure water is essential and needful to sustain your physical body and life. It is your mind/ego which is sincere, and it is also your mind/ego which is not sincere in wanting to find out the Truth. You cannot at once jump out of your ego and be free of it. You have to purify it, sublimate it, use it properly (not misuse it) and evolve. In the final jump, when the ego becomes purified and intoxicated with God, it dies and merges in its source, which is the Divine.

Q: Can a prayer or a *mantra* help me to reduce the ego and increase my sincerity?

Swamiji: Yes, prayer, remembrance of the Divine, meditation, breathing exercises, contemplation, recitation of God's name or *mantra*, reading of books based on Truth and written by inspired saints and sages, do help to purify the ego and ultimately get rid of it.

Q: We are going home...

Swamiji: Where are you going? Which or what is your country? If you could realize from where you have come and

to where you belong, your coming and going will completely cease. You can come from or go to only where you are not. Is it not so?

Q: It is said that at the end of this century many disasters, e.g. earthquakes, will destroy a part of humanity.

Swamiji: It has already started to happen. You see many countries being disintegrated. People have almost lost their sense of proportion and are fighting for what does not exist in the real sense. These are the signs of the coming events. They say, “The coming events cast their shadows before”. The next ten years are very crucial as far as man’s very existence on this earth is concerned. A new system, new values, new man, new age, may come up within the next thirteen years. The prevailing conditions point to this as signs of what is to come.

India was regarded as the most peaceful place to live in. Its simplicity, its culture, its spiritual values, its power of tolerance and assimilation attracted people from all over the world to come and spend the latter part of their lives in a peaceful atmosphere and seek the higher dimension of life. But now, most parts of India are becoming or being destabilized — the North, the East, the West and the South of India, are all included. The Himalayas were once considered to be an insurmountable wall against foreign invasion. Now, India has to post a great part of its defence forces along the Himalayan border to protect the country. What a change! And this is happening all over the world! During the last few years, the world has become unipolar, instead of two superpowers in the world as was a few years

ago. Are these not enough signs that something new is going to happen in the world in the not so remote future?

Your country, Switzerland, has itself, changed much. When I went to Switzerland in May 1978, the weather was so cold that I needed a quilt with a blanket to guard myself from cold at the night. The last time, in May 1992, it was so hot in Switzerland that I liked to use a fan.

Q: Do you think that in the next century, there will be ‘heaven on earth’?

Swamiji: Heaven and hell, both exist together. It is not possible to separate them. Much depends on where and how man wants to live. Said Jesus, “ The kingdom of heaven is within you”. I tell you, both hell and heaven are within you. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, it is said that dispassion for heaven is an essential part of the *sadhana* for God or Self-Realization. From the Indian spiritual point of view, hell is the degradation of heaven and heaven is the transformation of hell. Basically both are temporal and relative.

Q: Can emotions and sentiments towards the Divine be a hindrance on the path?

Swamiji: Psychologically speaking, there is a difference between sentiments and emotions. The emotions have to be purified, sublimated and then directed to the Divine in the path of *Bhakti Yoga*. Such emotions are not a hindrance. In fact, they help the devotee on the path of God-Realization. Purified and sublimated emotions for the Divine can lead to *samadhi*. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa reached the *savikalpa samadhi* through emotional love of God.

Some saints also had many spiritual experiences through raising their level of consciousness by sublimating their emotions and directing them towards the Divine. However, they did not interpret those experiences properly, with the result that the experiences were mixed up with many superstitions. Some Sufi saints had very sublime spiritual experiences following the path of devotion.

Q: What should be the right approach to taking the robe of a *sannyasi*? Does the *Guru* offer the initiation, or is it done at the seeker's request? Is *sannyasa* taken for life or as in Buddhism, can it be taken for short periods as well? What is the difference between a *sannyasi* and a *sadhu*? What are the vows? Are there different levels of renunciation?

Swamiji: Robes of a saint/sage are only symbolic. As a matter of fact, the heart is to be dyed with the love of God. If the heart is not dyed, the wearing of robes makes no sense at all. Anyway, robes are like the uniform of a *sadhu*, just as there is the uniform of a policeman, or a driver or a navy officer. From the uniform a man wears, one can easily recognize what values or role of life he has assumed or accepted.

By wearing the robe of a policeman, you will think twice before stealing. By wearing the robe of a *sadhu*, you will not dare to kill a man or even an animal, because with a *sadhu*'s robe the society will not permit you to do so. You will feel guilty about doing any mean thing if you are wearing the dress of a *sadhu*. Your dress as a *sadhu* indicates that you are a pure-hearted, humble man seeking the Divine and trying to unravel the mystery of life. So the robes do have a role in that sense. In Hinduism there is no tradition of periodic

sannyasa as it is there in Buddhism. In Hinduism, if you become a *sannyasi* or a *sadhu*, it is for your whole life unless you get distracted and give up the path. That is considered to be a degradation.

The robes of a *sadhu* are taken only when the disciple sincerely requests for it, and the *Guru* graciously agrees to it. The vows taken are many; they differ from person to person according to their needs. There is no fixed rule for that. The only rule is that, the seeker has to be whole-heartedly devoted and dedicated to God-Realization.

‘*Sadhu*’ is a word, which can be used for a saint or a sage of any denomination. The word ‘*sannyasi*’ is usually used for *sadhus* of the denomination of Shankaracharya. There are again many sub-denominations of these *sannyasis*.

Yes! Renunciation does not come suddenly. You can renounce the robe of a householder, but you cannot renounce the attachments to people, relations, things and situations at once. You grow in inner renunciation gradually as you advance in your *sadhana*. There are many levels of renunciation.

Q: How can I recognize a consciousness, which is not the mind? What is the spiritual heart?

Swamiji: The heart which is referred to as the spiritual heart is, as a matter of fact, a higher dimension of consciousness, which is purified and integrated. The experiences of this higher consciousness are more intuitive and deeper than that of the thinking mind. The impact of the experiences of that consciousness radically changes one’s life.

Q: A few months ago, I underwent a loss of memory for several hours. Where was my consciousness during that time?

Swamiji: What we feel is our consciousness at present, is not our true Consciousness. It is only a bundle of memories, desires, thoughts, imaginations and sentiments, etc. In fact, it is the mind and not Consciousness in the real sense. So to lose such consciousness made of memories, desires, etc., is a boon for the seeker provided he remains aware and alert.

By losing memory, your false identifications are washed away periodically. It may awaken you to the falsehood of the false 'I' or the 'ego/self'. Real Consciousness does not 'come from' or 'go to' anywhere. It is always there, reflecting the different states of mind. A man ignorantly identifies those states of mind with Consciousness itself.

For example, you have a transparent cup. If you put a red liquid in the cup, the cup looks red. If you fill it up with a greenish solution, the cup looks green, but in reality the cup is neither red nor green. You can verify it by taking the red or greenish solution out of it. Similarly when you become empty of thoughts, memories, desires, imaginations, you have the taste of pure Consciousness, provided you do not fall asleep at that moment.

You have identified Consciousness with the mind. You have done it for lives and lives. The result is that when the mind goes to sleep or is stupefied, or ceases to function due to an injury to the brain which is the instrument of the mind, you feel as if you are not aware, or as if you have no Consciousness.

What is the proof that there is no Consciousness? There must be someone who has seen that state of unconsciousness,

and that is impossible. It is a contradiction. Absence of Consciousness can never be experienced. It is the most untenable, the most illogical and completely unverifiable theory, that there can be a state in which Consciousness is totally absent. It amounts to saying that God can be absent in time and space.

Q: You have said that we have to give up the pleasures of the senses. From that perspective, to what extent is it fair to practise the arts such as music, painting, etc., and also sports, since these activities involve pleasure of senses? Is it possible to integrate the sense of beauty in our *sadhana*?

Swamiji: All the pleasures as well as pains are born by the contact of the senses with their corresponding objects. These contacts are not, and cannot be lasting. So the pleasures and pains themselves are not lasting. They are transient. They can never give men lasting satisfaction. They leave an impression on the mind, a sort of memory-impact, which impels a man to have the same experience of excitement again and again, with the result, that there is a sort of hide-and-seek game.

If you have favourable sensation (depending upon your past experience), through the contact of a sense with its corresponding object, it is called pleasure. If the sensation is unfavourable, it is called pain. With the pleasurable sensation, you feel a sort of elation, but the sensation is temporary. Therefore, when that sensation is gone, you feel a sense of depression or frustration. So each elation turns into depression, like waves. There is a crest when the wave goes up and ebb when the wave comes down. So, a man who seeks

pleasures and elation also invites pain and depression. Pleasure and pain cannot be separated. Moreover they are not lasting.

Therefore, a seeker who has known their impermanence through reflection never runs after pleasures. You cannot give them up absolutely. As long as you are alive, you must see, hear, touch, etc. The seeker keeps poise in such sensations. When they happen, he/she is not moved or swayed by them. The seeker knows they are not lasting. The seeker of Truth aspires only to that which is lasting and eternal.

The pleasures, which are derived from music, painting, art and poetry, are aesthetic. They are of higher quality than the pleasures we get by eating a chocolate or drinking a cup of coffee. These pleasures are surely higher and more sublime. If taken and used properly, they can become means to the real happiness, which is the result of God-Realization. Music, for example, has the power to withdraw the senses and mind from external objects and focus them on a feeling or thought, which is related to the Divine. So it can be a means to the Realization of the Truth. Similar is the case with art, poetry and creative painting. They can lead you to the Divine via nature, which is the expression of the Divine.

Q: Is dream a reality?

Swamiji: In the *Yoga Vashishta*, there is a story. King Janaka had a dream; in the dream, he saw himself as a beggar very, very hungry, begging food from door to door. However, he could not get anything to eat. In one home, when he spread his cloth to beg food, a woman put a piece of bread on it. A

kite was flying just above in the sky and, before the beggar (Janaka) could take the piece of bread, it came down in a flash and took away that piece of bread. By this sudden event, the sleep of Janaka was broken, and he woke up. All night long he could not sleep, as he kept reflecting on who he really was? Was he a hungry beggar who a few minutes before was going from door to door to beg food? Was he a king who was lying on his kingly bed and reflecting? As far as the experiences were concerned, he had felt both of them. So, what was true and what was not true? He could not reach any conclusion and was very sad; so much so that, the next day he did not eat anything and neither did he go to take up the court, but sat saddened, reflecting in silence on who he really was. Was he really a king or a beggar? For two days, he remained silent and reflecting. The ministers became worried to see the plight of the king. They went to *Rishi Ashtavakra* and told him all about the situation.

So, Ashtavakra came and, having read at once the mind of Janaka, knew the state of confusion in which he was. Ashtavakra laughed and said, “Janaka! You are neither a king nor a beggar. If you were a king you would never cease to be a king, at any time and any place. You would be a king forever. But that cannot be. So your being a king is a delusion born of your ignorance. It is a temporary phenomenon that you happen to be a king at this time. In reality, you are not a king. You have been put here only to play the role of a king. Also you are not a beggar. How could you be a beggar? That experience was also temporary. You were put in another state of consciousness to play the role of a beggar. That also was a temporary phenomenon. You are neither a king nor a beggar in reality. Think and reflect over what you are in reality. That true Knowledge will make you free.”

Q: In many circumstances, I feel indifferent towards things by which I should be touched. How can I see the difference between true detachment and a trick of the ego, which does not want to be disturbed?

Swamiji: You say you feel indifferent towards things in many circumstances by which you should be touched. By this statement you admit that you know those things by which you should be touched but towards which, you feel indifferent. There seems to be a contradiction in what you say. If you know the things by which you should be touched, it means those things touch you, but you pretend as if you are not being touched. This is not detachment. True detachment does involve the knowledge that those things should not touch you, and that they are insignificant and unimportant. By knowing this, if you remain detached, that will be the true detachment.

If you feel that a thing should touch you, your ego will force you to be touched. It is a different matter if the ego remains disturbed or undisturbed by the feeling of being touched. It depends upon your spiritual standing whether the ego will become disturbed or not disturbed. The ego is hurt only when something goes against it. But when the ego surrenders itself in a given situation, taking it as the divine decree, it is not disturbed.

Ego or mind plays many tricks to befool the seeker. But what is the ego? It is born of non-seeing and unawareness. When you see the ego, it at once loses its ground. It is like a shadow, it has no real existence. If the ego were real, it could never be destroyed or got rid of. It is as if you are angry. When you are angry, you do not see your anger. In a fit of anger, you only see the person with whom

you are angry and the fault of that person. At that time, your awareness is flowing outward. If you could be aware of yourself or of your anger at that time, meaning that the awareness could flow back within, the anger will cease. You may even begin to laugh.

Chapter Two

“Realization is always timeless. You have not to do anything to realize God. You have to undo and surrender. To get something temporal, action and time are needed. To realize your true, divine Nature, you need to do nothing but to be aware. You are already in God.”



Q: I feel tired. I have been practising so many methods of concentration...

Swamiji: Moving or doing brings tiredness. Stopping brings rest. Movement exhausts the energy; rest restores it. An ordinary man cannot stop himself, so nature has devised sleep for him. When you have a sound sleep, you restore your physical and mental energy. Have a good sleep!

Q: Please, would you tell us about the quality of joy?

Swamiji: Joy has many, many different levels. There is the so-called joy in the pleasure of eating, drinking, sleeping, having sexual activity. That is the lowest pleasure, which is readily available in animal life. There is the mental joy you get through thinking, analyzing and reflecting. There is an aesthetical joy, which a painter feels while drawing a scene of nature. There is a joy experienced through poetry or through music. There is the joy of a scientist who makes a search to discover a scientific truth. There is the joy of selfless service. There is the joy in the remembrance of the Beloved. There is the joy of the communion with the Divine. There is, finally, the highest joy of Oneness when the subject, the object and their relationship merge into the unity of the Consciousness.

There are so many other joys also. Can you express in words the joy you have in eating a *gulab jamun*, a *jalebi*, a *rasgulla*³, a pastry, a chocolate and so many other different sweets? You can simply say, “They are sweet”. There is something in all of them, which tastes sweet. But you cannot express the sweetness in words!

Q: For more than a week, I have been asking myself, “Who am I?” The question, which comes after that, is “Who is God?” If one day I happen to find the answer to that question, would I become God-intoxicated?

Swamiji: When you come to realize “Who am I?” going beyond the mental consciousness and entering into the non-polar meditation, there is no God-intoxication. There is no subject, which is different from the object; nothing becomes intoxicated with something that is different from itself. It is the Realization of the immutable Self. God-intoxication is the state of the complete absorption of the devotee’s mind in God, who is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of this universe, and at the same time the most loving and the beloved of all creatures. This state of God-intoxication usually comes through following the path of love and devotion. Ultimately it leads to the Realization of the consciousness of Self-Fulfilment.

Do not mix up the two paths. One is the path of enquiry, the other is the path of love. In the path of love, the question of enquiry does not arise. When you fall in love with someone, do you make enquiries as to who that person is?

³ *Gulab jamun*, *jalebi* and *rasgulla*: Indian sweets.

Is he rich or poor, employed or unemployed, is he a Muslim, a Christian, a Hindu, a Jew, a Frenchman or an Englishman? True love suffers no such enquiries.

You fall in love with God without knowing who He is, or where He is. You simply fall in love. Truly speaking, on the intellectual level, you may be called a mad person if you fall in love with God. There are very, very few persons who fall in love with God without any reason. There is no motive behind it, you don't know the 'why', 'what' and 'whether' of God, and yet there is a very strong attraction in you for God. You weep for Him, you talk to Him in your dreams, you play with Him in your thoughts, you feel His invisible presence inside you and outside you, and you cannot resist that. Your whole personality is possessed by what you call God — this is God-intoxication. I myself had gone through this kind of experience for a long time. I was not concerned who God was, and still I could not forget Him.

Q: I feel ill at ease with the idea of God as an entity, which is outside me. So I am seeking God inside. But it is not easy for me...

Swamiji: God is at once inside and outside. In reality the idea of inside and outside arises with the body-consciousness. First we think we are this physical body. Then we consider God inside us or outside us. When the body-consciousness disappears, the idea of God being inside or outside becomes irrelevant. It is due to the physical body that the idea of God being inside or outside arises. God is like ether (space). If there is a pitcher, or say a thermos, you may say that the ether is inside the thermos as well as outside the thermos. But the truth is that the thermos itself, in the final analysis,

is made of ether. So ether is inside the thermos, the thermos itself is made of ether, and ether is outside the thermos also. Ether is homogeneous. It cannot be divided or split, though the phenomenal existence of what we call 'thermos' creates the impression that the ether is inside the thermos as well as outside the thermos also.

There is nothing wrong in seeking God inside. On the other hand, it is better because it is the nearest place where you can discover God. Why seek God far away when He is available and can be found at the nearest place? Moreover, what you see inside yourself, you see everywhere, in all others. If you are sad and sick, the whole world looks sad and gloomy to you. If you are happy within, you feel as if the whole nature is dancing with joy. In reality there is no difference at all between 'inside' and 'outside'. Some people start seeking God outside, but in the end, they turn inside themselves. Some people start seeking God inside, and in the end of their Realization, they find God outside also — present at once inside and outside at the same time.

The way you take to seek God depends upon your temperament and interest. All paths lead to the same goal. A sweet or a chocolate is sweet on all sides. Someone is eating it from its left side; you are eating it from the right side. It is sweet on all sides.

Q: Does the ego follow the soul after death?

Swamiji: Ego is the part of the psyche, which remains and moves with the soul from life to life so long as the soul is not completely merged with its source, which is the Divine. But the nature of the ego changes with reflection on the experiences of life. Ego comprises a part of the person. The

personality changes as the soul evolves through experiences. Ego is the false 'I', the product of false identification of the Spirit with the body/mind. When the identification is broken, the ego still remains as long as the physical body is not disintegrated. But then the ego does not direct the movement of life; it becomes an instrument. To use your ego is quite different from when you are used by your ego.

Q: Thank you, Swamiji, for your message. Would Your Holiness continue guiding me on the spiritual path?

Swamiji: I do not remember the message I gave. I am not a good messenger at all. When someone asks me a question, I give the answer, which spontaneously comes to my mind, and then forget it. So if you read the questions and answers, which are being compiled, you will find different answers to the same question at different places. Every question has many dimensions, and the person asking the question doesn't necessarily consider all the dimensions of the question. The answer is related only to that dimension of the question, which is in the mind of the one who asks the question.

On my own behalf, I have no message to give. I do not feel I am sent to give a divine message to lost people. The most important thing is that a person should feel that he/she is not very important at all. The world was going on very well before I came to the world, and it will go on well when I will leave it. I am not at all indispensable in this world, nor are A, B or C indispensable. The world goes on in spite of us.

[...] I thank you so much that you remember me. I reciprocate and appreciate your disinterested love for me.

Seeing this lock in your hand, it has reminded me of the saying, “What is the use of locking the doors of a stable after the horses have been stolen?” In the beginning there were only wild horses, wild cows, wild elephants, etc., but man, though being much physically weaker than them, tamed them and made them useful for himself, through the power of his intelligence. Man can also tame his senses and mind on the path of Self-Realization.

Q: I read the book you gave me and I agree with its contents, but I feel it is only an intellectual understanding. What should I do to be more involved with what is written there?

Swamiji: It is the discipline of the *vedantic* system that if you read something constructive once, you should reflect on it ten times, and contemplate on it one hundred times. Only then your life is gradually transformed and you have Enlightenment and Realization. Otherwise you are simply stuffing your brain with information and ideas.

Most Westerners follow the second option. Very few practise the discipline of any system of *Yoga*, whether it is *Bhakti Yoga*, *Karma Yoga* or *Jnana Yoga*. They read books, attend seminars, try to understand the system intellectually and then become teachers. I was surprised to see so many *Yoga* teachers in France. I observed on my last visit to Europe that some of the psychiatrists who met me there, were themselves mental patients. I think it is the easiest profession you can adopt in the West! The demand is so great. What does it indicate? It indicates that the people there are more tense and frustrated, in spite of all their wealth and affluence.

Q: With the conditions in which I have started my *sadhana*, it seems quite impossible to achieve Realization in this life. What should I do?

Swamiji: Everyone has the potentiality of realizing God. Realization is always timeless. You have not to do anything to realize God. You have to undo and surrender. To get something temporal, action and time are needed. To realize your true, divine Nature, you need to do nothing but to be aware. You are already in God.

Turn your attention to Him, and you will see Him, here and now. You can see Him here and now if you have the eyes to see. As a matter of fact, you have the eyes already. Do not keep them shut. Let your eyes remain open, and you will see Him. You have closed your eyes wilfully and you say you cannot see Him.

God can never be found in the future. He is always found now and here. You are like a thirsty fish in the ocean! You do not have to go anywhere, nor reach anywhere. You have to stop and see. You cannot see anything in its true shape when you are running. Can you? To see, you must stop. Your mind must stop.

Q: With the mind, we see forms. What will we see when the mind stops? God without form?

Swamiji: When your mind stops, you see yourself. When your mind is moving, you see others. When your mind stops, you see the timeless Spirit. When your mind is moving, you see the world.

Q: You say that deep sleep is unconscious and that it is the same for everybody. Dreams are subconscious and everyone has one's own dreams. But according to psychologists, the sleep of the dream is deeper than that of the deep sleep, as it is more difficult to awaken somebody from his/her dream than from his/her deep sleep. How do you explain that the subconscious state is deeper than the unconscious one?

Swamiji: I did not say that the subconscious state is deeper than the unconscious one. The unconscious state is surely deeper than that of the subconscious state. It is more difficult to wake up a dreaming person because the mind of a dreaming person is occupied. Wherever there is preoccupation, there is less receptivity. That is why a man in the deep sleep state is easily receptive to the call made to him, as he is totally unoccupied in that state. So your psychologists should rectify their mistake. As far as psychology is concerned, the West is just a child in comparison with Indian psychology. Western psychology has recently been made a branch of Science, but psychology in the East was, and is regarded as an essential part of *Yoga*, or of the religion/spirituality since millenniums

Q: A dog bit me when I was chanting the *mantra*. Was the *mantra* not strong enough in me? Does the *mantra* have the power to eliminate or reduce the impact of past *karmic* history?

Swamiji: If Jesus can be hanged and crucified by his own community of people, if the so-called believers can torture Mansur el-Hallaj and Shamas to death, what wonder if a street dog bites you! Only a few days ago her pet dog, not a

street dog, bit Mother Teresa. Does it in any way lower the status of Mother Teresa or her devotion? Once a wild elephant charged on me. On another occasion, a wild elephant broke my thatched hut, but I was not inside the hut at that time.

An honest seeker of Truth is obliged, more often than not, to face or undergo a lot of problems and sufferings in this world in order to follow the path of God-Realization. An honest seeker of Truth in this world is like a goat living in the forest of wolves. What if the body is killed in search of God? It is better to be killed in search of God than to die on a deathbed lying in an incapacitated physical and mental condition. The world is not to be enjoyed by the seeker of God. Contemplate on the impermanence of things and life. It will teach you the art of dying. You can enjoy life in its fullest only after you have learned the joy of dying. Be prepared to die at every moment.

Chanting of the *mantra* only is not enough. While chanting the *mantra*, your heart must be connected with God. If it is so God can surely reduce or eliminate the impact of your past *karma* on your life. The *mantra* does protect and work if its power has manifested, if it has penetrated into each and every fiber of one's being.

Q: When we say, "I come to thy shelter", what does that mean? What are we trying to secure? When all that we think we are is only a dream, what is there to be secured?

Swamiji: When you see the unreal as unreal, the unreal gradually ceases to influence you and you eventually come to realize the Real. When you see the dream as a dream, the

dream does not last long and you are awakened. When you are Enlightened and have realized your eternal and immortal Being, you need not take anyone's shelter. Please, do not confound the means with the end.

You have been bitten by a street dog and are so upset and full of doubts. You feel yourself vulnerable and your trust seems to be shaken. It seems you have not read the biographies of saints who suffered untold sufferings for the sake of their beloved God. It is the quality of a real devotee's love of God that if something happens to him/her which is adverse, he/she blames himself/herself and feels that he/she is responsible for that, and even gives thanks to God for having given him/her the punishment. And one who has no real love for God always finds faults with the working of God when something adverse happens to him/her.

It surprises me how reactions and doubts have been created in your mind by a dog biting you. Do you take shelter in God to save you from the bite of a dog? If so, it is a very low type of devotion. There is no need of taking shelter in God to save oneself from the bite of a dog. A stick can do the work. There are other dogs always biting or tending to bite the seeker e.g. anger, doubt, greed, desire, fear, ego and so many infirmities, which the seeker finds very hard to overcome. By simply saying these words, the 'shelter' does not happen. Saying, "O God, I am taking Your shelter, please save me" is one thing, but in reality in your heart, you may have taken so many shelters that are totally unsafe.

Saying a thing is one thing, to feel it deeply in the heart or being established in what one says is quite another. When one has really surrendered to God, one sees God and His working in everything and enjoys His *lila* within and without.

There is no question of disturbance or of disbelief arising in him/her. The doubter and the disbeliever in him have completely been wiped out. If the whole universe is destroyed, if all the volcanoes in the world erupt and wipe out most of the life from this earth, the one who is established in God is not moved at all.

You know how much shelter in God you have taken, in spite of saying and repeating those words daily. Your doubts and distrust show that the 'shelter' has not happened at all. It is only confined to the words. That a bite of a dog should create such a big distrust in the devotee who has given up one's whole life to the Lord, indeed seems very surprising. Who is distrustful? Who is doubtful if the whole personality has been surrendered? First tie a coffin on your head. Be ready to die if you want to tread the path of Realization.

The quality of a real devotee of God is that he/she takes all responsibilities on himself/herself if and when something adverse happens, but gives credit to God when something favourable happens. Tomorrow you might get a bad cold and question, "Though I have taken shelter in God, I have caught a bad cold. So, what is the use of taking shelter in God?"

Q: How can I avoid sleep during early morning meditation?

Swamiji: Sleep during meditation can be avoided by taking appropriate sleep required by the body when you are not practising meditation. If you are tired physically or mentally, you will go to sleep during meditation. If the meditation is boring and you don't enjoy it, you will also go to sleep. If you have eaten too much or so less that you feel weak, you will be forced to go to sleep during meditation. So you have

to keep your life balanced in all activities in order to maintain alertness during meditation.

Q: Why should I have faith?

Swamiji: The questioning and doubtful mind is an obstacle in the path of God-Realization. It always remains disturbed. The trustful and faithful mind, as that of a child, is open and receptive. It is far easier for a person having such an open mind to realize God. Mere speculation, studying and storing one's mind with words and thoughts usually do not help a seeker of Truth. They make you a philosopher instead. If you stretch your reasoning mind beyond a certain limit, it turns agnostic and makes you wander in the circle of argumentation. You reach nowhere and come to no definite conclusions about Truth, what to say of any spiritual experience.

A seeker had read so many books on spirituality, studied the books on all religions and philosophy along with the most modern theories of science, yet he felt that something remained unknown which he missed. He went to a sage for guidance. The sage looked deep into his eyes and his thoughts and said, "If you really want to know the Truth first-hand, go back and forget all that you have already learnt. Then come to me. Your mind is full of words and ideas. There is no empty space in it where Truth can find a place. So please go back, forget all that you have learnt and then come to me".

Q: What is your opinion concerning psychologists and psychotherapists? Are they advanced in spirituality?

Swamiji: Most of the psychotherapists work on mental patients. They know only of the complexes of the mind. They are not aware of the higher traits and potentialities of the mind because they keep in touch only with mental patients. As a matter of fact, they themselves may suffer from psychological problems. Freud is regarded as one of the greatest psychologists of the West, though to me, Jung was much more advanced and knowledgeable. Freud himself was the victim of the weaknesses of his mind. He had anger, greed, desire, and attachment like any ordinary person. He himself has written that he could not control his desires. It is easier to know the faults of other people than one's own. Is it not?

Yoga and spirituality as well as religious disciplines are based on psychology. The seekers should follow those disciplines instead of becoming professional psychologists or psychotherapists.

Q: How can I reconcile daily life with the spiritual path?

Swamiji: Most of the *vedic rishis* were householders. They discovered and expounded the highest Truth in the *Vedas*. How could they strike a balance between their family and social life, and the spiritual life?

There is, as a matter of fact, no watertight compartment between the material and the spiritual. If you accept all things, situations and relationships in the name of the Divine, they turn into a means of remembering the Divine and do not hinder your spiritual progress. But if you take this world as independent of the Divine and deal with it in such a way that you forget the Divine, then it surely becomes an obstacle.

The world is as you take it or make it. If you regard it as a manifestation of the Divine, and yourself as a participant in His divine *lila*, you remain aware of the divine Presence even if you are a householder fulfilling all your obligations.

I have heard of two labourers working for the construction of a temple in a small village. One was asked, “What are you doing here?” He said, “Somehow, I have to sustain myself and my family, so I am working here as a labourer and I am breaking stones”. The other man was also breaking stones as a labourer. He was asked, “What are you doing?” He then replied, “The temple of the Lord is being constructed in the village. I am doing my bit as a service in the construction of the temple of my Lord”. Both of them got the due wages for the work they were doing, but their attitudes were quite different. One was remembering the Divine through that work, and the second was doing the same work simply to earn money.

The seeker of Truth lives in the world and works as that labourer who was ‘serving’ in the construction of the temple of the Lord. The crux of the problem for the seeker is, how to remain aware of the Divine in all situations. For this, he regularly sits in meditation and reflects on the eternal values of life and tries to live for the Divine. The goal of human life is to live consciously in the Divine and the means is to live for the Divine. If you are vigilant and alert you can turn the stumbling-stones into stepping-stones and go ahead on the path of God-Realization. It depends upon us how we interpret life and how we live it.

Q: If the mind is not balanced, can we become united with God, and achieve *nirvana*?

Swamiji: Only the one, who has achieved complete mastery over one's mind and complete Realization of the true nature of one's Being in this life, achieves *nirvana* after shedding his/her body.

If the Divine is not discovered here and now, He cannot be found after the soul leaves this physical body. How can a person full of passions and desires realize the Divine? He/she cannot get even the day-to-day ordinary peace. He/she is continuously being tossed in the ocean of this *samsara*, the world of time. *Nirvana* requires complete purification and stillness of the mind.

Q: You said that those who are established in, and content with their essential Being have no more duty. But how can I know my own duty?

Swamiji: God or the Divine is the 'be all and end all' of life. After God-Realization, you feel completely self-fulfilled. There is another dimension of God-Realization. It is that you realize God, not only within but also without, in each and every person and thing, and God does not need your help. This question was asked to Swami Vivekananda in America. He replied, "If you are a devotee of God, you feel that everything is God. If you are a *vedantin* you perceive the whole world as an illusion and *Brahman* alone as the Reality". As Shankaracharya said, "*Brahma satyam jaganmithya*".

So where does the question of duty arise? Duty is the substitute of love. What you cannot do out of love, you can do it as your duty. Duty indirectly indicates a sense of compulsion. You may fulfil your duty but experience it as a

burden upon you. When you do something out of love, you feel joy in it. Moreover duty is a word, which is connected with action, with doing. But what if you come to realize that you are not the doer? In such realization the question of duty also does not arise. It does not mean that a God-Realized person does not do anything. Whatever he does, he does not do it as a duty but out of love. He becomes a tool in the hands of God. He becomes childlike, totally free from the sense of duty.

In *Spiritual Gems*, I have written, “Is it at all possible to know and perform your duty without knowing yourself?” (p. 84). By this logic, your first and foremost duty is to know yourself. Your duty depends upon what you become. When you do not become anything and are simply what you are, the question of duty does not arise. Duty binds you. Love liberates you. Love is a radiation of joy. To feel the duty of knowing yourself binds you with the means of Self-Realization. When you are Realized, all bondages disappear.

Q: If the *mantra japa* is not performed properly, can it harm the person who is practising *japa*?

Swamiji: *Mantra japa* is a means of remembering the Divine. If it is not done properly, or if it is done mechanically, without feeling, it may not yield immediate results, but it can never do any harm. I am talking of the *mantras*, which are connected with the Divine — through which you pay your obeisance to God or pray or take His refuge. How can these *mantras* do harm? It is sheer nonsense to say that such *mantra japa* can harm you.

There are other *mantras* connected with evil spirits. Some people practise such *mantras* to have control over those spirits in order to use them. The *japa* of those *mantras*, if not performed with proper rituals and methods, can harm the practitioner because no one likes to be controlled and used. So those very spirits whom you try to control may harm you.

Through divine *mantras*, you don't want to control the Divine, but you want to be controlled by the Divine. You take to His refuge through such *mantras*. You become connected with and remember the Divine. The Divine does not harm a devotee if the devotee calls on Him through a *mantra* for help. I do not understand how people write such unreasonable things, which are also totally against experience.

There was a man who was a devotee of Lord Krishna. He lived in Vrindavan for some years and recited Krishna *mantra* to have the *darshan* of Lord Krishna. Since he did not have the *darshan* he became so frustrated that he left Vrindavan for his home village. On the way, he met a man who had perfected the *mantra* of an evil spirit and had control over that spirit. The man read the mind of the devotee and said to him, "Devotees spend lives to see their beloved God, and you have become frustrated with your *sadhana* in a few years". The devotee asked, "Please, first tell me how did you come to know that I was coming from Vrindavan and was frustrated on account of not having been able to see my *Ishta*, Lord Krishna?" The man replied, "I have got control on a ghost through a *mantra*. This ghost tells me what is in the mind of any person who meets me. I can use this ghost in many ways. The *mantra* of this evil spirit can be perfected in three nights". The devotee said, "I could not see Krishna.

Please tell me that *mantra* and I will practise it according to your instructions for three nights”. So the man initiated him in the *mantra* of the evil spirit.

As instructed, the devotee practised the *mantra* for three nights, but nothing happened. He could not control the evil spirit through that *mantra*. He went to the man and told him about his failure to see the evil spirit and control it. The man called the spirit and asked it, “Why could not the devotee see you and control you through that *mantra*, though he performed rightly the *japa* and the rituals for three nights?” The spirit replied, “He is a devotee of Lord Krishna and has performed thousands of *japa* of the *mantra* of Krishna. When I approach him, I feel as if I am entering a burning fire which I cannot bear, so I cannot go near that devotee”. The man told the devotee why he could not have contact with that evil spirit. The devotee reflected and understood that it was because of the power of the *japa* of Krishna’s name, which he had performed while living in Vrindavan, that prevented the evil spirit from coming near him. He repented over leaving Vrindavan and stopping the recitation of the *mantra* of Krishna. He went back again to Vrindavan and renewed the practice of *japa* of the *mantra* of Krishna. After a few years, he had the *darshan* of Lord Krishna who blessed him with the love and knowledge of the Divine.

This is a true story told to me by a very old and revered saint of Vrindavan. He was a retired judge of the Supreme Court and spent the rest of his life in Vrindavan.

This is true about all the holy Names such as Krishna, Rama, Waheguru, Allah, Shiva, Jesus, Buddha, Mahavir, Adonai, Hari and so on. The devotee should practise the holy

Name of his/her faith with love and trust. The *japa* of the holy Name purifies the heart of the devotee and generates divine love.

Q: If I practise *japa* all day long, I feel rather stupefied. What then should I do?

Swamiji: *Japa* is practised in all the religions without any exception. Its purpose is to break the stupefaction and to awaken the soul, which is under the spell of *maya*, the power that limits the awareness, happiness and knowledge of the soul. *Japa* is a technique discovered by the mystics of all religions. It takes all that you have learnt intellectually about God and Truth deep into your subconscious level where the roots of all the passions, desires, anger, greed and ignorance are buried. *Japa* roots out all the impurities of your heart and soul and enables you to be aware of your divine, essential Being. It is the simplest way that can be followed by one and all, irrespective of the seeker being old, young, poor, rich, sick or healthy. It is the panacea for all that might afflict the soul and bind it.

Q: How can I become more and more dependent upon God?

Swamiji: You have to perform *japa* with the feeling of self-surrender to the Divine. There are *mantras* whose meaning is, “O Lord, I surrender myself, my soul, my heart, my intellect — all that I have and all that I am to Thee”. If you repeat this sentence again and again for a long time, say for five to six hours a day regularly, it will, in due course of time, go down deep into your subconscious. It will strike at the root of your ego which brags all the time of your

precarious and temporal achievements, and which puts all sorts of obstacles on the path of self-surrender to God.

Q: Should a seeker of Truth have difficulties in finding a place to practise his/her *sadhana*? I have been travelling for one month and visited different places. I had to face difficulties everywhere. Nowhere did I feel that the people were following a spiritual path.

Swamiji: It seems you did not go to the right places. Or you could not adjust yourself there, to their spiritual approach. No place is perfect. Everywhere you have to confront limitations. Had there been some perfect place then, you would not need to seek God. You would need only to go to that place!

An *ashram* is like a community centre where many people stay together. Everyone has one's own peculiar temperament and likes and dislikes. The thing that keeps them together is one master in whom they all have faith and trust and one goal of discovering the Truth, i.e. Self-Realization. For that purpose everyone should and has to deny oneself of many conveniences and comforts. That is not so difficult because a human being has the potentiality of adapting oneself to any situation. He/she can even manage to live at the North Pole!

The greatest problem is that of the ego. There are clashes between different people mainly because of their egos. The ego wants to control each and everyone. It considers itself the wisest one among all and tries to impose itself, its self-will on others. It causes conflicts in the *ashrams*. Such conflicts are present in almost all *ashrams*,

more or less. In the presence of the master, they remain covered up and do not come up to the surface. As soon as the master leaves, the conflicts come up. Is it not strange that there have been disputes leading to court cases between the different groups in some of the most famous *ashrams* for controlling those *ashrams*?

The first and last obstacle in the path of Self-Realization is the ego. If the seeker is able to subdue the ego and get rid of it, he/she not only discovers the Truth, but also becomes a great force and a centre for uniting people of various temperaments.

Comfort is not a hindrance to God-Realization, but the attachment to comforts surely is. The seeker must try to learn to adjust and adapt to whatever situation he/she is put into. You don't serve your senses if you are a seeker; the senses have to serve you. You use all your faculties to achieve Self-Realization: your senses, your mind, your reflection and discrimination. You don't serve them but use them. They should not use you. In this matter, you have to be very vigilant as to whether you are being used by your mind or whether you are using your mind rightly.

Q: Since no place is perfect, is it useful to find a place which is uncomfortable and try to meditate there?

Swamiji: No place is perfect. It is true. One place may be relatively more conducive for *sadhana* than the other. Naturally the seeker has to choose a place, which suits him/her most as regards his/her *sadhana*. Saying, "No place is perfect" does not mean that you should go to a place where people are fighting with guns and sit there in meditation. If

you do so, you will most probably get shot in the crossfire during your meditation.

The mode of your *sadhana* changes with many factors, e.g. the level of your consciousness, your bodily conditions, your age, your external circumstances, climatic changes, etc. In summer, you can sit in meditation in simple underwear, but in chilly winter you have to wrap yourself up with blankets.

Q: What about the posture of the body during meditation?

Swamiji: If you feel pain in the body while sitting in a particular posture, it is not necessary that you must sit in that posture. It is better to sit cross-legged with your spine and neck in a straight position, but if you cannot do that because of sickness, old age or for some other reason, you may sit on a chair and meditate. After all, meditation is more concerned with the state of your mind than the posture in which you are sitting.

Emphasizing this point, Saint Kabir says in one of his couplets, “What if you have perfected a particular sitting posture (in meditation) when your mind is moving fast, and when your mind is full of all sorts of desires and expectations? If you are sitting in a perfect posture but your mind is running about in all directions, then you can be compared to the bull of a grinding mill, who is walking all the day going round and round in circles, covering fifty kilometres of distance and yet remaining at the same place”.

Q: How to choose between stretched legs or sitting on a chair?

Swamiji: It is better to sit cross-legged if you can do that. If not, sit on a chair. If you stretch your legs as you are now demonstrating, and everyone sits like that, then the meditation hall may accommodate only ten to fifteen persons sitting in meditation.

Q: In Poonjaji's book, I read that we are already Liberated and that we should not worry about getting Liberation. Can it be true?

Swamiji: Are you already Liberated? If everyone was already Liberated, could there be fights, wars, sufferings, conflicts, different and opposite forces and people pulling in opposite directions? What is the use of teaching if all are Liberated? Who asks the question if each and everyone is already Liberated? Do you mean that sometimes you are Liberated and sometimes you are bound and not Liberated?

It reminds me of a joke. A child who had been baptized as a Christian, was asked, "Is the earth round or flat?" He replied, "It is round in the school and flat in the church". In the school it is taught that the earth is round. In the church it was previously taught that the earth is flat, based on a literal interpretation of the Bible.

If a person who is weeping says, "Oh! I am very happy", will you believe him? If a man is full of desires, cravings, emotions and is a slave of his senses and mind, if he says one thing and does just the opposite, if he is not in complete control of his lower nature and is creating problems for himself and others, would you call him already Liberated? Is there a scarcity of such people in the world? Are all of

them already Liberated? Exercise your discrimination a little and say what you sincerely feel.

Q: Swamiji, you are joking. I feel you don't understand me!

Swamiji: Is what I have written a joke? Just reflect on it. People live on the earth and are always talking of heaven. There is so much anarchy and disorder within man and outside in the world, and you say, each and every one is already Liberated! It is talking in the air. Please read in the Holy Scriptures about the qualities of a Liberated One; then you will know. If each and every one were Liberated, there would have been no need to narrate in the holy books the qualities of a Liberated One.

In the olden days, *Vedanta*, *Yoga* and *Tantra* were taught only to those few seekers who had reached a certain advanced stage of spirituality. Only devotion and *Karma Yoga* were taught to the common masses. There were very special reasons for it. *Vedanta*, *Yoga* and *Tantra*, if taught to the common masses irrespective of the stage of their spiritual evolution, are more likely to be misunderstood and would bring degradation instead of upliftment in the seeker. Also, they are very arduous disciplines only to be undertaken by a committed seeker. They require patience and perseverance which no one in these days seems to have. It has become only an intellectual exercise to read or listen to these systems, and pretend to be knowledgeable and a Liberated One. Therefore, only competent seekers were taught *Vedanta*, *Yoga* and *Tantra*.

This is the jet-age and days of fast food. Everyone wants instant Realization. Everyone wants everything

ready-made. No one seems to have a deep and sincere aspiration to work and to break the web of one's mental or emotional trappings and give up cravings and desires. In the *Gita*, Krishna says that out of thousands and thousands of people, there are few who sincerely work for Liberation. And out of those who are most sincerely working to be Liberated, there are very, very few, and rare beings who really get Realization and become Liberated.

Jesus has said the same thing in a few words, "Many are called but few are chosen". According to Tulsidas, and similarly according to Jesus, there will come a time, call it *Kaliyuga*, when the people in chains will proclaim they are Liberated, and there will be many false prophets. The sinners will pretend to be most virtuous and those who talk and talk about God, without having any spiritual experience, will be regarded as men of wisdom and God-Realized.

Chapter Three

“Live in the world, but let not the worldliness live in your hearts. Devote some time daily to reflection, prayer and reading of books that give you inspiration to lead a life full of selfless love and service, and of awareness of what is real and permanent. It matters little where you live. What is important is how you live.”



Q: How can I feel more and more the need of God and be sincere and engaged in my spiritual quest?

Swamiji: The more you feel the need of God, the more sincerely you will be able to dedicate yourself to the path of God-Realization. The more thirsty you are, the more you try to find the water and drink it. How do you feel the need of God more and more? You have to reflect on what you have been seeking in life and what you have found. You have to learn from past experiences and grow. There are certain steps, which may intensify and deepen your aspiration for Self-Realization, such as:

- Read regularly the books, which intensify your aspiration to follow and practise the path. The books on the lives of great saints and sages can give you inspiration.
- Sit quietly and meditate daily and regularly.
- Practise *japa* if you have a *mantra*, and have faith in it.
- Associate with those saints and sages from whom you get inspiration, and always avoid the company of agnostics, non-believers and sceptics.
- Do not mix too much with people who are deeply involved in mundane affairs, whose sole purpose is to make money and indulge in worldly pleasures. They appear to be happy, but are quite disturbed and restless within.

- Pray to the Divine for dispassion, clarity of vision and light of Awareness.
- Practise some breathing exercises, which make your breathing process light, slow, rhythmic and deep.
- Serve the poor and the needy according to your capacity, in the name of God.

Q: I read in a book that Christ is still alive now in a body. Is this possible?

Swamiji: Christ is a state of perfect Enlightenment. Jesus was the embodiment of that state. If you understand Jesus in this sense, there may be some embodiment of Christ in the world even now — because the world never becomes totally bereft of Enlightened people at any time.

There is a subtle world in the universal medium where Jesus still lives in the same Form with many of his devotees who have gone in that world after their death from this earth. You can have a vision of Jesus and his *loka* in meditation. It can come to you by itself when your mind is tuned with the wavelength of that world, or you can see it in a vision through deliberate practice of meditation in that direction.

Many great Realized sages have their own worlds (*lokas*) in the universal medium. You can have a vision of many sages in meditation even if they have left their physical bodies and this earth. These worlds and *lokas* are phenomenal, as our world on this earth, though much more lasting than the world on this earth. In the *mahapralaya*, the great and ultimate dissolution of the whole universe, such Realized Ones and their worlds merge in *Brahman*, the

infinite, divine Consciousness. Nothing is independent of the infinite, divine Consciousness.

Q: Is a high level of meditation required to have visions of saints and sages?

Swamiji: Yes, high enough, but not the highest level. In the highest level of meditation all visions cease.

Q: Is it possible for a human being to take a new life at a low level such as an animal?

Swamiji: After death, you can go into or assume the body of an animal temporarily, for a certain period, to work out some of your tendencies, which can be worked out only in the body of a particular animal. It does not mean that the spiritual level you have attained in the human form is lost. When you again assume a human body, you start from your spiritual evolution where you had already reached. Spiritual progress is like the movement of light, which is never in a straight line; it is always in a waveform. Do you know how energy travels, whether it is light, sound or heat, or any other energy? It travels in a waveform.

There are ups and downs in the progression of energy. Similar is the case with spiritual evolution. You may have to pass through so many forms before reaching the state of Self-Realization, after which you have not to go anywhere or do anything, or assume any form.

There is a story of king Bharata in the *Mahabharata*. He renounced his kingdom, went to the forest and lived like an ascetic, spending the remaining days of his life in *tapas*

and meditation. In India, there have been so many instances when kings renounced their kingdoms and became monks. One day, king Bharata had gone into the forest, to fetch water from the river. There, he saw a pregnant female deer. Frightened by the roar of a lion, she jumped into the river. But, due to the pressure of the jump, she delivered a baby, which fell in the water. King Bharata, who saw what had happened, brought the fawn back to his hut. Out of mercy, he fed the baby deer with milk with the help of a nipple. The fawn was saved and started living in the hut of Bharata under his protection. After a few months, when Bharata was dying, the baby deer was sitting nearby. The king started thinking about the survival and maintenance of the baby deer, after his own death. Since he had become attached to the baby deer and was thinking of it at the time of death, he was born as a deer in his next life. But due to his *tapas* and purity in his past life, he remembered how he had to reincarnate into the body of a deer. After a few months, he shed his deer-body and again assumed the human form. He remembered what had happened to him in his past two lives. Therefore, in his present life, he became very vigilant and careful not to be attached to anything or person again. He lived like a mad man, acting as if he was a mad person, to avoid the association of anyone. In the end, he achieved *nirvana*.

The story shows that even a great *yogi* can take birth in the form of an animal, though temporarily.

Q: What is the light of Awareness?

Swamiji: The light of Awareness is the light by and through which everything that exists is perceived. Awareness is the final and authentic proof of the existence of each and every

thing. The light of Awareness is not some objective light, which can be seen as we see the light of a candle, bulb, or the sun. It is the 'experiencing' which is present in all the states, such as the wakeful state, the dreaming state, the deep sleep state and *samadhi*. It is eternal and never ceases to be. It cannot be experienced as an object like a chair or a table.

The present, past and future, as also space and all the worlds, owe their existence to Awareness. In its essential Nature it is without any content, but it can reflect anything without being tainted by that thing. It always remains in its pristine purity. The light of the sun lights up the water of the Ganges as well as the water of a gutter, but it does not become defiled by the water of the gutter nor purified by the water of the Ganges. Similarly, the light of Awareness may light up anything but remains untouched by what it reflects. It does not need any proof because proof itself needs Awareness. It can be directly experienced as one's true Being only when it is not identified with any thing, person or situation. It is not an experience, but the 'experiencing'. Meditation actually plays a negative role. Through meditation, the super-impositions on Awareness are removed, the identification of Awareness with its apparent contents is broken, and the Awareness alone remains revealed to itself in its essential, divine Nature.

Q: How and where should I repeat the *Gayatri mantra*?

Swamiji: It is better to do *Gayatri japa* mentally, but by making it *samput* with seven *vyahritis*, which is to say, fixing the latter before and after the *Gayatri mantra*. It makes the *mantra* longer (already the *Gayatri mantra* itself is long enough).

The mental chanting of all *mantras* should be done keeping one's attention focused at the heart-centre, which is located in the middle of the chest. *Gayatri mantra* is a sort of prayer to the Divine requesting the granting of the pure and integrated intellect in which the Truth is revealed.

Q: I feel some difficulty in concentrating on the *Gayatri mantra* at the heart-centre.

Swamiji: It is always difficult to concentrate on long *mantras*. The shorter the *mantra*, the easier it is to concentrate on it. If you cannot concentrate on the heart-centre while chanting the *Gayatri mantra*, you may concentrate on the meaning of the *mantra*. When the power of the *mantra* is manifested, you will feel its vibrations first of all at the heart-centre. Afterwards the vibrations permeate the whole body.

The seven *vyahritis*, which are to be fixed before and after the *Gayatri mantra* while chanting it, are *bhuh, bhuv, svah, maha, jana, tapa* and *satyam*. These *vyahritis* denote the seven *lokas* or worlds. While addressing the Divine and invoking Him, it conveys the following sentiment, "Thou who art pervading these seven *lokas*, O Lord, grant us the Truth/Consciousness. We contemplate on Thy essential Nature!"

Q: Is it possible to chant it when walking or doing manual work, etc.?

Swamiji: As a prayer, it can be chanted all the time. But some *vedic* scholars say that the *vedic mantras* should always be

recited with proper rituals and with a clean body and docile heart (after taking a bath, wearing clean clothes, and also sitting on a clean *asana*). This instruction has to be specially followed when the *mantra* is being recited to make an *anusthana*, a religious ceremony, with a specific purpose.

Q: Can the *mantra* be repeated with concentration in between the two eyes?

Swamiji: This centre, the *ajna chakra*, is the centre of vision. One has to focus one's attention on this centre when one is contemplating on some divine Form or some divine Idea. The centre where a *mantra* is to be recited is the *anahata chakra* or the heart-centre. In some books, you see pictures wherein a *yogi* is seeing some divine Form/Image at the heart-centre. It is basically wrong. Visions of saints or *avatars* are always seen at the *ajna chakra*.

Q: Can the light be seen in the heart-centre?

Swamiji: The sound of the *mantra* is heard at the heart-centre. Even the *anahata* word, a word which is not produced by friction, is heard at the heart-centre. That is why this *chakra* is called the *anahata chakra*. The light is always seen at the centre of vision that is *ajna chakra*.

There is much confusion among seekers about these points because in some books some pictures show the seeker concentrating on light or a divine Image at the heart-centre. This is basically wrong, unscientific and against experience. Sound and light are interchangeable. Sound changes into light and vice versa. If you are chanting a *mantra* at the

heart-centre and hear a sound which is transformed into light, your attention will at once be shifted to the *ajna chakra*. On the other hand, if you are contemplating on light at the *ajna chakra*, and that light changes into sound-vibrations, your attention will at once shift to the heart-centre and you will hear the sound at that place.

Q: You spoke about the *ajna chakra* and the *anahata chakra*, but you did not mention the *vishuddha chakra*?

Swamiji: You should know that all these *chakras* and the knowledge of the *kundalini* were actually discovered by *tantrics*. These have not been mentioned in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali which is the most authentic book on *Yoga*, and very systematic to reach the state of the highest *samadhi*. It has its own system and discipline to be followed by the seeker.

The *tantrics* put the *vishuddha chakra* between the heart-centre and the *ajna chakra*. When the energy/consciousness reaches the *vishuddha chakra*, which is located in the throat, the seeker becomes totally unconscious of his physical body. The level of consciousness of each of the six *chakras* is different, and it also depends on how much a *chakra* is opened or developed.

The three main *chakras* in the body, on which the seeker has to work to open them, are: the navel-centre (*manipura*), the heart-centre (*anahata chakra*), the centre between the two eyes (*ajna chakra*). The more these *chakras* are opened and active, the deeper become the vibrations emanating from these *chakras*. Their vibrations reach the other *chakras* and tend to open and activate them. Then, there

must be a proper coordination between these *chakras*, which has to be achieved by the seeker. Only then the seeker can have an integral experience of Truth/Consciousness.

This type of *sadhana* of opening the six centres must be undertaken while living with a master (who has himself practised this *sadhana* and has succeeded) under his direct guidance. This has not been the method of my approach, though I had the experience of some of these centres, but not in the exact forms as described in the *tantric* books. These experiences came to me through concentration, the practice of *japa* and breathing exercises. I did not follow the *tantric* system, so I am not able to guide you practically in this system.

Q: We are newly married and after our trip of three months in India, we would like to live a pure and peaceful life, dedicated to others. Should we live in a community life to be a help in that way?

Swamiji: The inner peace and pleasure have no similarity between them. Inner peace comes with the ending of inner conflicts — manifest or hidden. It comes when all the parts of one's personality are integrated, purified and harmonized. Both of you can help each other in that respect if you lead a simple, meaningful life with mutual respect, loyalty, understanding, sacrifice, sharing of pains and pleasures of each other, which are inflicted by infirmities and limitations, physical, social and mental. Live in the world, but let not the worldliness live in your hearts. Devote some time daily to reflection, prayer and reading of books that give you inspiration to lead a life full of selfless love and service, and

of awareness of what is real and permanent. It matters little where you live. What is important is how you live.

Q: Are there any differences between men and women on the spiritual way and if so, what are the different points that a woman has to work on in her *sadhana*? What is the specific role of a woman?

Swamiji: From the spiritual point of view there is no difference between a man and a woman. The Spirit is the same in both of them, or to be more precise, both are the manifestations of the same Spirit. As far as their bodies are concerned, the difference is obvious. On the mental plane also there is some difference. Woman is by nature more emotional and passive, while man is intellect-dominated and aggressive by nature. In *sadhana*, usually the path of devotion is suited to women, while the path of knowledge, exceptions apart, to men.

Q: Is there a difference between God-Realization and Self-Realization?

Swamiji: Yes and no. Essentially there is no difference between the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the soul. The difference between them is just like the difference between a man and a woman. God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, but the individual soul is not omnipotent and omniscient; it is confined in the physical body and mind. There is a common denominator of the soul and God, and that is the Spirit. It is called Godhead or *Brahman*. The soul is feminine in relation to God and nature.

In Indian terminology, there are four concepts: *Brahman*, *Ishvara*, *jiva* and *Prakriti*. *Brahman* or Godhead is common in *Ishvara*, *jiva* and *Prakriti*. The word Self is usually used for the Spirit or *Brahman*. By the Realization of the Self, you do not become omnipotent or omniscient. By Self-Realization, you become aware of the timeless Consciousness, the Spirit that is free of all attributes: it has no dimensions, it is neither big nor small, it is timeless and spaceless, it is free from birth and death. By Self-Realization, you become Liberated and go out of the vicious circle of birth and death, the so-called 'world phenomena'. This timeless Consciousness is synonymous with Bliss and 'Is-ness'.

Brahman is absolute Existence (Bliss, Awareness and Love), whereas *Ishvara* is the energy of *Brahman*. God-Realization means you become aware of that supreme conscious energy which is creating, controlling, running, sustaining and also destroying the world of name and form at the same time. God-Realization and Self-Realization both make the seeker Liberated. One can have both, God-Realization and Self-Realization, or one may have only Self-Realization and no God-Experience.

Q: What is concentration?

Swamiji: Concentration means focusing your attention on a single point, a single idea, a single image, or a single word or *mantra* in the body, or on any single point outside the body. During concentration, you may have many types of experiences, which cannot be had with a dispersed mind. Through concentration on any centre in the body you can feel the vibrations of that centre and know the functioning of it. *Japa* is not only a method of concentration but also a

way of remembering and communicating with the Divine through the power of the *mantra*.

Q: In order to have the full power of the *mantra*, should we fix it on the heart-centre?

Swamiji: Not fixing the *mantra*, but chanting the *mantra* mentally at the heart-centre, and at the same time hearing it mentally, is what is important. After a long and regular practice, the chanting becomes effortless, it goes on without any effort and you simply carry on hearing the *mantra*. There are further stages of this practice. The ultimate stage is the non-polar *samadhi*, which can also come through other methods of contemplation.

Q: When I practise concentration on an image at the *ajna chakra*, I hear the chanting of 'OM Hari sharanam', which is going on by itself in my heart. Is my method of practice right?

Swamiji: If you do both at the same time, your mind will be divided. Either hear the *mantra* in the heart, or see the image at the *ajna chakra* one at a time. You can practise both but at different times. Chanting means reciting or repeating the *mantra* mentally. Usually the chanting is oral, but you can do it in your mind also. During mental *japa*, repeating of the *mantra* has to be practised. There is no need of chanting at that time.

Q: How can I surrender? For me, it seems very difficult to do it.

Swamiji: Self-surrender is the consummation of self-effort. When you have utilized all your energy in the right direction on the way of finding the Truth, the surrender happens by itself. Surrendering to a person may be difficult, if you do not have complete trust in that person, or if you have some doubts. It is the doubt, which creates fear. Moreover, when you have some expectation, or some motive of self-interest towards the person to whom you want to surrender, you may have the fear that your expectation may not be fulfilled. When you use the word surrender, what do you mean by it? Surrender to whom? And what for? Why do you want to surrender?

Q: I want to surrender to God, to the Truth, to be nearer to Reality.

Swamiji: How will you surrender to God if you do not know Him or when you have not seen Him? Surrender needs full trust and living faith in God. If you have trust and faith, then surrender is not so difficult.

Q: To see Him, I have to surrender, but the surrender cannot happen if I have not seen Him. What am I to do?

Swamiji: So, first seek Him. Try to see Him or realize Him. This is what we are talking of daily at this place.

Q: When I arrived here I was tired and I felt that surrendering would be easy. But after a week, I feel a strong ego within me again.

Swamiji: To be egoless is one thing and to be free of ego is quite another thing. It is just like the difference between being careless and carefree. Would you like to be careless? You first have to purify your ego, then to sublimate it and then to use it rightly. The problem is not the ego, but being used by your ego. Ego is a very useful thing if you are not a slave of your ego. A donkey has no ego at all, but you cannot call it a Liberated Being. The ego has to be tamed and subdued first. Only then can you be free of the ego.

If you feel weak and exhausted, it does not mean that your ego has become weak. Usually a weak person has a strong ego and a strong person has a weak ego. An elephant is very strong but it has no ego at all. It is just like a strong person being more tolerant and a weak person less tolerant. A person who has a very strong ego says, "I have no ego at all." The one whose ego has been subdued will not exclaim or say that he/she is free of ego.

Q: How can I tame my ego?

Swamiji: What we call *sadhana* is the means to first tame and purify your ego, and then to be free of it. There are many limbs of *sadhana*: meditation and reflection, watching your ego, prayer, selfless service, breathing exercises, reading of holy books, association with and listening to the sages, then following their teachings sincerely, avoiding the company of people who are totally engrossed in worldly affairs and whose only aim is to make money and indulge in sensual pleasures, etc.

Q: I am practising breathing exercises as you told me. Should I change what I am doing or carry on the same?

Swamiji: You may increase the period of your breathing exercises. You can easily go up to thirty seconds of inhaling and sixty seconds of exhaling. Moreover, you can do it six times a day and regularly. The more rhythmic and deep your breathing process becomes, the slower become the modifications of your mind. There is a very deep connection between the breathing process and the thinking process. Have you ever noticed that when your mind is full of fear and tension, your breathing becomes fast and irregular, you need more oxygen in that state, and vice versa?

Q: Is there a difference between the two spellings of 'OM' and 'AUM'?

Swamiji: English is a language in which the pronunciation of words has no fixed rules. So the Hindi-Sanskrit word is written both as 'OM' and 'AUM'. 'AUM' seems to be more appropriate, but 'OM' is more often used as in 'omnipresent' as well as in 'omniscient'. In the *Upanishads* where 'OM' is explained by different aspects of the Divine, the transliteration 'AUM' is more accurate.

In English 'but' and 'put' both have 'u' in them, but their pronunciation is quite different. Only by practice can you know their real pronunciation.

Q: Though silence is difficult for me, I have discovered something in it.

Swamiji: Silence has its own activity. You can be much more active in silence than when you are not in silence. Devotees observe silence to enhance the activity of remembering the

Divine, which gives them more joy than any other thing can do.

Q: Can I communicate with the Truth through silence?

Swamiji: You know, the immediate result of silence is that it brings up to the surface of your mind what is hidden therein. When you are physically or mentally occupied, what is hidden in your mind does not get a chance to come up. That is why in silence, when you are comparatively unoccupied physically and mentally, you become aware of what is hidden in your mind. Silence is a part of *sadhana*. In the *Gita* much emphasis is laid on it. There is another silence, which is the essential nature of everything that exists. The whole universe comes out of that silence and finally goes back into that silence. It is not nothingness but a most positive entity. Here, we are talking of silence, which is a part of the *sadhana*.

Q: How can I know that my meditation is right?

Swamiji: If you are now more and more silent and satisfied within, if you become free of turmoil or conflict, you do not need to know from me whether your meditation is right or not. Only the right understanding and the right path bring silence and make one free of conflict and turmoil, provided this state of self-composure, silence and peace is not lost in unfavourable and adverse conditions.

Every seeker follows the path, which is suitable to him/her, according to his/her temperament and capability. There are certain common factors in all paths, such as

purification and sublimation of one's emotions, thoughts and desires. Non-duality is the highest experience. When one is established in the non-dual and non-polar Realization, the question of tension, turmoil and conflict does not arise at all.

All the paths ultimately lead to the unity and oneness of all beings. And that is possible only when one is established in the timeless, infinite and divine Consciousness. The word 'approach' or 'path' indirectly involves the conception of duality. When you follow any path, it indirectly signifies that you want to realize something or you want to achieve some goal, which you have not already achieved.

The seeker starts his journey from duality and finally reaches, or becomes aware of, what is called the non-dual Reality. To my understanding, to fight with one's mind, or to give in and indulge in its illegitimate and unjust desires are both wrong attitudes. You have not to fight, but you have not to give in also. You start from discriminating between right and wrong according to your own experience and in the light of the Holy Scriptures, teachings of saints and sages, and then strive to shun what is wrong even if it is painful and inconvenient. After following what is right, you ultimately reach a stage where you transcend your mind and its dualities and realize the non-dual.

Q: What is the need of meditation? Why do we need to meditate?

Swamiji: Our mind is full of all sorts of thoughts. It is like a crowded market place. How would God come there? We have to make a room in our heart for God to come and stay.

If we invite the President of India to our *ashram*, can you imagine how many preparations we will have to make here? If you invite the President of your country to your home, you will clean your home, put everything in the right order, keep a special place for seating and entertaining him. Similarly, you can imagine how the seeker has to prepare himself/herself to receive God in his or her heart. Meditation and all other spiritual disciplines are aimed to prepare yourself to receive God in your heart. It will not be an exaggeration to say that most people have no place for God in their lives. They do not feel a real need for Him. Their going to temples and churches is only a formality.

Some time ago, I heard a seeker from France saying that religion is now only a 'Sunday-religion'. It has become a ritual to go to church on Sundays, to attend mass, and then forget all about God. There is no urge to realize God; no real need felt for Him in one's life. The same thing is happening more or less in all religions. People even fight in the name of God who is the embodiment of Love. What a blatant contradiction to fight in the name of Love!

God is absolute Love-Bliss-Awareness. It is Life, Light, Energy, and Consciousness. Without God, life becomes totally lifeless. Most people are not living, they only exist. It is only the awareness of God, which makes you alive in the real sense.

Once a disciple of Jesus told him that he wanted to go and attend the funeral of his father. Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury their own dead; you come and follow me". Meditation prepares you to come to life. It makes you alive. It fills you with awareness. It fills you with divine love. It fills you with bliss.

Let God be the greatest need of your life. Let Him be your most Beloved One. He is most loving and lovable. He loves you more than your mother or father, your wife, husband, son, girlfriend or boyfriend. Respond to His love positively. You owe allegiance to God who loves you most. Meditation prepares you to be aware of God who is your innermost essential Being.

Q: The Big Bang is now the hypothetical model generally accepted to explain the origin of the universe. Is there any similarity with what is said in the sacred Scriptures?

Swamiji: There is no finality in what physics and other sciences say. Their theories are changing after every few years. Yes, there is a certain similarity between the theory of the Big Bang and the *upanishadic* statement that there is One without a second, and that this One manifested itself into many, without losing its oneness. Now, only Shankaracharya's *Vedanta* can logically explain the statement that the One becomes many without losing its oneness. According to Shankaracharya, the becoming is only phenomenal or apparent. It is not real. It is like a dream.

Q: How do we attain *brahmacharya*?

Swamiji: There are many factors that make it possible for the sexual energy to be sublimated, transformed and rise upward in the body to the higher centres, enabling the seeker to realize the divine Bliss. The sexual pleasures are readily available in the animal life. But man has the potentiality to have higher types of pleasures, which he can derive from music, poetry, selfless service, awareness and love of the

Divine. The foremost of them is the deepest interest in and love of God.

When the life-interest of a person is basically changed, all of his/her energies begin to be channelled into higher values of life. The true love of God is the foremost factor. Then, there must be the determination to reflect on and to learn from one's past experiences in order to grow in spiritual depth. Prayer also helps. A strong will-power to attain *brahmacharya* also plays a great role. This strong will-power can be achieved by practice of some breathing exercises and by the practice of doing every action consciously.

Q: Can one also attain God-Realization in the life of a householder?

Swamiji: God-Realization is possible both in the active life as well as in the life of renunciation as practised by a recluse. Most of the *vedic rishis* were householders and active men. It depends upon the temperament and capability of the seeker as to what path he/she should follow. The disciplines of both paths are different, but the aim and purpose of the seekers are the same, viz. the Realization of the timeless Bliss/Awareness. One can learn and grow in all situations, provided one is a sincere seeker.

Q: What should one do in order to be a *brahmachari*?

Swamiji: There are two types of *brahmacharya*: one is observed by a *sannyasi*, the other is observed by a householder. They are explained in detail in the Indian religious Scriptures. A *sannyasi* seeker voluntarily

renounces all the worldly sensual pleasures and directs all his energies by sublimating and channelling them toward God-Realization. He shuns all conjugal relationships, transforms even his sexual energy and directs it towards God-Realization.

Sexuality is expressed in many ways. It is not sexual intercourse only. One may try to satisfy or enjoy one's sexual urge by talking with the opposite sex, by touching, by sitting or standing and living in proximity with the opposite sex or even by entertaining sexual thoughts. The *sannyasi* seeker is expected to shun all such types of sexuality. He must give his whole life with all his energies to the Divine i.e. for God-Realization.

A Sufi saint went to Rabia, a woman Sufi sage, and said to her, "Why don't you get married?" She replied, "I have surrendered my whole being, my body, my heart, my mind, my self-will and my intellect to the Divine. How can I marry when I have no body of my own? I am an instrument in the hands of God. I have no self-will left in me. I am like a paper kite flying in the air whose string is in God's hands. I have no body. This body has already been surrendered completely to God. How can I marry?" She is just like an Indian *sannyasi* seeker who observes, or is expected to observe, total *brahmacharya*.

Many *vedic rishis*, Sufi sages and saints were householders. They had children and lived in society fulfilling all their familial and social obligations. Naturally, they lived with their wives, but the satisfaction and gratification of sexual urges were not the goal of their lives. They lived for the higher values of life. They made experiments in life to discover the Truth and shared their

experiences with other people. They lived with their wives as co-travellers on the pilgrimage, which ultimately leads to God-Realization. They cohabited only to produce children, to fulfil their social obligations, but they followed certain rules and regulations, which a husband and wife should follow even in their sexual relationships. The rules are written in the Scriptures. There are certain days and periods during which even the wife and husband are forbidden to cohabit. There are many other rules in the books on this subject. I did not read them because I did not need to read them. If you so want, you can find some books in Indian literature on this subject.

At a certain age, after they had children, the *vedic rishis* and their wives, though they lived together, ceased to maintain the relationship as between a husband and a wife. Together, they devoted themselves to the path of God-Realization, helping each other on this path. This way of living on the part of the couple, as described above, is called a 'life of *brahmacharya* of a householder'. But, it needs mutual understanding between husband and wife; otherwise there would be fights between them, which could lead to divorce. This concept of self-control of a married couple seems to be alien to the Western culture.

At present, even mental consciousness has not reached its highest peak in man. He still has so many animal instincts in him. He can understand them through reflection and can work to transcend them. It is very obvious that all sensual pleasures are readily, and to a greater extent, available in animal life, whether they pertain to the senses of touch, smell, hearing or seeing, etc. An eagle flying high in the sky can see a needle lying on the ground; a dog can smell a particular

type of smell from a great distance; an insect can, by the sense of touch, know a vehicle coming on the path and move aside. A donkey enjoys much more pleasure in rolling itself in dust than a man can enjoy sleeping on a very thick foam mattress. An Awakened One would never become subservient to the sensual pleasures.

Chapter Four

“Why should you become so serious about anything, which is less than God, if you are a seeker of God?”



Q: Could you give us some advice concerning *pranayama*?

Swamiji: To practise *pranayama* without complete and total *brahmacharya* is very dangerous. It may disturb the balance of your mind (if it is there!) or bring about nervous breakdown if you practise *pranayama* exactly as it is prescribed in the books without observing complete *brahmacharya*. Moreover those whose practice is dominated by *pranayama* have to take special and rich food and follow a regular discipline without interruption, even for a single sitting. Simple, deep, rhythmic and conscious breathing may be done by anyone without any harm and is very useful. In the *Yoga Darshana* of Patanjali, *pranayama* is the fourth part, which is preceded by *yama*, *niyama* and *asana*. No one, these days, follows *yama* and *niyama*. They practise only *asanas* and *pranayama* (especially in the West) and call it *Yoga*.

Yoga practised partially without adopting its whole system of discipline doesn't help much in one's spiritual progress. If you want to do *pranayama* exactly as it is directed in the *Yoga Shastras*, you should follow all the injunctions of that discipline.

Retaining the breath inside or outside the body must not be practised in the beginning. Moreover this discipline should be practised not by reading books but under the special and direct guidance of a *yogi* who himself has successfully mastered this technique. Therefore in my book,

The Practical Approach to Divinity, I have given a very brief description of it and have emphasized only deep and conscious breathing.

Q: Why do we exhale to two counts and inhale to one count while practising conscious breathing?

Swamiji: It is because you don't take full advantage of your lungs. When you breathe out, your lungs must become totally empty, so that more fresh air (oxygen) can come in when you inhale. If your time of exhaling is greater than the time of inhaling then the whole lungs get exercised. Otherwise, a part of your lungs remains inactive and without exercise, making them unhealthy. Deep breathing gives adequate exercise to your lungs and keeps them healthy. It also helps you break the habit of mechanical breathing and increases your will-power.

Q: Why is it that God doesn't come to my aid any more?

Swamiji: It is stupid to blame God for not coming to you. On the one hand, you have said that one part of you was convinced that God was in you. Then, you should reflect about the obstacles that are preventing you from seeing God within you. Are these obstacles created by God or created by you? Have you tried to remove these obstacles consistently? Maybe you are creating more and more obstacles! If you want to follow the right path, God never puts obstacles in it for you. He wants to help you if you truly and sincerely want His help. If you turn your back on Him, if you are more interested in other things than in God, if you

don't sincerely follow what God tells you from within, what can God do for you? The inner conscience always guides a person from within, but more often than not, the person does not follow the guidance and goes his or her own way.

God is most unassuming. He will not impose Himself upon you. He is the embodiment of freedom. He wants you to grow from within and be free. He is readily available. Make yourself available to Him. You are trying to escape Him, instead of making yourself available to Him. And then you blame Him instead of blaming yourself. What a stupidity!

Q: As long as one stays in solitude, the presence of God can be felt very concretely, but it does not last when one is no longer in solitude. Why?

Swamiji: Yes, it is true. So long as the experience of the presence of God does not become stabilized and changed into Realization, one has the same feeling as you have. I myself used to have the same feeling. A mystic said the same thing after having come down from the mountains, where he was totally absorbed in God-Consciousness, and started mixing among the people. It was the feeling of 'something' being taken away from him.

Q: What is the best situation for achieving stabilization, seclusion or activity?

Swamiji: It depends upon you and how you are able to stabilize your spiritual experience. The point is that you must have the Realization, which never fails you, whatever the

situation. As a matter of fact, it is not the experience, but the 'experiencing' in which you have to be established. The experience comes and goes, but the 'experiencing' is constant and ceaseless. Every substantial spiritual experience leaves a very deep impact upon your subconscious as well as your conscious mind. Therefore spiritual experiences have their own utility. These help you to come to the 'experiencing'. 'Experiencing' is readily available to us, but we are not available to it.

Q: How can we remember God and feel Him? It seems to be subtle and difficult.

Swamiji: If you are not able to remember God whom you feel very abstract, then you should remember some God-man in whom you have total faith, love and trust. A Realized God-man is the highest embodiment of God. You may even remember some prophet or *avatara*, in whom you have faith and love, and remember also his life events. This will gradually raise the level of your consciousness to that of whom you remember daily, regularly and for long periods. You may also contemplate the divine qualities of God, if you can do that. You may even use some divine symbols to remember God. You may also remember God through some divine and holy Name. There are so many ways of remembering God. You may choose one, which suits your temperament, and follow it with trust and commitment. It will gradually enable you to ultimately remember and be aware of God, in His true and essential Nature.

You have to start from where you are standing. When a child first begins his studies, he is not taught higher mathematics, nuclear physics or the mathematical equations

with which Einstein proved the theory of relativity. He is taught A, B, C, the alphabet first. After a long study of sixteen to twenty years, he is able to understand higher physics, chemistry or any other higher science. For children, the teacher uses the blackboard, writes some letters on it and asks the children to copy them. The same is true with the new students of spirituality or of God-Realization. A wise teacher teaches the student, according to the student's capability and competence. He would not say to a beginner, "You are already perfect and Liberated" or "You are God". To tell this to one and all, irrespective of their competence, is sheer nonsense, even if what he says is not an untrue statement.

I have heard from many scholars and teachers of *Vedanta* that they cannot concentrate their mind even for a few minutes, when they sit in meditation. Yet they teach *Vedanta* to the students of M.A. classes in colleges. Their mind is always full of thoughts of the past or of imaginations of the future. They have done thorough research on *Vedanta* philosophy and have won big academic awards of being an able professor and scholar of *Vedanta*. But in practice, they are below the level of ordinary seekers who can control their emotions and thoughts for a short period. Vivekananda used to say that, if you want to know where you stand as regards spirituality, just sit down and see how far you can control your thoughts. It is the litmus test to know where you stand.

If your thoughts, desires and emotions are not in your control, you have not yet cleared even the primary class of spirituality. You may have a Ph.D. Degree in *Vedanta* and teach the subject to others, but if you cannot control your mind, you are unable to have any substantial spiritual experience.

Q: I want to experience God, not to think of God. How can I feel the fragrance of God?

Swamiji: The fragrance of God is not different from God. They always co-exist. It is not possible to separate them. You cannot say, “Keep God with you and give me His fragrance”. When you realize God, God is with you with His fragrance, and you are also with God. God cannot be felt or thought of as an object like a chair. He can only be Realized as one’s essential Being. In Realization, the duality of subject and object between the lover and the beloved vanishes. So long as the duality remains, it is not perfect Realization. The feeling of God as someone other than you, may give you great happiness, but it is not the perfect happiness. The consciousness in every dual experience is split and divided, so there cannot be complete experience or complete happiness. However, we have to begin in the direction of God-Realization from where we are standing.

One who is engrossed in dual perceptions, dual experiences, cannot at once jump into the non-dual experience. There are so many stages and types of what is called *samadhi* in which one is able to feel the presence or the fragrance of God. There is mention of these types in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. Sometimes, in some very rare situations, one may have a glimpse of non-dual experience, but it is not permanent. It is just like a flash of the lightning, which comes and goes at once.

One can have the permanent experience of the Divine only after a very long preparation. People talk of sudden Awakening. Yes, there may be sudden Awakening, but it appears to be sudden. Moreover, Awakening is not the end; it is only the beginning. I have already written how you can

feel the presence of God, or progress in the path by which you can feel the fragrance of God.

Q: I feel time and effort are required to achieve perfection in *sadhana*. On the other hand, I also know that Enlightenment is attained through God's grace. Am I right?

Swamiji: On the part of a seeker, there should be the deepest aspiration and total commitment for God-Realization, which he/she translates into a searching *sadhana* for the Truth, sublimating and directing all his/her psychophysical energies to the aspired end. On the part of God, there must be a special and unreserved divine grace, specially directed by Him to the seeker. Persistent sincerity, zeal, intense and undivided longing of the seeker for God, attracts the grace of the Divine.

When this searching *sadhana* on the part of the seeker and the special grace of God meet, there happens what is called God-Realization.

Q: Is universal Liberation possible? Does universal Liberation come in this phenomenal world?

Swamiji: I don't understand what 'universal Liberation' is! The universe is beginningless and endless. It is the play of the infinite Consciousness/Energy, which goes on forever. There are periods when this universe goes into a seed-form and all the worlds of names and forms disappear into the seed, which is sustained by and grounded in God, the infinite, timeless Consciousness-Energy. But again the hidden worlds of names and forms start appearing from that seed and this is called 'manifestation'.

The process of the universe coming into manifestation and going back into the unmanifested state in the seed-form goes on forever. It is just like the incoming and outgoing breath of the universal Being. There is no universal Liberation as such. But an individual can be liberated from wandering in this vicious circle of the universe. He can merge in and become one with the ground of the universe. Therefore, I have said elsewhere that Liberation is individual and personal.

Q: Are we not all connected together?

Swamiji: Being connected together does not mean that if one person is Liberated, all should become Liberated. If it were so, then when the Buddha got Liberation, everyone would have been Liberated.

Q: And what about the 'One without a second'?

Swamiji: The 'One' you talk of is beyond bondage and Liberation. Liberation and bondage are irrelevant to Him. It is the individual who is in bondage and it is the individual who becomes Liberated. And there are countless individuals.

Q: Are the creation and the dissolution of the universe a play of God?

Swamiji: Yes, they are. However, is it a play of God for you in your practical life, or is it just a theory for you? You cannot know or feel the play of God unless you know God directly and first hand. You are trying to put the cart before the horse. Unless you first realize God, you cannot realize that the world

is the manifestation or the play of God. To say that the world is the manifestation of God, without directly realizing God, is like talking in the air.

A Sufi saint went to Rabia, who lived in a solitary hut, keeping her hut bolted from the inside and always remembering the Divine. She belonged to Basra in Iraq, which is a very hot place during summer. This day was cloudy and very pleasant. The Sufi saint called on Rabia from outside, “Rabia, what are you doing inside? Come out and see how pleasant it is outside, the clouds, and the cool breeze blowing. Come out and see the beautiful manifestation of God”. Rabia, from inside the hut, said, “I appreciate what you say. You are a great saint and you have realized that the world is the manifestation of God. But if one has to realize God, whose manifestation this world is, one has to come within. You are enjoying the manifestation and I am enjoying the one whose manifestation you are enjoying”.

Most people talk only of theories ‘about’ God and His manifestation, without realizing God, either in His pure and essential Nature, or in His manifestation.

Q: If attachment is painful, sometimes detachment is more painful. What is the difference between detachment and renunciation?

Swamiji: Detachment appears to be more painful because you try to give up your old habits. If you are a chain-smoker and give up smoking, you will feel discomfort, uneasiness and even pain for a certain period. But if you persist and do not succumb to the habit of smoking again, that discomfort and pain will gradually go away.

Have you used any drugs in your life? Drugs are very harmful — everyone knows it. But when you become accustomed to taking drugs and then suddenly give them up, it is very painful. Your system wants those drugs again, and you feel very uneasy. It is very difficult to give up drugs. Attachment also is like drug-addiction. It is not so easy to give up attachment. As a matter of fact, you are confusing detachment with renunciation without detachment. It is renunciation without detachment, which is more painful. Detachment is not painful at all. Real detachment in fact relieves your pain caused by the attachment. Renunciation signifies the giving up of worldly possessions. Detachment denotes the giving up of the sense of possessiveness.

Q: It concerns not only the detachment, but also my conditioning.

Swamiji: Right conditioning is helpful for the seeker to a certain stage. Conditioning can be changed by discipline. The mind of a human being is flexible enough. A human being has the capability of adapting itself to various conditions.

You say that your pain is caused by your not being able to be detached. Actually, it is not detachment which alone is the cause of your pain. There is another state, which a Christian mystic has called 'the dark night of the soul'. When the seeker is not able to have some substantial spiritual experience, even though he has given up all attachments to the world, he feels very desperate and sad. You should be prepared to encounter many things on the way to Truth. The path of Truth has been compared to walking on a razor's edge. Your pain may be only a beginning. Wait and see what happens next. There is a couplet of an Urdu poem, which

says, “This is just the beginning of love, and you are weeping. Wait and see what happens in the future.” Nevertheless, weeping in love is good; it cleanses your eyes as well as your heart!

Q: Why is there suffering in God’s creation?

Swamiji: The human body, the mountains, the rivers, etc., are not created by man; they are created by God. They are God’s creation. The world consists of two layers. On the base is God’s creation, then the individual imposes its own *sankalpa* on it and *jiva srishti*, the ‘world of the human being’, is created. There is no suffering in God’s creation. The suffering is only in the world of relationships created by individuals. These relationships are created by the individual’s *sankalpa* and not by God’s *sankalpa*. Suffering belongs to *jiva srishti*, and not to God’s creation.

Q: How can one become aware of oneself, and develop a consciousness in order to grow and ultimately be established in it?

Swamiji: There are two selves in man. One is the false self, which is called ego/mind. Most people work, speak and think through this false self. The other self is the soul, which is the reflection of the Spirit, of the contentless Consciousness in the ego/mind. This is called *jiva* in Hindu terminology. This soul goes from one birth to another. It is only a reflection which lasts so long as the mind lasts. In its developed and higher state, the soul uses its mind for right purposes in the right directions. The real Self is the Spirit which is timeless,

eternal and immortal. God and *jiva* (Universal Being and individual being) are both manifestations of the real Awareness/Consciousness.

By 'growth of consciousness' is meant the growth of the *jiva*, the phenomenal consciousness. This growth depends upon the purification and stabilization of the mind, which in turn are achieved by devotion to God, by *Raja Yoga* or *Jnana Yoga*, the *Yoga* of knowledge and understanding. All these *Yogas* are not exclusive or contradictory to one another. They are rather complementary; one helps the other and vice versa.

The conscious effort on the part of the soul to grow and realize its essential and eternal Nature, or to realize God, is what is called *sadhana*. *Sadhana* is composed of many parts: Right conduct, right belief, right understanding, prayer, listening to saints and sages and periodic association with them, *japa*, reflection, meditation and breathing exercises. Read books that encourage you to conduct *sadhana* in order to transform your life. Do not read those books that confuse you or create doubts in your mind. Doubt is the greatest enemy of *sadhana*. The doubtful person never succeeds. Living faith and trust in the existence of the Divine are not only essential for the Realization, but they also reduce tension and stress in life. A trustful person is much more relaxed, while a doubtful person is always uneasy and tense.

Sincere aspiration for and total commitment to *sadhana* also attracts God's grace, which removes so many obstacles in the path of Realization. By *sadhana* you get inner experience, which comes again and again. In due course of time, the experience is stabilized and turns into Realization. Realization is not the experience, which comes and goes. It is the 'experiencing' which is constant and timeless.

Q: I feel that preconceived ideas are the main cause of my suffering and their root lies in the false 'I', 'me', 'myself'.

Swamiji: Lord Buddha discovered, after his long search of Truth during his twenty-four consecutive lives, that desire and attachment were the cause of suffering. The essentials of the Buddha's findings and the heart of his teachings lie in the Four Noble Truths:

- There is suffering.
- There is a cause or origin of suffering, which is the attachment to desire.
- There is an end or cessation of suffering, which is *nirvana*.
- There is a way leading to the cessation of suffering, which is the Noble Eightfold Path.

If you have discovered something new and better as regards the cause of suffering and the deliverance from it, please tell and explain it to us in detail.

Q: I mean that I am living only from my point of view, without integrating the situations of others...

Swamiji: You say that the cause of your suffering is your point of view. You should have said that your cause of suffering is that you take only your point of view as the correct one and the point of view of others as incorrect, and you want to impose your point of view on others. Similarly others want to impose their viewpoints on you. So there is a fight between you and others in which you get hurt and so you suffer. Not only do you suffer in the fight, but you make others suffer also. Is it true?

Q: There are two levels in me. One is completely identified with the emotions or sufferings, and the other is aware that it is only the ego at work. How can I become established in the second level always?

Swamiji: You have to stop identifying yourself with your ego in the day-to-day activities. Ask yourself again and again the question, “Then what?”, “If you get the chocolates, then what?”. You will feel their deliciousness only for a few seconds so long as they are in touch with your tongue. As soon as they go down your throat, the taste of deliciousness is lost. And what, if you don’t get chocolates? You are not going to die without chocolates!

Why should you become so serious about anything, which is less than God, if you are a seeker of God? If you become too serious about anything which is less than God, then you are not a sincere seeker of God. Be more and more sincere and consistent in your aim and purpose of life. That is the secret!

Q: You said that to give up the world, we have to give to the mind something sweeter than the world. During my meditation, I have gone through the experience of nothingness and would like to remain at that place.

Swamiji: Nothingness, freedom, fulfilment, are different names of the timeless Consciousness. They differ only in name. Is freedom not the sweetest thing? Who does not want to be free? If during meditation you are able to experience nothingness, which is full, or the being, which is devoid of ego, stay in that experience. Slowly and gradually that experience will become stable, and in due course of time it

will turn into Realization. All the pleasures fade away in the light of Self-Realization. There is nothing sweeter than Self-Realization.

When the false 'I', the ego, subsides, the real Being becomes manifest. The ego must be got rid of in one way or another. What awakens the soul from its slumber of ignorance and delusion is meditation, aided by its complementary psychophysical discipline.

Carry on with a persistent and deep aspiration to discover the truth of your essential Nature, directing all your energies and attention to that end. You must have read how the Buddha got Enlightenment after so many years of uninterrupted effort? How Shri Ramana Maharishi, Shri Ramakrishna, Saint Francis of Assisi and so many other saints and sages worked so hard to discover the Truth? Everything you get has to be paid for, in one way or another.

Q: Why do you appear differently at different times?

Swamiji: I always remain what I am. You see me differently at different times because your mood is changing. Sometimes I may appear to be cruel, sometimes compassionate, sometimes arrogant, sometimes humble, sometimes hateful, sometimes loving, and so on and so forth. I can appear in thousands and thousands of shades according to the mode of perception of the person who sees me.

Q: I feel divided in two parts, one, which gets angry and the other, which sees the anger but cannot do anything about it and I suffer. How can I remain calm in provoking situations?

Swamiji: I will tell you one method, though I do not have to use it for myself anymore. Some people would garland me, wash my feet, press my feet with love and respect, bow before me, even think of me as an embodiment of Divinity. When they would be doing so, I would just think of my critics who would give names to me (behind my back) or even might be nasty to me, and I would remain calm. When someone would be behaving with me in a very nasty manner and even criticizing me very harshly, I would just think of my admirers and devotees who bowed at my feet and gave me so much respect and love, and I would remain calm. I would say to myself, “What does it matter if some people blame you or some praise you? No one in this world has been or is without his critics and admirers.”

You can try this method. When you are in a situation, which provokes your anger, think of your beloved son and your anger will subside. When you are facing a situation that may puff up your ego and make you arrogant, think of the people who are superior or higher than you. This should make your emotion of arrogance subside. By adopting this attitude you are providing an antidote to your emotion of elation, or that of tension or even depression. Hate, anger and jealousy can be overcome by love. You cannot overcome anger by anger and hate by hate.

Q: Should I become like a stone?

Swamiji: God is present even in a stone. Do you know some Hindus worship stones as a symbol of God? Why? Because a stone is not disturbed at all if you give it bad names or hit it or disbelieve it. As a matter of fact, the worshipper of a

stone does not worship the stone at all, he/she worships the quality of its remaining undisturbed and calm. There is a saying, “Either be as soft as melted wax, or be as hard as a stone”. You have to choose one of the options.

Q: Why did Jesus not meet his mother?

Swamiji: Once the mother of Jesus came to meet him when he was with his disciples. He was informed about it. Jesus asked, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God are my brother and sister and mother”. This is exactly the concept of a Hindu *sannyasi* who, according to the rules of *sannyasa*, is forbidden to keep relationships with his old family. *Sannyasa* is considered as a new birth. That is why the name of a person who takes *sannyasa* is changed. Even his surname is changed. Jesus was virtually a *sannyasi*, a wandering monk.

There are different codes of conduct for a *sannyasi* and a householder. A householder has many familial obligations to discharge, he has to act according to the rules and regulations prescribed by society for a householder. A *sannyasi*'s code of conduct is different from that of a householder or a married person, but there are some cardinal virtues and moral values, which have to be observed both by a *sannyasi* and a householder. For example, speaking truth, non-stealing, being unselfish, compassionate, striving to be free of anger, hatred and jealousy, being trustful, etc. These are common qualities to be cultivated both by a *sannyasi* and a householder.

Q: You have had a vision of Jesus. We have no idea of what he looked like. Could you give us a description?

Swamiji: If I were a painter, I would have painted a picture of Jesus. I saw him smiling, he had a very beautiful beard and I still remember the shape of the robe he was wearing. The gown had no collar; it was round at the neck with folds all around. The colour of the robe was white with a little greyish shade. He had long hair and glowing face. Once I saw a picture of Jesus, which I kept in my meditation room in Haridwar; it just resembled how I saw him. That photo has been misplaced somewhere, since all the things were transported from Haridwar to this place. I have not found the photo yet, but it must be somewhere here in the *ashram*.

Q: In Jesus's life, we find many miracles. Beyond their symbolic value, is there an historical reality?

Swamiji: Yes, all the miracles he performed are historically true. Jesus was a great *yogi* and possessed such powers. I believe they are historical facts and not merely symbolic. It is also true that he taught through parables.

Q: For myself, one of Jesus Christ's most important teachings is that of the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, "I will give you water to drink with which you will never be thirsty again".

Swamiji: Jesus's teachings are purely spiritual and moral. When Jesus says, "I will give you water to drink with which you will never be thirsty again", this is symbolic and the water he is talking of is nothing but God-Realization.

You feel completely self-fulfilled with God-Realization or Self-Realization. Only a God-Realized One can honestly say, "I want nothing."

Q: The question asked above is very important to me as I am of the Christian culture, and Jesus was my hero in my childhood.

Swamiji: Is Jesus not important to you now? Children have a simple faith. When one grows up the faith should become deeper. It is the faithful who can realize God. Be more faithful! Be more trustful!

Q: I feel that awareness is the thread that leads all thoughts to Being. Awareness is like surfing on the crest of the wave of what 'Is'. However, when the slightest thought comes to my mind, I am under water.

Swamiji: Awareness is 'Is-ness'. It is the essential Being itself. It is not an object, nor is it a subject of any object. Time, space and the law of cause and effect do not bind it. It is non-polar, non-dual. You can never separate yourself from it, although you can turn your back on it and momentarily forget it, or you can misinterpret it or misunderstand it.

During the thinking process, too, Awareness is there, even though it is then identified with the thoughts and appears as thoughts. It is the 'Is-ness' of all things and beings. It is absolute, though it can appear as relative. In the realm of the world-perception it appears to be relative. When you say, "I am aware", it can be asked "aware of what?" During

activities, even during the so-called mechanical activities, Awareness is there too, but its presence is not confirmed. Awareness is present also in your deep sleep state, even in a state of coma, but the mind having become stupefied and the brain having become paralysed, the mind being unable to work without the brain, there is no confirmation of the presence of the Awareness. You cannot get rid of the Awareness, try as you may. It is your 'Is-ness'. You can never experience the absence of your 'Is-ness'. Can you?

The confirmation of this is a thought. Awareness is there, even when there is no thought. As a matter of fact, Awareness is revealed in its pristine purity when you are free of all thoughts. You say, "What is the use of such Awareness when there is no confirmation of it!" Yes, there is no use for pure Awareness, because in pure Awareness, there is no individual who would use it, and there is no purpose also because Awareness is complete in itself. If you want to feel or see or experience Awareness as you experience this chair, it is not possible! You cannot make an object of Awareness. Yet, you can experience it as your 'Is-ness', as your being and that is the experience of your true Self.

Q: Your Holiness, we are going back tomorrow...

Swamiji: Are you really going back home? Man is as if he were in exile, and the irony is that he thinks he is not in exile. When you realize that you want to go back home, it is called 'Awakening'. It is the beginning of the path of Realization. What is called the 'Awakening' is not the end, but the beginning of the path of Truth.

Q: Does it mean that after the Awakening, we have no more doubts?

Swamiji: Awakening means that you start doubting your dreams. Awakening means you start seeing the unreal as unreal. It is the beginning of the experience of the Reality.

Q: What is the difference between reflection and prayer?

Swamiji: Thinking, reflection, prayer! Thinking is a general term. You may think of something, but you may not come to any conclusion. Your thinking may be right or wrong or confused.

Reflection means thinking again and again, and the content of the thought go deeper and deeper into all the parts of your personality. Reflection is called *manana* in *vedantic* parlance. First you listen to some true statement and then reflect on it logically or faithfully again and again for months and months, even for years if so needed. There are three inner parts of the *vedantic* discipline: *shravana*, *manana*, *nididhyasana*.

– ‘*Shravana*’ means listening to the oral statements of Truth from sages with an open mind. That is called listening without any interference from your mental concepts or beliefs.

– ‘*Manana*’ or reflection means that you think again and again on what you have listened to, logically, and confirm it through arguments and reasoning put forward by those who have tried to demonstrate logically the experience of Truth as far as they could.

– ‘*Nididhyasana*’ or contemplation means that through contemplation you fix or focus your total mind on the idea or the conceptual conclusion you have reached through listening and reflection.

Prayer means to ask or invoke the help and grace of God. It has many stages. There is no thinking in prayer. It is the call of your heart to God, to help you or to help someone.

Q: Am I not reflecting when I am listening to others?

Swamiji: Listening is very difficult. Usually when someone is saying something to you, you are not listening to it; you are interpreting it with your mind. You are not listening but judging, according to your own convictions and beliefs, what the other is saying. You can listen to someone only when your mind is silent, when your mind is not interpreting or judging, when your mind is passive and alert. Otherwise, you are listening to your own mind.

Q: Would you give me your advice for my practice concerning breathing exercises?

Swamiji: I think I have written enough about breathing exercises. One is the strict discipline of *pranayama*, which literally means control of the *prana shakti*, the ‘vital force’. Should you be able to control the *prana shakti*, you would easily control all the modifications of the mind. *Pranayama* should not and cannot be successfully practised unless one takes special rich food and the practice is conducted under the direct supervision of a teacher who himself has successfully practised *pranayama*. If the discipline of

pranayama is not followed strictly according to the rules, it may upset the physical and physiological system of the practitioner. In India, it is known that if you practise *pranayama* only through reading books, or simply by hearing about it, you will more often than not damage your body system and invite disease. Therefore, I don't recommend a strict discipline of *pranayama* to all seekers.

What I recommend is only deep, rhythmic and conscious breathing, which makes the breath regular, deep and slow, with the result that it also slows down the thinking process. You must have noticed that when you are overwhelmed by some strong emotion, whether positive or negative, the pattern of your breathing at once changes. When you are angry, full of fear or upset, or very excited, your breathing becomes fast and irregular, and it loses its rhythm. Conversely, if through any exercise you can make your breathing deep, slow, regular and rhythmic, your mind will slow down and become calm. When the inhaling and exhaling is deep and regular, it also has a good effect upon your health.

There is no danger at all if you practise conscious deep breathing. Deep breathing relaxes your body as well as your mind. But do not do it too much and forcibly i.e., beyond your capacity. If you do so, it may give you a headache and produce tension in your body instead of bringing relaxation. This rule applies to every practice. When you try to conduct a practice forcibly and too much, i.e. beyond your capacity, it is going to give you a headache or heaviness. Have you not heard that "slow and steady wins the race"?

A tamed mind is like a trained horse. Do you know that tamed horses are very faithful, like pet dogs? I have heard

stories of olden times when the people used to fight riding on horses with swords or arrows. Should the rider of the horse become injured and fall down from the horse, the horse would pick up the injured owner with his mouth and bring him back to the base camp. The horses would even sacrifice their lives for their masters. Through discipline you can tame your mind.

Q: One day during my meditation, I saw many pages of some scriptures and I was reading them. I don't remember in what language it was — perhaps Hebrew. I enjoyed its meaning greatly. But as soon as the meditation was over, I forgot at once those lines and their meanings, though the impact — a sort of great thrill and delight — lasted over more than an hour. I had never had such an experience before during my whole life. How should I interpret it?

Swamiji: It is very difficult to interpret such experiences with the thinking, analyzing mind, as the thinking mind is totally absent during such experiences. It was an experience of a higher level of consciousness in which the barriers of languages are broken and the consciousness can understand any language with its meanings. Such experiences have a role in bringing some changes in the subconscious levels of a person, which the thinking mind can never do however hard it may try. Do not try to interpret such experiences.

Q: Many people receive a *mantra* from you, but can I practise the *mantra*, which I have already received?

Swamiji: You should go on practising the *mantra*, which you have received already with complete faith and trust in it. You

do not need to have a *mantra* from me. Moreover, for the last few months, I have put certain conditions, which one has to fulfil before one can have a *mantra* from me. One has to wait for one year at least, and fulfil those conditions. Within the last two months I have sent back at least ten people who came from different parts of India only with the purpose of receiving a *mantra* from me. Let us see if they come back again after one year having fulfilled those conditions. It will prove how sincere they are in wishing to receive the *mantra* from me. Should you practise the *mantra* you have already received from someone with total commitment and sincerity, it will surely purify your mind and stabilize it. There is no need for you to receive a *mantra* again from anyone.

Chapter Five

“Silence means the cessation of all reactions. Silence is that permanent and essential state of one’s Being in which ‘what’, ‘why’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ disappear.”



Q: Why do I often feel moments of expansion followed by moments of depression?

Swamiji: During *sadhana*, there is nothing unusual in the experience of increasing and then diminishing joy, and after some time, again increasing joy. The spiritual journey is like climbing the peak of a mountain. Before you reach the highest peak, you have to travel through so many ranges, which have ups and downs. You climb one peak of a range, and then you come down in order to climb the other higher peak of the other range. After reaching the higher peak you again have to come a little down in order to climb a still higher peak. In this way crossing over many ups and downs, you finally reach the highest peak.

Moreover, experiences are not constant. They come and go, but they leave a deep impact on your personality, which makes you grow more and more wise and spiritual. To say the same in religious parlance — they draw you closer and closer to God. No experience in time is constant and eternal. When you are completely free from all drawbacks, wrongs and infirmities, then you don't need any *sadhana* because you become Realized and Liberated. The seeker has to recognize his or her faults and weaknesses and has to strive to remove them. That is what *sadhana* means.

A man has many parts in his personality, which tend to drag him in different directions, so there is disharmony

and conflict in him. These different parts have to be integrated, harmonized and their energies channelled to treading the path of Realization. But when you have reached or realized the Absolute, then there is no coming down, no diminishing of joy again. You realize that which is timeless and the journey is finished. There is no more going ahead and coming back in space or time, no more increasing or diminishing of joy. When the conflict and confusion are gone, the path becomes very smooth and joyful and you very soon reach where, potentially, you already are. Before that fulfilment, the changing of states or of one's position in relation to joy, awareness, light, life, love and bliss is normal.

Q: Would you tell me what you mean by "Realization is unlimited"?

Swamiji: I have not said that Realization is unlimited. I have said that you have to realize what is unlimited, infinite, eternal and timeless.

Q: Is there not a contradiction which means that we have to go further into the Realization?

Swamiji: There is no contradiction at all. Realization means to be one with the Source of all knowledge. It means there is nothing more to know, nothing more to find, and nothing more to seek. If there is no limit to something, it means it is without a limit. You have taken it in the sense that the seeking is limitless. Realization is not seeking. It is the end of all seeking. You have confused the word 'Realization' with the word 'seeking', hence this question has come up in your mind.

Q: The more I desire to realize God, the more I increase my ego. I would like to reverse the current and stop this running...

Swamiji: How can the desire to realize the Divine increase the ego? What increases the ego is the desire to realize something other than one's real Self. The real Self and the Divine are essentially one. The Divine is everywhere. He is within you also. God-Realization does not require you to go anywhere, much less running. On the other hand, God-Realization requires you to stop completely. What makes you run is the desire of realizing something temporal? It is not possible to realize any worldly thing without running and doing. Moreover doing nothing, wanting nothing, expecting nothing, desiring nothing is the most difficult thing. Can you live without doing something or wanting something? If not, it is better to aspire for God-Realization and work for it. It will purify your ego and ultimately destroy it. There is no other way. It may take birth after birth for you to realize God, but there is no other option to be free and fulfilled. To strive to realize something other than God is to strengthen your ego and delay your freedom and Enlightenment.

Q: Do you mean that rather than increasing my ego, I should lose myself?

Swamiji: The false 'I', the ego, is the obstacle. You cannot give up the ego all at once. You say, "I should lose myself". So how are you going to lose yourself? If you try to lose your ego, the ego is still working. The first step is to purify your ego and use it rightly. Do not be used by your ego. In a sense, the ego is the cause of the bondage as well as the cause of your Liberation also. There is an *upanishadic* verse which means that the mind is the cause of bondage, and mind is

the cause of Liberation also. A purified and stable mind is the cause of Liberation. An impure and unstable mind, which is not under your control, is the cause of your bondage.

Have you not heard or read about the ten stages and pictures of the spiritual bull herding in the Zen Buddhist tradition? In the first picture, a man is looking for the bull. Then, after following the traces of the bull, he sees him. The bull is jumping, kicking his rear legs in the air. In the fourth picture, the man tries to catch the bull, but it is found hard to keep him under control. In the next picture, the bull is pacified and tamed. The struggle is over. In the sixth picture, the man is coming home, riding on the bull's back. In the following picture, the bull is forgotten, leaving the man alone. The eighth picture shows the bull and the man both gone out of sight. In the ninth picture, the man is returning back to the Source. Finally, in the last picture, he is entering the city as an Enlightened One. I saw it long ago, more than thirty-five years back. The pictures show the upward steps of spiritual training. The bull represents the ego/mind. The man represents the seeker.

Q: I have received initiation from Ananda and I repeat his *mantra*, but at the same time, I feel attracted by Mother Meera's *mantra*. May I use both *mantras*?

Swamiji: According to Indian tradition, when a seeker has been initiated and given a *mantra*, it is once and for all, a lifelong commitment of the disciple who has been initiated by the *Guru*. Even if the *Guru* leaves his physical body, the disciple has to stick to the teachings and *mantra* of the *Guru*. Otherwise there will be no end to changing one's loyalty

from one *Guru* to the other, and the disciple will reach nowhere. However, it does not mean that one should not pay respect to, and serve the other sages. All sages should be given due respect by the seeker.

I must say that you should practise the *mantra* you have received from Ananda with full faith and trust. *Guru* is like a father and a mother, and cannot be changed. You may give due respect and love to Mother Meera without being disloyal to your own *Guru*. The question of choice arises only when you have not already been initiated into a *mantra*. There are so many *mantras*, so many teachings and so many sages. The mind of the seeker is not stable; it becomes attracted to some practice at one time, and to another at another time. To stop this wavering of the mind, the seeker has to choose a path and follow it whole-heartedly. That is one of the purposes of getting initiated.

Once you are initiated, then you are morally bound to follow that teaching and practise that *mantra*. It is very important; otherwise the seeker's mind always remains wavering and divided, resulting in the seeker being unable to devote himself/herself whole-heartedly to any path of God-Realization.

Q: Why does a person dance or sing when full of joy?

Swamiji: If a dancer is sorrowful, then who will be joyful? Dancing is one of the ways in which joy is expressed. Hindus take it that this world is the dance of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva is either in *samadhi*, sitting motionless and absorbed in himself, or he is dancing. When he is in complete *samadhi*, the whole universe is in a seed-form and abides in him. When

Lord Shiva comes out of *samadhi* and expresses his joy, the universe comes out. That is why Hindus call this universe the play of the Divine.

Why do you dance? There is no motive behind dancing. It is a way of expressing your joy. There is no other motive behind it. The dancing cannot be independent from the one who is dancing. When someone asks, “Why did God create this world?” the Hindu says that the question of ‘why’ does not arise at all. If a person is singing or dancing out of joy, you cannot ask him or her, “Why are you dancing?” Real dancing or singing is always motiveless and spontaneous like poetry. If a person is weeping, you may ask, “Why are you weeping?” The weeping must have a cause. The real joy is causeless. It is the Divine Himself. We call Him *Satchidananda*: ‘*sat*’ meaning ‘Existence’, ‘*chit*’ meaning ‘Consciousness’, and ‘*ananda*’ meaning ‘Bliss’. These three essential attributes are not different from one another. Absolute Bliss and absolute Existence are the names of the absolute Consciousness.

Q: My question concerns ‘surrender’. When I am pressed by time with events pulling on all sides, I am often confronted with new and difficult situations, for which I have to make decisions by myself. In such moments I feel very responsible about my work, anxious and worried, and full of uncontrolled thoughts. I pray to God but I still feel the burden is on me, and I feel cut off from others and lonely. I do not know how to act without claiming and thinking of the fruits of my actions. How can I become spiritual in active life?

Swamiji: Self-surrender is the consummation of the *sadhana*, of the conscious self-effort to be free of all ignorance, bondage and dependence. It comes gradually with your spiritual growth and unfolding of your self.

All situations cannot be favourable to you or to anybody in the world. Even the great prophets and sages had to face adverse situations in their lives, but they never lost their balance. They did not become worried or disturbed, because inwardly they were always aware of their divine Nature. You can never stop the unfavourable conditions confronting you. You are in a body-mind, which is conditioned. With every situation, there are so many persons directly or indirectly involved. Those persons have their own likes and dislikes, and everyone tries to make the situation according to one's own liking. This creates stress and strain in all the persons connected with that situation. Only the person who is inwardly centred in one's true Being is able to remain undisturbed.

Your story or problem is the story or problem of each and every person. One has to accept the challenge of the situations. No one can escape them. And there is no fixed rule as to how one should tackle a given situation or problem. One has to exercise one's understanding and reflection and try to act rightly in a given situation. One has to be flexible sometimes and even compromising in some situations. Do you know that a thin and flexible tree is never broken in the storm? It bends but does not break. It can bear the impact of the storm. But a very rigid and inflexible big tree is broken by the storm. You have to be flexible in certain situations and very rigid in some others. This you learn by

self-experience. Or you may be guided by intuition, provided you can stop the thinking process and listen to the inner divine voice.

Responsibility deepens one's understanding. One should never be careless and irresponsible. To be responsible is one thing, and to be worried and anxious quite another. Worry dissipates your energy. The more worried you are, the more inefficient you become in your work. Worry does not solve any problem. It only aggravates the problem because in a worried state of mind, you cannot act properly. The problems of life have to be faced with a balanced mind. This you can do only if you sit in meditation regularly as well as reflect and pray. Such spiritual effort gives you strength to face the problems. When you are a doer, you cannot escape the fruits of your actions. The result of your actions is not in your hands, so it is futile to think of the results and the fruits of your actions. If you act rightly the fruits will be good whether you think of the fruits or not. The same is the case with wrong actions. You have to reflect and act rightly. There is no need to think about the fruits of your actions.

Everyone has to solve his or her own problems by taking guidance from the one whom he trusts. There is no one in the world without problems. Some cope with their problems. Some accept the inevitable and remain quiet. Some always remain disturbed. It all depends upon the state of one's spiritual unfolding. Man can be anything. He can be God. He can be a devil, an angel, or an animal. He can even be like a stone. He can be what he wants to be. That is why man is considered to have the highest position in this universe.

Q: I am so attached to worldly desires because I know the joy they give me (even if there is also suffering). How am I to yearn for God when I don't know what He will give me?

Swamiji: The pleasure which one gets through the gratification of desire is short-lived, but the consequent suffering can be enormous and even disastrous if one indulges in undue and low desires. Should one reflect upon this fact again and again, the attachment to pleasures gradually wears off, and the desires for pleasure die a natural death. A lot of work needs to be done on oneself to eradicate one's illegitimate desires. If one person can overcome one's desires and can tame one's mind, why can't you do it?

Joy has a different flavour and quality. It is basically different from sensual pleasures. When you help/serve a needy person, you feel an inner joy, which cannot be compared with the pleasure you get from eating a chocolate. The pleasure of eating a chocolate lasts only so long as the chocolate goes down your throat. But the joy of serving others, or the joy which you feel when your mind becomes pure and stable, resounds in your heart for days and days.

Yearning for Liberation or freedom is universal. It is there in you already. It is in each and everyone. Everyone wants freedom. Even a schoolboy wants to have a holiday from school. That indicates the yearning for freedom. What does God-Realization give you? This you can know directly only when you have attained God-Realization. Those who have realized God, or the Scriptures, give you hints of what God-Realization gives you. You should have trust and faith in them and follow their teachings whole-heartedly. Then you can see directly for yourself what God is and what God-Realization gives you.

Q: In my state of ignorance and confusion, I find it difficult to realize what 'providence' and 'grace' mean? How can I feel them? Why do you say to us that we must attract the grace of God? Does a law of attraction exist?

Swamiji: Grace of God can be easily understood as love of God, like that of a mother for her child. It is motiveless, causeless and spontaneous. If you are open you can feel it. If you are not open you don't feel it, but it is there always. Sometimes a child is attracted to toys and does not pay attention to its mother. The child may turn away from its mother, but the mother never turns away from the child. Providence is the divine Law, which usually works according to the *karmas* of an individual. From the standpoint of the individual it can be called the fate of the individual. But fate is determined by the *karmas* of the soul, while providence is determined by the Divine.

The Liberated One does not make any *karma*. There is an end of this phenomenon for him/her. He/she has realized first-hand that he/she is not the doer. He/she goes out of the law of *karma*. He becomes one with the Divine who is beyond the law of *karma*. The law of *karma* applies to the souls who are the doers.

Q: Since God knows everything, why do we have to call Him and implore Him in our prayers (since He can see into our hearts)? Is prayer a way to attract God or a means of self-improvement?

Swamiji: A mother always takes care of the child, and when a child weeps and calls its mother, she comes running to the child and pays special attention to the child. That is what

prayer is and how it works. Through prayer you call the Divine. The more your prayer is sincere and comes from the heart, the more effective it is.

How do you know that God knows everything? If and when you have come to know God directly and first-hand, then for you there is no need to pray. You pray to Him in order to know Him. Yes, prayer is for your purification. Through prayer, you remember the Divine who is the embodiment of perfect purity. There are many stages of prayer, as there are many types of devotees. Prayer at one stage turns into thanksgiving to God. At a still higher stage, the thanksgiving may also cease. Does a child give thanks to its mother? How you pray, depends upon your closeness to the Divine. There comes a stage where prayer is not needed at all. The lover and beloved become one. As the cry of a child attracts the attention of its mother, similarly the deep aspiration and longing of the devotee to meet God attracts the attention of God.

These are only similes through which the mind can get a glimpse of what grace is. But no simile is perfect in all respects. Grace is inseparable from God. As mind cannot know God directly, so you cannot grasp mentally what grace is, but you can surely realize God and His grace.

Q: My friend is suffering from bone cancer and asked me to pray for her. She is in the hospital and suffers tremendously. Would you pray for her?

Swamiji: No one wants suffering and yet no one seems to be without it. Many high saints suffered dreadful diseases/ death of the body. Even Lord Jesus and many Sufi saints

were hanged or brutally killed. A very great saint, Oriya Baba, to whom Anandamayi Ma often used to go to pay her respects, was hacked to death by a mad devotee who struck Baba on the head with an axe from behind in the presence of other devotees. It appears that suffering is inevitable for the evolution of the soul.

I wish your friend might get enough strength to bear with this suffering and have mental peace. Write to her and ask her to remember the Divine in her heart continuously. Sometimes miracles happen and even patients of cancer in advanced stages recover.

Q: In *Spiritual Gems* you write, “All nature is struggling to release herself from the vanity of time, and wilt thou lie slumbering on?” (p.3). I don’t understand the meaning of the saying.

Swamiji: ‘Nature’ here means the world. Why is nature always moving? What is the purpose? Where does it want to go and reach? As nature is an intelligent force, it cannot move mechanically. The Realized Ones say that it wants to be liberated from time, but time itself denotes movement, so it looks impossible that nature will be liberated from time, in spite of its continuous struggle to be liberated. A Christian mystic, whose name I have forgotten, has said that the movement which signifies nature’s struggle for change is beginningless and endless. So, in spite of its struggle, nature is not getting liberated.

Man has something in him, which does not change or move at all. Movement of anything in time or space requires a vacant space or time, where or when it is not present. But

the Spirit, not being bound by space and time, does not need to move. The essential Being of man is the pure Spirit, not bound by time and space, so man has the potentiality of getting liberated from time. He has only to be completely aware of his essential Being to be Liberated. He must strive for his awakening into his real Being.

Q: Would you explain how to accept relationships and situations in the name of God?

Swamiji: To accept relationships and situations in the name of God doesn't mean that you do not have to use your discrimination, or do not have to avoid unfavourable relationships. What it means is that you cannot run away from the world. You have to be in the world and face the challenges of life. You have to face the problems with composure and without being excited or depressed. The relationship you develop or the situation you accept, should be done in the name of God, so that through that situation or relationship you are able to remember the Divine. Life is not a bed of roses. You have to face many problems and challenges in life. From time to time, you have to encounter both favourable and unfavourable conditions, which you should face boldly and courageously. Success in life, especially in the material sense, involves so many factors, persons and forces. One has to exercise one's intelligence and will-power to counter the adverse situations. Regular meditation, prayer and other spiritual exercises can enhance such strength and capability.

Even so, one has to work very hard in life to succeed. No one can escape hardships by trying to run away from them. Irrespective of the responses one gets from people, one

goes on struggling. If someone betrays your faith and trust, it means you are putting your faith in a wrong person. You might have been swayed by your emotions while making a choice. But such things do happen in life. One should try to learn from them and lead one's life more diligently. One has not to be discouraged by failures nor has one to be excited by successes. They are temporal and come and go. Nothing is lasting in the world. That which lasts cannot be snatched away, even by death. The seeker of Truth is seeking that lasting, permanent and absolute life which is timeless and immortal. Remembering the Divine through situations and relationships helps the seeker to realize the absolute Truth.

Q: I am facing an obstacle in my *sadhana*, which keeps my mind in bondage. I have always feared authority and until now I have not been able to face it. Can you help me to be free and become a complete adult so that my *sadhana* comes to a decisive point?

Swamiji: The problem you are facing is very simple. Try to see or feel the presence of the Divine in each and everyone. There is no big or small permanently in the world. Those people in a high position can slide down, and those in a low position can climb to a higher status. Humility is one of the cardinal virtues. Give due respect to all. As you want respect and love, similarly everyone wants love and respect.

Somewhere I have written, "Your greatness is not determined by how you deal and behave with your superiors and rich people but instead, by how you deal with your subordinates, dependents and poor people". If you dislike or fear the authority of others, then others also may do the same. Do to others what you expect to be done to you by others.

This is the least one should follow. The great sages say that you should love your enemies. Jesus said that, if a man slaps you on the right side of your face, you should turn the left side of your face to him so that he can slap you on the other side also! This principle goes beyond non-violence. You have not only to be non-violent, but loving and compassionate also.

Practise the feeling of divine Presence in every being. It will purify your mind. Can you impose yourself on anyone in whom you feel the presence of the Divine? Can you play tricks on anyone in whom you feel the presence of the Divine? It is impossible. There is no need of using your authority on anyone if the other is convinced and assured of your goodwill and love. All people need love; they do not need authority. Love is much more powerful than authority. You may force a person to obey you by your authority, but in that obeying there will be no love at all. That is what makes a difference between a devotee and a servant. The servant serves you because he cannot do otherwise. The devotee serves you out of love and respect, without any compulsion or fear of authority. Be humble! Be loving!

Q: At times God-Realization seems just behind the door, at other times it seems years ahead and one wonders if it is not for just a few blessed ones.

Swamiji: Yes, it is exactly like what you have written. It is so because your mind keeps wavering. When your mind is relatively more calm and inspired, you feel that God is very near. When your mind is depressed, you feel that God is far away.

Moreover God-Realization is not only the result of your efforts. It requires the unreserved grace of God also. Where and when the sincere and whole-hearted self-effort on the part of the seeker and the special grace on behalf of God meet together, the miracle of God-Realization happens. Who knows when that moment comes? It may come just now on the spur of the moment, unexpectedly, or it may not come after thousands of lives of effort. The seeker has to start with this idea in mind. You need to have patience and perseverance, but such patience is only possible when you have “burnt all your bridges” behind, and you cannot go back. So long as there is an iota in your mind of turning your back on God, you cannot have God-Realization. If you have fixed five years, ten years, ten lives or one hundred lives to try for God-Realization, it probably will not come to you, and you should be prepared for disappointment. You cannot fix a time frame for God-Realization. You may have to die a thousand deaths to come to have the eternal Life. To put any condition for God-Realization shows a lack of total interest and love for God. Love tolerates no condition of time or space. It is always unconditional!

Q: Does a saint ever become bored?

Swamiji: A saint means one who is in communion with the Divine, the source of all happiness and bliss, or a person who is interested in God-Realization, if he is not God-Realized. So how can a saint become bored? Boredom is born of dissatisfaction.

There is a story in the *Mahabharata* of a king named Yayati. He was the greatest king of his time. He exhausted all the means and methods to get satisfaction from the sensual

pleasure but did not succeed. Then three times, in his old age, he invoked the help of supernatural powers and borrowed many years for his life from the lives of his sons. But even then he could not gratify his desires. In the end, he attained to dispassion and wrote beautiful poetry on the futility of sensual pleasures, which can never satisfy a person. It is the dissatisfaction with the pleasures, which is the cause of boredom.

Q: Is the time of meditation the proper time to reflect on one's problems?

Swamiji: What are you doing the whole day? Is the period of meditation only left to you for thinking over your day-to-day problems? The period of contemplation or meditation is not meant to think over your problems. Contemplation means to withdraw your mind from all worldly thoughts and fix it on the Divine or on the divine qualities. The purpose of meditation is to make your mind free of all worldly thoughts. If you are thinking of solving your worldly problems during meditation, then it is no meditation at all. I don't mean that you should not think of your problems and plan methods to solve them. But the time of meditation is not the proper time to do so. During contemplation you are to stop the thinking process altogether, if you can do that! If you cannot do that, only think of the divine qualities or fix your attention on some divine symbol or image. Do not reflect on your problems at that time.

Q: When I see the image of my *Guru*, words also accompany it, related to the image...

Swamiji: If and when you see the image of your *Guru*, be absorbed in it totally and enjoy it. When you are in a state of deep love for someone or when you are wonder-struck to see something very beautiful and charming, not only your speech stops, but also your thinking mind stops also. Isn't it so?

Q: During meditation, I am invoking divine peace and this brings me peace.

Swamiji: You feel the joy and peace when your mind stops. The pleasure you feel when you are excited is not peace; it is a sort of fever, the temperature going up; it comes down and turns into depression. Every pleasure brings pain after it leaves you. Peace is a state of mind in which the sensation of pleasure and pain, excitement and depression, both disappear. The mind stops moving up and down and comes to rest. That is peace. When the state of peace is prolonged and stabilized, another joy emerges which transcends peace as well. This joy is not mental. This is spiritual joy. May you be more and more peaceful during meditation.

Q: The drama for the seeker of Truth, in fact, is to be a seeker!

Swamiji: Seeker of Truth means one who has come to know the futility of untruth, one who feels suffocated in the temporal and unreal situations, things, objects and relationships. To be free from that suffocation and to get rid of what is temporary and not lasting, he/she becomes a seeker of the Truth which is eternal, lasting, and a source of satisfaction.

Q: If I could have a glimpse of God, will that help me to be patient?

Swamiji: God will show Himself to you when you are passive and alert. When you are occupied, God will be sitting before you and you will not be able to see Him.

Q: I don't want to lose my creativity...

Swamiji: Where is the creativity in repeating the same experiences day after day, life after life? The sages say that only the joy of God is ever fresh and green.

Q: What is silence?

Swamiji: Silence means the cessation of all reactions. Silence is that permanent and essential state of one's Being in which 'what', 'why', 'where' and 'when' disappear.

Q: Is *mantra japa* useful in the spiritual path?

Swamiji: *Mantra japa* is the easiest and most effective technique of self-purification and inner concentration discovered by ancient sages. Seekers of all religions have invariably practised it. *Mantra japa*, if practised consciously with love and faith, not only transforms one's conscious mind, but also strikes deep down in the subconscious mind where the roots of emotions, desires and cravings are hidden. Without the knowledge and purification of one's subconscious mind, it is almost impossible to cease being subservient to one's mind and be free. *Mantra japa* is also

the easiest way of remembering the Divine if practised with love and trust.

Q: I would like so much to organize groups of people to go trekking or do something which keeps me active...

Swamiji: Have you been born to play the same games as you have been playing during thousands of your past lives? If the games played during thousands and thousands of years have not satisfied you, how will you be satisfied with the same game in this life? Are you not tired of wandering? It would be much better if you organize groups of people to sit quietly and look within.

Q: I have surrendered so many things in these last days...

Swamiji: The true surrender will come from within yourself. If you are unable to do a thing which you want to do, you cannot call it surrender.

Q: It is already so difficult to surrender what we like...

Swamiji: You have surrendered many times, but you have again taken your surrender back. That is the problem with you. How can you surrender many times? Surrender means ultimate death of the ego. You cannot surrender again and again!

Q: You wrote down for me one day, “The emotions come from God...”

Swamiji: When and where have I said that emotions come from God? If emotions come from God, then your problems also come from God. Therefore accept those problems quietly and joyfully. Why then do you feel disturbed?

Q: On the piece of paper, it was written, “Direct your emotions towards God...”

Swamiji: If you interpret my words with your own mind, then what can I do? You are talking in the air. You don't know what is God and you tell us what God is doing. Does “direct your emotions to God” mean “the emotions come from God”? When you will be able to see without your mind, it will be real seeing. Now what you are seeing is not pure seeing. You are seeing a ghost where there is no ghost at all. That is your problem. You are seeing what is not, and you are not seeing what is really there. This is the cause of all your problems.

Q: The only thing I want is that you should take my mind and kill it forever...

Swamiji: I am ready to take it. But the problem is that you give me your mind one hundred times in a day and, take it back one hundred times the same day.

Q: Have others already a quiet mind and am I alone in crying out my difficulties?

Swamiji: All have their own problems. Some are more disturbed than you, some are less disturbed than you. Some are very quiet.

Q: Will it be possible for me to reach the goal?

Swamiji: The goal is not far away from you; you are far away from it. You can reach it in no time, provided you can drop your mind and provided you can give up your ego.

Q: Is *Prakriti* the energy? What is *Purusha*?

Swamiji: *Prakriti* is the composite of three qualities: *sattvaguna*, *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*. When these qualities are balanced, there is no movement. When the balance is disturbed, the movement starts and the creation/manifestation of the world starts. *Prakriti* is the energy, the doer, but when its principles are balanced, the movement remains latent. *Purusha* is the awareness, the non-doer. *Purusha* is the Seer. *Prakriti* is the seen. *Purusha* is dimensionless and without qualities. *Prakriti* is manifold. By the combination of both, the world is created. This is the *Samkhya* School of Indian philosophy.

Q: You seem to give more importance to the *Purusha*?

Swamiji: *Purusha* and *Prakriti* can be resolved into one. That one is the Supreme Divine. *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are its two aspects. To remain uninfluenced by the three *gunas*, you must have the Realization of *Purusha* first. The *Samkhya* School of philosophy says there are two fundamentals, two independent principles. One is *Purusha*, the other is *Prakriti* and they are different.

Vedanta says that the fundamental principle is One. It is the One who manifests into *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. Then with the catalytic action of *Purusha*, the equilibrium of the

three forces of *sattvaguna*, *rajoguna* and *tamoguna* is disturbed, and *Prakriti* starts to evolve into ego, mind, senses, matter, and everything material, that is the whole creation/manifestation.

Q: As a psychotherapist, how can I explain to my patients that they have to become responsible for themselves? It is very difficult to speak to them about God.

Swamiji: The way is the same! If you want to be happy (not merely comfortable) in the world, or if you want to realize God, the way is the same, because absolute happiness is the property of God. The way is very simple to understand, even though it is most difficult to follow. The way is to be the master of your ego, and not to be the slave of it. Don't use the word God, if you so wish. Only tell them that their pain and problems will be relieved if they could cease to be the slave of their egos. The problem of everyone is the problem of the ego. Tell them, that it is sheer stupidity to seek lasting happiness in things, situations and relationships which are not lasting.

Chapter Six

“Realization is not the result of self-effort. Yet those who do not make any self-effort for Realization also do not have it. Up to a certain stage, conscious self-effort for Self-Realization is essential.”



Q: You gave the main significance of the sacred syllable *OM*. Now, I would like to know more details concerning the symbolic significance of *OM*?

Swamiji: *OM*⁴ is the symbol of all the aspects of the Divine. The Divine has many aspects. It has infinite dimensions and yet transcends all the dimensions. It is absolute Existence, but an absolute which does not oppose the relative aspect of the existence. It is incomprehensible by the thinking mind. It is neither the known, nor the unknown. It is both and yet above and beyond both. It cannot be experienced as an object as we experience a chair. It can only be experienced by becoming one with it, and that experience is unending and unbroken. It is more appropriate to call it ‘experiencing’ than to call it an ‘experience’.

Just as you cannot see with your eyes all the facets of a building by standing at one point — its interior, exterior and all its facets — similarly, the mind cannot have the integral experience of the Divine. It can try to comprehend it, bit by bit, and conceive the whole by the summing up of those bits. However, the Divine is not only the sum total of all its aspects. It is that and yet it transcends the sum total of all the aspects.

⁴ The sacred syllable *OM* is also referred to as *AUM* in the transliteration from Sanskrit.

Now, the infinite aspects of the Divine can mainly be classified into some categories such as: *nirguna* 'without attributes/qualities', *saguna* 'with attributes', *nirguna* and *saguna* (at the same time) 'with and without qualities', *saguna nirakara* 'with attributes but formless', *saguna sakara* 'with attributes as well as with form'. All these aspects can be conceived by the mind, one by one. They are represented by a single word 'AUM'.

Again, we can divide the manifest universe as gross, subtle and causal, just as we can divide the three states of mind as waking state, dreaming state and deep sleep state. There is something common in all these states and yet it transcends these three states. That is called '*turiya*', which literally means 'fourth'. As a matter of fact, it is not the fourth state but it is called 'fourth' to distinguish it from these three states. These states are corresponding to the three types of worlds mentioned above as gross, subtle and causal and are called '*bhuh*', '*bhuva*' and '*svah*'. The syllable 'AUM' also represents the three states of existence, as also the *nirguna nirakara*, what is called '*turiya*'.

There are five parts of the word ॐ which can be detailed as A, U, M, the half-arc and the point above the arc. The three letters 'A', 'U' and 'M' represent on the cosmic level, the three worlds and the three modes of the Universal Soul. On the individual level, they represent the three states of mind, the three individual bodies and the three modes of the individual soul or *jiva*.

The first letter 'A' represents the gross world (or physical universe), *Virat* or the Being identified with this gross world, *jagrata* or the waking state, the gross body, and

vishva or the individual soul identified with this gross individual body.

The second letter 'U' represents the subtle world, *Hiranyagarbha* or the Being identified with this subtle world, *svapna* or the dreaming state, the subtle body, and *taijasa* or the individual soul identified with this subtle individual body.

The third letter 'M' represents the causal world, *Avyakrita* or the Being identified with this causal world, *shushupti* or the deep sleep state, the causal body, and *prajna* or the individual soul identified with this causal individual body.

Baba Nagina Singh Bedi has compared the meaning of the three letters of 'AUM' with the three universal Beings according to the system of Sufis as *Rehman*, *Allah* and *Ghaib*. A writer has also compared them with the three bodies (*trikaya*) accorded to the Buddha in the *Mahayana*: 'A' represents the *Nirmanakaya*, 'U' represents the *Sambhogakaya* and 'M' represents the *Dharmakaya*.

The half-arc on ॐ represents *maya*, the inscrutable power of the Divine, the power which makes the Infinite appear as finite.

The point on the half-arc in ॐ denotes the dimensionless aspect of the Divine, i.e. *nirguna nirakara*. Even in mathematics, a point is defined as something that has no dimensions; it is very abstract.

Thus, *OM* represents the absolute Existence and all the aspects of the Divine. It is the source of all words, names and forms. It is a very mystical word. In the *Vedas* all the

mantras start with *OM*. It is said that its power is already manifest.

By scientific research it has been proved that sound pollutes the atmosphere and produces tension. In the West, someone told me that there are more cases of nervous breakdown because there are so many vehicles producing sound in the atmosphere, which adversely affects the brain, — this is one of the causes. Contrary to the above, the sound of the word ‘*OM*’ produces harmony and peace in the mind; it does not pollute the atmosphere.

In Lonavla (Maharashtra), there is a *Yoga* centre. They have made scientific research on the effect of different sounds produced by different words. I went to see that laboratory where such experiments were being made. The one in-charge of the laboratory showed us all the scientific instruments for making this research. He told us that all sounds except the sound of ‘*OM*’ pollute the atmosphere.

OM is used in many religions with a slight change in its connotation. In English we find it in the words ‘omnipresent’ and ‘omniscient’, which are used for God. The Buddhists and Jains use *OM* in their *mantras*. Even in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is present as ‘*amen*’ or ‘*amin*’, and is used as an expression of assent at the end of prayers. Some people say that these words resemble *OM*.

The gist of all this is that *OM* represents all the aspects of the Divine. I have virtually stopped the reading of the *Upanishads* and other *vedic* books, and almost all other religious books, for the last twenty-five years or more, so I have forgotten the terminology used in *Vedanta* and other religions. Maybe, I have used some wrong words but the meaning and import have been used correctly.

Q: Is it correct if I say that *OM* is the name of God? Is it possible that God manifests in ourselves through a sound?

Swamiji: Yes, *OM* is the name of God. Said Patanjali in the *Yoga Sutras*: “*Tasya vachaka pranavah*”, “the word which expresses Him is *pranavah* — the sacred syllable *OM*”.

You may call on God or remember God with the word ‘*OM*’. That is what is needed for concentration. To think on the meaning of *OM* keeps the thinking process going, but simply to chant *OM*, without thinking, helps you to be centred within. Once you have intellectually understood the meaning of *OM*, the meaning does remain in the background when you chant the word ‘*OM*’. So at the time of chanting, there is no need of thinking about the meaning of *OM*.

Yes, you can listen to the sound of ‘*OM*’ when it is spontaneously going on within you. However, you can listen to the sound of ‘*OM*’ only when it is resounding in your heart and your attention is turned within. To make this possible, you have to first practise to chant *OM* mentally more and more, with total absorption. It may take months and months of continued and regular practice of chanting *OM* before you can feel the vibrations of *OM* within you.

Q: In the Gospel of John, we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God”. At which level of expression does *OM* come in regard to this ‘Word’? At which level of *OM* comes Christ-Consciousness?

Swamiji: Christ-Consciousness is the divine, undivided and timeless Consciousness. It is the level of consciousness in which one realizes the unity in diversity and diversity in

unity, the One having manifested itself into many and yet remaining One. The absolute, undivided Consciousness manifests itself in the manifold universe and yet it remains undivided. This seems to be illogical. It implies that the One becomes many, without losing its Oneness. But Truth is Truth, whether it can be logically explained or not. To explain this Truth logically, Shankaracharya brought in the theory of *Mayavada*, saying that the diversity in the whole universe is only apparent and not real. It is like a dream of the dreamer who himself is a part of the dream, and unreal from the standpoint of the Truth.

However, if you do not bring in logic and totally depend upon faith, and accept the statement of the 'seers', then you may say that it is the miracle of God, who is omnipotent, that He really becomes many and yet remains One. Many examples can be quoted in favour of this theory. For example, you may say that ether (*akasha*) evolves itself into air and yet it remains ether. Or, to use the scientific language, you may say that ether manifests itself into an infinite number of atoms and yet remains ether. The atoms come out of ether and ultimately merge into ether.

Now coming to the point, "In the beginning was the Word," one may ask, the beginning of what? Does 'beginning' mean the beginning of the universe, the manifold world of names and forms? If we take it so, then it means the absolute Consciousness first manifested itself into sound/word.

It is also in the book of Genesis (*Bereshit*, in Hebrew) that God said, "Let there be light" and the light came into existence, meaning the light was the foremost manifestation of God. God first manifested Himself into light. It does not

make any contradiction, because light and sound are not radically different. Sound changes into light and light changes into sound. So “In the beginning was the Word” means that the creation/manifestation of the world of name and form started with a sound.

The sound of *OM* is all-inclusive. When you recite *OM*, its sound starts from the throat and stops when the lips are closed. All the sounds are included in the sound of *OM*. The sound of *OM* is an undifferentiated and homogeneous sound.

Q: I have read many Sacred Scriptures, but I feel greatly disturbed when I try to integrate them into my daily life...

Swamiji: Sacred Scriptures of different religions may differ in their mythologies, philosophies and rituals, but the ethics, morality and methods of concentration prescribed in them are more or less the same. It is these three which are mostly connected with the practical life of a seeker. No true religion teaches hatred, violence, anger, attachment or greed. All religions teach love, compassion, non-violence, contentment, honesty, sincerity, love of God and detachment from temporary and passing things. The methods of concentration and of worshipping are also not in contradiction. Every seeker has the liberty to follow any method to worship God or for concentration. Hinduism even tolerates you if you are a non-believer or an atheist, saying that a time will come when you will have to believe in the existence of a supreme conscious Power. If you do not believe it now, you are at liberty to do so. God does not impose Himself on anyone. He is the embodiment of absolute Freedom and wants everyone to be free.

Freedom does not mean that you do whatever you want to do. Freedom really means you are not a slave of your mind, emotions, desires and impulses. Freedom means absolute love. There is no coercion or compulsion in it. Freedom means infinite joy which everyone can infinitely share and it does not exhaust. A free person can never be violent, greedy, bigoted, fanatic, jealous, disrespectful, attached and wrathful. A free person can never be disturbed. He/she is always composed, balanced, quiet, happy, contented and fulfilled.

Where is the contradiction? Foolish people fight in the name of God on religious concepts and theories. If you address God with a particular name, Allah or Rama, you are a devotee of God, but if you call Him by the name of Shiva, Vishnu, Indra, Adonai, Buddha, Christ, etc., you are wrong. You are a non-believer! By 'non-believer' you really mean one who does not believe as you believe, and so you fight. This is sheer nonsense. Everyone is free to believe what one wants to believe, provided that belief does no harm to others. Everyone is free to address God by the name of his faith.

Q: I had a strange dream last night. Are dreams true?

Swamiji: There is a famous Zen story. One day when the devotees of a Zen sage, Chuang Tse, came to see him, they found him in a gloomy state. The devotees had always seen him very joyful before. They asked him, "Sir, today you seem to be depressed. We are at a loss to understand what could make you so depressed today". The sage said, "Last night, I saw a dream and in that dream I was a butterfly. It has made me a bit perplexed. You know, I am a Zen monk and I also take myself to be a monk but in my dream, I saw myself as

a butterfly. It has raised a very serious question in my mind, and I am still perplexed and thinking over it. If a monk can see himself to be a butterfly in a dream, why cannot a butterfly see himself to be a monk in his dream? So what is true? Maybe in reality I am a butterfly and seeing a dream of being a Zen monk called Chuang Tse”.

Do not take the dreams seriously. Do not make them a problem for you. Your life is already full of problems!

Q: What is the true meaning of my dream?

Swamiji: Dream means a wrong perception. A king may see himself as a beggar in a dream, and a beggar may see himself as a king in his dream. Though, a dream is a dream, it is not a true perception. In a dream, you kill a person and are very much afraid of being hanged for that crime but, as soon as you wake up, that fear goes away. You become sure that in reality you did not kill anyone.

Q: Is the wakeful state and dream state also a question of the same wrong perception?

Swamiji: A true perception is the one that lasts forever.

Q: When I meditate on my *Ishta*, sometimes I am in the higher centre and feel covered by light, and sometimes I go to the lower centre in my heart. I need your advice to do what is correct...

Swamiji: To meditate or concentrate on a divine Form, the right place is the centre in the forehead while the appropriate

place to concentrate on the *mantra* or sound of a *mantra*, is the heart-centre. The heart-centre is not considered a lower centre; it is in the middle. Shri Ramana Maharishi always used to advise the seekers to concentrate on the heart-centre, so did Shri Aurobindo. The image of any divine Form should not be seen in the heart. It should be seen internally in the forehead between the eyes. This centre is called the centre of vision. To practise the silent meditation, the heart-centre is the right place. It is a scientific approach. Anyway, you can make experiments yourself. What I am saying is on the basis of my own experience and it is also in conformity with the experiences of many sages. In the *Upanishads*, it is written that the abode of *Purusha*, or witnessing Consciousness, is the heart-centre.

Q: I had the experience of the awakening of the *kundalini*, and at that moment all my energy went to the centre in the forehead and also above. Should I try to get again this same experience?

Swamiji: All the centres are connected with one another. If you go direct to the highest centre by some technique or through the grace of some saint, you may go into *samadhi* and a state of bliss, but that will not last. You will be forced to come down again. Unless all the centres are purified, opened and fully coordinated among themselves, the energy/consciousness has to come down in order to purify the lower centres.

Q: When I repeat the *mantra*, I cannot disunite it from the breathing process. Though, if I try to associate them, I feel

stress and tension. On the contrary, if I let it be done simply, all is in order and I become the witness of this process. What can you tell me for a good practice?

Swamiji: You don't have to synchronize the breath with the chanting of the *mantra*. On the contrary, you have to synchronize the chanting or hearing the *mantra* with your natural breathing process. If you do so, you will not feel any stress. You are already saying that you hear the *mantra* with the flow of the breath, and it goes on well and you do not do anything else. That is the correct method. Just synchronize the listening to the *mantra* with the natural flow of the breath and do not think anything. If you continue with this practice, you will feel a very peculiar feeling of peace emerging in you, so much so, that you would cherish living in this state of peace more and more. It will also make a deep impact on your subconscious mind.

Love and peace are the strongest forces that transform your life. Stress and tension are the forces which disorientate the life of a person. Great stress and tension may even make one's cerebral activity unbalanced, turning the person into a psychic patient. Peace is a very strong force that pushes forward the spiritual evolution of a person.

Q: Should I continue doing what I am doing? How can I really 'let go' and find peace?

Swamiji: Peace comes to you when you overcome your likes and dislikes. 'Let go' does not mean that you allow your mind to think whatsoever it cherishes. If your mind thinks wrong thoughts, you have to refuse to cooperate with it. Usually a common person thinks what he does not want to think and he does not think what he wants to think. His

thoughts are not under his control. It shows his helplessness and subservience to his mind. I will tell you how you can see whether you are free or not. Sit down and look at your thoughts. If you can think what you want to think, and if you can stop the thinking process effortlessly when you wish not to think then you are a free person. How can you call yourself free when your thoughts and emotions sway you, and you are unable to quiet your mind?

Q: Please, can you do more to help me?

Swamiji: You can take a horse to a river or a pool of water but you cannot force him to drink the water.

Q: Some saints realize God through *Guru-parampara* (the lineage from the *Guru*), others seem to be born sages or to get Realization in this life without a *Guru*. What is the difference between them? And what is *vidvat sannyasa*?

Swamiji: As far as Realization is concerned, there is no difference between them. The Realized Ones who had no *parampara* are very few. Most of them had their *Gurus*; they belonged to a lineage.

There are two types of *sannyasa*. The first type is called '*vividisha sannyasa*' and is taken by a *sadhaka* from a *Guru*. There is a lineage in such cases. The other type of *sannyasa* is called '*vidvat sannyasa*'. It is taken by one who has already realized the Truth and does not need a *Guru*. His manner of taking *sannyasa*, is to voluntarily renounce the world and take on himself the life of a *sannyasi*. There is no lineage in such a case.

Q: Was it like that for Shri Ramana Maharishi?

Swamiji: Shri Ramana Maharishi was a very exceptional case. He did not even go to saints for *satsang*. He was a born sage. However, some born sages take *sannyasa* from a *Guru*, just to fulfil the tradition as mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. Even Lord Krishna had his *Guru*. Baba Bhuman Shahji was a born sage with extraordinary powers, and yet he went to a master and got initiation.

Q: What is the import of the lineage?

Swamiji: Lineage is like a college or a school. You can graduate from any college. After you have graduated, it is not necessary to remain attached with that college. You cannot spend your whole life in a college. When you are Liberated, you know that all lineages are good in their own right but it is not necessary for you to remain bound with your lineage.

Q: Often the students keep a close relation with their college, even when they are completely involved in their job... Does that mean it is the same thing for the lineage?

Swamiji: You can become a professor in the college from which you have completed your studies, but that is not obligatory.

Q: Is it more difficult to be a *sannyasi* nowadays than it was before?

Swamiji: The times have changed. The old traditions are also changing. Some twenty years ago if a *sadhu* or saint would go to stay in a certain *ashram* or *math* he was asked his lineage and his denomination. In some orthodox *maths* or *ashrams*, this rule is still observed, but in the upcoming *ashrams*, this rule is not observed. You are not asked which lineage you belong to. As the caste-system in India is now breaking down, having outgrown its utility, similarly, old rules about different traditions of *sannyasa* are also becoming eroded.

Q: Things are changing but it is said that what is written in the *Upanishads* should be kept, whatsoever the external life becomes. For instance, should a *sannyasi* keep begging for his food and wandering, even if life is much more complex now and not so suitable for this situation?

Swamiji: There are two elements in the *Upanishads* — the eternal and the temporal. The knowledge of the Eternal or true Self is eternal. It cannot change, but the means and methods of achieving Realization change from time to time and place to place. After you have realized your true Nature, you are not bound by any code of living. Even in the *Upanishads* there were Liberated Ones who followed different modes of living. Some were wandering monks. Some lived in solitude in a hut or a cave. Some lived in *ashrams*. Some were speaking and teaching. Some became silent.

You know that the denominations of *Puri*, *Giri*, *Tirtha*, etc., have special meanings. '*Puri*' literally means one who lives in a town; '*Giri*' means a *sannyasi* who lives on the mountains; '*Tirtha*' is the one who lives at places of

pilgrimage. However, these 'Giri', 'Puri', 'Tirtha' have now become surnames of *sannyasis*.

Q: Why are we all seeking for security?

Swamiji: There is no security in the world of time. Security is certainly there 'somewhere' otherwise everyone, without exception, would not be seeking security. It is the innate urge of the soul. It is not confined to the people of one religion, country or nation. Nor does it depend upon one's idiosyncrasies, nor on the type of the education one gets. It is a universal phenomenon.

Q: I am making an effort to come closer to the state of 'no-mind', but I do not know how to 'let go'.

Swamiji: When the effort reaches its highest peak, it turns into effortlessness. It is just like trying to close your fist with utmost effort. When you have exhausted all your energy in trying to close the fist, the fist itself opens.

What you do in the period of *sadhana*, with most sincere effort, becomes spontaneous and effortless in *siddhi* or 'perfection'. Effort has its own place in *sadhana*; even the ego has its place in it. *Sadhana* cannot be done without a purified and sublimated ego. When the ego is completely eradicated, the *sadhana* stops — meaning it becomes a joy in which there is no ego of being a *sadhaka*. It becomes like dancing and singing (not professional dancing or singing).

Realization is not the result of self-effort. Yet those who do not make any self-effort for Realization also do not

have it. Up to a certain stage, conscious self-effort for Self-Realization is essential.

'Let go', means complete self-surrender and giving up of ego and false identification completely. I have noted that some people, predominantly in the West, confuse it with *tamas*, the inertia, which is the lowest quality. They live on earth and go on talking of heaven. Their lives are not transformed at all. They are always talking of the end without taking a single step towards that end. It betrays total ignorance and self-deception. It is the trick of *maya* to keep the soul fettered while making it imagine that it is free.

The 'let go' happens in you when you have exhausted all your efforts to realize the Truth; and when having spent all its energy in the right direction, the mind stops moving. The mind stops, but the Awareness is full. This is the state of 'no-mind'. He alone who is in the state of 'no-mind', can be in the state of 'let go'. Meditation is the test to know how far you are free. Sit in meditation and you will be able to see if you are in a state of 'no-mind' or not. That is, whether you are subservient to your thoughts and emotions or you are free of them.

Q: It is said that three graces are needed for God-Realization. Among them the most difficult is the grace of our own mind, the second most difficult being God's grace, and the third is the *Guru's* grace.

Swamiji: That is true. Because the *Guru*, or God, will never make you free forcibly. A freedom, which is imposed on you, becomes bondage for you. Your sincere wish to be free, to realize your true Being or God, must be there and you must

strive, using all your energies for Self-Realization. That is what is called the 'grace of the self', *atma kripa*.

Q: Some *ashrams* impose very strict rules and discipline. In some others, there is no discipline at all and that is very difficult too!

Swamiji: No one is forced to go and stay in an *ashram* and follow the rules of that *ashram*. When you go and stay in an *ashram*, knowing the rules of the *ashram*, it implies that you are willing to follow those rules. Self-discipline which is not forced or imposed on you from outside gives you joy. Mere intellectual understanding, without self-discipline, does not lead you to Self-Realization.

You may find many scholarly professors teaching *Vedanta* in universities. They know the minute points of *Vedanta* and explain them very beautifully and convincingly. However, on the ground level, their practical life is not much different from that of an ordinary man. They have the same attachment to their families as an ordinary person has. They have anger, greed, fear and other weaknesses.

Ashram life is a sort of community life. In the *ashrams*, they have a common kitchen; the members co-operate with one another to run the *ashram* in an organized way. They adjust themselves according to the schedule of the *ashram*. For example, if there is no fixed time for lunch or breakfast, the people staying in the *ashram* will come to eat their meals at their convenience and it would be difficult to run a community kitchen, provided that it is the only activity of an *ashram*. The time for group meditation and for *satsang*,

etc., must be fixed and every inmate of the *ashram* must follow the rules and regulations of the *ashram*.

Q: After living for many years with the *Guru* in an *ashram*, and being disciplined, should not the disciple go and live what he has understood in order to integrate it into him?

Swamiji: Very true. I had read in a book of Swami Ram Tirtha that a disciple lived with his *Guru* for many years, following all the rules and regulations and teachings of the *Guru*. After many years the disciple suddenly left the *ashram* and the *Guru* one evening without informing anyone. The *Guru* was very much pleased and told his other disciples, “I am very proud of my disciple who has left. He is totally Liberated. He has realized his true Being. He does not need to live here now and to observe any discipline of an *ashram*”. This example applies only to a disciple who has realized the Truth and has become Liberated. As a matter of fact, there is no rule for the Liberated Ones. Their actions are spontaneous.

Q: Does it mean that the disciple should give up even the attachment to the relationship between the *Guru* and disciple?

Swamiji: The relationship of the disciple with the *Guru* is based on love and surrender on the part of the former to the latter. It is not based on attachment. However, a seeker can leave the *ashram* or the institution if he does not find the atmosphere congenial and conducive for his *sadhana*.

I have seen a few monks (in Europe) who left the Church and the monastic life and are living alone. One is

living in a cave. One was living above a broken room far away from the monastery he used to live in. Nevertheless, they were both alive and very happy.

Q: Would you please throw light on the perseverance and patience needed by a seeker on the path of Realization?

Swamiji: There is a Sufi story. An angel going to God met a Sufi saint. The saint had been offering *namaz*⁵ five times a day regularly and living a very disciplined life full of austerities for over more than fifty years. He requested the angel to ask God how much more time was left before he would see God, and how many more prayers he had yet to offer for that purpose. The angel said, “Okay, I will ask God and will let you know when I come back”. When the angel asked God about the Sufi saint’s question, God replied, “Not even a single prayer of that saint has been accepted, and it will take at least five thousands years more before he will be able to realize me”. The angel came back and conveyed God’s message to the saint. As soon as the saint heard that message, he was overwhelmed with joy and started to dance in ecstasy. When he was dancing, a voice came from heaven saying, “All your prayers have been accepted”. Thus, God blessed him with Realization. So the angel was very perplexed and asked God, “Sir, you are completely incomprehensible and unpredictable. Just an hour before, you told me that not a single prayer of this saint had been accepted and now suddenly, all his prayers have been accepted and you have come down to bless him. What is the

⁵ Prayers prescribed by Islamic law.

secret?” God said, “As soon as this saint heard my message, a positive divine thought overpowered him, assuring him that I was at least hearing his prayers and he would have my Realization even after five thousands years. This moved me so much, that I could not restrain myself. I blessed him, seeing his patience, his sincere and unshakable aspiration to see me”.

A sincere seeker treading the path of Realization needs such patience and perseverance. The story may be true or not but its import is one hundred percent true.

Q: You wrote that we have to use all our energies for Self-Realization. Can you give details about that?

Swamiji: Every man has four main energies: *kriya shakti* ‘energy of action’, *bhava shakti* ‘energy of emotions/love’, *jnana shakti* ‘energy of understanding’, *sankalpa shakti* ‘will-power’. The seeker has to direct all his energies for Self-Realization. All of what you have or of what you are is to be dedicated to the path of Self-Realization.

Q: Where is the *kundalini* energy situated? What is the *Kundalini Yoga*?

Swamiji: *Kundalini* is a word used by *tantrics*. There is no mention of *kundalini* (even the term *kundalini* is not found) in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, which is the most authentic book on *Yoga*. The modern writers have mixed up *Tantra* and *Yoga* disciplines, which confuses the seeker. Mixing up these systems is like fixing the carburettor of a Mercedes, the gearbox of a Toyota, the steering of a Maruti, the wheels

of a Gypsy and the engine of an Ambassador car in one vehicle, and then trying to run that vehicle. In the *Yoga Sutras*, there is no mention even of six centres in the body. It is the discovery of *tantrics* that the opening of *kundalini shakti* gives extraordinary powers. Hence, most seekers, lured by the temptation of possessing supernatural powers, become attracted to what they called *kundalini Yoga*. However, *Yoga* has nothing to do with *kundalini*. It is a different *tantric* system of philosophy in which the term '*shat chakra bhedan*', meaning 'the opening of the six centres', is taught. It is altogether a different discipline of *Tantra*. *Kundalini* literally means divine power which is lying folded in man, in the lowest centre of the body, called '*muladhara*'. As a snake coils itself, similarly the divine power in man remains coiled in the lowest centre till it is released.

Q: Which *mantra* should be practised to rouse the *kundalini*?

Swamiji: The *Tantra* system has the most secret *mantras*. A *tantric* remains so hidden, that in the *tantric* Scriptures it is written that if you come to know that a person is *tantric*, he/she ceases to be *tantric*.

In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, after the *sutra* which I have already quoted, viz. "*Tasya vachaka pranavah*", "the word which expresses Him is *pranavah/OM*", the next *sutra* says: "*Tajjapah tadarthabhavanam*", meaning "the *mantra* should be repeated with the feeling of its meaning at the heart-centre". There is no religious system in the whole world in which *japa* is not recommended. *OM* is the only *mantra* whose power is already manifest. You have to assimilate its power by practising its *japa*. Of all the other *mantras*, you have first to awaken their power and then assimilate it. There

are some *bija mantras* which have no meaning but are only sounds. However, *OM* is a complete *mantra* in itself. The *japa* of *OM* can be practised for arousing the *kundalini*. If you fix *OM* with any *mantra* and repeat it, it is easier to manifest the power of that *mantra*.

The basic energy is one. It transforms itself into so many forms. The names of energies mentioned are only those which all human beings possess. Even what we call matter is a form of energy. You see the world not as it is, but you see it according to your senses and mind. If you had seven senses, you would perceive this world in a different way and different form. There are beings who have less than five senses; there are others who have more than five senses. All beings see this world and interpret it in different ways. So let me tell you that energy is one. From the standpoint of *Vedanta*, even consciousness and energy are not two different things. The whole existence has a common denominator, which is called '*Brahman*' or Godhead, the Divine, the One without a second. It manifests itself into many and yet it remains One. It is infinite. There cannot be two infinities nor can anything be excluded from infinity, and yet infinity is not only the sum total of all the things that we perceive as finite.

Mind is also a sense, but when I say seven senses, I do not include the mind in them. There are so many forms of mind. There is the subliminal-mind, the over-mind, the super-mind, the universal-mind, and so on. The manifestation has infinite dimensions. Mind is one of them. It is a part of the whole. How can a part know the whole? Moreover, the whole is not the sum total of its parts; it is something more and beyond. It is the mind which thinks that the whole should be the sum total of all the parts, which is only logically true.

I talk of metaphysics only when I am asked about it. On my part, I gave up thinking or talking of metaphysics over the last three decades. When you ask me a metaphysical question, I have to reply to it in metaphysical terms. To talk of the physical only is not wise also.

Q: What is intuition?

Swamiji: Intuition is also of so many different types. There is the intuition which animals have. We call it instinct. It is more accurate than the conclusions of the ordinary thinking process, the process which is initiated by a mind full of prejudices, likes and dislikes, attachment, greed, anger, hate, etc. Then there is a mental intuition. Beyond the mental intuition is the supramental intuition.

Q: How can we use these different energies for the purpose of *sadhana*?

Swamiji: Serve the poor and needy in the name of God. It is the right use of *kriya shakti*.

A Christian priest came to Shri Ramana Maharishi and asked him, "Have you seen God? Can you show God to me?" Ramana Maharishi said, "Come to me tomorrow and I will show you my God". Next day, when the priest came to Ramana Maharishi at the appointed time, Ramana Maharishi took him to a corner on the mountain. There was a leper with wounds all over his body lying in a desperate state. Ramana Maharishi collected some dry wood from the forest, lit a fire, boiled the water with some leaves which have antibiotic qualities, and with motherly love, cleaned the wounds of the

leper with that water. Afterwards, Shri Ramana Maharishi said, "He is my God. I come to serve him daily like this". The leper was so much hated and despised by the society that he had to take retreat in that corner. This is one example of making best use of your *kriya shakti*.

Bhava shakti is the energy of feeling. One has to conserve this energy, unify it, and then direct it to the Divine. *Jnana shakti* is the power of analysing and understanding which can be used in many ways. It can be used by a thief, a robber, also. The seeker after Truth uses it to understand the true nature of things and God. *Sankalpa shakti* is the will-power which is needed to support all the other energies. Without strong will-power, you cannot even dare to steal. To tread the path of Truth, you have to stake your whole life, you have to be prepared to die for the sake of God. You need strong *sankalpa shakti* to do it. To do *sankalpa* literally means to choose. You have to make a choice between the temporal and eternal on certain occasions. At that time, you need all of them: *kriya shakti*, *bhava shakti*, *jnana shakti* and *sankalpa shakti*.

To enhance your will-power, you have to undertake some sort of discipline. For example, if you take a vow to observe a fast for fifteen days, and you complete the fast in spite of all inconveniences and obstacles, it will increase your will-power. On the other hand, if you make some vows again and again and you do not fulfil them, you lose your self-confidence and will-power. You must think before taking any vow. If it is beyond your capacity to do something, do not take a vow to do it. You can enhance your will-power by prayer also. You may pray to God with faith and trust to give you strength. Breathing exercises are very effective for strengthening one's will-power. Actually, faith is the greatest

power in the world. It works miracles. Said Jesus, “If you have faith as big as a mustard seed, you can say to this hill, ‘Go from here to there!’ and it will go”.

Q: Could you please say something about the signs or indications that one is approaching Enlightenment? Are there special precautions required when it is happening?

Swamiji: The more you advance to Enlightenment, the more sincere and sure you feel about it. Your worldly attachment, anger, greed, desire and ego start leaving you. Your heart becomes full of love and compassion for one and all, irrespective of the attitude of others. You start feeling/seeing a glimpse of the divine Presence everywhere, as unity in diversity and diversity in unity. You become more and more calm. All excitement leaves you. These are some of the true signs of the dawn of Enlightenment. Besides that, you may have visions of great saints and sages. Your mind, thinking process and breathing process slow down. Your physical body may also be transformed; it will look more relaxed, beautiful, and you will be enveloped by a strong magnetic field which will attract the seekers of Truth to you. There are some other experiences or signs also which differ from person to person.

The precautions, if they need to be taken, are that you should not tell your experiences to each and everyone. If you achieve some extraordinary power, do not try to exhibit it. Let not the notion that you are being Enlightened overpower you so that you start feeling arrogant. At such a stage don't take to teaching others at all. Be unassuming, like the Divine.

Chapter Seven

“God’s love is free of charge. It is like air, like sunlight. You have not to pay anything for it. What you have to do is to simply keep open the windows and doors of your heart. God loves you. He loves everyone. Those who respond positively feel His love and grace. His love or grace has not to be earned; it has only to be received.”



Q: Since I came to you, I always feel to be the last for everything and others have the first place.

Swamiji: In the spiritual realm, one who wishes to be the last, is in reality always in the first position, and one who claims or tries or seeks to be the first, remains the last. It is one hundred per cent true, without any exception. It is the ego which wants the first position, and it is the ego which is the root cause of downfall. There is a story often told in Christendom. A devotee was very humble and considered himself the lowest of all. Once he encountered an angel who was going to meet God. He requested the angel to see if his name was in the list of devotees, and where it figured in that list. He always felt from the heart that he was the lowest. When the angel came back after meeting God and brought the copy of the list of devotees, it was found that the name of the devotee who felt that he would be the last in the list, figured on the top of the list. I read this story in a school textbook when I was a student.

Q: Why is it that often upright and honest people suffer, while dishonest and corrupt people flourish and succeed in this world? It seems as if wicked and dishonest people in the world are enjoying what is called heaven, and honest and law-abiding have to face hell in everything.

Swamiji: When you see the corrupt people drinking and dancing and singing, please do not think that they are happy. More often than not, when they exhibit such excursions for pleasure, they are concealing their inner restlessness and dissatisfaction.

There is another story. Once people living on the border of heaven wanted to know what was happening on the other side of the border that is in hell. They told their chief that they wanted to have a glimpse of hell, and requested him to take them to hell for a short visit. The chief contacted the head of hell who welcomed them for the proposed visit. When the people from heaven reached hell, they were given a warm welcome, and they were taken to a very beautiful place where they saw a cabaret show going on, people drinking and eating sumptuous food and singing and enjoying even more than what was found in heaven. The people of heaven were amazed to see all that and said, “We had heard that hell was a world where sinners were forced to go, and that they were tortured brutally in many ways. But here, we are seeing just the opposite! We do not have so many means of enjoyment in our heaven, and here in hell you have got everything!” The head of hell smiled and said, “Do not be mistaken. This is our publicity department.”

Dishonest and corrupt people may be wealthy, but they are never at peace within their hearts. A thief is always afraid in his heart lest he may be caught and punished. One thing more, if a dishonest and corrupt man is wealthy, it does not mean that he is wealthy because of being dishonest and corrupt. Usually, a man becomes wealthy when people take him to be honest and truthful. When he is exposed and loses the trust, which people had in him, his downfall begins.

Q: Is it obligatory to go through hell and heaven?

Swamiji: It is written in the Scriptures that to go to heaven you must go through hell first, even though for a second, which comes in the way to and before heaven.

Q: Are hell and heaven like the two faces of a coin?

Swamiji: Hell and heaven are the worlds where your capacity of feeling pleasure or pain is enhanced. It is so because in hell and heaven, you do not go with a physical body. You go there with the subtle body, which is capable of bearing pleasure or pain to a much greater extent. Here in this world, the soul with a physical body can feel pain or pleasure only to a certain limit. If you cross the critical limit, you become unconscious. So while in the physical body, you can feel pain or pleasure only to a certain limit. In hell, you feel more pain when you are tortured. In heaven, you get what you wish, and you can have pleasure-trips much more than you can get on this earth. The hell and heaven are in the astral and subtle worlds.

Q: Can we avoid going to hell?

Swamiji: God sends you where you want to go. He has given you the power of choice. It is a different thing if you may mistakenly take hell as heaven and vice versa. Your mind has tremendous power.

Q: I have been trying to come to India, my spiritual home, and dedicate myself to spiritual life for a long time. There was always opposition from my family. Recently, I have left

my family and my job for a period of about two months, in spite of the opposition. Putting myself in the hands of the Lord, I seek the true and real love of God. I want Realization. Is this a selfish desire? What should I do in my state to dedicate myself fully to the spiritual life?

Swamiji: The word 'desire' means to want or seek something which is different from you. As the real Self and the Divine are not different essentially, the inner urge to discover one's true Self or the Divine cannot be called a 'desire'. It is the call of the inner soul of man which is, as it were, in exile to go back home. It is the innate urge of the soul to own its divinity. There can be no higher goal and purpose of the human life than to strive for God-Realization. This urge to find out one's true Nature represents the highest and eternal value of human existence. The hypnotic power of *maya*, the power that makes the Infinite appears as finite and the Eternal as temporal, is so great that very few people aspire for God-Realization. Moreover, there are very rare people, out of those few, who sincerely and whole-heartedly strive to realize the Divine. "Many are called but few are chosen", said Jesus.

You are very fortunate that you have the aspiration to discover what is true and lasting. To break the spell of delusion is the most arduous and difficult task. It is easier to become a king or a president than to be the master of one's own mind and senses. It requires great sacrifice, discipline, hard work, unbroken zeal, continuous practice of meditation and reflection to attain the complete silence and alertness of the mind in which the Truth is revealed. People work for God-Realization life after life. You have spared two months for it. That also is good. If you utilize this small period

sincerely in making your mind passive and silent, it will be the best use of your time and energies. You are here for a week, as I have been told. Devote yourself more and more to meditation and reflection and prayer. It may open you up and make you more receptive to know directly what is real and lasting.

Q: How can I remain aware of every bodily sensation and movement of the mind in the daily life, and be one with awareness? Is this the right way to eradicate fears, desires and all my sufferings? Is it possible? How can I accelerate the process of purification?

Swamiji: First of all, remain aware and watch your thoughts during meditation, that is, while sitting with your body at rest. It is not so easy, but it is much easier than to be aware during your day-to-day chores when you are obliged to pay attention to the outer activities. When your meditation becomes mature, then slowly and gradually you can extend that state of awareness during those activities which do not need much attention. For example, when you are walking, or washing your clothes, or cleaning your room, or eating, you do not need so much concentration. In such activities, you can remain aware. But if you are working on a computer or checking the accounts, you have to pay an undivided attention in performing those activities.

So it is better to start with remaining aware of your thoughts and other activities of your mind during meditation. If you can do that, the thoughts begin to subside and the mind slows down with the result that you experience peace. That peace has a great power. It gives clarity to your vision, and you are able to see the futility of undue desires and cravings,

which are the cause of fears and sufferings. So, you are helped to give up many desires and be free of many fears. In this way, awareness can be useful for eradicating fears and sufferings.

It is wishful thinking to remain aware in all the day-to-day activities of life when one cannot remain aware and at peace during a small period of one hour of meditation. It is possible to remain aware in all activities, but one needs a complete transformation of one's life-interest, a complete purification of the mind, and a deep dispassion for what is temporal and not lasting.

There are other methods of purification also. Whatever you do, do it with love and in the name of God. Divine love is a great force like peace. It also transforms one's life. There are so many methods and practices. Some breathing exercises also help very much. Regular and continuous prayer gives you strength to purify yourself. Discipline helps you to overcome your old bad habits that create suffering. The seeker can use all these methods to accelerate the process of one's purification and transformation. It is an integral approach to utilize all that you have for your spiritual advancement.

Q: Before my arrival and also on the first day, I was feeling love of God but now, for the last few days, I feel that there are two persons inside me. One is quite insensible to the beauty; it is as if my heart had become dry and not feeling any more love of God. The other one is looking at the first one. As I feel that you are very near to God, could you intervene with Him so that He will grant me His love?

Swamiji: God's love is free of charge. It is like air, like sunlight. You have not to pay anything for it. What you have to do is to simply keep open the windows and doors of your heart. God loves you. He loves everyone. Those who respond positively feel His love and grace. His love or grace has not to be earned; it has only to be received. It is always coming to you uninterruptedly, but you may not receive it if you are not receptive and open. You have to keep your receiver in order and tuned up. God comes to you. He knocks at your door but you do not open your door, you hide yourself inside and do not want to hear that knock. You resist it. You resent it, so what can poor God do? He will never break your door open. He is not aggressive. He is loving but does not impose Himself on anyone. It is His greatness that He does not force anyone to submit. He has no ego. He provides you with all the opportunities to be free and loving.

Divine love never binds. It makes you free. It destroys your ego but, on the other hand, you try to save your ego. You prefer the world to God. You love your ego. You are obsessed by your ego. If He tries to teach you, you become angry. You resist. You try to prove that you are wiser than Him. You feel you are right and He is wrong. Then how can you love Him? He never betrays you, though you may betray Him in thousands and thousands of ways. I wish you could love God with your whole heart. If you do it, you will be free; you will enjoy lasting peace and happiness.

Q: I have many doubts about the path that I have followed till now, and about the techniques of meditation practised for the last fourteen years, like *Vipassana*-meditation. Is it

the right technique? Do I practise it correctly? I have doubts also about *Gurus*. Is it really necessary to follow one *Guru*, and only one?

Swamiji: The technique of *Vipassana*-meditation, as certain seekers have told it to me, can calm down one's thoughts. There is nothing wrong in the technique.

Guru is one. You cannot change a *Guru* once you have chosen and accepted a *Guru* yourself, without any pressure or persuasion. The divorce between a *Guru* and a *shishya*, a 'disciple', is despised in Indian spiritual tradition. Many saints and sages may help you, but the *Guru* is the one who has initiated you on the path of Truth, whom you have accepted willingly and with faith, and who is available to guide you. You will be considered disloyal to your *Guru* if you adopt another *Guru*. It will be like a married person having an affair with another woman. It signifies disloyalty and lack of faith and trust in one's *Guru*.

Q: Some *Gurus* claim to be *avatars*. What does that mean?

Swamiji: *Avatars* are of many types; they come for specific purposes on this earth. Though the general purpose of all *avatars* is to give a push and accelerate the process of spiritual evolution, different *avatars* come at different times and at different places to set people on the right path. There are hundreds of people in the world at present, and in the West also, who claim themselves to be *avatars*. I know that I am not an *avatara*. I have not cared to know who is an *avatara* these days. I have neither the right nor the need to prove or disprove that a particular sage who claims himself/herself to be an *avatara*, is indeed an *avatara* or not. I give

respect to all saints and sages in the sense that some devotees get inspiration from them to follow the path of Truth.

Q: The formless approach seems the easier way for me but I wonder if it is not a way of escaping surrender? I also feel a little afraid of you and afraid of taking you into my confidence.

Swamiji: Normally, the seeker of Truth starts from the gross, progresses to the subtle and then to the abstract. This is the normal order. However, if you find that it is easier for you to conceive or realize the formless and attributeless Godhead straightway, there should be no objection from anyone to your approach.

Why are you afraid of me? Do you think that I am a cheat? Do you take me as a robber or a terrorist? Do you think I want to convert your faith? Do you think that I want you to follow me and become my disciple? What makes you afraid of me? There is no need of being afraid of me. Have I ever tried to impose my ideas on you about what to do or what not to do? You are completely free to have your opinion about me. It does not make any difference to me. Everyone should be free to choose for oneself the *Guru*, with whom one feels in tune. I do not feel the need to convince anyone that I can rightly guide a person. I have sent back many people who came to get initiation from me. I have asked them to wait for at least one year and fulfil certain conditions, giving up their bad habits, and then come back and ask me again. I am not at all interested in hoarding disciples and creating a sect. You need not be afraid of me. Do you take me to be a bad and wicked person? Why are you afraid of me?

Q: Could you kindly explain the meaning of the inner experiences which I told you about? How can they be related to God-Realization?

Swamiji: There are two types of inner experiences. Some are those which are energy-dominated and some are consciousness-dominated. The experiences you have written about were not part of a dream (though a dream is an experience) but were due to the movement of energy in certain centres in the subtle body. Seeing of various lights, hearing of typical sounds, feelings of trembling of the body, feelings of the body floating in the air, the feeling of one's body very, very light or very, very heavy, etc., are the experiences which are energy-dominated. Many seekers have such experiences.

Consciousness-dominated experiences are those like the feeling of dispassion, detachment from what is temporal, feeling very deep and intense love of God, glimpses of a thought-free state, awareness of emptiness, deep aspiration to realize lasting peace and bliss, remaining unmoved and unexcited by favourable or unfavourable situations, etc.

No experience in time is permanent and lasting. They come and go, but leave an impact on your inner mind, which helps you in your transformation. One should witness these experiences, if and when they come, disinterestedly and should not try to interpret them with the physical or reasoning mind.

How are such experiences connected with God — are you asking? There is nothing which is not connected with God, though the connection may be invisible to the physical eye and ungraspable by the discursive mind. The Divine is

there behind all the movements of an individual and of the universe. The evolutionary power of the Divine is secretly working, giving to the individual different experiences and evolving the soul so as to make it completely free and Enlightened. Those whose inner vision and heart are open can feel the transforming touch and divine Presence of God everywhere, in each and every situation and event. As a blind person cannot see the light, similarly the people whose vision and heart are not open cannot see the Divine in themselves nor in His manifestation. It is almost impossible to feel or grasp the working of the Divine without God-Realization.

Q: How does the concept of unity appear to a person who becomes one with the supreme Reality? Is it like a piece of iron put into a fire that turns red (where iron gains subtle attributes of fire but keeps some of its gross aspects), or is it like a drop of water meeting the ocean and being completely absorbed in it, losing all limits and dimensions?

Swamiji: Unity is not a concept. It is the ultimate Reality. Mind is unable to grasp it. The concept of unity conceived by the mind cannot even be wholly and truly expressed by the two examples you have written. The iron put into the fire never becomes the fire; it only becomes hot and red because of its contact with the fire. When it is taken out of the fire, it gradually turns black and cold. It never becomes one with the fire. It only assumes the qualities of fire when it is in the fire.

A drop of water of the ocean, though having the same qualities as that of the ocean, can be separated from the ocean. So this example is also not very convincing. It would

be better if you say that all the souls are like waves in the ocean of the infinite Consciousness. You cannot separate a wave from the ocean. Can you? The ocean appears in the form of waves. The ocean can be with waves or without waves; it is the same ocean. As no example is perfect in all respects, it is given so that the mind can conceive an appropriate mental image of reality.

There is a system of Indian philosophy which tries to explain that the soul is separate from *Brahman*. So long as it remains absorbed in *Brahman*, it attains all the qualities of Godhead but cannot live in Godhead permanently. The *Arya Samajists* and their founder Swami Dayanandaji, give this example of a piece of iron put into fire when the soul is merged into God. Yet, they say that *nirvana*, *mukti*, or Liberation, is not permanent. The soul has its own fundamental existence. The soul cannot be or become Godhead. They believe in three fundamental principles. These are the soul, *Prakriti* and God. These three have independent existences of their own. But this theory or concept is not acceptable in *Vedanta* which says that the fundamental is One and this One is the eternal, infinite Bliss/Consciousness. Soul, *Prakriti* and *Ishvara* (God), are the manifestations of Godhead or *Brahman*.

Q: I am very grateful to the higher Self to have put me for a few days in your company in this wonderful place. I thank you very deeply. Yesterday evening, your *darshan* was a great teaching for me. When I saw you reading the newspaper, I had a shock. Suddenly, I was able to see on one side the inner child with his expectations, his demands,

and on the other side the infinite Consciousness which needs nothing. At that moment, there was nothing to seek, nothing to wait for. Now, at this very moment I am writing, I am perhaps waiting again for something from you! Through your contact, I have started loving God.

Swamiji: Is newspaper-reading a crime? You are mistaken if you think that I am reading the advertisements in the newspapers. When I read newspapers (of course, casually), I feel I am reading about how the Divine is playing in this world. I do not read newspaper with a political angle.

To need nothing also means fulfilment. When the experience of nothingness happens, the word 'need' becomes irrelevant. Nothingness means fullness, and the question of any need does not arise. In fulfilment, there is unconditional joy in all situations and conditions that is experienced eternally. Do you mean to say that those who do not read newspapers need nothing?

We have enjoyed your company. I see immense potentiality in you to realize the Truth. The love of God purifies the mind and clarifies the vision of the seeker of Truth. It is the means as well as the end. 'God' and 'Truth' are synonymous. You are travelling in search of the Truth, as you said a few days ago. Travelling gives you ample experiences of the manifestation of time and space, of names and forms. It may be necessary until a certain stage.

The Realization of what has manifested, the Realization of the ground of all manifestations, the Realization of the divine, eternal and timeless Consciousness comes or happens only when one stops completely. When you are running you cannot see even a chair in its true form. The world is the

perception of a moving mind. When the mind stops, you realize the timeless Eternity.

Q: Should I ask you a question from my heart or do you prefer an intellectual question?

Swamiji: I do not want you to question me. Are you my rival? Questioning means giving a challenge. I do not accept your challenge. Why do you divide the heart and the head? Your enquiry should come out from your whole being. It should not come only from the head or only from the heart! When your head and heart are not in harmony, you will always be in conflict. I do not want a question to be asked from your divided personality. I would like to have a question which arises from your whole being.

Q: When my question comes from my heart often I cry. Two days ago, I prepared a question...

Swamiji: Do you have to prepare questions like an examiner who sets a question-paper for the students? If you are a seeker, the questions have not to be prepared by you. They are already with you as your inner problems. Do you have to prepare and make your inner problems? You can tell me your problem without preparing it.

Q: How can your silence be explained (justified) when the people of this world are suffering so much?

Swamiji: If you so like you may explain my silence in the same way as you explain the silence of God in this world

where there is so much suffering. You are a seeker, you must have reflected a lot over it! Why and how does God tolerate so much suffering in this world? Can you tell me?

Q: Probably, the answer can be found through silence.

Swamiji: You will understand it when you have realized God. Silence or God does not create suffering in the world. Nor can speech alleviate suffering from this world. There are thousands and thousands of priests and preachers in the world, and thousands and thousands of suffering people trying to alleviate the suffering of others. However, we see that suffering in the world has not diminished a bit. The world seems to be going from bad to worse. Those who pretend to remove suffering from the world are now creating a bomb, which if used, will finish the life on the earth without destroying any material object. Their logic is perfect in the sense that when there will be no life, there will be no suffering also!

Q: When the torrent of silence breaks through in someone, is it always because *sadhana* has worn resistance so thin that it can resist no more? Or is there something else? Is it surrender?

Swamiji: Silence is not the state of non-resistance. You do not become silent because you cannot resist. Even to become silent for one month needs a lot of strength and resistance to ego, emotions or desires. One may be silent but may not have surrendered a bit. As a matter of fact, silence is a state which does not suffer resistance or non-resistance.

Q: When the silence is disturbed, are we far from the self-surrender?

Swamiji: A silence that can be disturbed is not silence at all, as a peace which can be disturbed cannot be the peace found through Self-Realization.

Q: Once I had been in the midst of Eskimo people. I did not know their language. But silence enabled me to communicate with them. How was it possible?

Swamiji: To communicate with your true Being, no words are needed. If you can communicate with your true Being you are able to communicate with the whole existence. Silence is the most powerful means of communication. You should know how you could communicate in silence with those Eskimo people.

Q: Please, what brought you to silence?

Swamiji: Silence itself! Silence is so sweet. It is irresistible for a person who wants to dive deep into one's essential and timeless Nature. Silence, in its true form and in its consummation, is the sign of fulfilment.

Q: Sometimes, though not so often, I know that I am free, that I am not the ego nor the body. Then I wonder what is the use of the ego. What should I do with it?

Swamiji: There is a contradiction in your question. You say that sometimes you know (know or realize?) that you are free and have no ego. And then you say, "What is the use of the

ego, what should I do with it?" When you are free of ego, and the ego is dropped, where and how does the question of using your ego arise at all? Moreover a common man does not use his ego; he is used by his ego. An Enlightened and free person alone can use his refined and purified ego selflessly for helping others. He helps and serves others spontaneously or out of divine love without being an egoist.

Q: The problem is that fears and ego become inactive when I am in meditation. They are not there, but they come back again.

Swamiji: When you have the direct experience of your essential, true Being in meditation, and when that experience becomes stabilized, the fears will not come back to you again, nor will the ego ever be able to overpower you. You have to carry on with meditation regularly and sincerely until you have Self-Realization. It needs a lot of work on oneself for a long time, with total commitment and undivided interest to be permanently free of fears and ego.

Q: I am interested in the qualities of God-Realized Ones, i.e. love, humility, tolerance, selflessness, etc., but I feel unable to get them or, say, to be stable in them, without being Awakened myself. In this attitude, I feel not open, not free to receive God.

Swamiji: Deep interest and love for the Divine make the seeker open and receptive. It is the sincere interest and aspiration to realize the Divine, which may be termed as love for the Divine that makes you open and fit for Enlightenment.

Make your interest for God-Realization 'deeper and deeper. Attention follows the interest. When you become deeply and sincerely interested in God, you can easily fix your mind on God and thus, be able to have all the godly qualities.

Q: Why do some people suffer and others do not?

Swamiji: Is there any person who has never suffered physically or mentally in this world? Suffering in this world cannot be escaped or avoided completely by any person. As soon as the child comes out from the womb of the mother it starts crying. It is true that some people suffer more and some suffer less in this world. Certain thinkers explain this by the law of *karma*. Some others try to explain this in terms of the propagation of wrong social and political systems in the world. Some believers in God attribute each and everything in this world, to the working of the will of God. All such theories and explanations, when debated fully, lead to their logical dead end.

From the spiritual point of view, all the suffering in this world is like a nightmare being seen by a dreaming soul, which itself has only a phenomenal existence. A healthy and happy person can see himself or herself as sick and miserable in a dream. Is it not so? A king can become a beggar in a dream but that 'becoming' seems real as long as the dream does not end.

The absolute Existence, the infinite Consciousness, which is the true and essential Being of each and every person, is all Bliss. There is no suffering in it at all. In order to get rid of suffering completely and forever one has to be

Awakened, to become aware of and established in this absolute Consciousness. There is no other way out.

Q: When I have to choose between two things, I cannot make up my mind. When I think that the first solution is the better one, I only see the good sides of the second solution. And the whole world seems to be sad. What should I do?

Swamiji: Choiceless awareness is the highest. It is not mental consciousness. You are identified with your mind, and your mind is made of the past. It is the sum total of your *samskaras*, your past impressions created by your past actions and experiences. The mind has its own likes and dislikes. If you choose with your mind, your choice may be right or it may be wrong. So, you do not have only to reflect before choosing but also you have to see the situations in the light of what the saints and sages and holy books say. Then you have to coordinate the line of your thinking with the injunctions of revealed Scriptures before taking any decision. Or when you are confused you may consult someone who is inspired and Enlightened and in whom you have faith and trust.

Q: I am a student of music composition. Is it possible to combine the intensive practice of art and the spiritual life whose only exclusive purpose is to go towards God?

Swamiji: Yes, the purpose of the sincere seeker of Truth is always exclusive. The aim is to realize the absolute Consciousness alone. However, the practice may not necessarily be exclusive. It should rather be all-inclusive, most comprehensive and integrated. The important point to

remember is that one should not confound the means with the end. To confound the means with the end is ignorance. The practice of music is not incompatible with the *sadhana* of God-Realization. Many sages were great musicians, poets and even philosophers. You may compose music or sing, but do it to please God. It will enrich your spiritual life.

Q: Would you tell me what is beauty?

Swamiji: Beauty? The greatest beauty is in the discovery of the infinite and eternal Being. One feels wonder-struck, bewildered and ecstatic when one comes face to face with the Truth. And this ecstasy never diminishes.

Q: Who am I? Deeply in me, I can see something that I feel as 'I'. Sometimes I feel that 'I' is in contact with members of my family and of my friends.

Swamiji: You cannot be separated from what you are. What can be separated from you in any situation, condition or state, is not your real 'I'. It is better that first you know what you are not. It does not need much discrimination and reflection to know what you are not, if you apply the above said criterion. Then stop identifying yourself with what you are not. This practice will lead you to the state of alert passivity in which you will be able to know directly and realize your true 'I'. However, it is easier said than done. It may take a lot of time and good deal of work to overcome your past habits, ready-made beliefs and convictions. The true 'I' is revealed when the mind is completely purified of emotions, greed, attachment, desires and ego, and when it is completely silent.

Q: I could ask you questions every day. Why do I always have such questions? Are you not bored to answer us all the time, and if not, why not? I ask for help of many kinds to almost everybody, and they do not give it to me. Why do you agree to help me? Do you love me? And if yes, why? I admit that maybe there is a God, and that His goodness flows through you so that you give love to us and fulfil our spiritual needs. Nevertheless, I have no proof that He exists except my own need of guidance and love, which expresses itself in questioning. I have no indication of the existence of God, though I experience this need. It is the only thing that makes me think it is not pure imagination. I do not manage to make this crying baby's voice quiet. Can I base the existence of God upon that?

Swamiji: A blind person cannot see the sun or light. It does not mean the sun does not exist. You need an inner eye, which is termed as *ritambhara prajna*, the eye of Truth/Consciousness, to see or realize God. As a matter of fact, you already have that eye, but a veil of ignorance has covered it and you cannot see. You have to remove that veil to see and realize God. That veil is voluntary; no one has imposed that veil on you. Your vested interests in what is not permanent, in what is not God, debar you from God-Realization. In practice, you do prefer the impermanent to what is permanent. That is the problem. If you look disinterestedly within yourself, you will come to know it.

I answer anyone's questions according to my knowledge and experience. When you ask a question, I answer you; when A asks a question, I answer A; when B asks a question, I reply to B. It is a sort of sharing. I do not do any special favour to anyone in replying to his or her question. I do not feel bored, but sometimes I wonder that

people ask the same question again and again, and this goes on for years. Intellectually, they have grasped the answer but something within them remains unsatisfied. They do not assimilate what has been told to them. So people go on asking and asking.

There are questions which come out of curiosity. There are questions which are metaphysical. There are what are called 'borrowed questions' which you have read in books or heard from others, and you ask them also. There are questions which arise out of your heart, and you sincerely want a solution to your problem. Such heartfelt questions alone are authentic and after getting the answer, you must dedicate yourself to realize what has been told to you. You must work sincerely according to what you have been told till you become completely satisfied. Then you will never ask that question again from anyone.

I have seen people asking the same question not only from one sage again and again, but they will go and ask the same question to other sages. Sometimes it becomes just a habit to ask questions. Otherwise if you sit quietly near a sage, without asking any question, you can receive the spiritual vibration, which may uplift you. To sit quietly is very difficult. Doing nothing is the most difficult thing to do.

Yes, I love you without any self-interest. I love all in the same way. Some feel this love, others do not — that is a different matter. It depends upon their receptivity and openness.

God cannot be grasped by the mind. When the mind is pure, silent, stable and alert, at times it can have flashes of

the existence of God. One may feel His divine Presence when one is open and not preoccupied with any mundane activity. No argument can prove or disprove the existence of God.

Q: During my meditation near you, I felt the presence of something. I would like to have such experience again and again. What was that?

Swamiji: It means you were experiencing something which gave you inner peace at that time. Whatsoever gives you inner peace is commendable. Inner peace is a great power. It transforms one's personality. It is in the state of total peace and complete silence that your divine Nature is revealed to you. With any experience, thinking or imagination, which makes you tense and excited (all excitements make you tense), you become closed and impervious to your divine Nature, your Buddhahood. You cannot wilfully have such experiences in the initial stages. They come by themselves like a flash and disappear. Only in a very, very advanced stage, can you wilfully enter into a state of some higher spiritual experience.

Q: Some saints and *Gurus* have thousands and thousands of disciples. And their disciples say that their *Gurus* will liberate them. They are no longer worried at all about God-Realization or Liberation. Has any *Guru* such great power that he can impart God-Realization to thousands and thousands of his/her disciples, and liberate all of them?

Swamiji: When it is said that a *Guru* can liberate thousands and thousands of his devotees, it is implied that there is no difference between God and the *Guru*. If God so wishes, He

can liberate billions and billions of people without any problem.

The one who has completely surrendered himself/herself unto God becomes a free instrument of God Himself. God's power is infinite and inexhaustible. The real *Guru* has no independent existence of his own. He has completely merged with God. Such a *Guru* can surely liberate thousands and thousands of devotees. The truth is that very few get Liberation, because there are few who sincerely aspire for God-Realization and Liberation. The other ninety-nine point nine, nine, nine per cent of the devotees go to the *Guru* and ask for worldly boons, and want their petty worldly and temporal problems solved by the *Guru*. The real *Gurus*, indeed, are rare and the real disciples are very, very rare.

Q: Are there some means or techniques to avoid the worldly thoughts during my meditation? If so, what are they?

Swamiji: Do not identify yourself with your thoughts. Watch them as a witness, and gradually they will subside. This is one technique of meditation. The other technique is that of negation. Be alert and if any undesirable thought comes or arises, refuse and reject it. Do not entertain it. This practice can also lead to stopping of the thoughts.

First of all the thinking process, and not the thoughts, have to be stopped. One thought comes and you start working on it with the result that a chain of correlated thoughts is created, and you are absorbed in that thinking process. This process has to be stopped. If stray thoughts, which are not connected with one another come, they do not last very long. When the thinking process is stopped, even then some stray

thoughts may come. But if you do not accept them, they drop by themselves.

Q: What is the purpose of meeting together in group to practise meditation? For me, meditation seems to be an inner and solitary act, where one in his or her solitude, seeks to be related with the Divine.

Swamiji: Meditation is not an act. It is a state of mind. If one person sits in meditation at a place, the place becomes charged with spiritual vibrations. If ten or twenty people sit together in meditation, it will create more spiritual vibrations at that place. That will help an individual. Have you ever experienced that when a procession is shouting some slogans, and when you join that procession, you also start doing the same. You are swayed by that atmosphere and act accordingly, in spite of yourself. That is because of the influence of many people taking part in the procession. The same principle applies to group meditation.

Chapter Eight

“God remembrance is the means as well as the end. In the beginning God remembrance involves effort. You have to withdraw your mind from mundane things, activities and relationships, and turn it to God and remember Him. In the end, remembrance of God becomes effortless like breathing, and awareness of God becomes more real than the awareness of your physical body. Start with the remembrance of God.”



Q: Why are we looking outside ourselves for love?

Swamiji: Ask it to yourself! Why do you do that? I do not do it. You look outside when you are not satisfied with yourself. Could you go within and discover your true Being, you would not need to look outside for love.

Q: When one is absorbed in one's love for the other, such as love for one's *Guru*, can that lead to the same result as one's going within?

Swamiji: “Whatever you loveth, man,
That become you must,
God if you loveth God,
Dust if you loveth dust.”

If you love your *Guru*, you will eventually reach that level of consciousness in which your *Guru* is living.

Q: Where is Shiva-*loka*? Is it within myself or outside of me?

Swamiji: There are innumerable *lokas*, worlds. They represent different levels of consciousness. All the powerful saints who have shed their physical bodies, as also the deities and *avataras*, have their own *lokas*. There is Shiva-*loka*, there is a *loka* of Christ as well as of the Buddha and Krishna.

The devotees of these *avatars* or deities go to their *lokas* after death. Some come back to earth according to their *karmas*. The others stay there and finally merge with the Divine when that deity or *avatara* or saint is merged with the Divine.

There are two types of *mukti* or Liberation. One is called *krama mukti*, i.e. the Liberation by stages. The devotees who first go to the *lokas* of their *Ishtas* and finally merge with the Divine are following the path of Liberation by stages. But those who have realized first-hand their divine Nature here in this life, do not go anywhere; they are Liberated totally as soon as they leave their physical body. When living in their physical bodies, they are called *jivanmuktas*.

Q: Twenty years ago, I found my grandfather hanged. Since then this image is pursuing me. During one meditation, I saw a pit and the thought of him appeared. I had the feeling of a call and the urge to pray. Is this image simply a mental one? Should I try to let it go the same as other thoughts, or should I do something to help my grandfather? Why was it me who found him?

Swamiji: You should pray to God to give peace to the departed soul of your grandfather. It will surely help him. The image is a mental one but certain suggestions are received by the mind from departed souls. Your grandfather had an attachment with you, as you have an attachment with him. It is quite natural that he wants your help. Such people, as those who die by committing suicide, those who are murdered or hanged or who die in accidents, go to the astral world and their souls are very much disturbed. Through

prayer you can help them to move on from that world and go on with their sojourn to other planes. Sometimes such disturbed souls have to live in the astral world for hundreds and hundreds of years unless they get help from someone to go out from there. In India, the relatives perform special rites for those who meet such deaths and pray for them for months and months continuously.

Q: What should be my behaviour when I feel a deep suffering either physical or mental, and also when confronted with pain?

Swamiji: One has to maintain balance of mind and remain composed during unfavourable conditions and sufferings, and try to remove them. Those sufferings, which are inevitable and cannot be removed, have to be accepted as the will of God, and one should try to learn from them. But it is easier said than done. One has to practise meditation regularly and pray for quite a long time to attain that state in which one is able to remain composed during adverse conditions.

Q: After practising *sadhana*, I feel separated from the active world. This situation creates conflicts and separations. Then eventually, I give up my *sadhana* in favour of worldly activities. How can I balance and harmonize both?

Swamiji: The practice of *sadhana* does not create conflicts. On the contrary it enables you to be free of conflicts. It is true that sometimes the practice of *sadhana* brings these conflicts, which are hidden in your subconscious, to the surface, before it helps you to be free from them. *Sadhana* does not separate you from the world. It gives you the right

perspective and you begin to see the world in its true form. One should have perseverance and patience, and work sincerely. It may take quite a long time to reach the state of harmony and peace through *sadhana*.

Sadhana means self-study and the practice of training your senses and mind, so that you can use them on the path that leads to the Realization of Truth. Doubtless, you have to make some sacrifices. You cannot enjoy both worlds, the spiritual and the mundane, at the same time. You have to choose between the impermanent and the lasting, the ephemeral and the eternal, and then strive to realize the Real.

Q: Can the state of meditation be assimilated into a process of dissolution where the physical, psychic and mental limitations disappear? If it is so, is it an intermediary stage or the final one?

Swamiji: Through meditation you finally come to realize what is limitless and infinite in you. Yet, it does not remove the limitations of the body or of any limited thing. Through meditation, you cannot make the unreal Real, the limited Unlimited. When you achieve clarity of vision through meditation, you see the unreal as unreal and realize the Real as Real.

Q: How can one know that one is not escaping the world in the name of *sadhana*?

Swamiji: *Sadhana* does not lead you into escaping from the responsibilities and challenges of life. It gives you strength to face the vagaries of temporal life with a balanced mind.

How can you escape by doing *sadhana*? Is *sadhana* easier than following your impulses or doing worldly jobs? You have been doing *sadhana* for a long time, so what do you feel? Do you feel that controlling your mind and thoughts is easier than teaching in the school?

Q: Since through speech much energy is dissipated, how can I use speech in the service of *sadhana*? Is silence observed to escape the problems created by speaking?

Swamiji: Speech can be used for serving others. It is a means of communication with others. You can console a depressed person with your words, you can remember God by chanting His name, you can sing praises to God and adore Him. How you use your speech, depends upon you. You can even misuse your silence if you want to do that, and you can misuse your speech as well.

It reminds me of a question put to me by a university professor who got his education in England, forty years ago. He asked me, “Is it not true that *sadhus* (monks) do not marry and turn to God so as to escape the problems of married life and challenges of life?”, and I asked him, “Why have you married? Have you married because you could not face the problem of remaining celibate? Are you not escaping God by remaining occupied with what is impermanent and temporal?”

Well, you can interpret any given situation in the way you like. Everyone is interpreting life with his own conditioned mind. If you are not married, you have problems. If you are married, you have problems. You cannot escape problems anyway. You have to face them. Similarly, silence

is not observed to run away from the problems of life. To remain silent, undisturbed and composed in the favourable as well as unfavourable conditions requires a lot of strength and patience.

Q: In my daily life I have started following my inner voice while making decisions and facing situations of various kinds. Should I encourage this process?

Swamiji: Not all people can listen to the little inner voice. Only those whose minds are quiet and pure can listen to it. It is the voice of God. It can never be wrong or misleading. It may be a gift or the grace of God that one can hear the inner voice. Otherwise most people listen to their own minds. They cannot even listen to other people. Listening is very difficult. Speaking is so easy. Intuition is rare. Reasoning is common. Reasoning may be right or wrong. Intuition can never be wrong. Intuition means supramental perception. It is immediate response without the interference of one's conditioned mind

You are very fortunate if you can hear the inner voice. You should develop this faculty. Intuition is not a gradual process. It comes like a flash. When the mind stops, intuition takes over. As soon as the thinking process leaves, intuition comes in.

Q: Does a fundamental reason exist in the fact that we like somebody and dislike somebody else? In my experience, I have sometimes realized that when I dislike somebody, it is because this person represents something I do not appreciate in myself and on which I have to work upon. Does it also

mean that the affinities we have with people are only based on the ego and personal interest?

Swamiji: The likes and dislikes of each person are different because of his/her mental make-up. Even little children have their own likes and dislikes, which are a testimony that the child has its own mind brought with itself from its past lives. Then the influence of the parents and society, the education and the way of its upbringing, also contribute to mould its mind and determine its like and dislikes. As long as one lives and acts from the level of mental consciousness, one cannot be free from likes and dislikes. The personal interest is also the creation of the factors mentioned above. The mind is the sum total of one's past impression, thoughts, feelings, desires, both at its conscious and subconscious level.

Q: How was the theory of *gunas* proved? Are these qualities absolute or relative, like the *Yin-Yang* in Chinese philosophy, whereby something is more *rajasic* than something else but nothing is purely and absolutely *rajasic*?

Swamiji: *Guna* means quality. You notice certain qualities in everything and every person. No proof is needed for that. All qualities or *gunas* have been classified in three categories called: *Sattvaguna*, *rajoguna*, *tamoguna*. This is not a theory but a fact visible and tangible by everyone. These *gunas* can be resolved into forces. And all the forces are the different forms, of one fundamental force or energy called *Prakriti*. According to the *Samkhya* School of thought, there are two fundamental principles, *Prakriti* and *Purusha*. These two principles have been defined by *Samkhya*. The *Vedanta* resolves *Prakriti* and *Purusha* into one fundamental principle and calls it *Brahman* or Godhead, the One without a second.

All what you feel or see or know by your mind are qualities or *gunas*. If you see a flower and I ask you, “What is this?” You will say, “It is a flower”. Then I say that I am not asking for the name of this thing but I want you to tell me what this thing ‘is’? Then you will tell me that it is something which has such and such qualities, it has this shape, this taste, this smell, this colour, it is hard or soft, and so on. So, what are you doing? You are telling me the qualities of a certain thing called a flower. I then say to you, I am not asking the qualities of what you call a flower. I am asking what the ‘thing’ is in itself? And you cannot tell me anything because you do not know. You know only the qualities through your senses and mind. The thing in itself cannot be known through the senses and mind.

You need not exert yourself to understand the *gunas*; they are so tangible and simple to understand. They are obvious. However, the thing, the substance, which supports those *gunas*, cannot be understood by the mind, which is itself made of *gunas*.

Q: Why will I die one day? Is a miracle possible (for I am sure you can do it) through which I can live forever?

Swamiji: When you grow up spiritually and eventually realize your true Being, death will cease forever for you. But you cannot make the physical body immortal.

Q: Children have a fear of abandonment. Is it a real or a normal dependence that a child feels bound to its mother? Or is it the mother’s behaviour, which is creating this fear? What is the basic cause why a person reacts in a particular way?

Swamiji: All children are dependent upon their mothers. They weep when they are separated from their mothers. It is quite normal that they should be afraid of being separated. There is nothing extraordinary in the mother's behaviour. As a child is attached to its mother, so is the mother attached to her children. The mother is even more attached to them. When the child grows up and gets married, its love for its parents diminishes. It becomes divided between its own children and its parents. But the love of the mother for its children never diminishes — exceptions apart. Am I right?

Everyone reacts according to one's state of mind. In a given situation, different people react differently. When you are attuned to God, you react as God likes you to react. Therefore you should strive to be attuned with the Divine. There are different levels of consciousness. You react according to your level of consciousness. Through *sadhana* your level of consciousness is changed and with that, your perception and the quality of your actions and reactions also change.

A man comes and in anger spits on the face of Lord Buddha. The Buddha simply smiles. He does not feel hurt. He is living in a higher state of consciousness where blame and praise do not disturb him. When you advance in your spiritual *sadhana*, you can face the challenges of life without being disturbed.

Q: Is talking about silence not a contradiction?

Swamiji: If you want to know silence, then be silent. You can know perfectly anything by becoming one with it.

Q: About *kashta mauna* (complete silence) — I presume if one were living within or almost in isolation, the temptations to respond by gestures would hardly be there. So to be able to take such a challenge, I suppose one needs to be living with others?

Swamiji: If your logic were true, then one should be living with thieves and scoundrels because there, you will have to face more challenges. When you are alone you are relaxed. When you are with others you become a part of society and have to behave according to the social norms. The presence of others creates some reservation in you. The feeling that someone other than you is there, makes you indirectly tense and somewhat closed, unless you feel complete oneness with the other.

Q: You say that one should not practise one's *nama japa* during meditation. Does that mean one may not use one's *Guru mantra* or that there should be a separate time for *japa*?

Swamiji: If you do two activities at the same time, your mind will be divided. Therefore only one method of concentration should be practised at one time. Moreover, the places in the body at which the attention has to be focused during *japa* and meditation are different. Therefore to practise *japa* and meditation at the same time is not correctly practicable. While practising *japa* the attention has to be focused at the heart-centre, but during meditation the attention has to be focused on the forehead, at the centre between the eyebrows, on some form, image or idea. The recitation of the name of God, i.e. the practice of the *japa*, or the *Guru mantra*, should be done by keeping one's attention at the heart-centre.

Q: I found the situation this morning full of disharmony. I do not understand why it is so difficult for relationships not to be smooth and pleasant?

Swamiji: God must be laughing at you. Do not be childish. Stop becoming irritated at petty matters!

Q: Is it the same for all egos to react immediately when something displeases them?

Swamiji: Different people react differently, to a given situation. Everyone reacts according to one's interpretation of that situation, and everyone interprets a given situation according to one's mental make-up and upbringing. It is most difficult to act freely, independent of one's conditioning. One should see one's conditioning and try to come out of this self-made cage.

Q: I have observed that we are repeating again and again the same things and therefore it appears that creativity cannot take place. What can we do to change this?

Swamiji: The potentiality of freedom and creativity is there in everyone. If it were not so, no one could be Liberated. It depends upon what an individual identifies himself/herself with, the conditioned mind or the divine spark in oneself.

Q: I believe that I have not yet begun my real *sadhana*. Up to the present I have only healed my psychological wounds. Now I have fewer desires, with not so much emotion as before. But I feel I am very far away from God-Realization. Where can I start from now?

Swamiji: Desires and emotions have to be sublimated and directed to God. God remembrance is the means as well as the end. In the beginning God remembrance involves effort. You have to withdraw your mind from mundane things, activities and relationships, and turn it to God and remember Him. In the end, remembrance of God becomes effortless like breathing, and awareness of God becomes more real than the awareness of your physical body. Start with the remembrance of God.

Q: What is your point of view about psychotherapy?

Swamiji: There are not so many psychic patients in India as there are in the West. For the West, psychotherapy is more useful. It is well known that in the West unstable family ties, growing use of drugs by the students and unbridled social freedom among youngsters are turning more and more adults into psychopaths.

Q: If I do not know God, how can I want God?

Swamiji: All want to be God, in one way or another. Is it not so? You want to be happy; you want to be all-powerful; you want to be without any limitations or problems. It is not the working of the ego but a universal urge of man. You want to be God and you are striving for it, even though you do not use the word 'God'.

Q: Is it possible that through psychotherapy we may feel the need of spirituality?

Swamiji: Yes, it is true but this problem is the problem of the West, where many people have no spiritual background. In India and in the East, people have faith and trust in God from their very birth. Psychotherapy is a science like chemistry and physics. It has nothing to do with spirituality. It is not the only way to cleanse and purify one's mind. The remembrance of the Divine is the most potent means of purifying and integrating one's consciousness.

Q: During meditation, I feel so much love and also the presence of God. But after meditation, I do not keep this feeling. What suggestions can you give me?

Swamiji: Carry on with meditation regularly with faith and trust. Make God-Realization the 'be all and end all' of your life. Be more and more sincere. Complete purity and silence of the mind are the prerequisites of Realization. Make Realization a question of life and death. Only then will you be able to realize God and merge in Him. Only then, will you be able to feel the presence of God ceaselessly.

Q: Is the 'Awakened One' same as the 'Enlightened One'?

Swamiji: Many of the spiritual teachers in the West, as everywhere, pretend to be Awakened. In fact, they have only gathered information. Even if someone becomes Awakened, one starts teaching and the Awakening again turns into sleep! Moreover, Awakening may come to only one part of the personality, like the intellect, while the other parts still remain asleep. In such cases, you will not see any substantial transformation in the life of a self-proclaimed Awakened person. One has to be very patient and wait for a long time

for the Awakening to be settled in all the parts of one's personality. Awakening or Enlightenment is usually taken as the same state.

Q: Do you mean that the ego can overpower the one who has become Awakened?

Swamiji: It is the ego only that creates the false prophets. When the Awakening comes to you, it makes you very humble. Awakening cannot become settled as long as your ego does not accept its defeat. Awakening usually comes like a flash in which you see the world as it is and see your own Self in its essential Nature. It usually comes when the mind stops thinking in the wakeful state. As long as the mind and other parts of the personality are not completely purified, the Awakening cannot last long even if it comes.

Read the lives of Enlightened Ones like Lord Buddha, Shri Ramakrishna, Shri Ramana Maharishi, Lord Jesus and others. A greater period of their lives was spent in purification for many, many years. We know many facts of the life of Jesus only after he started teaching. No one knows about the many early years of his life. An Awakened One cannot be overpowered by the ego. He is the master of his ego.

Q: My son died in a car accident. It has caused me a lot of suffering. Will you please help me?

Swamiji: Suffering is the inevitable part of this life. Death cannot be escaped. Saints die, kings die, prophets also die. No one can stop death. However, one can learn from

suffering. Attachment is the main cause of suffering. It is, of course, very sad when sons or daughters die before their parents; it is not usual. Normally the parents die first.

A man went to a mystic and asked for his blessings. The sage kept silent. The man again implored the sage to bless him. The sage said, “May your great-grandfather die, your grandfather die, your father die and you die”. The man was shocked and said, “Sir, are you blessing me or cursing me?” The sage said, “It is a blessing indeed if death occurs in your family in the order that I have told”.

You should pray to God to give peace to the departed soul of your son. May He give you the strength to bear the shock of your separation from your son?

Q: In a dream, I saw my brother telling me that he did not understand that he had died. How can this happen?

Swamiji: When death comes suddenly, the person who dies does not know immediately that he/she has died. When that person sees his relatives weeping, the soul is astonished and does not understand why the relatives are weeping. It is after the dead body is cremated or destroyed that the departed soul goes on to the next sojourn. Therefore those societies who know the science of death destroy the dead body as soon as possible. When the dead body is buried instead of cremation, the departed soul may not know for a very long period, that it had shed its former body.

Q: When we speak, are we going into the world, and when we are in silence, are we going out of it? In my case, I feel

it is more difficult for me to face the world than to be silent. What should I do?

Swamiji: It is not difficult to be in the world. It is difficult to face the world, no doubt. When you are in silence and peaceful, you are in the Divine. When you are disturbed and identified and occupied with the temporal, you are in the world. Silence is a torture for extroverted people who have traits of leadership and it is a boon for the born contemplatives. A silent person can face the world in a better way and with more strength.

Q: Is peace a state of the mind or a quality of the heart?

Swamiji: Peace comes through purity of heart and clarity of understanding. The vision should be clear and the intentions should also be pure. But peace is not an end in itself. It is in the peaceful and silent mind that the revelation of Truth happens.

Q: In the world, we are attracted by actions and we do not find time for meditation. How can we reverse the situation?

Swamiji: Right action and right meditation are not incompatible. These are rather complementary and help each other. Meditation helps you to perform right actions and the right actions help you to go into right meditation. There is no need to put action against meditation or vice versa. Balanced living is the key to speedy evolution of the soul.

Read what Lord Buddha says. Read his Noble Eightfold Path to Realization. It includes both right action

and right meditation. After Realization, he preached what is called the 'Middle Path'.

Q: I have difficulties with my daughter. She does not take care of her own responsibilities though she is nearly thirty years old. What can I do?

Swamiji: The first duty of parents is to educate their children in such a way that they can become responsible members of society, stand on their own feet, become financially independent, settle in life and try to assimilate the higher values of life. This education and training has to be started from a very early age of the child. When the child grows up into an adult, it is not so easy to mould it. You can bend and mould a fresh new branch of a tree in any form, but when the branch becomes very thick and stiff, it is not easy to mould or bend it. At this stage you can give positive and constructive suggestions to your daughter, but you cannot force her. She will not be so pliable now as when she was twenty years ago.

Q: During my job activities, I have no difficulty in my relationships with others but I have difficulty in relationship with my friends. What should I understand?

Swamiji: It means you are not really friendly with your friends. How can two friends not be in harmony with each other? Two persons can be called friends only when they are in harmony and also on the same level of consciousness; when the space between them is not disturbed; when both have mutual love, trust and confidence.

Q: I do not know if it is correct to use the ability I have to cure others through my hands, as it is a gift of God. What do you say?

Swamiji: God's gifts should be used for the welfare of all needy people. You should serve others without charging any fee. Otherwise the serving others becomes a profession. The service turns into a business and loses its sacredness. Moreover, it exhausts you in the long run and others are also not benefited as much as they should be. Healing others by the divine energy should always be done selflessly, without taking any fee for it.

Q: Is it possible to serve others really selflessly without some interest of one kind or the other? How can one serve others without ego?

Swamiji: What is your interest when you love your son or your mother and take care of them? Love and selfless service suffer no ego and no self-interest. Serving out of love makes you free of ego; it does not enhance your ego! Self-interest enhances the ego. Interest for what is divine purifies the ego and ultimately makes you free of ego.

Q: This morning, I had a very deep meditation but at the same time I became afraid. What should I do?

Swamiji: What sort of fear was it? The fundamental fear is the fear of death. If you die while meditating, there is no better death than that. It is much better to die in meditation than to die running in the pursuit of worldly things. Fear in meditation is the greatest hindrance to having any spiritual

experience. Even if some spiritual experience starts coming to you, it at once stops when some fear or doubt arises in your mind. Be prepared always to die. You cannot stop this fear unless you are prepared to die. This preparation may take a long, long time, even many lives.

Q: We are practising meditation and silence, what advice could you give us?

Swamiji: Silence is a state of mind in which all seeking stops. Silence, as a part of *sadhana*, has been recommended by most of the Enlightened Ones, as also in religious and spiritual books like the *Gita*. Silence helps the *sadhaka* in avoiding so many distractions as well as the non-essential communications and contacts. It integrates consciousness and enhances will-power. It brings clarity to thoughts. One can devote more time to meditation and prayer as also to other parts of *sadhana* when one is observing silence.

Q: I have noticed that when I am in silence for a long time, I can easily hear an inner little voice. Is this voice true?

Swamiji: What is that inner little voice? Different seekers hear different voices during their spell of silence. That inner voice may be the voice of one's subconscious mind. It may also be the voice of one's pure mind. It may be the voice of some other person who is sending you suggestions or it may be some idea or thought being reflected in your quiet mind from the universal mind. One should not follow blindly what is called the 'inner voice'. One should see it in the light of reason, as also in the light of holy and inspired books, before following that inner voice.

Q: Should the subconscious be totally purified so as to be in contact with the inner voice permanently?

Swamiji: When your external mind is silent, you come in contact with your inner mind and inner world. First of all, the conscious mind is to be purified and made silent. Then you have to work on your inner mind. Reflection, right thinking and right actions purify the conscious mind. *Japa*, contemplation and deep meditation are the techniques discovered by the *rishis* to purify the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind is more powerful than the conscious mind. The roots of all emotions like anger, greed, attachment, negative thinking are hidden in the subconscious.

Q: Since being here, I feel only sufferings upon sufferings when I see that my mind is full of so many negative tendencies.

Swamiji: It is true. Whenever you go to a sage, first of all your lower nature is revealed to you. How can you overcome your lower tendencies unless you first become aware of them? When you go within, you do not at once encounter God there. There are so many other things also hidden in you. First of all you encounter those things. And it is very painful for a *sadhaka* or a seeker. He or she finds himself/herself surrounded by so many diverse inner forces when he/she goes within. As one has to struggle in the outer world, so the seeker has to struggle in the inner world. God is the ultimate Being you encounter when you go within.

Q: Would Your Holiness guide me and tell me in short about the true purpose of life and about what should I do? I am a bit afraid of you. I am worried about my future also.

Swamiji: Everyone has, one day or the other, sooner or later, to turn to God, to one's true inner Being for lasting peace. There is no other way, wheresoever one may go, whatever one may have or have not, and whatsoever one may do. This is the gist of all spiritual and holy books. They are based on the experience of those who made experiments on their lives to find out the real purpose of life, and who committed themselves with total trust to explore the cause of suffering and remove it. You are fortunate that your situation has aroused you and you seek peace.

There is no reason of your being afraid of me! I am not a robber — and what have you got which is so precious that I may take away from you? I do not need anything from you!

The past is past. You cannot do anything with it except that you can learn from it by reflection and be wary of it, and make a resolve not to commit the same mistakes which you committed in the past. The future is indeterminate; you cannot do anything with it either. You can only make best use of your present, if you so wish, and act rightly with discrimination. How you live your present will determine your future.

The spiritual path is described in some books as thin and sharp as a razor's edge. The ego of man makes the path so difficult and hard. It is the first and last obstacle on the path of Truth and is the root cause of all suffering. This ego has to be subdued and overcome completely. Divine love/knowledge alone can make a person free of ego, show him the light and give him the peace which never fails him. How does one attain to the love/knowledge of the Divine? Well, you know the path. You have read many spiritual books and

have listened to many saints and sages. What you are expected to do is to work most earnestly and sincerely, and follow the path with total commitment and assimilate into your life what you have learned on the intellectual level.

Prayer, reflection, dispassion, meditation, consistency of purpose, discipline and association with inspired sages will help you and give you strength to discover the Truth. Patience and perseverance are most needed. The seeker of Truth has to work with the spirit of 'do or die'.

Q: In old age, we overcome our senses. Is it like being a *sannyasi*?

Swamiji: No! In old age, you exhaust yourself and become unfit for enjoying sensual pleasures, and you confuse it with overcoming your senses. When you are very, very old, you have no energy left to indulge. But in the next life, you start the same game again. You must have noted that old people try all sorts of tonics and methods to retain the vigour of youth. Their mind does not become old.

Q: Yesterday, my mother stayed hours and hours, looking at a procession and the cremation of a dead body. Was it a good thing to be doing?

Swamiji: Lord Buddha used to advise all the seekers to go to the cremation ground and stay there for at least one month. He gave this advice so that they could frequently see the dead bodies being cremated and contemplate on the transient nature of this life.

Q: I have kept *mauna* but my mind is crowded with thoughts. Should I continue my silence in this condition?

Swamiji: Do you mean to say that when you are not in silence, there are no thoughts in your mind and now, when you are in silence, your mind is full of thoughts? The fact is that when you are in silence, you first come to see your mind as it is. It is so because in silence you become a little detached from your mind and it enables you to see that it is full of thoughts.

You should observe what kind of thoughts come into your mind and then work on your mind to get rid of these thoughts. As a matter of fact, if you do not identify yourself with those thoughts and only see them, they will subside. Thoughts are not the problem. It is the thinking process which is the problem and it has to be stopped. If you do not identify yourself with the stray thoughts, the thinking process does not start, and the thoughts gradually subside. The problem is that the guard becomes one with the thief and then there is a free play for the thief. If you only see your mind and do not become one with it, the mind does not move at all.

Chapter Nine

“The seeker of God-Realization accepts things, situations and relationships in the name of God. His/her whole perspective of life is changed. He/she lives in the world, but not for the world. When the interest of life is radically changed, the passion becomes dispassion, and desire turns into aspiration to discover the Truth. As a matter of fact, the basic transformation is the transformation in the life-interest.”



Q: What is the thinking process?

Swamiji: The thinking process comprises a train of sequential thoughts coming into the mind when you become one with it. The mind works only when you become identified with it. It owes its energy to the pure Consciousness. The electric fan cannot move itself unless you switch on the button, and the electric current flows into its motor. If you switch off the button, the fan will move for some time due to its past momentum, and then it will gradually stop. Similarly, if you watch your mind and do not identify yourself with it, it moves for some time due to its past momentum, and then gradually stops.

Q: If it is so simple! Why cannot we achieve it?

Swamiji: It is easier than plucking a flower. You do not have to do anything but only watch. If you want to achieve something, you need to do something. For example, if you want to have a car, you need money. You have to earn money and then you can have a car. But if you want to give up your car, you simply offer it to someone. You do not have to do anything.

Q: How can we share our own experiences without being a teacher?

Swamiji: You can share your knowledge with others without being a teacher. A mother shares her knowledge with her children without becoming a teacher. She does it spontaneously without thinking of herself as a teacher. Even the children do not feel that she is their teacher. Her action arises out of love, without any expectation of reward. In India, they say that your mother is your first *guru*, though she has no ego of being a *guru*. She does not teach her children with precepts but by her own presence and example. Children are trustful, open and learn from the example of their parents. Their lives, exception apart, develop on the pattern of their parents' lives. Actually, knowledge which does not transform you, is not true knowledge. It is not alive; it is like dead wood.

Q: Can you tell us exactly how to practise meditation?

Swamiji: One can meditate on any aspect of God. God has many aspects. He is impersonal, attributeless as well as personal and with attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, love, light and life eternal, etc. God also manifests Himself in human form, which is called '*avatara*'. You should meditate on the aspect of the Divine in which you have faith and which you love most.

If you love and concentrate on a cow, you will become a cow. The story is that a villager came to a sage saying, "Sir, I cannot concentrate on God. Kindly tell me some easy method of concentration". The sage said, "What do you love the most?" "I love my cow the most," replied the villager. The sage told the villager to sit in a hut, close the door and concentrate on the cow he loved the most. The villager

followed the instructions and sat in the hut thinking of his cow all the time. Within a few days, he became so much absorbed in thinking of his cow that he forgot everything else. After some days, the sage went and called him. The villager was so much absorbed that he did not hear. The sage shook his hand and woke him and said, “Come out of the hut now”. The villager said, “How can I? The door is very small and my body and my horns are very big. I cannot come out from this small door”. The villager had become completely identified with the cow by constantly thinking of the cow. The sage then took the villager by the hand and dragged him out. The sage wanted to demonstrate to the villager that one becomes completely identified with what one is constantly thinking of for a long period.

Meditation is of many kinds. The purpose of all types of meditation is to make the mind steady and peaceful and acquire the ability to use your mind with concentration on the path of Self-Realization. It requires regular practice done with devotion and faith for a long time to have control of one’s mind. It is easier to become the President of your country than to be the master of your mind. There is no short cut to succeed in controlling one’s mind. There are no pills that can be taken, which will help you go into deep meditation. It needs a great deal of discipline, reflection, practice, breathing exercises, prayer, selfless service and so on, for a long, long period to be able to have complete mastery over your mind.

Q: I think the whole day long. I am never in the present, even for one second... What should I do?

Swamiji: The mind is made of past. How can it be in the present? To be in the present the thinking mind must be passive and cease to function. Sit down and simply watch your mind.

Q: I am afraid of failing in my *sadhana*. I mean to say that I may apply only half of myself to it. I know it is possible to spend a whole life doing only half *sadhana*. And that I do not want.

Swamiji: It is better to do some good than not to do any good at all. If one cannot devote one's whole life to God, should one not remember God for some time daily? Your logic implies throwing away the little you have if you cannot get the whole of what you want. It is what a child does. If you give the child less than what it wants, it throws the thing away.

Q: Why should the *Atman*, which is ever free, think itself to be bound by the mind?

Swamiji: The *Atman* never thinks that it is not free. It is the *jiva* who thinks it is bound, or it is free.

Q: The *jiva* cannot exist without the *Atman*. If the *Atman* thinks it is free, why is the *jiva* bound?

Swamiji: Soul or *jiva* is, as it were, the reflection of the *Atman* in the mind. As long as the mind is there, the soul or *jiva* will also be there. The reflection of the Spirit in the mind

takes on some colour of the mind. The reflection in the pure, calm and quiet mind feels itself to be calm and free, while a reflection in the impure and disturbed mind is not exactly like its prototype. If you see your face in a moving and dirty mirror, you will not be able to see your face as it is.

Q: Where did the reflecting medium come from? Does not its existence postulate duality?

Swamiji: The dreamer is asking where does the dream come from? The dream and the dreamer coexist. When the dreamer wakes up, the dream disappears. When the dream ceases, the dreamer also ceases.

Q: If the *Atman* does not dream, does the Supreme Soul or God dream?

Swamiji: The world has two layers. The outer layer is the dream of the individual or the *jiva*; the inner layer is the volition of God. The dream of the *jiva* ceases when it is Awakened or Enlightened. But the world of God does not cease.

Q: Is the world a cosmic dream?

Swamiji: The word 'dream' implies a state in which the objects, situations and everything is the projection of thought and is not everlasting. It is a phenomenon. According to *Advaita Vedanta*, both *jiva* and *Ishvara* have phenomenal existence. The world also has a phenomenal existence. *Parabrahman* alone has an absolute Existence.

Q: Is the nature of *Brahman* to project infinite dreams?

Swamiji: *Brahman* never projects dreams. It is the *jiva* who projects dreams. As soon as it is Awakened, the dreamer ceases to be, and only *Brahman* remains in its pristine purity. When you wake up from a dream, both the dreamer and the dream cease.

Q: Who is the Awakened One in the cosmic dream?

Swamiji: *Brahman* does not go to sleep or become awake. It is the *jiva* who goes to sleep and who comes out of sleep. *Brahman* is always the same as it is.

Q: What is the meaning of '*vimarsha*'?

Swamiji: '*Vimarsha*' is a technical word used for the divine play in the *Advaita* of *Shaktivada*. It is the divine and wilful play that comes out of joy. This world is God's *lila*. God's will is free, so His play is also free and spontaneous. You cannot ask 'why' about it. The 'why' can be asked about an action behind which there is some motive. If someone is dancing out of joy, you cannot ask, "Why are you dancing?" The dancing is the expression of joy; there is no seeking of joy in dancing by the dancer. Can the play exist without the player? Is the play separate from the player? It is not! The world cannot exist without God.

Q: When we talk of *lila*, we come into *Dvaitadvaita*. Is this *maya*?

Swamiji: It is only the Shankaracharya's *Advaita* which brings in *maya*, and it says that *maya* is inscrutable. As a matter of fact, Shankaracharya tried to prove the *Advaita* in the *Nirguna Brahman*. So he was obliged to bring in *maya* and say that the world of name and form (*saguna*) was like a dream. *Nirguna* means 'without qualities'. *Saguna* means 'with qualities'. Logically, they are incompatible. It implies that if *nirguna* is proved to be a principle, which is one without a second, then the world of name and form must need to be regarded as a superimposition, as a dream which does not exist in reality.

There are many *Advaita* systems. There is *Shiva Advaita*; there is *Shakti Advaita*, and some more also. You cannot prove the *Advaita* in *Nirguna Brahman* unless you say that *Saguna* is only a dream.

Q: I feel egoistic. What can I do to overcome it?

Swamiji: Ego is present in every person. You have to sublimate and purify your ego and direct it to discovering your true Nature. It is only the pure and sublimated ego that can be dropped altogether. You have to move step by step in eliminating and dropping your mind/ego. It is a great *tapas*, penance. You cannot at once throw it away because you are completely identified with it.

Q: What I am doing now cannot be taken as serving others?

Swamiji: It is the purified ego which wants to serve others. It is an impure ego which wants to be served by others.

Q: Therefore I cannot serve others until my ego is purified?

Swamiji: It is a reciprocal process. The more you serve, the more your ego is purified, and the more your ego is purified, the more you enjoy serving others.

Q: How can I be aware that I am in God's energy?

Swamiji: You cannot be but in God's energy, like a fish is in water. When your mind is purified and your attention turned inwards, you will become aware that you are in God's energy. Make your mind more and more pure, and turn your attention more and more inwards. Use your energy in the constructive way. The energy can best be used in search of God, in realizing your true and essential Nature.

Q: How can we conciliate our *vasanas*, strong desires, with what you said, that is, the seeker should direct all his/her energy to discover the Truth?

Swamiji: The seeker of God-Realization accepts things, situations and relationships in the name of God. His/her whole perspective of life is changed. He/she lives in the world, but not for the world. When the interest of life is radically changed, the passion becomes dispassion, and desire turns into aspiration to discover the Truth. As a matter of fact, the basic transformation is the transformation in the life-interest.

As I said earlier, it is the same energy which becomes love of God, aspiration, and it is the same energy that becomes desire, anger, passion greed, jealousy, etc. The deeper and stronger the aspiration of God-Realization you

have, the weaker is the desire (*vasana*) to seek the worldly pleasures.

Q: How can I know who I am?

Swamiji: Once, a sage got up very early in the morning. He had no watch, so he could not know the time. It may have been around 1 a.m. He started out for the bank of a river in order to sit in meditation there. While he was going to the river, he saw a beautiful garden on the roadside. Thinking that this too was a very nice place for meditation, he jumped over the boundary wall of the garden and went inside. The guard of the garden heard some noise and shouted, “Who is there?” The sage went to him and said, “Sir, I don’t know. I have been trying to know for the last forty years who I am, but I have not yet discovered myself.”

To know the ‘I’, you have first to know what you are not. Then you have to practise continuously and regularly for a long, long time to stop identifying yourself with what you are not. One is not only identified with one’s body, but also with so many things, people and situations. All these identifications must cease before one can realize who one is. It is very arduous, indeed, and requires all the qualifications of a seeker of Truth like sincerity, reflection, dispassion, discipline, dedication and practice of meditation to go deep within oneself.

Live like a sincere seeker and dive deep within. When you reach the state of ‘no-mind’, Self-Realization will happen. One has to do something to reach this state of complete ‘blankness’. The state of ‘no-mind’ is like dawn, while Realization is like noon, when all darkness vanishes.

Q: Is it possible for everyone to look directly, without the interference of the mind? Or is it only the Enlightened One who alone can see directly? The mind interferes most when there is some vested interest. But do we not have a vested interest in everything?

Swamiji: Everyone has the potentiality of seeing directly, without the interference of the mind. Only those few who have had not only the experience of their pure Being but also the Realization, can be free from the interference of their minds when they look.

Yes, it is the vested interest which distorts the vision. But vested interest may be of many kinds. All the vested interests can be categorized into three groups: interest of getting money and comforts; interest of getting fame, recognition, popularity, respect, importance, and interest in satisfying one's biological impulses. All these interests may be very deep in one's subconscious, and may not be visible to an ordinary person who is continuously preoccupied with mundane thoughts and activities. So one may delude oneself into thinking that one is free of all vested interests and wonder why one cannot look directly, without the interference of one's mind. Moreover, it is not only the absence of vested interests that qualifies a sage to see directly, but also the Realization of his free, immortal and infinite Self. A stone too, has no vested interest in anything.

Q: I had an operation on my eyes. Would you help me to restore my eyesight, so that I can see everything clearly, and can read books and gain knowledge?

Swamiji: There was a saint, Surdas by name. He was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. But he was blind and could not see with his eyes. He composed and sang many songs out of his love for child Krishna. It is said that his songs in praise of Krishna were so sweet and full of love that when he sang, Lord Krishna would come, sit near him and listen to them. Surdas would come to know by intuition that the child Krishna was sitting near him. Once he caught hold of Krishna's hand. Krishna freed himself from Surdas's grip and ran away. Surdas composed a couplet instantly and exclaimed:

“You can run away from me,
But You cannot go out of my heart,
However much You may try.”

Krishna restored his eyesight so that he could see the world. But Surdas refused it, saying:

“One who has seen You,
Doesn't want to see this world anymore.”

And he preferred to remain blind but absorbed in the sweet communion with Krishna for his whole life long. Another saint, Tulsidas, said:

“Fie on your knowledge
which does not change you,
which does not help you
to overcome your negative emotions,
which does not free you
from attachment and ignorance.”

If you load a donkey with religious and spiritual books, howsoever inspiring these may be, it does not benefit the donkey at all. The book-knowledge is not indispensable for Self-Realization.

Q: If someone hurts me or I hurt someone, is it my fate or am I free?

Swamiji: It is not in your hands if someone tries to hurt you, but it is surely in your hands whether you try to hurt someone or not. It reminds me of a couplet written by an Urdu poet. It says:

“I am amused by the wickedness of man.
He commits wrongs himself,
but he curses and condemns Satan
for instigating him to do so.”

It is desire which makes man submit to his lower nature and so hurt others. You can read *Vairagya Shatakam* by Bhartrihari. It consists of one hundred couplets on *vairagya*. It is very inspiring. I read it forty years ago. I remember a few of them:

“There was a time when I thought that time was passing. Now I see that time is, as it always is, but I am passing.”

“There was a time when I felt as if I was enjoying the objects. Now I see I have been consumed by them.”

“O desire, it is you who have made me a *jiva* from *Brahman*, a soul with limited perception and power. Will you please leave me alone? What do you want, O desire? Do you want now to make me a stone from a man?”

“O Lord, when will that blessed time come, when I will become so much absorbed in meditation that my body and mind will become motionless completely and centred in Thee, so much so, that the birds will take this body as lifeless and make their nests in my locks, and I won't feel what they are doing. O Lord, when will that blessed time come for me?”

When you are full of dispassion and love for God, you would never try to hurt anyone.

Q: During meditation my body starts trembling from the front to the back and from right to left. Can you explain why this is happening?

Swamiji: During meditation the divine energy may flow in the whole body to cleanse the body and the different centres in the body. It may create specific vibrations. Sometimes the vibrations are so strong that the body starts trembling. Sometimes bad thoughts and emotions, which are buried deep in the subconscious mind, come up also during meditation, on the surface of the mind. When you start cleaning your room with a broom, not with a vacuum cleaner, the dust which is settled on the floor starts flying. It is natural. One should not be afraid or become disturbed by such

experiences in the body or in the mind; otherwise, the fear will stop the process of cleansing of your body and mind.

Q: Is the aim of *sadhana* to dissolve the ego?

Swamiji: The aim is Self-Realization. As the ego is the last obstacle on the path of Self-Realization, therefore, the ego has to be removed. The seeker has not to be egoless, but to be free of the ego. A stone has no ego, but you cannot say that the stone is Realized. The ego is a very valuable thing in the world. Nature has evolved ego with its labour of millions of years. The ego has to be used for constructive purposes first, and then in the last step, ego/mind is dropped. There can be no sincere *sadhana* without a purified ego.

Q: I do not understand very well what the difference is between mind and ego?

Swamiji: Their functioning is different. Mind is a faculty/energy that desires, thinks, evaluates and comes to conclusions. Ego is a faculty/energy through which you become identified with what you are not. Basically, the same energy is in mind and ego. If you drive a taxi, you will be called a driver. If you stitch clothes as a professional, you will be called a tailor. But basically, you are the same person. So it is with ego and mind.

Q: Is a purified ego an ego which is not identified with the mind?

Swamiji: The purified ego is aware of its identifications and its limitations. So it becomes very humble, docile, receptive

and a means for discovering the Truth. Purified ego is like clean water, while impure ego is like dirty water. Pure and clean water is essential for being healthy and fit. Dirty water is the cause of so many diseases and suffering. In the *Upanishads* there is a verse, which says:

“ego/mind is the cause of bondage
and ego/mind is also the means of Liberation.”

If you are riding a horse, which is not tamed and not under your control, you have no freedom; it may take you where it likes. If you are riding a horse which is well tamed, which is faithful to you and under your full control, only then are you free and can enjoy the riding. It is in meditation that you come to know directly whether your mind is tamed and whether you are free or not. If your mind is tamed, you can think what you want to think, and you do not think what you do not want to think.

Q: I observe anger and greed when they arise in my mind. Does it mean that I am in control of them? Can we use this energy of anger, greed, etc., for God-Realization?

Swamiji: Observation of anger, at the time of anger, is the first step to overcome the anger. Subsequently, that energy has to be transformed into love-energy, before you can use it for God-Realization.

Q: It is difficult to avoid anger. What should I do?

Swamiji: If you keep God in your heart always, no negative emotion will dare come in your heart. Can darkness dare face the sun? It cannot!

Q: With *sadhana*, we cannot help but be in contact with our anger!

Swamiji: *Sadhana* means striving to keep God in your heart. Realization means that God resides in your heart ceaselessly without any effort on your part.

Q: I feel that I will realize the Truth some day.

Swamiji: Not only you, but everyone! There is no other alternative. Sooner or later, everyone will be Realized, because in essence everyone is already divine. How much time it takes for you depends upon you and God.

Q: Why doesn't God help me more?

Swamiji: God is always ready to help you. But are you ready to receive His help? He is both nearest to you, and farthest from you. *Sadhana* means making oneself available to God.

Q: Is there any objection to my situation of trying various spiritual paths? Am I a butterfly gleaning here and there?

Swamiji: Have simple trust and faith in Yvan. He will give you right guidance. He is a man of experience and has gone through long *sadhana* himself. There is no harm in listening to other saints, sages and teachers, but one should have only one master. Your master is Yvan. Your father is one. Your uncles and the friends of your father can also help you. You should accept their help whilst always remaining loyal to your father.

Q: I need advice on how to practise regularly. When I meet such great souls, I become serious for a few days, but sooner or later, I create pretexts in myself not to do *sadhana*.

Swamiji: Well, regularity in *sadhana*, in sitting in meditation, is very important. If you don't take the medicine regularly and also follow all the instructions, the medicine does not work as effectively as it should. But you don't have to take an overdose of medicine. If you work on yourself beyond your capacity, you may soon feel exhausted, or even bored with your work. So you have to work according to your capacity, and then slowly and gradually increase the period of your spiritual practice.

I have seen people starting meditation or *japa* for quite a long time, but slowly and gradually, the time of their practice becomes less and less. They start *japa* with chanting the *mantra* at the rate of fifty thousands a day or more, but after some days the rate comes down and they end up in doing regular *japa* for no more than one thousand times daily. This is not the right way. One should start with one thousand times of chanting the *mantra* per day, and then slowly and gradually increase the number as the practice progresses.

The *sattvic* and proper meditation/*bhajan* is that when you come out of meditation, you should soon feel like sitting in meditation again. One should start with small spells of *sadhana*, and then go on increasing the time slowly and gradually.

Q: To sit in meditation, is it better to keep the same *asana* (posture) even while suffering, or to move the legs and find another position which could be less painful?

Swamiji: The best *asana* is one in which you feel relaxed but alert. Any *asana* in which you feel pain and suffering will not help you at all in meditation. When you feel pain in one posture, you should change the posture. Even if you want to sit in one particular posture, you should start with very short periods of sitting in which you do not feel pain. Then slowly and gradually, by increasing a few seconds of duration every day, you can go on increasing the period of sitting in one posture. In this way, slowly and gradually you can increase the period of sitting in one posture for quite a long time. It may take you four-five years to perfect one posture of sitting. But the practice must be very regular.

Q: I always feel afraid, afraid to speak, to act, even afraid to talk to you. In fact, I am afraid of the judgment of others.

Swamiji: Why are you afraid of me? One should be afraid only of bad men. If you are clear in your conscience and have not done anything wrong, why should you be afraid of the judgments other people make about you? If you become disturbed by what other people say about you, then you can never be happy. If your happiness depends upon what other people say about you, then anyone can make you unhappy. Do not care about what other people say about you.

X went to Y and told him, “Your wife has become a widow”. Hearing this, Y started weeping. Z was also there. Z said to Y, “How can your wife become a widow as long as you are alive?” Y reflected, understood the point and became peaceful.

If you are upright and honest, and someone says, “You are dishonest!” Why should you be disturbed? If you become disturbed, you are like Y, and a stupid person.

Q: I know that, but what can I do?

Swamiji: There are people who give bad names to sages and to God. You cannot stop them. If they can give bad names to God, how can you save yourself from such people? Let people say what they say. Do not worry about that. Be clear in your conscience. That is what you should care for! You should know that it is the way of the world. There are people who are my critics, but I do not care about their criticism. Why should I care about their judgments? There are people who worship me as God, and I am not elated by it. There are people who criticize me out of jealousy, and I do not become disturbed. Why should my happiness depend upon what other people say about me?

Q: I repeat the *mantra* mentally, and I try to listen to it, but is it only mental?

Swamiji: Yes, it is mental. How can your activities be supramental when you are identified with the mind? By this activity, you are surrendering your mind to God. It will eventually take you out of your mind. As long as you are in your mind, whatever you do will be mental. The first thing you have to do is to make your mind peaceful and stable. Should you practise your *mantra* with faith, love and trust, peace will surely come to you.

Q: Sometimes during meditation, I am peaceful, and I can listen to the *mantra*, but it does not last very long.

Swamiji: If you want to be rich, or you want to attain a very high position in the society, you would work for it for your

whole life. If, so, then, for attaining peace and stability of mind, do you think that one month of work is sufficient? You have to work with patience and perseverance for a long, long period.

Q: Since I was young, my mother taught me to pray to the divine Mother. Is it okay to pray to the divine Mother or to the Lord?

Swamiji: Divine Mother and divine Father are the same divine Person. Some call the divine Person as divine Mother, while others call the divine Person as divine Father. It does not make any difference if you call the Divine as divine Mother.

Q: During meditation or out of the meditation hours, when I feel very peaceful with my thoughts and concentrated in my heart, can I stop repeating the *mantra* or do I have to continue to repeat it?

Swamiji: You should continue to repeat it. Do not stop the *mantra* yourself. If you go into a very deep silence where the *mantra* itself stops, then do not try to continue it.

Q: From my childhood, I have tried to be perfect and I spent all my energy on it.

Swamiji: Do not try to be perfect. You cannot be perfect by trying. When did I say that you should try to be perfect? Surrender yourself unto the Divine. Then the divine Will make you perfect. Do not bother about perfection. Be more and more sincere with God and surrender yourself unto Him.

Q: But even in your prayer, which I repeat daily, I say, “My Lord, make me perfect...”

Swamiji: “My Lord, make me perfect” implies, “My Lord, make me humanly perfect so that the negative propensities do not hinder my spiritual progress”. Can you make your body perfect? You do all your activities through your body, and if your body is not perfect, how can the activities done through the body be perfect? If you cannot breathe for four minutes, your body will die. Can you make your understanding perfect? If you get a blow on your brain, all your understandings fail you. Where are you seeking the perfection? On what level of existence/life are you seeking perfection?

Q: If I am not perfect how can I be responsible for my life?

Swamiji: On the plea of not being perfect do you want to be irresponsible? You are responsible to use rightly what has been given to you.

Q: I do not want to become an adult and be responsible. I prefer to remain as a child.

Swamiji: If others become irresponsible, how would you feel?

Q: Of course, I do not behave well with others...

Swamiji: You want others to be responsible, and for yourself you do not want to be responsible for anything — that is the problem. You are then following a double standard, one for yourself and another for others. This is not right.

Q: I observe that even with pure and good intentions, the actions, which follow, can become wrong.

Swamiji: You have to keep both your intentions and actions right, and in harmony. A sage used to say, “Love everybody, and I allow you to kill anyone. Then you will not commit a sin even if you murder a sage”. Now, it is very tricky. How will you kill anyone if you love all and everyone? You cannot!

Q: I was told, “If you are sincere, you cannot be hurt, and you cannot hurt someone else”. Is it true?

Swamiji: If you are sincere in not hurting, you will not hurt anyone. But if you are sincere in hurting, you will hurt anyone if needed. It depends upon what your sincerity is about!

Q: In his teaching Yvan points out the ‘obligation of consciousness’. I thought it was the way to keep the actions right and in harmony? Is it so?

Swamiji: ‘Obligation’ is a very inferior word. The word ‘love’ is the proper word. When you feel obliged to do something, it indicates a sort of compulsion. But when you do something out of love, it is joyful. The expression ‘obligation of consciousness’ should be used for those who are on a low stage of evolution. They do not do anything out of love, but they are put in such a state of consciousness that they are forced to participate in some meaningful activity. ‘Obligation’ means duty. I do not know if ‘obligation’ means something else in French. Duty is a

substitute of love. When you cannot do some good thing out of love, you should at least do it as a duty. Duty indicates a sort of lack of freedom and love.

Chapter Ten

“God loves you and you owe your allegiance to Him. He is most loving and most lovable. He is always available to everyone but very few are available to Him.”



Q: Are 'pure Consciousness' and 'God' synonymous?

Swamiji: God is the highest manifestation of the pure Consciousness.

Q: Does it mean that pure Consciousness is the highest level?

Swamiji: Pure Consciousness is neither 'higher' nor 'lower'. It is relationless. God is higher in relation to soul and the world. He is the supreme Soul.

Q: How can a human being who is limited become conscious of what is unlimited?

Swamiji: Human being is potentially divine. Unlimited power and consciousness are hidden in every person. These can surely be tapped through proper *sadhana* and right orientation of life.

Q: During my meditation sometimes I see nothing; there is emptiness. What should I do?

Swamiji: Remain in that emptiness which you feel in the state in which the objects are absent. It is not actually emptiness. Firstly, you are there because you are seeing the emptiness. You feel emptiness there because you do not see any worldly

object in that state. You are so entangled and enamoured by the objects that where there are no objects, you call it emptiness.

Q: Swami Prajnanpad said that only Knowledge could liberate. He was very severe towards the devotional approach to life. What do you think about this observation?

Swamiji: It is also said that devotion is like flowering; knowledge is the fruit. There can be no fruits without the flowering of the tree. In my understanding, *Jnana Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga* can both lead to the Realization of the Divine. For me absolute Love and absolute *Jnana* is the same thing.

Q: He himself suffered from his own emotions during his childhood. Perhaps that is why he turned to *Jnana Yoga*?

Swamiji: I do not know about his life. I do not know what made him suffer and what type of suffering it was. As for the physical suffering even some *jnana yogis* had to suffer. For example, Shri Ramana Maharishi's body suffered with cancer. Yvan Amar (Ananda) has been suffering with asthma for the last many years. Though, you will never find him complaining. He always says with a smile, "I have learnt so much from suffering. Suffering is my second *Guru*." Some great Enlightened Sufi mystics suffered severe torture by their fanatic community people because they proclaimed the Truth in terms of *vedantic* non-dualistic experience.

The cause of mental suffering is desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride, jealousy, etc. Devotion to God or knowledge of God dispels these negative tendencies of the

mind. The remembrance of the Divine purifies the mind and ultimately leads to Self-Realization, which enables the soul to go out of the vicious cycle of birth and death in this world full of suffering.

You talked about his psychological approach and the practice of 'lying'⁶. In India, only few seekers of Truth know or have heard about this practice of lying. Anyway, any practice which opens the mental knots and makes the mind peaceful and ultimately leads to Self-Realization, is commendable. Psychology and spirituality is not the same thing, though the knowledge of psychology can be usefully applied to grow in spirituality. You know, all the psychologists are not Seers and all the Seers are not psychologists. Freud knew the mechanism of the mind very well. However, he was a slave of his mind. He sometimes used to say that he could not control his impulses and desires. How can such a person be peaceful? Many professors of psychology, who teach psychology to higher classes in the colleges, are practically as disturbed mentally as a common person.

Q: Do you believe that Swami Prajnanpad was like these people?

Swamiji: When and where have I said that? Please do not misunderstand me. I have heard he was a great sage. Many seekers of Truth got inspiration from him. I pay my respect to him as I do for other saints and sages of all the faiths.

⁶ Technique developed by Swami Prajnanpad for the purification of the unconscious.

Q: My difficulty is to understand how two Realized Ones can speak so differently about the path and the Truth?

Swamiji: There is a common meeting point among all the Realized Ones, and that is that you cannot measure the immeasurable with the scale of your intellect which has its own limitations. Intellectual knowledge may help the unbelievers and sceptics in the beginning but it does not lead one into the deeper realms of spirituality.

Q: Do you say that *Jnana Yoga* is only intellectual?

Swamiji: *Jnana Yoga* is very misinterpreted in the West. If you want to know it in its totality, read Shankaracharya. It is a sevenfold path, comprising four outer disciplines and three inner ones. The fourfold outer discipline — or four preliminary qualifications — is called *sadhana chatushtaya*. It comprises *viveka* ‘discrimination between the Real and the unreal’, *vairagya* ‘dispassion’, *shat sampathi* ‘the sixfold virtues’⁷ and *mumukshutva* ‘intense aspiration for Liberation’. The threefold inner discipline consists of *shravana* ‘hearing of the teaching’, *manana* ‘deep reflection on what has been heard’ and *nididhyasana* ‘unceasing meditation on one non-dualistic thought alone, exclusive of all other thoughts’ or ‘non-polar meditation’.

However, the non-polar meditation cannot be reached unless one has mastered the outer fourfold discipline. In the

⁷*Shat sampathi*, ‘the sixfold virtues’, consist of *shama* ‘calmness of mind’, *dama* ‘self-control’, *uparati* ‘self-withdrawal’, *titiksha* ‘forbearance’, *shraddha* ‘faith’, *samadhana* ‘intellectual satisfaction’.

West, they generally use only *viveka* and try to master the three inner disciplines, and call it *Jnana Yoga*!

Q: In what stage are we in the West?

Swamiji: I would say, it is generally the discrimination or intellectual understanding, which is actually the first step in *Jnana Yoga*, and many Westerners stop there. Their discrimination doesn't usually bear the fruit of dispassion. According to *Jnana Yoga*, when discrimination becomes mature, you develop dispassion, which is the fruit of right thinking or discrimination. Dispassion, as I said, is the second step. After dispassion there is control of senses and mind, which no Western seeker (exceptions apart) even tries to attempt. Then there is deep aspiration (which is not only intellectual) to know directly the Truth or Godhead. These four steps are called the outer disciplines of *Jnana Yoga*. These are not exclusive. They help one another. As all the parts of the body grow at the same time, similarly, your personality grows in all its aspects if you follow the right path.

Q: What more can you say about *vairagya*?

Swamiji: If there is no dispassion in the seeker, it means that his/her discrimination is not mature enough. The maturity of discrimination in the seeker must bring dispassion. There are two types of dispassion:

– One is called '*shmathan vairagya*'. When you accompany a funeral to the graveyard or a cremation ground, you see vividly the transience of all things and relationships at that time, and a temporary feeling of dispassion may overpower

you. But it does not last long. When you come back home, you forget in a day or two the whole scene which generated dispassion in you, with the result that the momentary sense of dispassion which was with you at that time leaves you. This is called the '*shmashan vairagya*'. '*Shmashan*' literally means the 'cremation ground'.

– The other type of *vairagya* is that which is generated by regular and continuous discrimination or 'right thinking' as Lord Buddha called it. This is the true *vairagya*, which inspires you to seek the eternal life, light and bliss. When dispassion is mature, you are set on the practice of self-control to overcome your old habits and reflexes which still linger in you, in spite of your seeing their unworthiness through discrimination and also by having gained a sense of dispassion. Lord Buddha's *vairagya* started by seeing a dead man and an old man. But he made it a basis of right thinking and then converted that temporary *vairagya* into real *vairagya* by continuous right thinking. *Vairagya* which is generated through love of God is the highest, but it is very, very rare.

Q: Though I realize an increased capability of synthesis and analysis, spiritual zeal, etc., I still feel the need to be recognized and loved.

Swamiji: To seek recognition is the act of the false self, the ego, while to seek love is the deeper urge of the soul. It is only divine love which can satisfy the soul. Divine love is the greatest asset.

There is security nowhere but in the Divine and in the Realization of one's immortal Being. We are sitting here

feeling secure, but this feeling is deceptive. A big earthquake can come at any moment, demolishing all the buildings of this area within a few seconds. You may have a very big bank balance but the bank may go bankrupt any time. Your friends may betray you anytime. So to seek recognition for or security in what is finite and limited is sheer ignorance. Turn all your emotions and love to the Divine. The Divine never forsakes anyone. He is always with us and within us. Could we feel His presence and His love we would not seek anything from anyone. We would feel totally free, secured, and loved.

Before you are fully Realized, there is a fight between faith and doubt in your mind, which is normal. There are moments of elation and despair, of excitements and frustration during the period of *sadhana*. The seeker has to go through all those vicissitudes. There is no royal road to God-Realization and Freedom. It is the very strong and deep aspiration to follow the spiritual path, which gives you strength and power of perseverance. You should know that even a lover, who loves very deeply his beloved in this world, is prepared to bear all sufferings and face all difficulties cheerfully for the sake of his/her beloved. A lover of God should have much more strength and be prepared to face cheerfully all the challenges which confront him/her on the path of God-Realization. Seekers of Truth should even be prepared to give up their families, wives, husbands, mothers, sisters, money, home, friends, profession, status, jobs, fame, if need be, for the sake of God-Realization. In India, kings used to abandon even their kingdoms, become wandering monks and beg food from door to door when they wanted to realize God.

Q: I feel a deep weakness in me, which is slowing down my progress.

Swamiji: What makes you weak? Reflect on it and you will find that it is the body-consciousness and the lack of divine love which make you weak. Love and knowledge of the Divine make you strong. Even the love of an ordinary person gives you strength to face all challenges. When you love anyone or anything, you are prepared to make any sacrifice for that love. Is it not so? True love knows no fear, no weakness! True love does not expect. It integrates the personality. Finally, it unites the lover with the beloved.

Q: What is the difference between soul and Spirit?

Swamiji: Soul is individual or universal. Spirit is non-dual and absolute. Soul has only a phenomenal existence. Spirit has absolute Existence. In Hindi, individual soul is called 'jivatma'. Universal or Supreme Soul is called 'Ishvara'. Infinite and timeless Spirit is called 'Brahman'. *Brahman* is relationless and absolute. *Jivatma* or soul is controlled by *maya*, the composite of the three *gunas*. *Ishvara* is the controller of *maya*. The Spirit, in its essential Being, is neither the controller nor the controlled.

Q: Do the people who do not follow a religious or spiritual path, have their life under *karma*.

Swamiji: *Karma* is not only *prarabdha* or fate or destiny, as it is generally believed. There are three types of *karma*: *prarabdha karma*, *sanchita karma*, *vartman karma*.

'*Prarabdha karma*' means the *karma* or action which you have performed in the past and which has started giving

fruits. '*Sanchita karma*' is the past *karma* which is stored as *samskaras* and impressions, but which has not yet started giving fruits. It can be changed. '*Vartman karma*' means the *karma* or the action which is being done now. There are two other words in Hindi which are related with *karma*. These are '*akarma*' and '*vikarma*'. '*Akarma*' means an action which is performed without the sense of doership but with awareness. '*Vikarma*' has been interpreted differently by different *acharyas*. It is usually translated as those *karmas* which are wrong *karmas*, and against the teachings of Holy Scriptures. The law of *karma* applies to all persons irrespective of whether they are religious/spiritual or not.

Q: Can we not go out of the circle of all those *karmas*?

Swamiji: You can certainly go out of the vicious circle of *karmas*. You have to give up the sense of doership. When you have no sense of doership, your *karma* is called '*akarma*'. *Akarma* is the action which does not bind you, because there is no sense of doership in it.

Q: What about *nishkama karma*?

Swamiji: '*Nishkama karma*' means an action performed without any desire of fruits, but it may have the sense of doership in it.

Q: And what does '*kriya*' mean?

Swamiji: In *kriya*, there is no awareness even. When a train moves, its movement is *kriya* or activity but not an action. You cannot call it '*akarma*'.

Q: Does 'akarma' by itself mean 'no karma'?

Swamiji: 'Akarma' is a technical word. It is not an ordinary word. Literally, it means 'no karma'.

Q: Do body and mind create *karma* which are interpreted by the soul?

Swamiji: *Karma* doesn't belong to the body or mind. It belongs to the soul. Body and mind by themselves are insentient, how can *karma* belong to them? Body and mind are the instruments of the soul; they cannot do any *karma*.

You steal, and when you are caught you are taken to the court. If you say, "I have not committed the theft; only my body has committed it." The judge is not going to leave you. The judge will say, "Okay, I order that your body be put in the prison. Let the body reap the fruit of its action!"

Does the body feel the pain, or the soul? If the body could do a *karma*, then a dead body could also do *karma*! The sages go even beyond the soul consciousness. That is why they are Liberated. The theory of *karma* does not imply that you are not free in doing *karma*. It implies that you are bound to have the fruit of your past *karma*, but at the same time you are free in doing the present *karma*. The fruit is not in your hands. If you were not free in choosing and doing *karma*, you could not be responsible for their fruits. You reap what you sow! That is what the *karma* theory implies. Practically, the law of *karma* is the law of cause and effect.

Q: If we understand that we are not the doer, does it bring *karma*?

Swamiji: Intellectual understanding is not enough. Intellectually, you understand that anger is bad. Then why do you become angry? I have told you many times that the roots of all the emotions are buried in the subconscious. Unless your subconscious is changed, you may know all the mechanism of the working of your conscious mind, but you will not be able to overcome the impulses.

Q: Is *sadhana* done to 'let go' of our false identity and purify the subconscious?

Swamiji: The purpose of *sadhana* is Self-Realization. For Self-Realization, the breaking up of the false identification and the purification of all the parts of the personality are a must. Deep meditation and *japa* are the means to do that.

Q: Should reflection be done with concentration on the point between the two eyes?

Swamiji: The heart does not think; it feels. The brain does not feel; it thinks. To be more accurate, it is the soul which feels as well as thinks. Heart and brain are the instruments of the soul. Thinking is associated with the brain which in turn, is connected with the centre between the eyebrows. Reflection should, therefore, be practised at the point between the eyebrows.

Q: Is not the soul everywhere? Some say that it is located in the heart-centre; others say it is in the brain.

Swamiji: The soul of a devotee is, as it were, in the heart. The soul of a philosopher is, as it were, in the brain. The

soul of a *karma yogi* is, as if it were, in the navel. The navel is the centre of *prana*, the vital energy. The individual soul, in fact, is everywhere in the body but its main centre of activity is either the heart, the brain or the navel.

Q: I have a deep feeling of silence.

Swamiji: What can be deeper than silence? Silence is the means, and silence is the end. Silence is the source. Everything comes out of silence and finally goes back into silence.

Q: As I have been studying the *Yoga Sutras*, I would like to understand better ‘*samprajnata*’ and ‘*asamprajnata samadhi*’.

Swamiji: The word ‘*samadhi*’ is made up of two words, ‘*sama*’ plus ‘*dhi*’. ‘*Sama*’ means ‘silence’. ‘*Dhi*’ means ‘*buddhi*’. When your intellect becomes silent, the state in which it has no doubts, no inquiries, no thoughts, no desires, that state is called ‘*samadhi*’. ‘*Asamprajnata samadhi*’ is the state of non-polar meditation in which the subject and the object, the seer and the seen, the knower and the known become one, and Consciousness remains in its essential, pristine purity. All dualities are abolished in *asamprajnata samadhi*. On the other hand, ‘*samprajnata samadhi*’ is a state in which the mind is totally concentrated on its goal with a single thought, with the exclusion of all other thoughts. It is a state of total absorption, but the duality of the knower and the known, the seeker and the sought, is still there.

Q: How can I apply the practice of *japa* in *samprajnata samadhi*?

Swamiji: In *samprajnata samadhi*, the *mantra* stops but the mind is totally absorbed in the meaning of the *mantra*.

Q: I would like to get some guidance from you to know what is good or not, and what should be done? How to be free?

Swamiji: To be free, one has first to know what it is that binds one. When one reflects, one comes to know that it is the attachment with objects, situations and persons, which is the cause of one's bondage. Therefore one has to get rid of attachment and desire. There are many approaches for that. One has to purify one's mind, sublimate one's desires, emotions, thoughts, and direct them on the path of God-Realization.

There are different paths. There is the path of devotion, the path of knowledge and the path of action. They are not totally exclusive. In a particular path, a particular faculty of one's personality dominates the other parts of the personality and leads them. Every path has its own discipline and its own kind of reflection. There are certain factors or practices which are common in all the paths, such as: regular meditation, *japa*, breathing exercises, prayer, selfless service, periodic association with spiritually inspired saints and sages, reading of Holy Scriptures and books written by sages.

Q: I do not know what path I should follow, which would enable me to keep doing my social service as well as the things I like to do more?

Swamiji: Fulfil your familial and social obligations, but along with that, follow and practise the above written seven limbs of spiritual *sadhana*.

Q: Could you help me deeply so that my concentration will become stronger in the next few days and I will be able to do more fully the things in which I am involved?

Swamiji: When you start meditating and following the discipline with faith and commitment, slowly and gradually, you can achieve concentration and absorption. You cannot go directly into *samadhi* in a few days. You have become a scientist after spending many years in your studies, devoting so much time, spending so much money, undergoing so many hardships. How can you expect to be perfect in meditation in few days? There is no magic rug on which you can sit and go into *samadhi*.

Q: Sometimes when I sit for meditation other ideas and movements come. Should I follow them?

Swamiji: It is better you fix a time for thinking about your profession as well as about other worldly duties and obligations. If you do not spare enough time to think about the things in which you are still involved, you will start thinking about them during meditation. Before you sit in meditation, you have to tell yourself, that you do not have to think about worldly things. You have to remain alert, and if some worldly thought comes during meditation, you have to discard it. If you fight with your thoughts, you are still

involved with your thoughts. Do not entertain your thoughts. Do not identify with them and they will subside.

Q: What are faith and devotion to the *Guru*?

Swamiji: You cannot directly see or talk to God even though He is present everywhere. The *Guru* is physically available and you can talk to him, express your doubts, if any, and take guidance from him. You must have a simple faith and trust in your *Guru*, as a child has trust in its mother.

Q: How can I know if I have real devotion to my *Guru*? Is it related with faith and the fact that we have to see the *Guru* not as a human being, but as God?

Swamiji: The devotion of a disciple in the *Guru* is like the devotion of a mother to her child. Mothers have been seen sacrificing their lives for their children. Your heart will tell you if you have real devotion to your *Guru* or not. The disciple surrenders his mind and soul to his *Guru*.

Q: Is it due to the mind, with its fears of being betrayed, that we cannot feel devotion towards our master?

Swamiji: How can a *Guru* betray the disciple? The *Guru* has no vested interest in the disciple. It is foolish on the part of a disciple to think that the *Guru* could betray him or her. It simply shows the lack of disciple's faith in the *Guru*. Fear is the product of doubt and lack of faith. The *Guru* is seen as the personification of the Divine by the disciple. The *Guru* is like a ladder, which is connected with God on one end

and with the disciple on the other end. He can communicate with God and the disciple at the same time.

Q: It is already difficult to feel human love. So how can I get divine love?

Swamiji: God loves you and you owe your allegiance to Him. He is most loving and most lovable. He is always available to everyone but very few are available to Him, because very few are open and docile.

Some people say that love is a torture but it is very sweet. The true lover wants to be ‘tortured’ more and more by his/her beloved. Love is like a balm that heals wounds. Love does not demand anything. It consumes all desires. Only love can make a person selfless and desireless. Love bestows on a person the power to bear all sufferings joyfully. Love purifies the mind and transforms the whole personality. Love does not have to be learned. Love is the essential nature of the soul, though veiled by manifold desires and demands. When the veil is removed, it shines in its pristine purity. Love is not emotion, though it can produce any emotion. Love is the greatest unifying and binding force in the world. Without love the world would disintegrate.

Can love be practised? Love is not made. It is not even an act. How can it be practised? Love is the force which moves everything. Love is God and God is love. The selfless human love gradually leads to divine love.

Q: Is not *sadhana* only a practice to discover the love that we have in us? What is the difference between love and desire?

Swamiji: Practice may have some indirect utility in removing the veil, but it cannot produce love. You are confusing desire with love. Love binds you with the Real, and being bound with the Real and the Infinite is what freedom is. Love makes you free. Desire binds you with what is temporal and finite, and becoming bound with the unreal is bondage. Desire binds you.

Q: Last night, during my sleep, I was suddenly as if in a waking-dream state in which I heard noises made by a thousand people walking towards me. I was frightened. I could not move. I started chanting God's name.

Swamiji: When you are chanting God's name, no evil force or being can harm you. So you should not be afraid of those noises created by the movements of invisible beings or forces. They cannot even touch you at that time. How do you know if it was an evil force or a noble force? When you are afraid, even the noble force will stop its working on you. It was fear that made your body immobile and you could not get up immediately. Because, it was strange to you, so it created fear in you. Had you stopped the resistance, you would have felt a very soothing touch and feeling. When you resist a good force, it stops. It does not impose itself. Even God is very frightening to some people. When and if you feel frightened, you should start chanting God's name.

Q: Is the Divine breathing in me?

Swamiji: The Divine is always in you, whether He is breathing or He is seeing or He is digesting food or making your hair grow.

There are two types of action, the voluntary and the involuntary. Breathing is an involuntary action; your conscious mind is not aware of doing it but it is you who are breathing. When you leave this body, the breathing stops and the body disintegrates. The hairs on your body grow without your will; the food you eat is digested without your will, though the process of digestion is not completely uninfluenced by the state of the conscious mind. Even your breathing is influenced by the state of your mind. If you are disturbed and worried, your breathing becomes irregular and fast. It only means that there is no watertight compartment between conscious mind and subconscious mind, and there is no watertight compartment between wilful voluntary actions and involuntary actions.

God is there in your every action, conscious or subconscious. He is the Life of your life, the Mind of your mind, the Eyes of your eyes and so on.

Q: What do you mean by this beautiful phrase, “The space between us is not disturbed?”

Swamiji: When saying that, “When the space between us is not disturbed”, I mean when there is complete harmony between us. When the disciple gives up one’s ego and self-will and feels in complete harmony with the *Guru*, the *Guru* can work on the disciple freely.

Q: How can I be in harmony with the *Guru*?

Swamiji: You will be in harmony with your *Guru* if you have faith and trust in your *Guru*. When you lose faith in your *Guru* that harmony is disturbed.

Do not take back what you have already given to your *Guru*. Have you really given your mind to your *Guru*? If you have not, the question of taking back does not arise. And if you take back what you have given, you have not really given it at all.

Q: If among our close relationships, we know somebody who is constantly attempting suicide, what can we do to help that person?

Swamiji: That person should be given positive suggestions and be told about the importance of human life again and again. If he has some difficulties, you should share his problems and help him. Great depression or frustration or fear is the cause of the tendency to commit suicide.

Q: The strict discipline of sitting silently in meditation without doing anything four times a day, may prove to be difficult for foreigners because they are so used to and so proud of being 'free'? Moreover, doesn't meditation indicate duality?

Swamiji: What is freedom? Does it mean that you should do what you want to do? If it is that, then it is not possible. Freedom comes when you do not want anything. It is true that it is most difficult to sit quietly without doing anything. All *sadhana* is performed in duality. All questions are asked and answered in duality. We live in the relative world. Without relative awareness, we cannot even walk two steps. All seeking implies duality. Non-dual, non-polar experience is the aim and purpose of the seeker. The seeker uses

all his/her energies, senses, mind, things, situations and relationships as means to realize Unity.

[...] Your approach is right. Carry on with what you are doing or not doing. Awareness is the means and Awareness is the end. Be more and more aware. It is not necessary for everyone to contemplate upon any divine Name or divine Form. One can simply be and remain aware. Awareness without any content is the true Awareness. Absolute movement or activity and absolute rest are the same thing.

It is the mind which creates all differences; it is the mind which, as it were, divides the existence. All dualities are perceived by the mind. For seeking the Truth, the Divine is not the obstacle. If you stop seeking the Divine, the seeking does not stop. You will be seeking mundane things. To stop seeking the Truth is, as it were, suicidal. Seeking itself stops when you have discovered your divine Nature at first-hand.

Q: What are the criteria for the *Guru* to choose a disciple?

Swamiji: It is very rare that a *Guru* chooses a disciple. Normally, the seeker of Truth who needs the guidance of a living *Guru* chooses a *Guru*. The qualifications to be a disciple are utmost sincerity and burning aspiration for Truth. He/she must be prepared to die for the sake of the Truth. Nothing which is unreal should tempt the seeker of Truth.

Q: What present can a disciple offer to the *Guru*?

Swamiji: What can a disciple give to the *Guru*? 'Disciple' means one who has already given his whole life, his whole

being to the *Guru*. It is like asking, “What can we give to the *Guru*?” You can give something to your *Guru* only if first you take it back from him and then again give it to him. It will look like a joke. A disciple is one who has surrendered one’s whole being to the *Guru*.

Q: You said that time is not running. In that case, why did it rain yesterday and not today?

Swamiji: Yesterday it was raining and today it is not raining, so what has it to do with the running of time? I told you yesterday that you perceive the change only when your mind is changing. Has your mind stopped changing? As your mind still goes on changing, you perceive the change everywhere, in each and every dimension of this phenomenal world.

Three Zen monks were looking at the moving leaves of a tree. One said, “The leaves are moving”. The second said, “No, no, the wind is moving and it makes the leaves move. When there is no wind at all, you don’t see the movement in the leaves of a tree”. The third monk, who was advanced in spiritual experience said, “No, no, both of you are wrong. It is your moving mind which makes you see the leaves and wind moving.”

Q: During meditation, I feel sleepy and am therefore sad.

Swamiji: Sleep during meditation may be due to physical or mental exhaustion or both together. If it is so, you have to take proper and adequate sleep during the night, and also some medicine for physical and mental strength. There are so many other factors that tend to produce sleep during

meditation such as: eating too much food, being physically tired due to manual work or exercise, not finding any joy in meditation or lacking of adequate interest in meditation, being very weak physically or having some disease. Some drugs also induce sleep, and so on. You do not go to sleep while you are seeing a movie which you like very much. There is a saying that lovers, especially lovers of God, lose their sleep. They are always thinking of their beloved and devising plans to meet him, so much so, that they cannot sleep.

One becomes sad or depressed when one wants to achieve something and cannot. Have you devoted yourself whole-heartedly, with total commitment to realize God, and cannot discover Him? Look into your heart and observe what you have been doing all your life. Did you dedicate yourself totally to realize God within and without, or have you been engaged in playing worldly games to gain self and power and means of comfort? Who is to be blamed for your sadness? You seem to be impatient in finding God and are feeling depressed without even working for Him for a few years. You worked for the world with such patience for forty years, and you want to find God within a day?

Q: Because of the *samskaras* from my childhood and the structure of my mind, I cannot be in full confidence with God nor with anyone.

Swamiji: There is something in you which is stronger than all your *samskaras*. Be aware of it and you will regain your confidence. Moreover, *samskaras* are not static; they are changing. You can acquire new *samskaras* to counter the old

ones. Many things contribute to make your mind and *samskaras*, e.g. your company, your education, the books you read, and so on.

Q: Do we need a doer to act?

Swamiji: Without a doer, there cannot be any *karma* or doing. As you are not aware of the non-doer, your essential Being, you feel a sort of non-existence when you don't do anything. That is why you always do something. Doing gives you a false assurance of your being and you feel you are at least something. That is why you always cherish saying, "I do this, I do that, I did this, I did that, I will do this and I will do that."

Q: We cannot sleep all day long. What should we do?

Swamiji: You cannot sleep all the time but you can surely be awake all the time. You cannot be tense all the time but you can be relaxed and peaceful all the time. You cannot be sad all the time, either. It is so because wakefulness, peace and happiness are your essential Nature. You should perform constructive deeds, think positive thoughts and speak with others with soft and sweet words when you are not sleeping. You must devote adequate time to meditation and prayer daily and regularly. Have you come here to sleep all day long?

Chapter Eleven

“Some seekers have the Realization of Saguna Brahman first and the Realization of Nirguna Brahman afterwards. Some have the Realization of Nirguna Brahman first and the Realization of Saguna Brahman afterwards. Some attain the Realization of Nirguna Brahman only. Some attain the Realization of Saguna Brahman only. Some have no Realization at all, but simply the information of Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman by studying books. Some do not have the Realization nor do they have the right information. Some have neither the right information nor the wrong information. They live like animals.”



Q: In addition to *japa* practice, what other method should I follow?

Swamiji: To read the Holy Scriptures is less important than to do *japa*, and to do *japa* is less important than to meditate. The most important thing is the meditation or remembrance of the Divine with total absorption.

Q: What happens at the time of death?

Swamiji: At the last moment, when death approaches, first the physical body becomes inactive. Then, the senses stop working. Afterwards the conscious mind stops working and our attention becomes focused on one impression, one image or one subconscious feeling which has influenced us the most during our lifetime. It represents the total sum of one's lifelong deep interest and love. At that time, there is no choice about what to think.

A man who owned a cloth shop and who sold cloth all his whole life was dying. He became semiconscious. His family members shouted and told him, "It is your last moment, you should say 'Ram, Ram' and remember God". The dying man could not and would not speak "Ram, Ram". He would only say, "How many metres of cloth do you want to buy? What type of cloth do you want, etc.?"

What you do with deep interest in your life leaves a deep impression or *samskara* on your subconscious mind. This impression becomes the focus of attention at the time of death and determines your particular next birth. *Japa* and deep meditation influence and purify your subconscious mind.

Q: What are the benefits of silence? Among the inner experiences which come during meditation, are there light and music, i.e. sounds of silence? How can we advance through meditation to higher levels of consciousness or *lokas*?

Swamiji: Silence, in its essential nature, is the state in which one feels self-fulfilled, in which all the seeking stops and there is no motive for reaping any benefit. As a matter of fact, so long as there is motive, the mind does not become completely silent. Complete silence is always motiveless. Silence is observed also as a part of *sadhana* and is very useful for meditation. It helps the seeker to avoid many distractions. It is also helpful in going deep into one's subconscious to work there to purify it, and to integrate and unify the consciousness.

Substantial spiritual experiences come to the seeker when his/her mind is purified, integrated and silent. Yes, silence has its own music. You can hear the voice of silence only when you are completely silent. Light and sound are two aspects of the same energy and they are interchangeable. One may see the divine Light or hear the divine Voice in the state of silence. However, that is not the highest spiritual experience, because in that experience the consciousness is still split into subject and object. Moreover, so long as the

consciousness is split, the experience is only relative and there is no fulfilment in it.

The experiences of higher *lokas* are very joyful and transporting. They happen at a very high level of consciousness but the consciousness is still split in those experiences. These experiences usually come before the mind goes into complete silence during meditation.

Q: As *lokas* belong to the manifestation, can we jump and go directly beyond them?

Swamiji: One must first have the taste of the experience of pure Consciousness. Otherwise, if one involves oneself with *lokas* and different levels of consciousness, one may get distracted and be unable to realize the pure Consciousness. All the *lokas* are part of the manifestation. One can go to higher and higher planes of manifestation but that is not Liberation. First realize your true Nature and afterwards you may, if you so wish, enjoy the play and the manifestation of the Divine. It is true that Realization of the Absolute includes Realization of the pure Consciousness, as well as Realization of Consciousness in its divine manifestation.

Q: Is there some progression in the different kinds of Realization?

Swamiji: Some seekers have the Realization of *Saguna Brahman* first and the Realization of *Nirguna Brahman* afterwards. Some have the Realization of *Nirguna Brahman* first and the Realization of *Saguna Brahman* afterwards. Some attain the Realization of *Nirguna Brahman* only. Some

attain the Realization of *Saguna Brahman* only. Some have no Realization at all, but simply the information of *Nirguna Brahman* and *Saguna Brahman* by studying books. Some do not have the Realization nor do they have the right information. Some have neither the right information nor the wrong information. They live like animals.

Q: Does it mean that we can have the experience of *Nirguna Brahman* and yet have no *Saguna Brahman* experience?

Swamiji: Shri Aurobindo had the experience of *Nirguna Brahman* first. So did the Buddha. Many other sages also had the experience of *Nirguna Brahman* first. It is possible that one only has the experience of *Nirguna Brahman* or only of *Saguna Brahman*. *Saguna Brahman* implies the personal God in this context.

Q: What kind of Realization may I hope to have in this life?

Swamiji: Hoping or wishing is not enough. One must have a burning aspiration to have the integral Realization of the Divine and one must work for it whole-heartedly.

Q: I feel some contradiction in the saying which asserts that we cannot force God to come to us.

Swamiji: He cannot be found by self-effort alone. However, those who do not make or want to make any effort to find Him do not find Him either. How can you force the omnipotent God to come to you? You can only pray, call Him with love and wait!

Q: The tie with the veil of ignorance is so obvious that I cannot escape it.

Swamiji: Do not be afraid of the veil of ignorance. Have trust and faith in the Divine. The veil is not on the Divine; it is on your eyes. The veil of ignorance is voluntary. You have a vested interest in ignorance. That is why you find it difficult to remove it. The love of God can surely dispel the veil of ignorance.

Q: When I leave this place and go home, will I be able to feel your presence?

Swamiji: When you go back, you will see if there you can feel my presence in your heart. It depends upon you. God is everywhere but all people do not feel His presence. Only those who have deep and intense love of God and whose minds are not preoccupied with mundane matters can feel the presence of God. You will feel my presence there if your love for me is pure, very deep and intense.

Q: From here, will you help me?

Swamiji: Yes, you will receive my help if you are open and receptive.

Q: Everywhere, I feel the Arunachala Mountain.

Swamiji: Arunachala is a place highly charged with spiritual vibrations. If you are receptive and docile you can feel those vibrations. Many inspired and Realized sages, like Shri Ramana Maharishi, have stayed there for a long time and

sanctified that place again and again. Some places, like some men, are full of spiritual vibrations; others are not. If the seeker stays at some places which are spiritually charged, it is easier for the seeker to realize the Divine.

Q: We were very happy and excited to have a bath in the river Yamuna. Suddenly, a storm came upon us, as if the weather was participating in our joy. What is our connection with nature?

Swamiji: Let there be a storm of the love of God in your heart. Then you will feel much more thrilled and transported than you felt in your connection with nature.

Q: How can we explain to others the necessity to follow a spiritual life?

Swamiji: Example is always better and more powerful than precept. Lead a spiritual life yourself most sincerely. Everyone has spiritual potentialities. If he/she finds good company and associates with spiritually inspired people, this potentiality tends to become actualised. If not, it will remain dormant.

Q: When we cannot see light and beauty inside us, how can we get rid of this opacity we have upon us?

Swamiji: A little particle of dust in the eyes can prevent one from seeing the sun, the source of all light. Is it not so? It is not the fault of the sun or the weakness of the sun but the weakness of the eye that cannot see the sun. If a blind man

does not see the sun, the sun cannot be blamed for it. Your eyes need treatment.

Q: I have a spiritual cataract. How can I go beyond these difficulties?

Swamiji: What can the doctor do if the patient is not prepared to undergo the eye-operation? The patient has to be ready and willing for the operation. What is needed is the operation and not only the counselling. The operation is imperative and indispensable. Counselling is required to make the patient willing to undergo the operation. Some people spend their whole lives only in listening to advice. Some take advice and start giving that advice to others instead of following it. There are few, indeed, who follow the path of Realization sincerely!

Q: Yes, but then what should I do?

Swamiji: Go deep into the recesses of your heart and you will discover the Divine. Be more and more regular in meditation.

Q: Can we get Awakening or Realization in the sleep state?

Swamiji: Some people are aware in their sleep; others are sleeping in their waking state. To a Buddha, sleeping and awakening is the same thing.

Q: But I feel the difference....

Swamiji: How do you come out of your sleep?

Q: I need an alarm clock.

Swamiji: When you are sleeping, how can you try to get out of the sleep? It is only the Awakened One who can shake you and wake you up. If an ignorant person does something to himself/herself to remove his/her ignorance, how can he or she succeed? His/her effort will be based on ignorance. That is why a *Guru* is indispensable. Is a seeker sleeping or Awakened? The seeker is a little sleepy and a little Awakened! The seeker would not want to seek the Truth if he/she was in total sleep. Perfect Awakening is possible; perfect sleep is impossible. There is a sort of awareness even in a stone. How would you hear the alarm clock if you were in total sleep?

Q: Can the physical body live without food and water? In these days of inflation, it has become very difficult for a seeker of Truth to make both ends meet.

Swamiji: Life on earth is determined by food, water and air. You can remain alive without food for sixty-two days. But without water, you cannot live for more than a few days, and without air you cannot live for more than a few minutes. Simple food is not very expensive, water is cheaper than food and air is the cheapest commodity. It shows that the more a thing is essential for life, the cheaper and the more available it is. You do not have to pay for air, for sunshine or for simple water. Make your life simple. Practise simple living and high thinking.

Q: Thank you for all that I have received from being near you. Could you advise me on how I should live when I go back to Belgium?

Swamiji: There are many jokes about you Belgians! Be wise so that no one can make jokes about your actions. Be alert and cheerful. Follow the path of Truth earnestly and sincerely. Sit in meditation regularly. Practise breathing exercises if you can. Practise your *mantra* more and more and have total faith in your *Guru*. Daily make a *namaskar*⁸ to him in your mind before you start your meditation. Read inspiring spiritual books. Do not read detective novels and books on romance. Do not fall into the trap of psychotherapy. If you go to a psychotherapist, you will surely become a mental patient even if you are not one.

Q: How are thoughts formed in our mind?

Swamiji: Mind is, as it were, a thought-manufacturing machine. As soon as you are identified with your body, and through your body with other objects, situations and persons, this machine of the mind starts working. Mind, however, can be tamed through discipline, reflection, prayer, breathing exercises and other techniques. Mind is the cause of bondage and also the cause of Liberation. A tense, preoccupied, agitated, impure and unstable mind is the cause of bondage. A pure, silent, passive, stable and relaxed mind is the cause of Liberation.

Q: The engine of a car is a machine and engineers know exactly how that machine works. Could you give us a hint as to how the machine of the mind operates, i.e. creates thoughts, and how can these thoughts be controlled?

⁸ Salutation

Swamiji: Be more and more detached, dispassionate and a witness to your thoughts, and the thoughts will begin to subside. I have already written that it is through attachment and identification that thoughts arise. Reduce your desires. Cherish only noble and constructive thoughts. During meditation watch your thoughts disinterestedly, and the thinking process will gradually stop.

Q: What is mind?

Swamiji: Mind is the energy which enables you to desire, think, decide, plan and reflect. Mind means the thinking power.

Q: Is *asana* important during meditation?

Swamiji: In the initial stages, a proper *asana* helps in meditation but when the meditation reaches the advanced stage, it is not necessary to sit in a particular *asana*. As a matter of fact, it is the mind which has to be tamed and kept alert. But because the body and the mind are deeply correlated, they influence each other. When your mind is relaxed, the body also tends to relax and vice versa. If the body is tense, the mind also tends to be tense. When you are angry, your body becomes tense, your face becomes red, and your body may even shiver if the anger is very intense.

On the other hand, when there is love in your mind, the body becomes relaxed and light. When the body is not keeping well, the mind also becomes worried, disturbed and uneasy. So, if you keep your body healthy and sit in a comfortable *asana* during meditation it is very helpful.

Alertness is a key to successful meditation. If you sit in a posture in which your spine remains straight, it keeps you more alert.

Q: When meditation deepens, the energy flows and tilts my head. Then it is difficult to make the head straight. What should I do?

Swamiji: Well, do not go to sleep during meditation. Do not become tense. Do not see daydreams during meditation. Let the energy do whatever it wants to do with the body during meditation. Do not worry about that.

Q: I have observed that there is a link between attention and awareness, and the point between the two eyes. Should I focus on that point?

Swamiji: Attention is one aspect of awareness. When you say, “Do I have to focus my attention on awareness?” What do you mean by ‘I’? Can you separate this ‘I’ from awareness? Who is it that focuses the attention? How will you focus your attention on awareness? You should focus your attention on the centre between the eyebrows. This centre is very magnetic. Focusing your attention on this centre will help you to withdraw your mind from the objects and go within.

Attention is focused awareness. Awareness has independent existence. It remains even when there is no attention. Your attention follows your interest. You are attentive to what you are interested in. If you are deeply interested in objects of the world, it is very difficult for you

to withdraw your attention from them. That is why *vairagya*, which means dispassion, is considered as the foremost prerequisite of meditation.

In the *Gita*, Lord Krishna says that the modifications of the mind can only be stopped through the uninterrupted practice of meditation, supplemented with *vairagya*.

Q: What does 'dispassion' mean?

Swamiji: 'Dispassion' means giving up the longing to enjoy all the transient pleasures of this world, as also of heaven. There is a state of temporary dispassion; it is called *shmashan vairagya*. When some dear and near one dies, and you accompany his/her funeral to the graveyard or cemetery, you temporarily feel the futility of the temporal relationships. The reality of death strikes you in the face and for a short while you feel as if life is a delusion. You become, as it were, detached but this detachment does not last long. When you come back, you again forget death and life looks very real and permanent to you.

The true and real dispassion is born of discrimination between the Real and the unreal, the Permanent and the transitory. When you reflect again and again on the transience of the world phenomena and the futility of the temporary pleasures, which in the end bring only frustration and pain, you develop *vairagya*. When you come to feel that all that is in time is not lasting and cannot satisfy your soul, then you try to tame your senses and mind which run after objects, in order to enjoy them. Dispassion helps you very much in taming your mind and senses.

Q: As dispassion means giving up the pleasure of the senses, i.e. the positive aspect of life, does it also include the giving up of negative propensities of the mind?

Swamiji: The mind is what you make it. You can make your mind an angel. You can also make it a demon. It all depends upon what you want to do with your mind. There can be no pleasure without pain, as there can be no night without day. Pain and pleasure co-exist. If you want pleasure, be prepared for the pain also. It is deep attachment and the desire for sensual pleasures which generate negative tendencies. When attachment and desire are given up, the negative tendencies drop off automatically.

Q: Should we be close to the Enlightened One to receive his influence?

Swamiji: To receive the influence of the Enlightened One you should not only be close to him, but also be open, receptive and humble. The water of the rainfall gathers in the pits. The influence of the Enlightened One flows to those who are full of humility.

Q: Is a purified mind also required to be open?

Swamiji: Only a pure and unoccupied mind is open. An impure mind is like a thick, dark curtain, which obstructs the light. It is 'grace-proof'.

Q: Why and how does the child become selfish and egoist?

Swamiji: First of all, the child learns everything from its parents. Are the parents egoless and unselfish?

Q: Can the child bring the ego from his previous birth?

Swamiji: The personality of an individual depends upon so many factors: its past *karmas*, the influence of the parents on it, the influence of education, the influence of society, the influence of the company it keeps and so many other things.

Q: During meditation, is it the mind that experiences the various changes which occur in the physical body, e.g. warmth, etc.?

Swamiji: The mind does not know. It is the soul that knows. The mind is only a sophisticated instrument of relative perceptions. All the relative perceptions are received by the soul through the mind. The soul not only perceives the sensations and changes in your physical body but also those in your mind.

Q: What occurs prior to the Enlightenment?

Swamiji: In the final experience, the object of the experience merges with the experiencer and the relative perception stops completely. It is the non-polar experience, the experience of non-duality. Before this experience, Consciousness is split into three: the object of the experience, the experiencer and the experience. As Consciousness is split in all relative experiences, howsoever high they may be, there is neither fulfilment nor complete satisfaction. Before Enlightenment some transporting experiences may come in meditation

Q: Would you please name the aspects of God?

Swamiji: The aspects of God or better said the Divine are as follows: *sakara* 'with form', *saguna* 'with attributes', *nirakara* 'formless', *nirguna* 'without attributes', *sakara* and *saguna* 'with form and attributes', *saguna nirakara* 'with attributes but formless', *nirakara nirguna* 'formless and attributeless', and the *avatara*. The seeker may have the experience of any of these aspects singularly or the experience of any two or more aspects.

Q: What do we gain by the experience of our true Nature?

Swamiji: The first-hand experience of your essential divine Nature fulfils you completely. Your desire for knowing is completely satisfied. By realizing your divine Nature, you come to know the essence of all that is.

There can be innumerable ornaments made of gold. When you know gold, you know all the ornaments that are made of gold. You do not need to know the different ornaments in their specific forms in order to know 'gold'. When you know cotton, you know all the clothes that are made of cotton. There are two words in the Scriptures:

- *sarvavid*: the one who knows *Atman*. He knows the spiritual essence of everything.
- *sarvajna*: the one who knows the details of names and forms of all things. God or *Ishvara* is *sarvajna*. He is the omnipotent and omniscient Lord.

Q: To practise *Yoga*, I have read many books on meditation. Among the many methods mentioned, I have not yet been able to determine any method for myself. This disturbs the

quality of my concentration. Therefore, it now seems very important for me to practise only one method in which I can have faith. Could you please advise me?

Swamiji: All the methods of concentration mentioned in the books are right. If you follow any of them with determination, commitment and regularity, it will surely improve the concentration and the quality of your meditation. The essentials of a successful meditation are a very deep interest in one's spiritual upliftment, dispassion, together with a regular and uninterrupted practice of meditation. These methods are not mutually incompatible. They can be practised at different times.

In the early morning, fixing the mind on the heart-centre can be practised. In daytime, you can concentrate on the incoming and outgoing of your breath. In the evening, the mental repetition of the divine Name is the most appropriate practice. I would advise you that before starting any of these practices, you should pray to the Divine and invoke His grace for five minutes or so. It will help you in your practice. Do not read so many books. There is no need for a seeker to stuff his/her brain with information. The knowledge you gain through reading books is only information. It does not transform your life. Read only such books which inspire you to practise meditation more and more.

Repeat the *mantra* which looks most attractive to you; or, if you have faith in any master, you may receive the *mantra* from him. All *mantras* are powerful. You have to manifest that power by the practice of repetition of that *mantra*. When the *mantra* is repeated with faith and some

concentration, it is easier to manifest its power. If the *mantra* is taken from one who has already practised and perfected the *mantra*, it is still easier to manifest the power of the *mantra*.

Q: Some say that we are in the beginning of the age of Enlightenment. How is it possible, as we are still in the *Kaliyuga*?

Swamiji: It is easier to realize the Divine in *Kaliyuga*. *Kaliyuga* started thousands and thousands of years ago. Do you think no one has realized God during *Kaliyuga*? The Lord Jesus lived in *Kaliyuga*. Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Papa Ramdas, Shri Ramana Maharishi, Shri Aurobindo, Shri Ananda Mayi Ma, Oriya Baba, Harihara Baba, Paramahansa Yogananda, Lahiri Mahasaya, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Mirabai, Surdas, Tukaram, Guru Nanak Deva, Kabir, Udasinacharya Shri Chanderji and many mystics of other faiths. Did they not live in *Kaliyuga*? If they could realize God in *Kaliyuga*, why can't you?

Q: What is the purpose of life for people who are mentally sick or handicapped?

Swamiji: For such people, life is of no use. They cannot learn any more through their lives. However, there are many other people who are associated with such people who are affected and who may suffer, so the life of such totally incapacitated people is not completely useless. Others can learn from their lives. There is no loose and completely isolated thing, person

or situation in this universe. All are directly or indirectly interconnected.

An event taking place in another planet affects our lives also. There are children who die in the womb of the mother. You may ask, “What is the use of the life of such a child?” The child may not have any use for itself, but its mother may undergo so many experiences. When the child dies in the womb, it may affect the other members of the family also. As a matter of fact, it also affects you, though you do not feel it. Newton used to say that when you move your finger, you affect the whole universe by making that movement.

Q: What about abortion?

Swamiji: It has nothing to do with spirituality. The question of abortion has assumed political dimension in the U.S.A. and many other countries. There are agitations all over the world in favour of and against abortion, but it is obvious that abortion is against nature and the natural law.

Q: I feel my heart works one way only. I give out love but do not receive any in return. I am disappointed.

Swamiji: It is sheer ignorance to expect return in love. Desire nothing and you will never be disappointed. Love cannot be compelled. True love does not demand anything; it knows only to give. Love is not a business. It is self-giving to one whom you love. Love is not a contract either. It suffers no give and take. Love signifies total self-negation and self-denial for the sake of one's beloved. Love unifies the lover with the beloved.

Q: Are the search for God and Realization possible for people who live with a partner? In your book you said purity (among other things) means keeping away from conjugal sins. What does it mean exactly? Would it be good for me to find a companion?

Swamiji: Yes, it would be good for you to have a companion. However, the two companions must be loyal to each other and follow the rules of the society in which they live. Otherwise, their association will create tensions between them and it will certainly hinder their meditation. If both partners have a similar temperament, then both can work together for God-Realization.

Conjugal sins mean adultery, which is taboo in every religion of the world. In Islam, the punishment for adultery is very, very severe. In Christianity also, the punishment for adultery was very severe, too, in the past. Buddhism and Hinduism too, vouch for purity and loyalty in the married life. Those people who are meant to live alone never ask the question as you have done. They will not accept a companion even if they are persuaded to do so.

There was a great saint in India, Swami Ram Das Samarth. He was the only son of his parents. The parents wanted him to get married but he did not want to do so. He longed to be a *sannyasi* and follow the path of God-Realization alone. Forced by his parents, he unwillingly agreed to get married. When the marriage ceremony was being performed, the priest, before reciting some *mantra*, said, "Be wary". Ram Das took it as a warning, got up and ran away. His relatives followed him to try to bring him back, but he ran fast into the forest and no one could reach him. His parents could not trace him. He became a recluse and did penance in the forest, exclusively devoting himself to

meditation and God-Realization. He became Enlightened and a very powerful saint in the history of Indian saints. Such people are really fit for living alone.

Q: What about living in a community or a group?

Swamiji: For some it may be possible to realize God while living in a community; for others it may not be possible. There is no hard and fast rule for that. There are some people who cannot live alone and they cannot adjust themselves in the community. They are always disturbed and dissatisfied wherever they live.

Q: Why is it that the mind while doing *japa* often loses interest and wanders outside?

Swamiji: Does a mother ever become fed up while listening to something said about her son? She has got a very emotional attachment to her son. That is why she relishes and cherishes to talk about and listen to the name of her son.

You can enjoy *japa* only if you are deeply attached to the deity of the *mantra* which you are reciting. Otherwise you are bound to get bored. You must have love for God and have a deep faith and trust that through the practice of the *mantra japa* you will realize your beloved God. Then you will enjoy the *japa*. Lovers undergo so many hardships for the sake of their beloved ones and they even enjoy those hardships. In *mantra japa* you don't have to suffer any hardship. If and when you are related with your *Ishta* through a *mantra*, you never get bored and fed up with reciting that *mantra*. If you get bored, it is the sign that you are not related with your beloved God through that *mantra*.

If you do not enjoy the reciting of the *mantra*, take the *mantra japa* as a medicine. Do not give it up. Even if you recite the *mantra* without concentration and deep love, you are benefited. It will slowly purify your mind and generate love in you for the deity of that *mantra*. Sometimes, even though the medicine is very bitter you still take it, believing that it will cure your disease.

Q: There seems to be a contradiction between the evolutionary theory of Darwin and our reincarnation theory. Could you please comment on which is the correct one?

Swamiji: Darwin was a philosopher. He was not a Seer. Darwin used to say that he had never tasted peace of mind and happiness. He even said that he could not enjoy any work of art or music. His heart had become so dry. His theory of evolution has many, many shortcomings. Why do you take it as flawless? You cannot compare the findings of Seers and *rishis* with those of a mere philosopher. Darwin has based his theory mainly on the principle of *rajoguna*, the principle of survival of the fittest. The theory of evolution propounded by Kapila Muni⁹ is far more comprehensible and correct. It is based on the working of the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. If you read the *Samkhya* School of thought, you will feel and see that Darwin's theory of evolution is very incomplete and full of drawbacks. Kapila Muni says that you come from God and go back to God. Darwin says that you come from an atom, an inert and unconscious point in space and time. Moreover, he does not say where you will reach. That is the difference.

⁹ *Rishi* Kapila Muni was the founder of the *Samkhya* School of thought.

Q: Today maybe you have a question for us?

Swamiji: The word 'question' is not a proper word. It indicates a sort of challenge. In English, there is no word for the Hindi word '*jijnasa*' which means a humble and sincere asking with faith and trust. I have no question for you!

Q: I would like to ask about the state where I go sometimes during meditation in which I feel nothingness?

Swamiji: If you are there to feel the nothingness, then it is not nothingness. It implies the state in which you and absence of objects are there. If you are not there, then who feels or knows the nothingness? It is a state in which there is no object, no thought, no projection and no image. So you interpret it as nothingness but in reality, it is the state in which shines your naked and unadulterated existence. But you don't recognize your pure Self.

Q: I always desire to ask you something, even when I have the certitude that you have given me what I need. Should I ask myself who wants to always ask questions?

Swamiji: It is good to doubt the doubter. The doubt and doubter cannot be separated. Both arise together and subside together like the dream and the dreamer. Some people get addicted to asking questions. Are you one of them?

Q: Where is it more difficult to concentrate, on the *ajna chakra* or on the heart-centre?

Swamiji: The most difficult thing is to do nothing. You should concentrate on that centre where you feel it is easier to do so.

Q: I have started to concentrate on the *ajna chakra* with no result.

Swamiji: If you do not feel headache, you should carry on concentrating on that point. That centre is connected with the head. If you force yourself to concentrate at that place, you may feel headache. It is the centre of vision. You may come to see many visions if you concentrate at that point. Many colours, some scenes from other worlds also are seen there when your concentration becomes very acute and penetrating.

Q: My concentration is very weak and even in my astrological chart it is written that I will have difficulty in concentrating within. What should I do?

Swamiji: The astrologers also have the same problem of not being able to concentrate within. Do not trust the astrologers so much. Make regular and daily practice to concentrate within and you will succeed. Do not be in a hurry. Slow and steady wins the race.

Q: I feel difficulty in finding my inner joy.

Swamiji: What is your difficulty in finding the inner joy? What prevents you from finding the inner joy? Is it easier to find joy in the outer objects and situations? To find joy within

yourself, you have to deal with yourself only, but to find joy outside in some situation you have to deal with yourself and also with others. Which is more difficult? Reflect upon it. To find joy in some situation or from some object, you have to depend upon others also. If the others do not co-operate with you, you cannot find joy in outer situations. So, what is more difficult? Should you reflect deeply, you would discover that there is more dependence in finding joy in the outer conditions. Moreover, the joy found in objects and others is so precarious and uncertain. It cannot be everlasting. It cannot be fulfilling.

Q: Most of the spiritual teachers in the West play down the idea of renunciation being essential for Realization. Do they want to attract more people? What would you say?

Swamiji: There are positive and negative points of renunciation. Outer renunciation is not necessary for the seekers. Not every seeker is meant to renounce the world. The essential prerequisite of Realization is the inner detachment which is called the 'holy indifference'. The teachers who want to attract more and more people have motives other than to help others on the path of Self-Realization. You find this phenomenon not only in the West but in India also. Religion and *Yoga* are becoming more and more commercialized.

Q: I can imagine the positive points. What are the negative points of renunciation?

Swamiji: If the renunciation is not based on inner detachment and dispassion or on intense love of the Divine, it makes you

a hypocrite and becomes an obstacle on the path of Realization.

Q: Should we renounce only what leaves us by itself?

Swamiji: If in your home, people push you out of your home, you cannot say that you have renounced your home. Renunciation should be voluntary and joyful. If you become diabetic and are not allowed to eat sugar, you cannot say that you have given up sugar. If some day, you do not get food to eat, can you say that you are fasting? Can a dumb person say that he or she is observing silence?

Chapter Twelve

“Do you know how a lineage starts? It starts when the masses are very much influenced by a very powerful and Enlightened sage. Lineages starting on the names of different sages may not necessarily differ in their spiritual and religious teachings. In this sense, there is no difference between an Udasin sage and a sannyasi sage. A Buddhist sage, a Jewish sage, a Christian sage, a Muslim sage and a Hindu sage, all have the Realization of the one and same Truth. All lineages come out from timeless and spaceless Consciousness and go back and meet in timeless and spaceless eternal Consciousness.”



Q: Please Swamiji, will you come today for *satsang* at eleven o'clock?

Swamiji: It is not obligatory for anyone to come to me for *satsang* between eleven and twelve. What is obligatory is to attend the four sessions of meditation provided one is not sick or one cannot come for some particular reason. This time is not for *satsang* or discourses. It is the time for my sitting outside my room. Anyone who wants to come and sit here with me may do so, and ask me any spiritual question if one feels the urge to do so. It is not obligatory that questions should be asked during this time. At other times, I would like to remain alone! I come to the meditation sessions and to take food in the dining-hall only for the reason that it helps to maintain regularity in the schedule of the *ashram*.

Q: To stop my mind and not think about any situations or things is very difficult for me. What should I do?

Swamiji: If you become a slave of your mind, who is responsible for it? When the master is weak, the servant overpowers him or her. When the soul is weak, the mind overpowers it. Reflect upon who you are. Unless and until you directly know who you are, there will be no end to your problems.

Don't identify yourself with what you are not. It is your false identification and attachment with temporal things

and situations which creates problems for you. Be more and more detached, and it will be easier for you to stop the thinking process of your mind.

Q: What is the difference between detachment and selfishness towards the suffering of others?

Swamiji: It is the other way round. Detachment is helpful in giving up selfishness. The more you are attached, the more selfish you become; the less selfish you are, the more helpful you will be to others in alleviating the sufferings of others.

Q: If one of our dear ones is ill or has some difficulty, should we pray for him/her, even when we know this suffering is helpful for his/her spiritual growth?

Swamiji: When you are sick, what do you do? Don't you try to get rid of the suffering which the illness gives you? Or do you accept suffering, taking it as helpful for your spiritual growth? Suffering may be helpful for the spiritual growth of a seeker of Truth only if he/she accepts it wilfully and learns from it. You should apply the same principle in the case of your dear ones, which you follow for yourself.

Q: I understand that if some suffering arises, I have to remove it and accept what cannot be avoided. Is it so?

Swamiji: It is very difficult to accept suffering joyfully. You do not want to suffer. No one wants to suffer, and yet one has to suffer. If you accept what is inevitable, the pinch of suffering is reduced. If you do not accept the inevitable, you

suffer more. Some people invite suffering into the present, so that they may not suffer for a longer period in the future. It is a device to get rid of greater suffering.

Q: Some masters say that we do not suffer as much in this world as compared to the suffering in the other worlds. Is it so?

Swamiji: The suffering in the astral world is more than in the physical world. According to the Gospel it is recommended that if one part of your body causes you to sin, it is much better to cut it off and to lose that part than to have your whole body thrown into hell after death.

Q: What do you think about the method of asking for money to give a *mantra*, and then using that money to run a hospital or any charitable activity?

Swamiji: You may, if your conscience allows you, ask money directly for running a free charitable hospital? Why should you sell a *mantra* in order to run a charitable hospital? It is not proper to sell the *mantra* to collect money for charitable purposes.

Q: Could you explain the play of energies which we are made up of?

Swamiji: There are mainly three energies in you. These are: *kriya shakti*, which is the 'vital force' (or *prana shakti*, the 'energy which enables you to act and move'), *bhava shakti*, the 'energy which enables you to feel', and *jnana shakti*,

the 'energy which enables you to think and understand'. Every person has these three energies. The seeker has to sublimate these energies and direct them on the path of Self-Realization.

Q: Does the follower of *Karma Yoga* have more of *kriya shakti*?

Swamiji: For the one in whom the *kriya shakti* is predominant, *Karma Yoga* is the proper path. For the one in whom *bhava shakti* is predominant, *Bhakti Yoga* is the appropriate approach. For the one in whom the *jnana shakti* is predominant, *Jnana Yoga* is the proper way to Realization. In *Karma Yoga*, the *kriya shakti* is the leader and *bhava shakti* and *jnana shakti* assist it. In *Bhakti Yoga*, the *bhava shakti* is the leader, assisted by *kriya shakti* and *jnana shakti*. In *Jnana Yoga*, the *jnana shakti* is the leader, and *kriya shakti* and *bhava shakti* are the assistant energies.

Q: Is it possible to know which is the predominant energy in us?

Swamiji: The doubting tendencies in the seeker indicate the predominance of *jnana shakti*. The follower of *Jnana Yoga* asks questions, thinks over the answers, and puts more and more questions. The devotees following *Bhakti Yoga* have more faith. They are more emotional rather than intellectual. They do not ask many questions. If the *kriya shakti* is predominant in you, you always like to do something. You want an active life. You cannot sit quietly. You enjoy working and always like to be doing something.

Q: Should these three energies become one?

Swamiji: The basic energy is one. It manifests itself into the three energies mentioned above. These energies can, however, be transformed into one another.

Q: Does the soul of an animal take birth in a human form in the next life?

Swamiji: Normally, animals are not born as human beings. They are born again and again as animals for millions of years till the evolutionary divine power evolves a thinking mind in them. Only when the mind is evolved in them, can they take birth in human form. Man implies a mental being.

Q: Does the soul of an animal go to some *lokas*?

Swamiji: There are no animals in higher *lokas*. They are only on the earth or in the water.

Q: Do they take a birth quickly, or do they have to wait before a new birth?

Swamiji: When they die, their soul is mixed with the earth. They are born as grass and herbs and are eaten by animals, and then again enter the womb of animals and are born as animals. This is the process. So they do not take the next birth immediately after they die. All this process is controlled by the divine power. This can happen to those human beings also who live on the level of animal-consciousness and are subservient to animal instincts. Such human souls also take birth in the form of animals through the same process. They do not go to other *lokas*.

Q: Can trees realize God?

Swamiji: Trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen. They are instrumental in giving you life through oxygen so that you can realize God in your life. They cannot realize God themselves, but they are indirectly providing you with an opportunity to realize God.

It is believed by Hindus that many *rishis* came down and took birth in the form of trees in Vrindavan to see and enjoy the *lila* of God when He assumed the Form of the child Krishna and played in Vrindavan.

Q: Can you know your past life?

Swamiji: The past life can be known. I do not want to know it. I am not like you. I do not see any good in doing that.

Q: If we want to realize God, we require time to give up all our attachments to the family, etc. In that case, we may have to prolong our life so as to be able to get Realization before death.

Swamiji: It is possible to prolong your life in terms of days, months and years but not in terms of life-energy. Every human being has been given a fixed quota of life-energy according to his/her past *karmas*. If you spend that energy lavishly, the life span becomes short; if you spend your life energy conservatively, you may live longer. When you are worried, you spend more life-energy.

You can realize God only in a human form. If you have not realized God in life, how can you realize Him in death? You have to realize God, here and now.

Q: How should a *mantra* be practised?

Swamiji: *Mantra* should be recited mentally while keeping one's attention at the heart-centre. While the *mantra* is being recited, it should also be heard mentally. This is the proper way of practising a *mantra*.

Q: What is the result of practising a *mantra*?

Swamiji: The true purpose of the practice of a *mantra* is to purify the subconscious mind of the seeker and stop the thinking process. Some people practise some specific *mantras* to get extraordinary powers.

Q: During meditation, the vital energy starts to circulate which results in a state of emptiness. But the 'I' is still present. How does one achieve Self-Realization?

Swamiji: There are so many stages of meditation, and you may have many, many inner experiences during meditation. When one is preoccupied with some outer activity, how can one have any inner experience? Awareness is present in all the states: the waking state, dreaming state, deep sleep state, as well as in meditation. Self-Realization comes through the non-polar experience during *nirvikalpa samadhi* when the object of the experience, the experience and the experiencer become one.

Q: Can this experience come at any time and in any situation?

Swamiji: This experience may come suddenly when you are sitting in meditation. Very rarely, it may come when you are

not sitting in meditation. When this experience happens, the thinking process stops. The experience does not last long. It happens like lightning and goes away. In Realization, the experience becomes stabilized and permanent. One may have had this experience without having had Realization.

Q: Do you prescribe any particular way to realize the Self?

Swamiji: I do not prescribe any one particular way for all seekers to attain Realization.

Q: When repeating the *mantra*, I deeply feel its meaning and repetition occurring in all the parts of my body rather than the concentration in the heart-centre. Is that good?

Swamiji: There are some centres in the vital body where energy is converted into specific form. These centres also have their corresponding centres in the physical body. The three main centres are in the navel, in the heart (in the middle of the chest) and between the eyebrows in the head.

The navel centre, which is called *manipura* in *yogic* parlance, is the centre which converts the energy into *prana shakti*, the vital force. The heart-centre converts the energy into *bhava shakti*, the energy of feeling. The *ajna chakra*, the centre between the eyebrows, converts the energy into *jnana shakti*, the energy of thinking. If you recite a *mantra* with devotion and faith for a long period and regularly, you begin to feel, in due course of practice, the vibration of that *mantra* at the heart-centre. Therefore, the heart-centre is the proper place to concentrate upon when you are practising *mantra japa*. If you have to visualize some image, the *ajna chakra* is the proper place to concentrate.

Q: Is it right to practise my *mantra* with the incoming and outgoing of the breath?

Swamiji: There is no harm in synchronizing the chanting of the *mantra* with the incoming and outgoing of the breath. It helps in concentration. But one should not concentrate on the navel-centre while practising *japa*.

Q: *Mantra* should be composed of three parts. My *mantra* has only two parts. Is it correct?

Swamiji: It is not necessary. Different *mantras* have different number of letters or words. A *mantra*, which is very long, is difficult to concentrate on. A *mantra* of two or three words is not difficult to concentrate upon.

There is a story popular in Hinduism. Valmiki was a dacoit, a brigand. He once met a famous *rishi*, Narada, who persuaded him to stop robbing the people. Valmiki had a change of heart. He then asked Narada for some practice through which he would realize God. Narada told him to recite 'Ram, Ram' continuously. Valmiki said, "I can recite only 'Mar, Mar'." 'Mar' in Hindi means 'kill'. He was killing people after robbing them. Narada replied, "Okay, you keep reciting 'Mar, Mar' with the feeling that you are calling on God".

Valmiki practised 'Mar, Mar' with such devotion and faith that the reciting of 'Mar, Mar' turned into 'Ram, Ram' and he went into *samadhi*.

Q: What is meant by '*lila*'? What is the difference between '*lila*' and '*maya*'?

Swamiji: 'Lila' means free action, an action which comes out of joy and fulfilment. It is not an action which comes out of the desire to find or gain anything. It is like dancing, but not professional dancing. Dancing or singing is the expression of joy. It is motiveless and spontaneous.

'Maya' is a technical word. Usually, it denotes 'ignorance' or 'delusion'. Some people interpret 'maya' as illusion also. In *Vedanta*, 'maya' is described as 'anirvachaniya'.

Q: Does 'anirvachaniya' mean 'not knowable'?

Swamiji: 'Anirvachniya' doesn't mean 'unknowable'; it means 'indescribable'. *Maya* is the power which makes the infinite appear as finite. "Yo miyate iti maya," "That which determines is *maya*." It has only a phenomenal existence.

Q: Who is Shiva and also Vishnu?

Swamiji: Shiva is the absolute Consciousness, so is Vishnu. Shiva and Vishnu are not two but the same impersonal Person. The difference between them is only of name, form and qualities. As a matter of fact, the difference between things or persons is only due to their *gunas*/qualities and not due to their essential Being.

Q: I would like to know about the *Udasin* line.

Swamiji: The *Udasin* line is called *Shrauta-Smarta Dharma*, which means it is based on the *Vedas* and *Puranas*, like *Sanatana Dharma*. The founder of the *Udasin* line is *Rishi*

Sanatan Kumar, one of the four Kumara Brothers. *Acharya* Shri Chanderji, who is mistakenly taken as the founder of the *Udasin* line, is the 165th master in this line, a very powerful master. He is regarded as the incarnation of Lord Shiva.

Q: How can we recognize a lineage?

Swamiji: Do you know how a lineage starts? It starts when the masses are very much influenced by a very powerful and Enlightened sage. Lineages starting on the names of different sages may not necessarily differ in their spiritual and religious teachings. In this sense, there is no difference between an *Udasin* sage and a *sannyasi* sage. A Buddhist sage, a Jewish sage, a Christian sage, a Muslim sage and a Hindu sage, all have the Realization of the one and same Truth. All lineages come out from timeless and spaceless Consciousness and go back and meet in timeless and spaceless eternal Consciousness.

Q: It is like Gangotri which is the source of Ganga, but after the river flows, it meets other rivers.

Swamiji: In the beginning it is One, and in the end it is One. In the middle, it appears as many, or becomes many without losing its oneness.

Q: What is your opinion about the physical body?

Swamiji: It is a very useful thing but the most distrustful thing.

Q: I get help from my master who is no more in his body. Is it correct to call for help in this way?

Swamiji: Why not? If you can receive inspiration from God who is formless, why cannot you receive inspiration from a sage who has left his body?

Q: If I am far from your physical body, can I ask for your help and guidance?

Swamiji: Do you think that you are receiving the guidance from my physical body?

Q: That means then, that there is a way?

Swamiji: Yes, there is surely a way!

Q: What is the way?

Swamiji: The way is that you should be in harmony with and open to the one from whom you want to receive inspiration. It does not matter whether the sage is physically near you or not. Faith and trust make you open. Doubt and distrust make you closed.

Q: Is it advisable to call on several masters for help?

Swamiji: If you run in all directions, you cannot reach anywhere. Can you?

Q: Sometimes, I am contemptuous towards my neighbour. I beg forgiveness for that. How can I stop this behaviour?

Swamiji: If you could go within and see your own faults, you would not dare to be contemptuous to your neighbour.

No man, in the world, is perfect. The problem is, that you expect others (your neighbours) to be perfect and without any faults, though you cannot make yourself perfect and faultless. Are you perfect? If you can see your imperfections, it will be easier for you to tolerate the faults of others. If you tolerate your own faults, why do you not tolerate the faults of others? Do not practise double standards.

Q: I know that I am also full of faults, which I do not like.. How can I come to appreciate the faults of others?

Swamiji: A man maybe has an ugly face but also has very bright and clean teeth. Someone says, “He has very beautiful teeth,” and he feels happy. The other says, “He has a very ugly face” and he feels repelled. Is it not better to see the good of others and ignore their shortcomings? It depends upon you what you see. Everyone has a positive side as well as a negative side in his personality. It is your perception of things which makes you tense or happy. There are people who see faults even in Krishna, the Buddha and Jesus. There are others who get inspiration from their lives. You see what you want to see.

Q: Could you please explain what you mean by the expression, “Do not practise double standards”?

Swamiji: There was a judge. He had sentenced to death many hard-core criminals who had murdered innocent people. Once, his son was implicated in a murder case and was

caught red-handed. Then the judge argued that the death sentence should be banned by the law because it leaves no opportunity for the criminal to repent and improve. This is a case of applying double standards by that judge owing to the attachment he had to his son.

Q: Can you comment on what you wrote in your book, *The Practical Approach to Divinity*, about free choice?

Swamiji: Man becomes responsible only because he can choose. This power of choosing by discrimination can only be exercised by man. An animal does not choose mentally; it prefers and chooses only by instinct. An animal has no freedom to choose. It is the slave of its instincts. Man can control his impulses by exercising his power of discrimination. He can restrain himself from acting impulsively and under the sway of emotion. But the fruit of his action, which involves a situation connected with many persons, mostly depends upon his potential worth. He is not absolutely free to achieve whatever he wants in this world of cause and effect.

Can you become the Prime Minister of your country? It may be impractical for you, if not impossible. But you can wish to become the Prime Minister of your country and try for it. You have no problem in wishing to be the Prime Minister and trying for it.

Q: What is ‘partial freedom in action’?

Swamiji: ‘Partial freedom in action’ means that you are free to act, but the fruit of your action is not in your hands.

Q: I do not feel totally free because so many impulses interfere with my will.

Swamiji: If you kill a person out of the impulse of anger, should not the government punish you? You are punished because you are taken to be free not to kill wilfully. You are supposed to keep your impulses under control.

Q: Is it a crime to kill through ignorance?

Swamiji: Ignorance is not an excuse for committing a crime. No law permits you to commit crime out of ignorance and escape the punishment. Please do not confuse ignorance with innocence.

Q: Can we control our impulses and emotions?

Swamiji: Then what are you doing *sadhana* for, if not for freedom? Can you be free of anger and desire or not? If you can be free, it means anger and desire are not your essential Nature.

Q: My biggest fear is that I may lose the control of things and events. I would like to know how to 'let go'?

Swamiji: Have you got control over things and events? If not, then why should you be afraid of losing the control on them? Some people are unhappy because of what they have. Some are unhappy because of what they do not have! They marry and when there is some difference with the wife/husband, they divorce and 'let go'. Then they marry

again and again, and 'let go'. In this way, the 'let go' continues. They don't compromise with what they cannot cope with. They don't accept what looks unfavourable. Is it real 'let go'? 'Let go' in reality means complete surrender, complete acceptance of God's will. How many people can do that? 'Let go' implies desirelessness. 'Let go' means the state of 'no-mind'. Please don't confound it with helplessness. Don't confuse it with the slavery of the mind. The 'let go' comes to you when you have most sincerely worked for it, and spent all your energy to reach it. If you do not strive for it, neither will you reach the 'let go' nor will the 'let go' ever come to you. 'Let go' is the other name of self-surrender. Self-surrender is the consummation of self-effort.

Q: Should I keep witnessing in the heart-centre while chanting the *mantra*?

Swamiji: Watching should not be practised with the repetition of the *mantra*. While practising witnessing, one does not have to do anything but only to see some process or point in the body or in the mind. *Mantra japa* is dynamic in nature. Witnessing is passive in nature.

Q: I need to keep my attention otherwise *mantra japa* becomes mechanical.

Swamiji: Repeat the *mantra* and at the same time mentally hear it. Then, the *japa* will not become mechanical. Or, repeat the *mantra* with the feeling (*bhava*) of its meaning.

Q: Should I hear the *mantra* without seeing it?

Swamiji: Hearing and seeing both need attention. Reciting can be done without attention. But hearing must need attention.

Q: Hearing with attention?

Swamiji: Hearing cannot be done without attention.

Q: What is the link between a human being who repeats a *mantra* and the Divine?

Swamiji: There is a common element in a human being and God. That is the divine element. If it were not so, communication would be impossible. *Mantra japa* is the method of feeling that link.

Q: What is the attention which we practise during *mantra japa* made of?

Swamiji: Attention is the primary dimension of awareness. Attention implies focused awareness.

Q: How does this link with the divine work?

Swamiji: The link with the Divine is experienced when your attention penetrates the name and form of anything and meets the substratum of that thing.

Q: Why is *OM* not given as a *mantra*?

Swamiji: Who says *OM* cannot be given as a *mantra*? In all religions which have originated in India, *OM* is the common

mantra. Every *vedic mantra* starts with *OM*. In Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, *OM* is common. Even in other languages, it is used in some form or other. In English, the words 'omnipresent' and 'omnipotent' are used for God. *OM* is all-inclusive. All the other *mantras* come out of *A-U-M*. 'A' starts from the throat; 'U' comes in the middle of the mouth and the throat; 'M' is uttered when the lips become closed. The repetition or the recitation of *OM* covers all the functioning of the system of speech.

Q: Is *OM* a name of the Divine, or something else?

Swamiji: *OM* is the symbol of the Divine which represents all the aspects of the Divine.

Q: I attended a piano concert which was very captivating. I was in a marvellous state and felt intense love and joy. I wished this state should not disappear. Alas, it did so! What is the explanation of this state of mind?

Swamiji: There is another piano being played in your heart continuously. It has such a divine melody that no musical instrument in the world can ever generate. If you could go within and listen to the inner piano, you would feel much more transported than you felt by hearing the piano you have described. And you can go within and hear it whenever you like. You do not need to go to a concert, pay for the programme and get a temporary feeling of love and joy. The source of love and happiness is within you, deep in your own heart. Attune yourself to it and you will be filled with love and joy. The love and the joy, which you sometimes feel in

outward objects and conditions, are only the partial reflection of the inner joy perceived by your concentrated mind on that source. “Silence is the music of the soul”, said a saint.

Q: There are groups of ‘meditation-transmission’. These groups meet regularly and meditate for many hours on the *ajna chakra* and think about nothing. Their energy is then used by ‘masters’ to relieve the world of its suffering. What do you think of this type of meditation?

Swamiji: The centre for thought-free meditation is not the *ajna chakra* but it is the heart-centre. At the *ajna chakra* one has to concentrate on a single thought related to the Divine. This is the correct and scientific approach. Moreover, the thought-free, passive meditation gives you more peace than power. Dynamic meditation stirs up the divine power in you. To experience peace or energy is one thing, and to be able to transmit it to others is quite different. Not all seekers or people who meditate can transmit spiritual energy to others in order to alleviate the suffering of people.

Q: My *Ishta* is Jesus and my *Guru* is Ma. When I die, will I go to Ma’s *loka* or to Jesus’ *loka*?

Swamiji: If you realize your essential Nature during this life, you will not go to any *loka*. If not, your next birth will be according to what you will be remembering at the moment of death. If you die remembering Jesus, you will go to the *loka* of Jesus. If you die remembering Ma, you will go to the *loka* of Ma, should Ma have her own *loka*. Or, Ma may lead you to the *loka* of Jesus.

Q: Where will those who have realized their essential Nature go?

Swamiji: If you are Realized, you are neither frightened by death, nor do you go anywhere. When you die, your body disintegrates as also your mind, and you merge with the divine Reality, which is your essential Nature.

Q: What is the usefulness of the *mala* when repeating the *mantra*? Is it possible to repeat the *mantra* without the help of the *mala*?

Swamiji: A *mala* is useful in the beginning. When you practise *japa* on a *mala*, a sort of association with the *mala* is generated. So whenever you take the *mala* in your hand, you tend to remember the Divine due to that association. Some Buddhists use a wheel instead of a *mala*, which serves the same purpose. Yes, to use a *mala* is not necessary. One can repeat the *mantra* without using a *mala*. But for those who want to keep the account of their *japa*, a *mala* is very useful. This account is kept not for God, but for the seeker himself/herself, to know how much *japa* has been done in the day, just as some people keep the account of their daily income and expenditure. It is useful for them to keep such account because, through it, they can know whether they are incurring loss or profit in their dealings.

Q: Why do some people cover their hand in a bag while repeating the *mantra*?

Swamiji: They do not want to make a show of their *malas*. So they keep them covered. Some people only wear a *mala*;

they do not practise. It gives them a sort of publicity that they are devotees.

Q: What is the meaning to keep the *mala* between the three fingers as you have done?

Swamiji: I was told to use these fingers. I obeyed and did not ask 'why'. I was told that it was easier to concentrate on the *mantra japa* if the *mala* is moved between these three fingers.

Q: Westerners do not stop asking 'why', 'what' and 'when'.

Swamiji: The path of Truth is a path of not asking 'what' and 'why' It is a path of 'do or die'.

Have you heard the name of Swami Samarth Ram Das? A seeker would come to him and daily ask many questions about how he could realize God. Everyday he would ask the same question, "How can I have the *darshan* of Lord Rama?" Ram Das would tell him to purify his heart and practise meditation. But he would not be satisfied with the answer. One day when he again asked the same question, Ram Das told him to go to a certain place, where a very tall pine tree stood. Ram Das told him, "Go and climb that tree, and when you reach the top of the tree, jump down and you will be blessed with the *darshan* of Lord Rama". So the man went to the place and found that tree. He climbed to the top of the tree, and when he looked down, the ground was over ten metres below. He was frightened to jump down. Then a doubt came in his mind, "This method of Realization or seeing Lord Rama is not tenable nor has it been recommended in any Scripture, nor has it been taught by any other saint or sage.

If I jump down, my bones will be fractured, and I may die, and what if I do not have the *darshan* of Lord Rama?" So with this doubt in his mind, he climbed down the tree. When he was on the ground, there was again, in his heart, an upsurge of faith in Ram Das. "Ram Das is a Realized sage and very powerful. What he has said cannot be wrong. I must obey him". Then again he climbed up the tree, but when he reached the top and looked down, he was frightened to jump. Again the same doubt overpowered him and he came down from the tree. But when he was on the ground, faith again overpowered him and he again climbed the tree. In this state of confusion he would, again and again, climb to the top of the tree, and without jumping would, again and again, come down.

A woodcutter was watching all this from a distance. He came there and asked the man, "What are you doing? You climb up the tree and then come down, and again you go up and come down". The man explained his predicament to him and said, "My mind is divided. When I am on the ground I am full of faith in Ram Das, so I climb up the tree. When on the top of the tree, my mind is full of doubt, and I come down". He narrated in detail what Ram Das had said to him. The woodcutter said, "Step aside. I will go up and jump and have the *darshan* of Lord Rama. I know Swami Ram Das. He cannot be wrong". So the woodcutter climbed up the top of the tree and, remembering the sage Ram Das, jumped down. Immediately, Ram Das appeared and took the woodcutter in his lap when he was falling. Then, Ram Das blessed the woodcutter with the vision of Lord Rama.

Are you ready to take the jump? Merely asking 'why' and 'what' will not do.

Q: Is the pronunciation of the *mantra* important?

Swamiji: Pronunciation of some *mantras* is important, but not of all the *mantras*. There are some *vedic mantras*, which can be rightly pronounced only by professional *pandits* who have been educated and trained for that. These *pandits* recite those *mantras* while conducting oblations, *yajnas* and *havans*. What is most important while reciting a *mantra* for calling God is the feeling of love for God and intense aspiration to see Him.

Q: Will you write my *mantra* in Sanskrit, so that I can practise it correctly?

Swamiji: How will you read Sanskrit? A mother likes the prattlings of her child. The child cannot even speak proper words, but the mother loves to hear the broken words of her child. Anyway, I will write your *mantra* in Sanskrit.

Q: Is it not better to know how to say it in Sanskrit?

Swamiji: God understands all languages. God does not look to what you are saying. He looks to your intentions and the feelings of your heart.

Chapter Thirteen

“Experiences do not matter at all. Experiences come and go. No experience can be constant. Experience pertains to the mind, which cannot comprehend the Infinite. The essential nature of the Spirit is the unceasing Awareness. You can never be without ‘experiencing’ even if you so wish. ‘Experiencing’ is ceaseless Awareness. What you call frustration must need Awareness too, though it is there in its distorted form — in the feeling of frustration. Be more and more open and passive, and you will be able to feel this ‘experiencing’. Frustration is the result of attachment and expectation. Divine love suffers no attachment. It does not suffer frustration. Therefore, there can be no frustration where there is divine love.”



Q: How can I accept the death of my son?

Swamiji: Can you tell me if there is even one home in the world in which no one has ever died? Death is a universal phenomenon. No one has control upon death. Kings die, saints and sages die, great men die, sinners die, prophets die, those who save the lives of other people also die. We will also die. So what if your son has died? No one could save his life forever. You should also prepare yourself for your own death, instead of crying about the death of your son. What is the use of crying now? Will your son come back by your crying and weeping? Can he be brought back by any means? As a matter of fact, he has not died. He has gone to some other place. He has changed his form and name so you cannot recognize him now. Maybe he is in better conditions now than when he was with you. Why should you bewail and cry? You should pray for him.

Q: I have understood all what you said with my mind and intellect but how can I make this understanding in my heart?

Swamiji: You know it only with your superficial mind. However, if you reflect upon it again and again, your subconscious mind will be Enlightened and you will get peace. The root of your attachment, lies deep in your

subconscious mind. When the light of Truth reaches your subconscious, the attachment will disappear. Besides reflecting again and again on the lines mentioned above, you should pray to God daily for peace. He will give you strength and peace.

Q: Is it the attachment which makes me suffer?

Swamiji: Pray again and again. Pray to the Lord to give you wisdom and peace. All suffering is born of ignorance. It is not the death of your child that is making you suffer but the attachment to your son. Think for a while. If your son had gone to some other country and died there, and you had not come to know about his death, would you be suffering? Not at all. It is not his death, which is making you suffer, but the attachment and the separation from him.

There is a story in the epic *Mahabharata*. Arjuna's son, Abhimanyu, died on the battlefield. Arjuna was very much attached to him. He was weeping and crying and even Lord Krishna could not console him. Then Krishna took Arjuna to the *loka* where Abhimanyu was at that time. On seeing Abhimanyu, Arjuna became very emotional and moved forward to embrace Abhimanyu with love. Abhimanyu moved aside and said to Arjuna, "Who are you? You are not my father and I am not your son. In a certain life, you were my son; in another life, I was your son. In a certain life, you were my friend; in another, you were my enemy. Do not be stupid. I am not at all related to you now. Go away, I am not your son now". Then Arjuna's ignorance and attachment were shattered, and peace returned to him.

Q: How can the One be one and many at the same time?

Swamiji: God is not numerically one, as you think. He is spiritually One.

Q: Is there no calculation in God?

Swamiji: In *Vedanta* it is not said that Reality is one. It is said that Reality is non-dual. It is impossible for the mind to know anything without making comparisons. The mind's perception is basically a relative perception. It cannot comprehend the Absolute. That is why all the different paths of Realization require the seeker to go beyond mental consciousness.

Q: Is it possible to go beyond the mind which compares?

Swamiji: Certainly, yes! If you can observe your mind and thoughts, it proves you are separate from your mind. You can surely go beyond your mind.

Q: Is it possible to observe the working of my brain?

Swamiji: Why not? You can look at every organ of your body. If you can look at your thoughts which have no form, why can you not look at a thing with a form, like your brain and its working.

Q: I prefer not to choose.

Swamiji: Not to choose, is more difficult than to choose, when you are acting from the level of mind. The mind stops

functioning when you do not choose. Choosing means cherishing your opinion. It involves a preference of one situation, thing or person to another. When you do not prefer, the motivation to act stops. Is it not so?

Q: I would like to ask what your motivation is? Though, I believe that you have no motivation.

Swamiji: What is my motivation? People ask me why I am silent. You speak when you tend to become motivated. Is it not so? When the desire leaves you, you tend to be silent.

Q: After reading your book, *The Practical Approach to Divinity*, I chose to meditate on the *ajna chakra*. But there is the *japa* technique also. Can you tell me if what I am doing is suitable for me, or what would be better?

Swamiji: The answer will depend on your interest and your competence. All seekers cannot practise certain types of meditation. If they try them, they don't succeed. *Japa* is very easy to practise. It needs only faith, interest and commitment. If you are feeling good and enjoying the concentration on the *ajna chakra*, carry on with it regularly.

Q: Is it good to also practise *mantra japa*?

Swamiji: Why not? You can eat both butter and cheese.

Q: Will you give me some advice about what I should eat?

Swamiji: You should eat what you can digest easily. There is no harm in eating more if you can digest it. Only the

digested food becomes energy. The undigested food harms your body and mind. There is a Persian proverb which says that, “Eating is for living and remembering the Divine, living is not for eating”.

Q: Is it correct to eat meat and fish?

Swamiji: It is difficult to digest meat easily. You have to drink wine to digest it, which is a bad habit. Eating of meat encourages some people to kill animals, which involves violence. Only a brute person can kill others. I had stopped eating meat when I saw a fish, which I had caught, bleeding and struggling to go back to the lake to save itself. I was moved by its suffering. After that day I never ate meat.

Q: Were you a hunter in your youth?

Swamiji: No, never!

Q: How can I control emotions? Is the role of emotions to fix things in our soul?

Swamiji: You cannot keep your emotions controlled forever. You should try to sublimate them and direct them towards the Divine. Only then, do emotions play a positive role on the path of God-Realization.

Q: Where is the source of the will?

Swamiji: Will is a part of the mind. It cannot be separated from mind. The source of the will and the source of the mind

are the same — the *Prakriti*, which is the composite of the three *gunas*. The existence of *Prakriti* is based on the absolute Consciousness. When you want to be silent, your will begins to subside.

Q: Then the will to survive would also subside?

Swamiji: The will to survive is born of attachment to life. There is no place for the will to survive in the one who has realized one's true and immortal Nature.

Q: Among the students who follow *Mantra Yoga*, some get insomnia because the *mantra* cleanses and heightens the consciousness. Do you have any remedy for such insomnia?

Swamiji: What are you saying? The purpose of *Mantra Yoga* is to stop the thinking process! When the thinking process stops, there is a tendency of going into sleep. If one can overcome this tendency, one can enter into *samadhi*. There is no better medicine to cure insomnia than the repetition of a *mantra* without thinking.

Q: Some students experience jerking of the body known as 'shakti jumping', for months or years. What is the cause and can anything be done for it?

Swamiji: Usually the jerks in the body are felt when the level of consciousness is suddenly altered. As a matter of fact, it is a jolt in the mind, which is transferred to the body. During meditation, if there is a sudden rise in the level of consciousness, one may feel a jerk in the body. The same

happens when there is a sudden drop of the level of consciousness; one may feel a jerk in the body. With the abnormal movement of *shakti* (*prana shakti*) the body also may feel jolts or even tremble. You must have noticed that when you are travelling in a car you get jerks, especially if you are sitting in the back seat, when the speed of the car is abruptly increased or decreased. On the other hand, when the speed of the car is increased or decreased slowly and gradually, the traveller sitting in the car does not feel jerks.

Q: Even if the student is not practising, the phenomenon still occurs.

Swamiji: Yes, it can happen when one is not practising meditation. It is not necessary that the level of consciousness changes during meditation only, or that there is an abnormal movement of *prana shakti* in the body during meditation only. I have never experienced the phenomenon of ‘jumping’ myself. I had no such problem during my *sadhana* period, so I do not know its solution based on my own experience. I believe the practice of watching it with indifference should stop it.

Q: Could you clarify the effect of *pranic* flow in the *nadis*?

Swamiji: Normally, the breath does not flow in the *sushumna nadi*. It flows only in the *ida* and *pingala nadis*. By the practice of *pranayama* or conscious breathing, when one gains some control over the breathing process, one can direct the flow of the breath through the *sushumna* willingly. The functions of *ida* and *pingala* are connected with different states of mind, while the function of the *sushumna* is to

gradually stop the thinking process and lead to the non-polar meditation.

Q: If you were to offer only one practice to people in general, what would you suggest?

Swamiji: It would be like asking everyone to wear a dress of the same size. Only the common factors in different spiritual exercises should be taught to general masses, — like morality, purity, consistency of purpose and commitment.

Q: I would like to understand what mercy is and what compassion is. Is there any difference between them?

Swamiji: There is a difference between mercy and compassion. Mercy is a part of your reaction, a healthy reaction, when you see that someone is suffering. Compassion comes from within. Compassion is selfless love, directed to one and all. It is not directed to certain persons only. It is like a fragrant rose. A rose always gives fragrance even if there is no one to take it. The rose gives its fragrance to the sinner and to the virtuous alike, to the poor as well as to the rich.

Q: What happens if children use in the right way, the wealth earned by their parents through wrong means?

Swamiji: It is very rare that wealth amassed by wrong means is used in the right way. If the father amasses wealth illegally and wrongly, e.g. by stealing, deceiving, robbing, killing, etc., and leaves that wealth for his children, then that wealth will not give them joy. Moreover, the father also goes to hell,

due to sinful actions done in order to amass that wealth for his children. Not only that, the father is in hell even during his life, if he is stealing, robbing or killing others. Though outwardly rich and having all comforts and conveniences, such a father is starved of peace and inner joy even during this lifetime.

Q: Jesus said to turn and give the other cheek to those who beat you, though sometimes we have to beat the child for its own good...

Swamiji: If the mother beats her child, it is out of love. Jesus was saying that if your enemy beats you on the right side of your face, turn your left side also to him. The import of that, if someone does you wrong, you should not do him/her wrong and pay with the same coin. Be like a tree. Even if you cut the branches of a tree, it gives you shade and protection.

Q: I want to give you the other side of my face also.

Swamiji: Do you think I have done you any wrong when I suggested that you lead a pure and purposeful life and live for higher values? Have I beaten you?

Q: You asked me not to oppose others. Now, I really feel that everything is not so important, so what is correct?

Swamiji: When a tree is very small, it has to be protected from animals. If you do not do so, the animals will eat it, trample it, and will not let it grow. When the tree has become fully grown and becomes a huge tree, you can even tie an

elephant to it. You have a right to defend yourself but do not do it by harming others.

Q: Why then did Arjuna fight even with his own relatives?

Swamiji: Arjuna came from a warrior class. He was a fighter by nature. He had fought many wars in which many people were killed. He fought against injustice and oppression. However, when his close relatives were doing injustice and committing horrible wrong actions, Arjuna did not want to oppose them. It was due to attachment and infatuation. So, Lord Krishna asked Arjuna to fight in that situation.

Q: Does it mean that I have to fight?

Swamiji: Are you an Arjuna? Are you facing the same situation as Arjuna did? If so, you should be permitted to fight, but you have to fight selflessly!

Q: You have already explained the categories of good and bad thoughts. Do the good thoughts help us in conducting our life?

Swamiji: I had said that even the constructive thoughts could be divided into two categories: the important and the unimportant ones. Important thoughts are good. They are concerned with the present and with what you can put into practice. Such thoughts should be translated into action as soon as possible. Unimportant good thoughts are those which are concerned with the past and the future. The seeker need not entertain such thoughts. The seeker should discard even the good thoughts, which are unimportant, and are not

connected with the present. Such thoughts disturb the meditation.

Q: Does it mean that we should always act out of those good thoughts?

Swamiji: If you can realize your good thoughts, realize them here and now. Otherwise, they will hinder your meditation.

Q: How can I be sure that they are good thoughts?

Swamiji: Do you not know what a constructive thought is? A constructive thought is one which is for your good and for the good of others — good in the sense that it is conducive for your or the other's physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Q: How can I recognize a Realized One, as so many people claim to be so?

Swamiji: In the Scriptures, the qualities of a Realized One are given, as those given in the second chapter of the *Gita* for a *sthita prajna*. These are not given so that you should know who is a Realized One. These are given to know if you are a Realized One or not. These indicate an inner state of Enlightenment, which cannot be judged by any outer behaviour.

Q: What does '*Brahma vichara*' mean?

Swamiji: '*Brahma vichara*' means 'reflection on *Brahman*'. But how will you reflect on *Brahman* who is beyond the

reach of the mind and senses? While reflecting on *Brahman*, you have to mentally split *Brahman* into many aspects for your convenience, and then reflect on each aspect separately. It is just like looking at a huge mansion by going around it, going inside it, into every room, and by going through it and seeing all its facets. That is, you have to see it, as it were, bit by bit and then make it a united and integral perspective of the mansion. '*Brahma vichara*' means reflecting upon the different aspects of the Divine. However, reflection neither gives you the direct experience nor the integral Realization of the Divine. It gives you indirect knowledge, what is called '*paroksha jnana*', the knowledge of the Divine seen through the filter of your purified, unbiased and stable mind. It may also be called 'conceptual knowledge'.

The direct knowledge of *Brahman* is reflected in the mind, which is free of all thoughts, pure, at a standstill, unmoving and completely passive. It is the perceptual knowledge of the Divine.

Q: I have a feeling of frustration because for a long time I have not been able to attain a high level of inner experience.

Swamiji: Frustration is the greatest obstacle in *sadhana*, as perseverance is the essential prerequisite. When one falls in love with someone, one tries one's best, stakes one's life, to get one's beloved. The intense and deep love for the beloved eats up all other desires and attachments of the lover. There is no place for frustration in the path of love. It is a question of life and death for the lover. How can there be frustration when you are prepared to die for the beloved God.

Experiences do not matter at all. Experiences come and go. No experience can be constant. Experience pertains to the mind, which cannot comprehend the Infinite. The essential nature of the Spirit is the unceasing Awareness. You can never be without 'experiencing' even if you so wish. 'Experiencing' is ceaseless Awareness. What you call frustration must need Awareness too, though it is there in its distorted form — in the feeling of frustration. Be more and more open and passive, and you will be able to feel this 'experiencing'. Frustration is the result of attachment and expectation. Divine love suffers no attachment. It does not suffer frustration. Therefore, there can be no frustration where there is divine love.

As a matter of fact, it is the ego which becomes elated, excited or frustrated. How can there be frustration where there is no ego? Can there be headache without a head? Attachment strengthens the ego. Divine love weakens the ego and ultimately destroys it.

Q: Are not spiritual experiences the sign of inner evolution?

Swamiji: Yes, spiritual experiences indicate that your *sadhana* is going on the right path. But spiritual experiences may come or may not come, or may come in different forms and in various orders to different seekers. At a certain stage, they stop coming altogether. It does not mean that the progress of the seeker has stopped. The seeker should not become attached to any inner experience, however transporting it may be. As a matter of fact, all experiences in which the experiencer, the experience and the object of the experience are separate and distinct, split the consciousness and, therefore, are incomplete.

Q: Is the 'experiencing' the sum total of the experiencer, the experience and the object of the experience?

Swamiji: 'Experiencing' is not the sum total of the experiencer, the experience and the object of the experience. It is simple and indivisible. If it were a compound, it would be subject to dissolution and disintegration. All compounds are breakable.

Q: Two years ago I had a beautiful feeling, that you were my father. Now I cannot recollect that feeling and feel rather that you are the *Guru*. I feel sadness as I miss that feeling.

Swamiji: Everyone has one's own feelings and opinions about me. Maybe you have changed, or maybe I have changed. Who will decide it? Father is only a father, but the *Guru* is a father, a friend, a mother, a teacher, a spiritual guide and so on at the same time. The seeker can feel any of them in the *Guru* according to his/her feelings. Moreover, a *Guru* can be one who is a Realized One. As for myself, you can take me for what you want and my response will be according to your needs. Will you please explain a little of what you actually mean when you use the words 'father' and '*Guru*'?

Q: A *Guru*, for me, is one who is strong and very powerful, on whom I can take support. A father is the one who gives me consolation.

Swamiji: I will try to be one of them. Which would you like? What do you want me to be, a father or a *Guru*?

Q: In my dream last night, my mother came to me and I refused to see her. I am surprised about that because I believed I was free of her. But if I refused to see her, it must mean I am not free at all. What do you think about that?

Swamiji: Had you not refused to see your mother, or rather, had you welcomed her, would it have affected your freedom from her? How? What is the definition of freedom? Whom can we call a free person?

Q: I have many problems due to my mother's imposing attitude. I thought myself to be free of her. Would you help me to solve my past?

Swamiji: Freedom means to be free from ego. When you have no ego, no one can hurt you or bind you. Whether it is my mother or my father, my friend or my enemy, they cannot bind me, if I am not attached to them.

Q: She has not been a good mother to me and to my brother. I become disturbed when I remember her. What should I do?

Swamiji: Mother is a symbol of love incarnate. In this world, the love of the mother for her children is taken as most selfless. Exceptions apart, a mother can never think badly about her children. This is very exceptional. It seems she must have been your enemy in her past life.

Q: [Someone spoke about his dream which was disturbing him].

Swamiji: Well, a dream is a dream. Do not take it very seriously. Do not make it a problem for you. There are already so many problems a person has to face in this life.

Q: Is it possible for me, at the level where I am, to give the *mantra* 'OM' to those of my *Yoga* students who are advanced enough? I read in the *Mandukya Upanishad* that the *japa* of *OM* can cure many diseases.

Swamiji: *OM* is a very powerful *mantra*. Its vibrations are the strongest. It is the source of all words. It is used as the symbol of the Divine in all its divine aspects and, in all the major religions of the world, *OM* is practised. Yes, its power can cure even physical diseases, but that would be its minimum use. The ailments of the body are a part of life on earth. They are associated with the body, as form is associated with any object. The highest use of *OM* is in its practice for one's spiritual evolution. Its recitation purifies the mind and makes it quiet and calm. You may persuade your students to mentally recite *OM* sweetly. It will surely help them in gaining equilibrium of mind and peace. *OM* can be used along with other *mantras* also — with the *mantras* of the path of devotion as well as those associated with the path of knowledge.

Some diseases like blood pressure, heart ailments, etc. are directly related in most cases to the tension and stress in the mind. If the mind becomes quiet and peaceful, these diseases are usually cured. Because the recitation of *OM* removes the tensions of the mind, it is natural that many diseases of the body are cured by it.

Q: Can *OM* mantra also cure AIDS?

Swamiji: The vibrations of *OM* can eliminate all types of viruses. Cannot God cure all diseases? But very few people have real trust in God. Faith in God can move mountains.

AIDS is spreading fast in all the countries, especially the developing countries. People can contract HIV in different ways. Those who are addicted to narcotics and are prone to sexual promiscuity are in the high-risk group with regard to HIV contamination.

The recitation of *OM* purifies your mind. It could not only cure but also prevent diseases. This is not to say that those who have contracted any disease should discontinue medical treatment. However, the greatest disease is the ignorance of the Self.

Q: Concerning the disease of ignorance of oneself, I remember having read in one of Arnauld's book that the first lie is the lie of the mind. We lie all the time and are unaware of it. I am sure that my heart is full of love and joy, but a part in me is jealous, angry, full of desires, etc., and yet, there is another part which is polite. How then can I find the Truth?

Swamiji: Man has a very complex personality. His mind is the sum total of so many desires, emotions, thoughts, ambitions, likes and dislikes, impressions, etc. Some of his desires are even mutually paradoxical. It creates conflict and tension in him. In one School of Hindu philosophy, it is called the conflict between the three *gunas* called *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. Every *guna* struggles to dominate the other two.

However, the mind is not the real and essential Being of man. Above mind is the soul of man. The soul has the power to tame the mind and create harmony and balance. The seeker has to discriminate between mind, soul and the Spirit and assert one's true and essential Nature. Then he/she can unify one's mind and use it for one's spiritual evolution. When the master is weak the servants take over the charge of the house and run it as they wish. When you are weak, the mind can easily rule you.

Q: It is so difficult to concentrate. What should I do?

Swamiji: You have been sitting here for the last twenty minutes and listening with concentration. How could you concentrate here for twenty minutes? The fact is that the attention follows one's deep interest. Where and when you are deeply interested, you become attentive and concentrated. *Puja* and meditation require deeper interest, regular practice, right method or technique, *shraddha* and perseverance. Concentrating within is doubtlessly more difficult than concentrating on any outer object. However, if one is sincere, it is surely possible to hold one's mind to anything one wants to.

Q: How can I keep faith in God even when difficult events occur in my life?

Swamiji: It is true that in difficult and unfavourable conditions it is not easy to keep faith in God, but God is the most intelligent Mother. He does not fulfil all the desires of His devotees. He may sometimes create such situations for His devotees, which are difficult, but in which the devotees

need to learn some lessons. Most of the greatest scientists believed in the existence of God. Read the lives of great saints and Holy Scriptures that give you inspiration. This inspiration will help you in dispelling many of your doubts. Self-verification is the greatest proof.

There are systems and approaches in Hinduism in which one has no need to have prior faith or *shraddha* in the Divine. One can follow those systems, make experiments and finally realize the existence of the timeless and eternal Consciousness.

In India there is a saying, “When someone is in trouble or pain, one spontaneously cries ‘mother, mother’. And the very word ‘mother’ relieves some of the pain”. When an innocent child wants to touch the fire out of curiosity, its mother pulls it back. The child weeps but the mother does not allow it to touch the fire. Similarly God does not allow his/her devotee to put his/her hand into the fire even if the latter weeps and cries, wanting to do so. God looks to the long-term welfare of his devotees.

Q: How can we discriminate between mind, soul and Spirit? Is it the soul that discriminates?

Swamiji: Can’t you see your mind? You often say, “My mind is thinking this, thinking that. My mind is not pure, my mind is full of anger, my mind is happy, my mind is dull and so on and so forth”. Does it not mean that you are different from your mind? That which observes or drives the mind is the soul. The soul is like the driver and the mind is like a vehicle. If the driver driving the car says, “I am the car”, will it not

be absurd? If a person living in a house says, "I am the house," he will surely be a stupid person.

Q: What is the relation between mind, soul and the Spirit?

Swamiji: There is a Universal and Supreme Soul. It is called God. It has the universal mind. There is the individual soul with an individual mind. It is called *jiva*. Spirit is the common denominator of God and *jiva*. It is called *Brahman* or Godhead. It is the timeless and eternal Consciousness. It is the Spirit.

Q: I have observed that I can repeat the *mantra* and even hear it mentally, at the same time. However, as I am in the process of thinking, it is as if I have descended in the heart-centre and thoughts have got hold of my head.

Swamiji: Reciting the *mantra* mentally and, at the same time, hearing the *mantra* should normally stop the thinking process. If your thinking process still goes on, it will probably be due to your thinking on the meaning of the *mantra*. If you hear some word and start interpreting it, the thinking process starts. 'Hearing' means that you have simply to hear the sound of the *mantra* and have not to contemplate on its meaning.

Moreover, you should recite the *mantra* and hear it at the same time. Your mind is split into two parts at that time, the active part and the passive part. The active part of the mind is engaged in reciting the *mantra* and the passive part is attentive in hearing the sound of the *mantra*. Then, which is the other part that is thinking? You should reflect upon

this. I think, instead of hearing the *mantra*, you start contemplating on the meaning of the *mantra*. If you do so, it becomes meditation instead of *japa*.

Q: During meditation, sometimes there is pain in the forehead. Why is it so? How can I stop this pain?

Swamiji: Pain or heat is felt at the forehead during meditation when there is forced concentration. This happens, if you meditate more than your capacity, or if your meditation is not smooth and is full of tension and strain. In that case, the meditation should be stopped and one should simply relax. Relaxation, doing nothing and sitting quietly is one of the best meditations. The other way, is that you should couple meditation with divine love. No lover can ever feel pain in his/her forehead when meditating on or remembering his/her beloved.

Q: While working, I am not thinking but only concentrating on my work. During my work my mind does not go anywhere but it becomes disturbed when I sit in meditation. Why?

Swamiji: This is a sort of misunderstanding. When you are preoccupied with some work, you are absorbed in that work. You don't see the movement of your mind. You are moving with the movement of the mind. You become identified with that movement. But during meditation, you start seeing the movement of your mind and you feel as if your mind has started moving fast. The fact is, that during meditation you have simply become aware of the movements of your mind. During your work, you are not aware of the movement of

your mind. You are identified with the working of your mind. Non-doing is more difficult for a person of active nature than doing something. What is important, is not in doing something or not doing something. What is important is to remain aware in all the states.

Q: I cannot meditate for four hours a day!

Swamiji: You will have Realization when you are able to meditate on God ceaselessly. Is it difficult for you to sit near your beloved? Do you count the minutes and hours when you sit near your beloved? Let God be your Beloved One! Make the Infinite your Beloved. Make the Eternal your Beloved.

Q: I observe in meditation how much I nourish my thinking process — it seems unending.

Swamiji: It is wrong. You don't observe in meditation. You become one with your thinking process, and it goes on. How can you get rid of a thing when you close your eyes to it? It is said that when a pigeon sees a cat coming to kill it, it closes its eyes and thinks that there is no cat at all. The cat comes and eats the pigeon! To be in control of your mind, first you have to observe it, watch it, accept its positive suggestions and refuse its negative suggestions. Don't be like that pigeon who closes its eyes when it sees the cat.

Q: Are the soul and the heart the same?

Swamiji: Heart, mind, intellect, ego and body are the instruments of the soul. Soul is the master, but it has turned

into a slave. It has to regain its mastery. Soul is the spark of God. You have to learn to use your heart, mind, intellect, ego and body instead of being used by them. The practice to regain one's true status is called *sadhana*.

Q: I always see you answering our questions. Do you not sometimes feel like asking us some questions?

Swamiji: Often I put questions to the seekers, which impel them to have second thoughts about how they are spending or say, wasting their valuable lives. Most of the questions I ask them are in the form of jokes, which everyone enjoys. They imply very deep clues to the spiritual life.

Chapter Fourteen

“Desire means the longing for something which is temporal and separate from oneself. The Divine is neither temporal nor is it essentially separate from the seeker. The word ‘desire’ for God-Realization is a misnomer. It is the innate and irresistible urge of the soul to merge into its source. It is like the ‘aspiration’ of a fish to be in water.”



Q: I suffer, as I am unable to express to others the love, which I feel inside me. The problem is I cannot give to others the love I want, because I am closed. What should I do to open and speak without fear?

Swamiji: When you say you want to give love, you are not sincere; you actually want to get it. The important thing is to feel love. The feeling of love gives joy. It is not necessary to express one's love. Love has its own divine vibration, which is felt by those who are near and open. Those who are closed cannot feel the love vibrations. If you feel the love within you, how can you say that you are closed? And why should you suffer? How can a heart full of love suffer? It reminds me a couplet from an Urdu poet, which says, "Those, whose love is true and sincere, don't need to express it. Though their lips are sealed with silence, they are ever full of joy and remembrance of their beloved, in their hearts".

Maybe you don't really love. You want to give love for getting it back and, when you do not get it, you suffer. You should give love, and it will come back to you manifold. Whatever you give, it comes back to you manifold. Do not seek love. Give love to others, and it will come to you without seeking. Do not give love to others with the expectation that you will get it back manifold. If you do so, then you are not loving but investing your love.

Q: Will you, please, explain in simple words the practice of reflection, and the practice of *japa*?

Swamiji: The material part of the mind does something (it acts), the spiritual part simply observes, sees or listens without interpreting. When an action or activity becomes automatic, it means it has been taken over by the subconscious mind. All involuntary activities like breathing, circulation of blood, digestion, functioning of the muscles, etc., are done by the subconscious mind. The conscious mind has no control over them. Even most of the thoughts are mechanical, and are controlled by the subconscious mind.

In the case of the practice of *japa*, the part of the mind, which recites the *mantra*, is the material part, and that which listens (without interpreting it) is the passive but alert part. The purpose of the practice of *japa* is to stop the thinking process. During *japa*, one should not contemplate on the meaning of the *mantra*, otherwise the mind will keep on thinking. During the *mantra japa* one has simply to remain aware of the *mantra*, which is being recited by the active part. This practice gradually leads, to the silence of mind and cessation of thoughts.

The other method is reflection in which you have to think on some divine Form or Image, as that of Shiva, Krishna or Christ, or even some Enlightened sage, or remember them through their divine *lilas*. It keeps the mind occupied with thinking of the divine personality, which one can enjoy. But one should not mix up the different practices. One should practise only one method at a time. All practices in the end lead to the same goal — purification and silence of the mind, resulting in simple alertness or awareness.

Q: Is 'experiencing' the same as 'witnessing'?

Swamiji: 'Experiencing' is ceaseless awareness. It is constant and present in all states. It is there in ignorance, as it is there in wisdom. You can never be without it. It may have content or not. When there is content in awareness and the content is being witnessed without thinking, this awareness is called the 'witnessing consciousness'. 'Witnessing' is, as it were, directed awareness, but without involvement in what it is directed to. Experience comes and goes. Experience is in time. 'Experiencing' is timeless.

Q: What is meant by 'to die for God'?

Swamiji: The desire to live is the strongest desire in man. No man wants to die. Death snatches from you all your possessions, your wealth, your house, your relatives, and your friends. You have to go from the world against your will. 'To live for God' is clear. It means that your only aim of life should be God-Realization and that you should work for it whole-heartedly, with your heart and soul. 'To die for God' means that the seeker should be prepared to give up and sacrifice all that one has, for the sake of God-Realization — one's house, one's wealth, one's near and dear ones, one's desires, one's worldly ambitions, one's mind and even one's body for the sake of God.

Q: Should death of the ego happen before death of the body, what happens when death occurs?

Swamiji: Death means that the heart stops beating, the brain stops functioning, the circulation of blood stops in the body, all the muscles die, the metabolic process stops, the soul

leaves the body and goes away, taking its mind with it to the other worlds according to its *karmas* and tendencies. Practically, it means the separation of the soul from the gross body.

While living in the body, the Realized One is called '*jivanmukta*'. When he/she has shed his/her physical body, he/she becomes *videhamukta*. '*Videha*' means 'without body'.

Q: So ego survives death?

Swamiji: Ego means rarefied mind. The ego of a person who is not Self-Realized does not die when the physical body dies. It goes along with the soul.

Q: At the moment of Realization, do the mind and the ego become one?

Swamiji: When Realization happens, your identification with the ego/mind is broken. The ego becomes a spent force and subsides in due course of time when the *karmas* (*prarabdha*) of the body are exhausted. The soul becomes free of ego and realizes its prototype, the Spirit, that is, the eternal and timeless Consciousness.

Q: Why do Hindus burn the dead body? Is it better to burn it?

Swamiji: When a body is burnt, it is transformed into three things — ashes, smoke and light, — just as when you burn wood. The soul, which was attached to the body before death, now finds three parts of the body. It then associates itself

with one part according to its *karmas* and impressions. It either associates itself with the ashes, or with the smoke or with the light, and thus follows three different paths for its next journey according to its *karmas*. To burn the dead body after death as early as possible is most scientific. For those who have realized their true Being during their lives, there is no rule. You can do what you like with their dead bodies.

Q: Should I give instructions that my body be burnt after my death?

Swamiji: It is better you make best use of your body while you are alive than to be worried about what should be done with your dead body.

Q: What are the consequences of being buried?

Swamiji: The soul is very much attached to the body and does not want to go ahead in the next journey. It roams around the dead body as a ghost as long as the body is not completely destroyed. So it is best to destroy the body as early as possible.

Q: What about the modern method of electric cremation?

Swamiji: There is smoke, ashes and light even when the body is burnt in an electrical device.

Q: I do not want to be eaten up by my social life. What should I do to maintain my constant interest in the spiritual path?

Swamiji: The most important factor is the regular association with spiritual persons or the reading of spiritual books. If you carry on regularly with these, you can maintain your spiritual interest. Moreover, reflection on the experiences of one's life, sifting the eternal from the temporal, and the important from the unimportant, must be regularly practised.

The eternal and lasting values of life attract and interest only the discerning person. The hypnotism of *maya*, the glitter of the world is so strong, that even wise people often succumb to its tricks. Therefore, regular prayer is also a must. It is undisputedly accepted, as expressed in the *Gita* and other Holy Scriptures, that the illusory power of *maya* is very, very strong and overwhelming. Only those who seek the divine help by invoking God's grace continuously can cross over the binding and deluding power of *maya*.

Should you maintain your spiritual interest through association with spiritual people, continue the reading of spiritual books that give you inspiration, and conduct daily prayers, it will not be difficult for you to sit in meditation and other spiritual exercises daily. When you feel hungry, you do something to appease your hunger. When you become sincerely interested in spiritual life, you do start sitting in meditation and taming your senses and mind. It shows the sincerity of your spiritual interest and aspiration.

Q: Is discrimination obtained by concentration or/and meditation?

Swamiji: It is rather, the other way round. You are helped in meditation by thinking upon the experiences of your life with a composed mind. It is not through the experience that

you grow (all animals experience sensual pleasures, but they do not grow), it is by reflection upon the experiences that one grows and evolves. Discrimination comes through association with wise people and by reflection upon the inspiring words of the Holy Scriptures and sages.

Q: I don't understand. Do you mean that sensual experience is a wrong way to discriminate?

Swamiji: Animals see, eat, drink, and experience conjugal unions, fight, and love as men do. But they cannot reflect upon their experiences, learn and grow. Because they forget the act soon after they have done it, they cannot reflect on the result; they cannot discriminate and take decisions. Man has the thinking faculty. He can assess situations, restrain himself, control his anger, reflect on the result of an action and learn. He can feel the need of God. He can be attracted by eternal values of life.

Q: I have no faith, and I don't know how to get it.

Swamiji: Man cannot live without faith. Even in daily dealings you must have faith. You have faith that you will still be alive tomorrow. If you do not believe this, it will be difficult for you to live. But some people do not have faith in God. Their attitude is, "Let us first see God, and then we will have faith in Him". The *Samkhya* system of Hinduism has two branches. One branch believes in the existence of God. The other does not. It only believes in the existence of the non-qualified, eternal Consciousness but not in God as Creator of the universe.

Buddhism and Jainism are offshoots of Hinduism. They also do not believe in the existence of a Creator of this universe. Jainism believes in the existence of the immortal *Atman*, and Buddhism doesn't believe in anything which doesn't change. For Buddhism change is fundamental.

In the *Yoga* system also it is not necessary to first believe in the existence of God in order to practise *yoga*. There is an option. If you practise *yoga*, you may have faith in God, or you may not have faith in God. *Yoga* defines God as '*Purusha vishesha*', that is, 'special *Purusha*' or 'Consciousness'.

If you have no faith in God, do not be discouraged. Practise silent meditation. Just watch your thoughts or your breathing process. Associate yourself with people who have deep devotion and faith in God.

Q: What does '*Shrauta-Smarta Dharma*' mean?

Swamiji: '*Shrauta-Smarta Dharma*' means the religion based on the *Vedas* and *Puranas*. The word '*Shrauta*' comes from '*Shruti*', which means *Veda* (revelation). '*Smarta*' comes from '*Smriti*', 'that which is remembered'. '*Smritis*' are the holy books, which were written on the basis of memory, coming down to the level of the mind. They are not part of the *Veda*. Revelation is supramental and direct. '*Smriti*' means the memory of the revelation, which a purified mind can retain and allow to come up again. '*Shrauta-Smarta Dharma*' is what is called '*Sanatana Dharma*'. Literally '*Sanatana Dharma*' means the 'Eternal Religion'.

Q: '*Drashta*', does it mean the 'Seer'?

Swamiji: 'Seer' or '*drashta*' have practically the same meaning. 'Seer' is the English word, while '*drashta*' is the Sanskrit word. '*Drashta*' means 'one who sees'. '*Purusha*' means 'consciousness'. It may be used for '*jiva*', that is, the individualized consciousness, or for the 'Spirit', that is, pure Consciousness. It may also be used for the 'Supreme *Purusha*'. Then it is called '*Purushottama*'. Essentially, there is no difference between the different *Purushas*.

Q: "The non-dual manifests into many" — what does it mean?

Swamiji: To say that *Brahman* is non-dual is to convey that *Brahman* is not separate from manifestation. *Brahman* manifests into many and yet remains One.

Q: In *Vedanta* do we not say that God is One?

Swamiji: If you say 'one', it looks as if it is different from two or three. The mind has its own way of understanding. If I say 'X' is not a good person, people will understand that I am saying 'X' is a bad person. Mind can grasp only in the language of opposites, therefore mind can never comprehend the Existence, which is non-dual. When it is said that God is One, it means that God who created the world is One. The world is not created by many gods. It is called 'monotheism'. Hinduism is basically monotheistic. The different gods in Hinduism are the parts of the manifestation of the One, who becomes many without losing its Oneness.

Q: Yesterday, you spoke about your life in the forest, which was very inspiring. Please, tell us a little more about it.

Swamiji: Usually, I do not speak of myself. Yesterday, we were talking about the life of Lord Buddha when he lived in forests and practised self-mortification. It reminded me of some similar situations which I faced when I used to stay in the forest. So I referred to some of them, casually. I am actually not interested in thinking of the past. There is a saying, “When you have found your beloved, all the pains you have taken to find your beloved are forgotten”. It is all past now. Most of the memories of the past are forgotten. At the time of living in the forest and the cave, I was in a different state of mind. For me, life at that time had no meaning without Self-Realization. In a sense, I had accepted to die and was prepared for death without God-Realization. So, I never cared for food or shelter or about the danger of wild animals. But God and Babaji protected me always. Should I tell those happenings, some people would not even believe them. And what is the use of talking about the past. Let us talk about the Divine.

Q: You said, “let us talk of the Divine”. I do not know what the Divine is. So I cannot speak about something that I do not know. For me the Divine is love and joy, which are simple. Can I say that the Divine is only simplicity? Is it right to say that the only obstacle to Realization is the mind/body?

Swamiji: What difference does the name make? You can call God love, joy, freedom, simplicity or what you like. Do you think love is simple, or joy is simple? If joy and love were so simple, everyone would be full of love and joy. But who

is full of love and joy? Most people confuse love with attachment and joy with sensual pleasures. You will find very few people full of joy and love, and those people will mostly be those who are, in one way or the other, aware of the Divine. The Divine denotes what is infinite, immortal and everlasting. Are you not in search of something, which is lasting? Do you seek the joy, which is lasting? Do you seek love, which is lasting? There is no lasting joy in the finite, declare the *rishis*. And it is one hundred per cent true. One should not confound joy with excitement. Every excitement ends with depression and frustration. Every excitement leaves behind a 'hang over', and then, you want more and more excitement, and there is no satisfaction because it is not lasting. How can anything, which is not lasting, give you lasting satisfaction?

You say you do not know the Divine, but don't you want to know the Divine? What are you seeking? Okay, talk of joy and love. What is joy? What is love? Will you please tell me what is love? Will you please tell me what is joy?

Q: I spoke of simplicity, but I did not say it was easy. Now, what is love? And what is the difference between love and attachment?

Swamiji: Love and attachment are like light and darkness. How can you be in the light and in the darkness at the same time? Can you? When the light comes, the darkness vanishes. One becomes attached only when one has no love. Attachment is the substitute for love. Love makes you free. Attachment binds.

Q: Is it right that there are degrees of love with different persons?

Swamiji: There are no degrees of love. There are degrees of attachment. There are degrees of darkness. There are no degrees in the light of Consciousness. The light of a simple candle can dispel the darkness accumulated in a cave for millions of years. Light is more qualitative. Darkness is more quantitative. Light is spiritual. Darkness is material. Love is the panacea of all maladies.

Q: What are 'sattva' and 'tamas'?

Swamiji: 'Sattva' and 'tamas' are two qualities of *Prakriti*. The third quality is 'rajas'. *Prakriti* or 'Nature' is the composite of these three qualities/attributes.

Q: In my mind I understand very well the difference between love and attachment, but in practice I am full of attachment to possessions and people. Could you guide me as to how I can give up attachment?

Swamiji: To understand intellectually what is attachment is not so difficult. A person with a little reflection can understand it. But to be detached needs a lot of right understanding, sincere effort, discipline, prayer, meditation, breathing exercises, regular and unbroken reflections on the futility and troubles of being attached to temporal things, possessions, situations and relationships. Should you foot that bill, you will surely be free of attachment.

Q: I thought of seeking your advice many times, but I felt it was not correct, so you did not help me.

Swamiji: If you did not ask me, it was not my fault. Is it not correct? Had you asked me for the help, I would have helped you if I could.

Q: If I surrender to God completely, where shall I get my food and other needs of life?

Swamiji: In India when a woman is married, she gives up her parental home — father, mother, brothers, sisters — and goes to live with her husband. She does not claim on her parents' property. She renounces everything and every relationship for the sake of her husband. She takes her husband as God incarnate. And it is believed in Hinduism that a woman can achieve God-Realization by serving her husband taking him to be God. She lives for her husband and dies for her husband. She does not need to do any other *sadhana* for God-Realization. Such is (was) the relationship of a woman to her husband in India. And her husband reciprocated and gave full protection to his wife. He was responsible for her physical, mental and spiritual upliftment. It was his foremost duty to provide all kinds of security to her, even at the risk of his life. Their mutual loyalty was unbreakable. Nothing in the world could sever this loyalty.

Once a seeker asked Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, “The devotees who renounce their jobs, their parents, their home, their everything, from where do they get food to eat and shelter to live?” Ramakrishna said, “A wife who has renounced everything for serving her husband, can she remain without food? If she does not, for the sake of

argument, get food, she can force her husband to supply food and other means for her sustenance”. It may not be understandable in the West. But it was actually so in India long ago.

Should you surrender to God completely, He will take care of you in every respect. How can you expect that God, if He cannot give you food and shelter, can give you salvation, freedom and Enlightenment? Is Enlightenment cheaper or easier to get than food and shelter?

Q: What is the difference between pure mind and ‘no-mind’?

Swamiji: The state of ‘no-mind’, is the state in which you are not identified even with the pure mind. In the state of ‘no-mind’, you cease to react, cease to prefer, and cease to think of the past and future. Pure mind is the mind, which is free from lust, greed, anger, ambition and all negative tendencies.

Q: Could you please explain a little further, “The more the ego reduces itself, the less strong is the suffering?”

Swamiji: Yes! Ego is the main source of suffering which includes both pleasure and pain. Ego is born of the identification of the soul with the body/mind. The relationship between souls is also through body/mind. The soul reacts to situations through its mind and feels pleasure or pain. Pleasure is the favourable sensation, while what is called pain is the unfavourable sensation, and they are interchangeable. The ego/mind works like spectacles and influences the perspective of the soul.

When one comes to realize directly one's true Being which is beyond the mind and beyond the ego, the identification of the soul with the body or mind is broken forever and there is an end to suffering. The Realized One enters the kingdom of heaven while still living in the body. Some call it 'nirvana', others call it 'Freedom', and still others call it 'Self-Realization'.

Q: I see myself on the correct road, which seems endless. I need someone to tell me to keep going. With help I might reach the destination, but without assistance I am afraid I will look for short cuts and get lost. At the same time, I find it difficult to surrender. It seems like a catch-22 situation!

Swamiji: When your beloved is calling and you hear that call, do you not start running to him/her? Would you feel that the road is long and hard? Would you expect someone to tell you, "keep going"? Your love for your beloved makes the path easy and interesting. The seeker of Truth falls in love with the Eternal. True love never looks for short cuts. Love is the means and love is the end. The lover can never go astray when he/she is following the call of the beloved. The search for Truth is, as it were, a love affair of the seeker with God, the absolute Consciousness. It entails loyalty unsurpassed. If you have true love, the question of going astray does not arise because love has the quality of supramental intuition and divine Light. You need not seek anyone's help. Only keep in touch with those who are Enlightened and who are mad with divine love. It will purify your heart and clarify your vision more and more.

To keep in touch with an Enlightened One does not necessarily mean to be always with him/her physically. It

means to be in harmony with and open to your spiritual mentor. He/she will make you surrender to the Divine within you, in spite of your opposition.

Q: We can see this child here feeling so happy to receive used foreign stamps. Is it not stupid to collect the used stamps? It makes me laugh when I see this.

Swamiji: Excuse me, but you are doing the same thing in a different manner — collecting used and second-hand information of what others have said about God and Truth.

Q: This information will be used to prepare books, and the books are surely useful for the seekers, aren't they?

Swamiji: Yes, these books are as useful as maps are useful. But if you are only satisfied with seeing the map of Switzerland, instead of going to see Switzerland for yourself, then the reading of a map becomes a hindrance. Spiritual books are like the menu of a very tasteful and delicious food, but most people start, as it were, eating the menu instead of going for that delicious and sweet food mentioned in the menu.

Q: I am confused with what you said about 'love.'

Swamiji: I am not confusing you. Maybe I am bringing out the confusion which is hidden in you. How can one who is not already confused, be confused? Is it confusing you, or exhorting you to experience for yourself that divine love?

Q: Maybe it is attracting me?

Swamiji: Well, being confused and being attracted are different, rather opposite things.

Q: What is '*karma*'?

Swamiji: '*Karma*' means an action performed consciously with good or bad intention. It is, as it were, a mirror in which the face of your mind can be seen. *Karma* is like a seed. When you sow a seed, it bears fruits sooner or later. If you sow wheat you reap the fruits of wheat, if you sow gram you get grams manifold. You reap what you sow. This is the law of cause and effect. The law of *karma* is the law of cause and effect. There can be no effect without a cause, whether you can see the cause or not. When you repeat a *karma* again and again, it becomes a habit, an automatic action. Then you become subservient to that action; you cannot control it. Your *karma* becomes mechanical. Habit becomes your second nature, and you try to justify your actions.

Q: Who is the doer?

Swamiji: The doer is the *jiva*, the soul. It is the *jiva* who sows the seeds of *karma*, and it is the *jiva* who reaps the fruits of its *karma*. This is pure justice. It is strange that some Schools of thought believe in the *karma* theory but deny the existence of the soul. Action must involve a doer. How can there be an action, a doing, without a doer? As long as there is a doer, there will be *karma* and the doer has to bear the fruits of the *karma*.

Q: Materialistic desires create *karma*. Desire to realize God is a desire also. Does it not create a *karma*? Is it not a selfish desire?

Swamiji: Some people live and die for themselves. Some live and die for their families. Some live and die for their nation, society or country. There are few who live and die for God. Should we call these few people selfish? It is a question of values. Any temporal value howsoever high it may be, cannot be compared with the eternal value. To live for the Truth, for God, for the Absolute, is the highest and deepest aspiration for an Awakened soul. To call it 'desire' is quite absurd. Desire means the longing for something which is temporal and separate from oneself. The Divine is neither temporal nor is it essentially separate from the seeker. The word 'desire' for God-Realization is a misnomer. It is the innate and irresistible urge of the soul to merge into its source. It is like the 'aspiration' of a fish to be in water. Would you call a fish selfish if it pants for water?

Q: Why are emotions there? Why should I control them?

Swamiji: What do you want to be? Do you want to be the slave of your emotions or the master of them?

Q: What should I do when I feel sad?

Swamiji: When you feel sad, you should 'see' your sadness and it will disappear. Be wary! Seeing is not analysing. Or, you should remember someone whom you love deeply, and your sadness will go.

Q: When Hitler murdered so many people, who was responsible?

Swamiji: Hitler and his men who obeyed his orders to kill!

Q: A man tries to come out of the vicious circle of *rajas* and *tamas* by leading a *sattvic* life. He still undergoes suffering which he accepts as *prasad* of the Lord, and does not create any desire nor ask for *moksha*. Why is he misunderstood?

Swamiji: The qualities of *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* cannot be absolutely separated. Each quality is trying to dominate the other one. *Sattva* is trying to dominate *rajas* and vice versa. There is a continuous struggle between them. The soul is identified with these qualities (*gunas*) and behaves and acts under their influences. *Sattva* cannot lead one out of the suffering. It creates its own type of suffering, but its suffering has a *sattvic* quality and it purifies one's mind. To accept suffering as *prasad* of God is itself a *sattvic* quality, and it also reduces the intensity of the suffering. It may even stop the feeling of suffering. Above all, when one remembers God, even though it is because of suffering, it must purify one's mind.

Q: I saw a cow of the *ashram* dying today. She was suffering. Why does a cow suffer? Could we say that she was a human being in one of her past lives and committed bad *karmas* for which she was suffering now? If the purpose of suffering is to make the sufferer learn and grow, how can the suffering of which she does not know the cause, teach her?

Swamiji: A cow or another animal does not mentally suffer as man does. An animal suffers only physically and instinctively. A man suffers physically and mentally. An animal cannot learn from his suffering. A man can!

Why does an animal suffer? Well, there is no need for a seeker of God to know it. Man can, however, learn even from observing the suffering of animals. Man has to take birth again in an animal form, if he lives like an animal overpowered by the animal instincts, that is, if instead of outgrowing these instincts, he becomes more subservient to them.

Q: Whilst an animal is doomed to suffering and cannot change its lot, man creates bad *karmas* which brings him to a lower level below human beings. So we should observe an increase in animals and a decrease of human beings. Instead the population of tigers is decreasing (these were around four thousand at the time of the partition of India and now they are only four hundred) and the population of human beings is increasing. Why is there this fallacy?

Swamiji: It is not only the lower life that evolves into a human being. There are innumerable planes of existence above the human level. The beings of those planes are highly evolved, more than men, but not completely Liberated. They also come down on earth as human beings to evolve further and be free. So some beings are coming up to the human level from animal life, some are coming down from higher worlds to human forms on this earth to be Liberated. There are infinite number of beings and infinite numbers of planes of existence, and there is an exodus of beings from one plane

to the other. You cannot keep an account of all the creatures who are changing their forms and *lokas*.

Your question would be valid if we consider only two planes or worlds. One of human beings and the other of animals, that is, of those who are subhuman. We cannot know from which plane the *jivas* are coming to the earth and how the human population would be affected. And thus, what about the population of mosquitoes, insects, ants, and so many other creatures? Why should we only consider the population of men and tigers?

Q: How long will it take to get rid of my mind?

Swamiji: First, tame and purify your mind. The mind is a very useful servant, but it is horrible when it assumes the role of a master. Purify your mind and offer it to God. Your mind becomes purified when you remember the Divine who is the embodiment of absolute Purity.

Q: But when completely ignorant, are we not very happy?

Swamiji: Then you are neither happy, nor unhappy. Then, you are totally immersed in ignorance. Then your satisfaction is the satisfaction of a donkey!

Q: Are there many Realized Ones at the present moment?

Swamiji: How can there be many Realized Ones? Is Realization a variety? In Realization, all the Realized Ones are one.

Q: How can we cure ignorance?

Swamiji: Ignorance is cured with divine wisdom. Anger can be cured with love. Jealousy can be cured with goodwill. Passion can be cured with compassion. Desire can be cured with desirelessness. Arrogance can be cured with humility. Ignorance can be cured only with divine knowledge.

Q: You have written a lot about selfless love. Unfortunately, I cannot experience it (not even towards my children). Can meditation help me to acquire such love and if so, how?

Swamiji: Selfless love means a love, which is not based on some vested interest, which is not based on the qualities of your beloved. A mother loves her child whether the child is beautiful or not, whether it is intelligent or unintelligent. There is a saying that the most beautiful person in the world, for a mother, is her child. I have seen mothers taking such motherly care of their children who did not recognize their mother at all due to some brain damage.

In Hinduism, the Divine or God is given the name of 'mother'. In all other religions, God is regarded as a father. Mother's love is the most selfless and unmotivated love. The more you grow in divine wisdom, the more selfless you become. Yes, right meditation makes you more and more selfless.

Q: During meditation on *vedantic* concepts like "Brahman alone is" should I recite my *Ishta mantra*?

Swamiji: Meditation and *mantra japa* should not be practised at the same time. In *mantra japa*, the *mantra* has to be recited

mentally and at the same time listened to, without thinking. The main purpose of *mantra japa* is to stop the thinking process. In the advanced stage of *mantra japa*, the reciting becomes effortless, and one only listens to the *mantra*. One only remains aware of the *mantra* being recited. After that, there are more advanced stages of this practice. In this practice, the attention should be kept at the heart-centre.

During meditation, one idea related to the Divine has to be concentrated upon at the *ajna chakra* on the forehead. The initial stages of meditation involve reflection on one divine Idea such as that of “*Brahman alone is*”, but the thinking process goes on. This is called ‘*manana*’. In the practice of advanced meditation called ‘*dhyana*’ or ‘*nididhyasana*’, the mind has to be riveted to that single divine Idea. Both *japa* and meditation ultimately lead to the same state, but they should not be practised at the same time.

Chapter Fifteen

“No Guru will tell you, ‘Please have trust in me. Believe me blindly’. Your lover or beloved may say so, but not a Guru — never! A Guru has no vested interest in you. A Guru means, one who has no vested interest in anyone. If you go to a Guru, it is your choice and your liberty. A Guru will not do anything to attract you, nor will he ever wish that you believe in him or not. He doesn’t need your trust nor your faith in him, as a banker needs proof of worthiness in his client, when the latter wants a loan. The Guru wants you to be open and receptive. You can be open and receptive only when you are trustful and faithful.”



Q: What is the difference between an activity and an action? Who is responsible?

Swamiji: An activity is a movement without a doer. An action must involve a doer. This is the main difference between an activity and an action.

A train moves. It is not doing any action. If a train is moving and someone is crushed under it, can the train be responsible? It is the driver who will be responsible. It is the doer who is responsible for the doing. When you cease to be a doer, when you become a conscious instrument of God, then God alone is responsible for your actions.

Q: I have no special emotion neither do I have any problems, but I find I am simply unable to concentrate. Please, would you help me?

Swamiji: Don't be discouraged by problems. They have to be faced and tackled. Lack of concentration or wandering of the mind, is a common problem. Even those who deliver great religious and spiritual discourses have to face this problem. As a matter of fact, such people face even more problems while sitting silent. Their minds are thinking of examples, arguments, ideas with which they can convince those who seek guidance from them.

If and when your mind wanders during meditation, don't identify yourself with this wandering. Just remain alert

and see the movement of the mind and it will stop. Do not try to fight with your mind. Just watch your mind and it slows down and stops thinking. Just see. Is seeing difficult?

What have you to do for seeing? You have to do nothing. Just watch. Just see the arguing process and it will stop. It is easier to be the President of your country than to have full control on your thought. Do you agree with me? Great men like the Buddha, Jesus, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharishi, were completely free from subservience to their minds and senses. They were the Kings of all kings.

Q: Can we experience the process of ‘non-thinking’ anywhere — on a road, in a car, etc.?

Swamiji: What is needed to walk on the road or to drive a car is attention. However, while learning to drive a car, both attention and thinking are required. You should first practise watching and stop the thinking process during your meditation.

Please, don’t try the method of ‘non-thinking’ while driving a car on the roads in Athens or in the bazaar of Chandni Chowk in Old Delhi. If you do so, you will create an accident.

Q: When I close my eyes, my mind still does not stop thinking. What should I do?

Swamiji: Yes, the closing of your eyes for meditation is not enough. You have to close the window of your mind also. That is what meditation is practised for.

Q: Are the processes of thought and the mind different or dependent upon each other?

Swamiji: Thought is only one dimension of the mind. The mind is comprised also of emotions, beliefs and reflections.

Q: Sometimes while carrying out activities like swimming, cleaning, cooking or listening to music, I am more in meditation (no thought, just being in the action) than while sitting for meditation. In this 'no-action' my mind drifts, — not necessarily thinking but remembering, associating, imagining. When I observe, it is after the thought has occurred, not simultaneously. Is this okay? Or how can I improve? How can I change the conditioning of my mind from anger, guilt, criticism and create space for new perspectives like love, bliss, unity, etc.?

Swamiji: To be absorbed in any action in order to escape one's thought, cannot be called meditation. It is like closing oneself in a room with the belief that now I am safe from death and no one can ever make me die. You cannot even remain closed in a room for a long time. An escape from thinking and emotions does not mean freedom from thoughts and emotions. Meditation does not mean forgetfulness. It means to be in simple wakefulness, simple awareness without any content, to be in the state of alert passivity, if I may use borrowed words.

There is no basic difference between thinking and imagining or associating and remembering your past. All this is the activity of the mind, a process of thinking which should be stopped during meditation while you remain conscious, wakeful and alert.

The first and foremost step to be free from your conditioning, is to know your conditioning. When you begin to see your conditioning, the conditioning begins to be de-conditioned. Conditioning cannot bear the light of Awareness. Conditioning is the result of acting and thinking, again and again, mechanically. The absence of conditioning creates space in you for freedom, love and unity.

Q: Could you tell us about *satsang*? What is the difference between *satsang* and meditation? Are these two paths along with *seva* enough to become realized?

Swamiji: *Satsang* means communication with the Truth. But how will you communicate with the Truth when you do not know it? So in common parlance, *satsang* means communication with those who have realized the Truth. Communication is possible only when you are open, when you are unbiased, when you are passive and alert, when your mind is calm and quiet, when your heart is full of trust and faith, and when you have the ability to listen — which is quite difficult to have. When someone speaks, instead of listening to the one who is speaking, you are listening to your own mind. To have the ability to listen, your mind must be silent. If your mind is closed and conditioned, then what you listen to is distorted by your mind.

Meditation is the method to make your mind silent. It is the preparation to be able to listen. It is the way to make your mind passive and alert. Meditation clarifies your vision; it unifies your mind. If your mind is not unified and pure, you cannot know who you really are. Have you ever seen your face in a mirror which is broken in many pieces? If not, you should try it, and you will laugh at your face seen in the

broken mirror. There is also what is called a laughing mirror. Have you ever seen your face in a laughing mirror? If not, please do it and you will be amazed to see your face. The mind of an ordinary man is like a laughing mirror. It shows your face in an amazingly different and unreal shape.

Seva is very effective to purify the mind. However, *seva* must be accompanied by love and reflection. Otherwise, you will not enjoy it nor will it purify your mind as it should. *Seva* without love, humility and selflessness may even puff up your ego and you may feel or even say, “See how much *seva* I am doing?” Selfless *seva* is in a way more difficult than meditation. It is much more difficult for those who are introverted and for those who are full of ego.

Q: How should I practise meditation?

Swamiji: All methods of meditation are generally very effective and useful, if practised with utmost sincerity, regularity, love, and total commitment. Treat them as appointments with the Divine. These methods are not mutually exclusive or contradictory. They are complementary and the practice of each method helps the others.

At one time, only one method should be practised, because it creates its own rhythm. When you sit in meditation, first of all pray to the Divine for say, five minutes, and then watch your breathing process for five minutes or so. It will regularize your breathing and equally distribute the energy, which eases the tension in the body and slows down the thinking process. After that you should practise the method of meditation of your liking, for about forty-five minutes or so, in one sitting. The method may be

positive or negative, dynamic, passive or neutral. The above is the right procedure of starting and practising meditation.

Some people sing devotional songs or read some inspiring verses from the Holy Scriptures before starting the meditation. These induce an attitude of love, dispassion, compassion, sincerity, detachment in the mind and heart, which helps in meditation. It is essential that, when you sit in meditation, the mind should be full of aspiration, spiritual interest and earnestness. If your mind is full of anger, hatred, anxiety, tension, curiosity or inertia when you sit in meditation, then the meditation intensifies the negative qualities. Meditation strengthens and gives energy to the feeling, thought, *bhava*, aspiration, inspiration, depression, or whatever is in your mind when you sit in meditation. So, for about fifteen minutes before starting the meditation, you have to prepare your mind for it. A prayer, a devotional song, some breathing exercise can be helpful in preparing your mind.

Q: Instead of relaxing and enjoying the things I have, i.e. family, career, money, etc., I seem to be doing things the hard way.

Swamiji: Things are dead. It is you who give them life. How can things give you life? Stop seeking enjoyment from what you have, stop seeking life from dead things. If you do so then, and then only, will you be able to really enjoy them.

Q: Money, family, power, status are usually considered necessary to enjoy life. How do they prevent us from evolving spiritually? And without them can a person be happy?

Swamiji: If your happiness depends upon money, family, power and status, you will feel insecure within. How can you remain relaxed when you are attached to things and situations which are not lasting? How can you enjoy a thing on which you depend? Can a slave ever enjoy his master?

Jesus said that you can really live if you die. I don't remember the exact words. Only if you give up the desire of enjoying, you will become full of joy. You know the story of the rich man who came to the Lord Jesus and asked him what he should do to receive eternal Life. Ever since he was young, he had obeyed all the commandments of the *Torah*¹⁰ and didn't know what else he needed to do. Jesus looked straight at him with love and said, "You need only one thing. Go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have riches in heaven; then come and follow me". When the man heard this, he went away sad, because he was very rich. He had no courage to do that. He was attached to all he had. Jesus remarked to his disciples, "How hard it will be for rich people to enter the Kingdom of God. It is much harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God than for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle". Obviously, he was referring to people like you!

Q: If we have faith in God, then we can enjoy His presence and live without worrying about the future. So what is the problem?

¹⁰ *Torah:* Hebrew term usually translated 'law'; designates the first five Books of the Bible, containing the Mosaic legislation.

Swamiji: Very nice! You should have faith in God and should live without worrying about the future. Then you should try to enjoy His presence. The problem is, how will a rat tie a bell on the neck of the cat? Have you heard this story? There were many rats in a house and a cat came to know of it. It started visiting the house. It would pounce on the rats and would kill one or two daily and eat them. It became a big problem for the rats. They convened a meeting, thought and thought over the problem. Finally they came to the conclusion that a bell should be tied on the neck of the cat so that, when it came along, the bell would ring, and they would run away and hide themselves in their holes. Then one rat said, "It is a very nice solution, but which one out of us is going to tie the bell on the neck of the cat?" So, in your case, how will you stop worrying about the future if you are attached to those things which are not lasting? How will you enjoy the presence of God unless and until you have realized Him? That is the problem!

Q: Many times you have answered about what to do while meditating. Yet, I am not sure about the procedure or about what is in my head during meditation. I feel an inner conflict more than anything else. Will you tell me again what I should do?

Swamiji: First of all, when you sit for meditation, you should pray to the Lord for five minutes or so, asking the Lord to give you a right understanding, the strength to face the challenges of life, as also to bless you with a devotion and love for Him. You can use any language for praying because God understands all languages. The prayer should come directly from your heart and be full of simple trust and faith

in the Divine. After prayer, practise conscious breathing for about ten minutes. To do that, you have to simply watch your breathing process without thinking anything. Just watch the incoming and outgoing of the breath in your body in a natural way. It will regularize your breathing process and diminish the tension in your body and mind.

After that, you can start your meditation, using one of the methods to which you are attracted and which you feel is easier to follow. You can read these methods in the book, *The Practical Approach to Divinity*, or in some other book, in which practical guidelines are given on meditation. Meditate for forty-five minutes with that method, so it will make a sitting of one hour. You may sit in meditation three, four or five times according to your situation and circumstances. Consistency of purpose, regularity, perseverance, sincerity and burning aspiration to realize the Truth, are the essential prerequisites of a successful meditation.

Q: Most of my life I have avoided being emotional. Nowadays, I am learning to feel, but at the same time I am not supposed to be identified with my emotions. What should I do?

Swamiji: Emotions comprise the vital part of the human nature. No human being can be without emotions. The seeker of Truth tames and sublimates his/her emotions, and uses them in the path to Realization. He/she is not overwhelmed by emotions but uses emotions in a constructive and positive way. He/she uses emotions and is not used by emotions. This is possible only when the seeker reaches quite an advanced

stage of spiritual life. The same is the case with the power of thinking. He/she uses the power of thinking and is not used by it. This capability comes to you gradually when you grow in meditation and *sadhana*.

Q: I have a dilemma about faith, belief and trust. I cannot accept it blindly and ‘buy’ the belief that the *Guru* will be there for me. On the other hand, if I don’t believe in the *Guru*, he surely won’t be there for me. I want to be able to trust, so that I will never be alone or afraid.

Swamiji: No one can live without faith, belief and trust in this world. You heard about me or read about me and trusted that I exist! Then you trusted that you would be able to meet me and see me, and you decided to come. Then you trusted that you would not die on the way but reach here and so you started to travel. You have been and you are always trusting and believing one thing or the other. Without belief and trust, you cannot even raise one step and move. What is ‘blind belief’ and what is not ‘blind belief’? All those beliefs which brought you here, were they blind or not? What testimony or reasoning had you, that I would answer your question? Did you not depend upon a ‘blind belief’ in this regard? Do you believe and trust your husband or not? Your family will soon break up if you have no trust in your family members. You first had trust in someone and then your family came into being. Is it not so?

Now, about the belief and trust in the *Guru*, no *Guru* will tell you, “Please have trust in me. Believe me blindly”. Your lover or beloved may say so, but not a *Guru* — never! A *Guru* has no vested interest in you. A *Guru* means, one

who has no vested interest in anyone. If you go to a *Guru*, it is your choice and your liberty. A *Guru* will not do anything to attract you, nor will he ever wish that you believe in him or not. He doesn't need your trust nor your faith in him, as a banker needs proof of worthiness in his client, when the latter wants a loan. The *Guru* wants you to be open and receptive. You can be open and receptive only when you are trustful and faithful.

Q: I am more and more aware of my essential Nature during meditation, but how can I retain this awareness when participating in my daily life activities?

Swamiji: Meditation is to the soul what food is to the body. When you sit in meditation and if your meditation is proper and successful, you gain spiritual strength and awareness. The Hindus sit in prayer and meditation four times in a day. Muslims offer *namaz* five times a day. Here in Sadhana Kendra Ashram, seekers sit in meditation four times. Why is it so? Why not sit only once in the morning? It is like taking food. You take your breakfast, then you take lunch, then evening tea and then dinner. But when you go into active social life, that strength and awareness slowly diminish. So, you have again to sit in meditation. So long as you are not permanently established in the infinite source of energy/awareness, you will lose again and again the strength and awareness, which you gain through meditation and prayer. You have to recharge your battery again and again. When you have realized your essential Nature and are established in it, then you will be able to keep awareness, even when you are participating in the day-to-day activities. Before that, you must sit in meditation at regular intervals

and you must also practise alertness in your day-to-day activities.

Q: What is meant by ‘using’ the emotions, the thoughts? Apart from observing them, what do you mean by ‘sublimating’ and ‘taming’ the emotions?

Swamiji: Do you know how to tame a wild horse? One can even tame a wild elephant and a lion. You can use a horse or an elephant, ride on them and take them anywhere. The same is the case with the mind which is full of emotions and thoughts. The mind is like a donkey. If you leave the donkey free, he will surely wander away into the fields of your neighbours and eat their crops.

You have to discipline your mind in such a way that it obeys you. You become the master of your mind. ‘*Swami*’ means ‘master’, master not of others but master of one’s own mind and senses. He/she can direct his mind and senses. His thoughts and emotions are under his complete control. The mind and senses can be trained by discipline and right understanding. When they are trained, you can use them in constructive purposes. Then you are not swayed by emotions. Then you can direct them to God also. That is what *sadhana* is for. Through sincere and prolonged *sadhana*, you can transform desire into aspiration and passion into compassion. *Sadhana* is the science of spiritual alchemy. Through *sadhana* you can transform the iron of mind into the gold of Spirit and man into the Divine. It can be done because essentially there is no difference between man and the Divine, as there is no essential difference between iron and gold.

Q: What is the effect of meditation on daily life activities? Can there be a connection between meditation and the process of daily life?

Swamiji: Meditation is to daily life what food is to the physical body. Do you eat food continuously for the whole day? You take breakfast in the morning, then you take food again at lunch, then evening tea and then dinner, and maybe some biscuits or dry fruits in between. But you need not eat food continuously. You need time to digest that food which turns into physical and mental energy. Similar is the case with meditation. If you could sit in proper meditation even for half an hour in one sitting, it can easily leave an impact on your mind, making it calm and composed in daily activities for at least five to six hours. But by the passing of time the influence of meditation becomes reduced, and you have to sit again.

Right meditation gives you strength to face the challenges of life. It increases the efficiency of action, because it makes the mind composed (a tense mind cannot make right decisions and it loses its efficiency of working). It gives clarity to your vision and you see everything in the right perspective. You are able to distinguish between the means and the end. Meditation gives a heavenly quality to your daily life. Without meditation, one usually acts under the sway of one's emotions, or to use the right words, one only reacts and has no ability to act.

So, meditation is a must for a person who wants to grow humanly and spiritually. It must improve the quality of your life. The improvement in the quality of your life depends upon the quality of your meditation. If you can sit in proper meditation, if you are not daydreaming and sleeping

during meditation, then fifteen minutes are enough. If you sit for one hour and have only five to ten minutes of meditation, with the remaining fifty to fifty-five minutes spent in daydreaming, planning how to fulfil your worldly desires, how to defeat your enemies, how to excel over others, how to make your future more comfortable, how to control your wife or husband, how to travel back to Israel or Switzerland, and how to work there in your office to promote your business; all this is not meditation. So, out of the one hour that you sat in meditation, it may have been about five minutes of meditation or even less. Some do not have meditation at all. They only sit and think about fulfilling their worldly interests and ambitions, or other social and political affairs during that time.

Q: In my home, I don't have time to sit in meditation. There are many things to do in life that leave little time for meditation. What should I do?

Swamiji: I will tell you a story. There was a woman like you, very intelligent and also very clever. She went to a sage and said, "Sir, where should I sleep? There is no space for me to sleep. In this universe, there are billions and billions of ants, so many rats, so many cats, so many dogs and three quarters of the earth is covered with water and there are billions and billions of men and women and donkeys and big elephants, horses, tigers, jackals and many other creatures. When I think about them, I feel I will not get even one foot of space to sleep and take rest. I am very much troubled by thinking over this problem". The sage smiled and said, "What you are saying is theoretically correct. I cannot refute your argument,

but practically, you have got enough place to sleep and take rest. Don't create imaginary problems for yourself".

So your arguments are right only theoretically. If you want, you can have enough time to meditate. Stop going to nightclubs. Stop going to see movies. Stop going out to enjoy weekends. Stop reading newspapers and film magazines, then you will find enough time for meditation. Where there is a will, there is a way. Cultivate sincere interest for meditation.

Q: In an interview Yvan Amar said, "The closer I am to the *Guru*, the closer I am to myself. All the behaviour of the *Guru* consists in putting into the obvious the myth that one is maintaining in relation with others". Is it not the same thing with life?

Swamiji: Yvan alone can rightly explain what he said. I would explain it in the way that the *Guru* does not impose himself on you. He only brings out what is hidden in you. So, when you are near your *Guru*, first of all, you come to know your mind. If you are confused within, the nearness of the *Guru* will bring out that confusion. It may also disturb you, but how can you remove your confusion unless you first come to know that you are confused and ignorant? The *Guru* is not a 'yes-man' to you. He will not support your wrong ideas and beliefs. He has no vested interest in you that he should please you. He will disturb you if you need to be disturbed for your growth.

Relationship of the one with the other should be based not on any obligation (as a duty). It should be based on selfless love. Obligation involves compulsion. Selfless love involves freedom and joy. A relationship which is based on

selfless love ultimately leads to unity and oneness. A relationship which is based on compulsion does not bring joy and it binds in one way or the other. Duty or obligation is the substitute of love. It is like a blind man's stick. If you have no eyes, you need a stick to walk. It is a compulsion. A blind man's stick has its own utility, of course.

What is life? You cannot define life. You can only say that life is not death. You can say life does not die. Can any relationship be immortal and permanent? No relationship can last for a long time, if the relationship is based on compulsion. If the relationship is based on selfless love, it can last for many lives and ultimately leads to the unity of the two souls. Can there be a relationship in unity? Relationship is possible only between two or more persons, things and situations.

The purpose of meditation is ultimately to realize oneness and unity. In its initial stages, meditation makes your relationships more and more harmonious and based on love. Action and reaction are basically different. Action comes from within. The source of action is the Spirit, the selfless Being. Very few can act. To be more precise, only a Realized One acts. All others react. Action is not asked for any event. It is given freely by the Spirit. It is an outflow of joy. It doesn't involve the asking or desiring for joy. In Realization the disciple becomes one with the Guru.

Q: I read your words, "Alone we come and alone we go. Whom then should one consider to be one's friend or relative in this world? This body, the objects and relatives are not ours. May we not be theirs". I felt that these words lead to

freedom, and I experienced in a personal way what you told us about the effect of meditation on daily life.

Swamiji: All unions and associations end up in separation, just as those who take birth must die sooner or later. The seeker should always reflect upon this fact. It is very important. It is an aid to maintain *vairagya* 'dispassion' towards mortal things and relationships. *Vairagya* is the prerequisite of successful meditation and concentration. It is said in the *Gita* by Lord Krishna that the most turbulent and restless thing in the world is the mind. It is the most difficult task to make it silent and stop its thinking process. By dispassion, regular and prolonged practice of meditation, the mind can surely be controlled and restrained from wandering and moving purposelessly. Mere practice, without dispassion, usually does not succeed.

Q: I want to know the difference between wanting to know the Truth and real devotion, and the need of the mind to feel secure, to have a sense of purpose. How can I know that my devotion, if it comes, is not self-conviction or self-conditioning?

Swamiji: Wanting to know the Truth, real devotion, needing to feel secure, etc., are all connected deeply and positively with one another. There is no contradiction between them. The seeker of Truth has all these positive qualities, although one of them may dominate in him/her. Real devotion for realizing the Truth or one's essential and true Being, cannot be called self-conviction. Conviction is a kind of conditioning. Conditioning is acquired only from outside. However, the innate urge to realize the Eternal and Infinite,

hidden in all beings, is universal and irresistible when it manifests itself. No conditioning or brainwashing can suppress it or eliminate it. It may become distorted for short or long periods, but it is always working behind the veil. You are always working to realize your eternal Self, though you may be doing it in a wrong way. Most people do it in the wrong way. That is why very few are Enlightened Ones in this world.

The aspiration of the soul to find out or discover its divine Source is like that of a fish needing water. Would you call the need, of the fish for water, a conditioning? The conditioning can be changed, someone may brainwash you, but can the need of a fish for water be in anyway stopped or changed unless the fish wants to commit suicide!

Q: In meditation the thinking process continuously disturbs me. When I become aware of it, I repeat the *mantra*. After a while the thinking process is there again. You said that in meditation we had to see and not to do anything, but if I do nothing, I dream.

Swamiji: You cannot expect to completely stop your thinking process within a month or so. If you expect that, you will become frustrated and disgusted sooner or later. There are not many *sadhakas* who really feel pained and troubled by not being able to concentrate their mind in meditation. Have you ever wept bitterly with anguish because you cannot concentrate your mind during meditation? In the early days of my *sadhana*, I really used to weep when I could not concentrate my mind on God during meditation. I would weep secretly because I felt inwardly ashamed of not being able to control my thoughts during meditation.

You should learn to see your thoughts or your thinking process dispassionately and without becoming identified with your thoughts. You have to really see. You don't have to think that you are seeing. If you can do that, the thinking process will become slow and gradually stop. You say, "If I do nothing, I dream". What do you mean by saying, "I dream"? Does 'doing nothing' mean 'dreaming'? 'Doing nothing' implies not doing anything physically as well as mentally. If you are dreaming during meditation, how can you say you are doing nothing?

Q: I would say I daydream.

Swamiji: Daydreaming virtually means thinking and imagining. There are many methods of stopping the thinking process which we have discussed many times. If by dreaming you mean going into dream-sleep state, then it should be controlled also.

Q: While daydreaming, how can I observe that I am daydreaming?

Swamiji: I will tell you a story of daydreaming. There was a man. He was not a special type but like all ordinary men. Once, he was holding a glass of milk in his hand just about to drink, but he started thinking some serious thoughts and forgot to drink the milk. He started thinking, saying to himself, "I have become quite mature and need to find a suitable match to get married, but I have no money. I am not employed. I have no place to live in. I would have to borrow money from my friends and somehow sustain myself. A time might come when even my friends stop lending me

money and supporting me. So, I must find some work. If I don't get a suitable job, I would have to do the work of a labourer on daily wages and live a very simple life. I will have to save some money daily. Within a few years of hard labour, I will be able to save enough money to build a house. I will stay in one portion of the house and will rent out the other portion and get more and more money. I will not smoke, I will not drink, I will not go to restaurants, I will take simple food and will go on doing the hard work. When I have a reasonably good bank balance then, I will seek my life-partner, get married and be settled in life. After two or three years of marriage, I will have children, very beautiful and smart children. Then the children will grow up. I will give them a high education and get them settled in life. Later on, they will marry and I will have grandchildren. Some of them who are very naughty will come to me, their grandfather. They will try to come onto my lap, or will try to ride on my back, as children do when they play with their grandparents. By then, I will be a very old man and will sometimes become irritated. So, I will push them away with my hands — like this”.

When he thought like this, his hand acted according to his thought, trying to push someone, and the glass full of milk fell down from his hand spoiling all his clothes. This is a typical example of daydreaming. Usually the mind daydreams in this very manner. It thinks of the future or it remembers the past, it continues to think and goes on daydreaming. To stop the thinking process during meditation you have to be alert and watch your thoughts as a witness. You are to see your thoughts as you see a bird flying in the sky. You simply see the bird and do not identify yourself with the bird. You don't think where he is going to or where

he is coming from. You see the bird with indifference and casually, with practically no vested interest, and the bird goes away without disturbing you.

In the same way, you have to see, as a witness, your thoughts arising in your mind or entering your mind. Do not identify yourself with those thoughts. Just watch them disinterestedly and they will subside. If you identify yourself with a thought and start working on it, it creates a chain of thoughts, and then the thinking process starts, and you are lost in it. You forget that you are sitting in meditation; you lose your alertness. You are possessed by your thoughts as one is possessed by a ghost. You do not think. The thinking process possesses you. It spoils your meditation. At one point, you become so much identified with the thinking process that you even do not know at that time that you are thinking. Your thinking becomes mechanical. The 'horse' of your mind is running out of your control, and you have become identified with your horse.

Witnessing and alertness are the keys to stop daydreaming. Practise this witnessing consciousness in day-to-day activities also. With regular practice, perseverance and sincere effort, you will gradually be able to stop the thinking process of your mind.

Q: I am very much worried about my future. Will my thinking stop if I come to know about my death?

Swamiji: Do you know your future? Are you certain that you will be alive by ten o'clock this evening? If I tell you that you will die within three days, you will not believe it and will not stop your daydreaming. Even if you believe it, you

may start worrying about your property, your bank balance, your son, etc. You may even think more intensively about these things. If you become aware of your coming death, you will start thinking of hell, if you are a sinner. If you are a virtuous and religious person, you may start thinking of heaven.

Q: Just to think about it, I become confused. What will happen to me?

Swamiji: You will be thinking confusedly. Confusion does not stop the thinking process. If it could do so, then everyone would like to be confused. It is the absence of confusion and ignorance that stops the thinking process.

Q: Do dreams come to purify our subconscious, or can we interpret them as a premonition of what will occur?

Swamiji: Mostly you dream of what has gone deep into your subconscious. A washerman, a driver, a clerk, a teacher, a gardener, etc., all of them have different dreams. Have you ever dreamt of milking a cow? More than ninety-five percent of dreams are created by the subconscious mind. One percent of dreams may be created by the super-conscious mind. These dreams are like visions. They come up mostly in very, very pure and refined minds, and they are true.

Q: Why do I cry when I am near you?

Swamiji: Do you still cry when you sit near me? Are you afraid of me? Do you think I am a ghost? Why do you want to cry when you are near me? Or do you cry to frighten me?

Q: Should you be a ghost, I would be happy to keep you with me always.

Swamiji: There are many ghosts who don't leave you, after you are possessed by them. But I don't want to possess anyone, nor do I want to be possessed by anyone. I want to have with everyone the same relationship that I have with God, and expect the same relationship from everyone. I want everyone to possess God and be possessed by God, because only this relation can fulfil a soul. No other relationship can completely satisfy a soul.

Chapter Sixteen

“How can you know your absolute Nature through a relationship? It is absurd. Brahman is the ‘One without a second’; so, how can the relationship lead to the Realization of the ‘One without a second’? How can the non-dual be realized through duality or relationship? All relationships are in duality. Through a relationship you can only know what you are in relation to others. The relationship may be useful in the sense that both partners help each other on the way to God. However, in ninety per cent of cases, it distracts the seeker from realizing the ‘One without a second’.”



Q: What is the exact meaning of ‘awareness’? What is the technique to maintain awareness all the time, particularly when one is alone and while one is doing day-to-day work?

Swamiji: Awareness is of many kinds. The pure Awareness is contentless and absolute. It is the essential nature of *Atman*, simple awareness without any object, direction or time/space. It is beyond mental consciousness (mind). This simple awareness can be realized only in the non-polar state called ‘*nirvikalpa samadhi*’. The other dimension of awareness is the supramental awareness. In this awareness, the opposites are reconciled; it is an awareness of unity in diversity.

Yet another dimension of awareness is the witness in which one remains aware of some object, person or situation, without being identified with the content of the awareness. Then, there is the mental awareness, which is relative and involves the subject, object and their relationship. It may be called ‘alertness’. In the beginning, in the practice of awareness, one has to be alert and should not do anything mechanically. Even thinking can become mechanical.

All the inner processes in the body like digestion, the distribution of energy in the body, metabolism, etc., are going on at our subconscious level, and we are not aware of them. To sit down and watch one’s breathing process, is a very efficient technique for enhancing one’s alertness. It also regulates the breathing and slows down the thinking process.

The practice of *pranayama* is based on the practice of conscious and rhythmic breathing.

Q: It is said that religion starts when inner transformation takes place. How can I make a conscious effort to achieve this inner transformation?

Swamiji: The inner transformation starts with right understanding, which in turn is based on regular and unbroken practice of reflection on one's experiences. Religion is right understanding with right belief blended together and expressed in right action. Conscious effort to transform one's life, in order to realize the Truth or God, is what is called *sadhana*. It has many limbs.

Q: I seek Your Holiness' blessings for achieving desirelessness and intense longing for God.

Swamiji: Desirelessness or dispassion and intense longing for the Divine are deeply related. They are complementary and help each other. May the Divine draw you nearer and nearer to Himself.

Q: During meditation, Krishna's name came strongly to my mind. What is the meaning of this vision and what importance should I give to it?

Swamiji: It is very promising and fortunate if the name of Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva, Lord Rama, Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus or even any prophet or sage, comes strongly to one's mind. It signifies that the Divine is calling you. You have simply heard the divine call. The Divine is always calling us

but we are full of noise and so much preoccupied with mundane matters, that we do not hear the call. Sometimes when our minds are open, receptive, passive, calm, quiet and alert, we do hear the call of God. The divine call exhorts us to come back home.

We are, as it were, in exile. A prince loses himself in the forest and undergoes so many problems and pains, until someone fortunately guides him back to his kingdom. When a child loses the grasp of its mother's hand in a crowd, at a festival, it is lost and separated from the mother. You can imagine the state of the mind of that child. It weeps and cries for its mother. The state of mind of a seeker of Truth is similar. Krishna, Jesus, the Buddha, Shiva, Rama, Moses, the Prophet Mohammed, are like the divine Mother to the soul lost in the phenomena of the world. They are always calling you from within and through the sages. They remind you of your true purpose and the aim of life, which is to find out the Kingdom of heaven within you. Respond to this call and follow the call sincerely. Only then, will your life become meaningful and fulfilled sooner or later.

Q: Many people have a spiritual master. I want to know if I have one and how I can find him?¹¹

Swamiji: A spiritual master is like a coach, but not only a coach. As your father was guiding you while you were playing badminton, so that you would not lose the match,

¹¹ A young boy had asked this question. He had been playing badminton with Swamiji the evening before. His father, sitting on a bench, was coaching him.

similarly, the spiritual master is like your spiritual father. He guides you in playing the game of your life purposefully, with alertness, concentration, commitment and intelligently, so that you don't lose the game of this human life. It is a rare opportunity to be free and to discover the Truth. Life is a challenge. It is the greatest match one can play and face. The players need to know the essentials of the game, regular practice and, of course, an expert coach. In the spiritual field, that coach is a spiritual master. I think all, not just many, of the well known players have a coach, at one time or the other. Exceptions apart, all seekers of Truth have a spiritual master.

You want to know if you have a spiritual master? It is better to know first if you are a seeker of Truth? What do you want? What is your need? What is the purpose of your life? What do you want to realize in life? You have first to reflect upon this deeply and then decide the aim and purpose of your life. If you reach the conclusion that you do need to know the Truth, you do need to realize your essential and divine Nature, and you do need to be free. Only then should you think of finding someone who can guide you on the right path, to eternal peace, freedom and bliss.

Q: When one commits mistakes or takes wrong decisions, is all this a game of the mind which pretends to be the doer? When I realize I am not the doer, are decisions, choices (which have to be made in everyday life) only manifestations of my ego?

Swamiji: Mind is not the doer. The soul is the doer. Mind is the instrument of the soul. If the instrument has developed some defect in it, it does not work properly. When the mind is full of *rajoguna*, attachment, jealousy, hatred, desire,

self-interest, emotions, etc., the soul is not able to make right decisions. When you come to realize directly that you are not the doer, the Supreme Soul takes over, and your decision and actions are directed by God. You become only an instrument of God. Can God take wrong decisions?

Ego and mind are two aspects of the same thing. Basically they are not different. There is dirty water and there is pure water. If you drink dirty water or contaminated water, you fall sick. If you drink pure water, eat pure edibles and remain composed, you normally don't fall sick. With the ego, the case is similar. If your ego or mind is purified and rightly directed, it helps you evolve and ultimately makes you free. If the ego/mind is impure, untamed and wrongly directed, it binds you. Say the *Upanishads*, "Mind is the cause of bondage and mind is also the cause of Liberation of man".

Q: Kindly give some guidance for practice of meditation and *japa*.

Swamiji: Should you supplement the *bhava* 'feeling' of self-surrender to the Divine while chanting the *mantra* in your mind, it will not only give you strength but also a very deep peace. When your meditation is appropriate, it has a very deep effect of keeping you composed for a long time. Have you seen a drunkard? When he has a session of drinks, he gets a special strength to forget all his worries and problems so long as the effect of the drink lasts. The effect of right meditation and *japa* is very much stronger than that of alcohol and it lasts for very, very long periods.

It should keep you full of peace and joy for the whole day. It does not make you forget your problems, but gives

you strength to face your problems peacefully and to rise above them. Said Guru Nanak Deva, “*Nama*, i.e. the divine Name, is the panacea of all the maladies (of the mind). It resides in the hearts of the devotees of God.”

Q: I have observed that whenever I follow a thought, it is always after the thought has already started. Can it be called ‘witnessing’? How can one be in the witnessing state?

Swamiji: Your witnessing is not pure. It is mixed with thinking. You are confusing thinking with pure witnessing. The pure witnessing tends to slow down the movement of your thoughts. Thinking makes a sequential chain of thoughts and creates a process of thinking. What you are talking of is the witnessing, mixed and identified with your thoughts. Just close your eyes and simply watch if some thought arises. Try it here and now, and you will know what pure watching is. Close your eyes and watch within for five minutes without thinking, and then tell me, what did you see or experience?

Q: I heard some sounds and heavy breathing. No thought.

Swamiji: No thought? So, if you can remain without a thought for five minutes, why can’t you for twenty or thirty minutes? You have the potentiality of being without thoughts. With regular practice of watching, you can prolong the time of being without thoughts. Don’t become identified with what you are hearing and it will not affect you. Many sounds come and strike your ears at this time, but you hear those only in which you are interested. If you come to hear something that you are not interested in, it will not disturb you. You will not react and it will fade away.

Q: What should I do when a thought comes again?

Swamiji: Yes, it comes back when you stop being a witnessing consciousness. Moreover, the tendencies which you have accumulated from many lives cannot disappear in one hour of meditation. What you have to do, is not to give importance and significance to what comes into your mind during meditation. You react only when you give some significance to a thought or a thing.

Q: I would like to meditate for a long period, but cannot do it. How can I prolong the period of meditation?

Swamiji: With deep interest and regular practice, you can prolong the period of meditation. It is certain that the quality of meditation improves, though the quantity may not improve, due to some circumstance or physical indisposition.

What is most important is the quality of meditation. Some people sit daily for one complete hour, but the real meditation does not last for more than five minutes or so. For the other fifty-five minutes they are planning, daydreaming, remembering their past or imagining about their future. You first should try to improve the quality of your meditation.

Q: When I practise too much meditation, I tend to become tense.

Swamiji: Usually if one does not enjoy meditation, one becomes bored and not tense. Yet, if one feels bored during meditation and is forced to sit, one becomes tense. This is

the general law of tension. Where there is resistance, there must be tension.

Q: Should one continue the practice of meditation for one full hour?

Swamiji: If you have given someone an appointment for one hour (an appointment with God, in the case of meditation), you should be patient enough to fulfil that appointment even if you don't enjoy the meeting. If you don't do so, and again and again don't fulfil what you had resolved to do, you not only lose your will-power but also the goodwill of people. You may slowly lose the goodwill of God if you give Him an appointment, and again and again, don't honour it.

Q: Could you please advise me about the 'effort to be effortless' and the 'let go'?

Swamiji: Make your best effort. Use your energy rightly in the path of Realization and exhaust it in that effort. Nothing should be left in you which could make you say, "I did not put in my whole effort". Stake your whole life consistently on the purpose of God-Realization. When your effort reaches the extreme limit and you cannot make more effort, surrender happens and you become effortless. Even if a grain of physical or mental energy is left in you without being spent in your spiritual venture, it will not let you be effortless. You will still be making efforts to get all the mundane things but God.

The concept of 'let go', though very correct theoretically, is being misused by unripe seekers in the West, making

them *tamasic* and full of inertia, instead of making them effortless. This is a great tragedy and a disaster for the seeker of Truth.

If you tell a seeker of Truth, who has just started to make some effort to discover the Truth, not to make any effort and 'let go', he will stop doing the little which he has started. You cannot say, 'let go' to everybody because it is not so easy a play that everyone can do it. Even the very advanced seekers are not able to 'let go', what to say of the neophytes? 'Let go' means complete self-surrender. You are suffering with a great headache and come to me and ask for a cure. Instead of giving you some medicine, I tell you to 'let go' and suffer the pain. What is the use of coming to me? Or going to a doctor? If you could suffer and 'let go', you would not have come to me at all. If a seeker comes to a master and says, "Sir, tell me, what should I do to overcome my weakness? What should I do to find God?" Should the master tell him to 'let go'?

Q: I thank you for enabling me to stay here and also for creating situations in which I could learn and grow. I know that when I pray for your help, I will get it.

Swamiji: I appreciate the spiritual resolve and understanding which you have shown and I wish you all success. Spiritual success normally comes to those who work sincerely, with total commitment, and in the right direction under the guidance of a practical and Enlightened spiritual master. My help will reach you wherever you are, provided you keep yourself open and receptive, and I wish you progress in meditation and in your spiritual growth.

Q: More often we complain about our lot. We should see what God has already given to us. Why don't we fulfil our duties?

Swamiji: Most people think of what they don't have, and they complain. They do not think of what God has given them, and they do not thank God. Such people never find peace. Most people think only of their rights and seldom care to fulfil their duties. Rights and duties always co-exist. If rights are due from someone, you also have some duties towards that person. The seeker of Truth fulfils his duties but doesn't bother about his rights. The worldly man fights for his rights but doesn't fulfil his duties. That is the difference. To expect something from God after making due and right effort is legitimate, but it is not spiritually wise. Selflessness and complete freedom from desires and expectations are the highest and most exalted states of being. When Gautama Buddha became Enlightened, he came to the conclusion that desire is the cause of suffering in the world. Do not desire! Do not expect! That is the gist of the teaching of Lord Buddha.

Q: Why didn't you call me before?

Swamiji: Clever people always say what you are saying — you say, "I did not call you". Why do you not say that you forgot me? I had been calling you but you were so occupied that you did not hear me. There is a couplet in the *Ramayana*, which says, "People complain to God and find fault with Him or with their fate, instead of accepting their own negligence and faults".

Q: People want to make effort because nothing is going well for them. I discovered that this attitude is again the power of the ego, which is never satisfied. Why do you not teach me to 'let go'? Can you help me accept myself as I am — simply?

Swamiji: Here as everywhere, everyone has his own type of ego. I have to deal with many, many egos, and try to pacify everyone's ego. I do the same with you. I don't discriminate between people. However, because I deal with everyone according to his/her ego, my advice appears to be different to different people. What are you? If you are disturbed, should I help you to remain disturbed? Should I help you to remain slumbering? I will not do that. I will disturb your sleep and help you to come out from your sweet stupor.

Q: How can I change my situation? I am very worried for my future.

Swamiji: When you change, you see your situation also changing. It means the situation also changes for you, when you change yourself. Instead of worrying about your future, you should make the best use of your present. Your future is determined by how you make use of your present.

Q: Gurudev, it is so difficult to leave you!

Swamiji: Even if you leave me physically, you will not be able to push me out of your heart. I don't think anyone who once comes in touch with me can ever leave me. One may go away from me, but to forget me is almost impossible. If someone, one in one hundred thousand cases, stops loving me, he/she will start hating me, but can never, never leave me.

Q: For the last two or three days I cannot concentrate at all and I don't know why? Can you help me?

Swamiji: If your mind does not obey you, who is responsible for it? It is like a weak master complaining that his/her servant doesn't obey him/her. The servants are very clever and come to know the weaknesses of their masters, because they observe their masters in each and every action. So they start exploiting the weaknesses of their masters. They blackmail them and force them to behave as if they were the servants. Then the servant becomes the master. Don't let your mind become your master.

Q: Sometimes the meditation is so easy, other times it needs a lot of effort to keep my *Guru* between my two eyes or in my heart. Why is it so?

Swamiji: It is so because sometimes you are open and receptive, but sometimes you are closed and preoccupied with the mundane and with those things or situations to which you give more importance than to your *Guru*. It is so simple. Your mind dwells on what you give more importance to. Your mind is divided. It is fluctuating like the pendulum of a clock; it goes to one extreme and then goes to the opposite direction and moves to the other extreme. If you have no control on your mind, who is responsible for it?

The mind has to be dealt with like a naughty child. The child does not become naughty in a day or two. It develops its habits and personality, slowly and gradually. The mind is not your enemy, you have spoiled it — it is like your spoiled child. You have been conceding to all its desires, legitimate or illegitimate, with the result, it now makes all sorts of

demands. What will you do now? When it was the time to discipline and teach your mind/child, you did not care. Now it has developed its own separate identity. It asserts itself. You have either to obey your mind or be indifferent to it, or dissociate yourself from it. There is no other option.

Q: I don't see saints during meditation. Why don't they come to me?

Swamiji: How will they come, when the door of your heart is shut and locked from inside. They do come and go back seeing your doors shut. Sometimes they even call to you and ask you to open your doors, but you are either asleep or occupied and don't listen to the call. They wait and wait and then go back. And you complain that they do not come? You are blaming others instead of blaming yourself. It is a general tendency to do so. Said Jesus, "How dare you say to your brother, 'Please, let me take that speck out of your eye' when you have a log in your own eye?"

Q: Can you save me and open the doors which are closed?

Swamiji: One who is able to close the door, can open the door also. He/she has just to move the key in the lock on the inside.

Q: Please, take hold of me and guide me.

Swamiji: I don't want to kidnap people. When someone sincerely wants spiritual help, it comes to him/her. Grace is like air and light, available to one and all, if one has not closed oneself in a small cell and shut all the doors and windows.

As soon as one opens the window, the air and light rush in. They are waiting to come in. That closed window is the ego. It is like a sluice separating the river from a canal. As soon as the sluice is lifted up, the water of the river flows into the canal. Be open and trustful, and you will receive my help.

Q: If we have no ego, we will die!

Swamiji: The man who has no ego is the most alive. He alone can realize the Truth. He becomes the instrument of God. He is full of joy.

Q: What is a vision? How can we interpret the emergence in the consciousness of some images which seems not to be connected with the mind?

Swamiji: Conscious mind is a very, very small portion of the mind. Mind itself has many dimensions. What you see without thinking or planning may come from the subconscious level. It may come from the universal psychic medium. It may come from the over-mind, it may come from the super-mind. It may also be projected on the screen of your mind by someone — some sage or some higher being. Therefore what you call a ‘vision’ is a flash from any other plane of existence than that of your conscious mind.

Q: Do all religions belong to the mind?

Swamiji: Religion consists of many elements: rituals, ethics, philosophy, mythology, etc. However, the essential element in every religion is spirituality. It is the common factor in all

the religions. It is not based on the mind. In every Holy Scripture of any religion, there are basically two elements — temporal and eternal. The temporal part cannot last, it must change with place and time. On the other hand, the eternal element pertaining to the Spirit is always the same. It does not change with time and space. It is beyond time, space, causality and categories.

Q: It seems beneficial to live in a relationship with a partner as it raises our awareness of our own problems and thus, enables us to grow spiritually. What do you say about that?

Swamiji: The Lord Jesus had no partner. Swami Vivekananda had no partner. Shri Ramana Maharishi had no partner. Lord Buddha left his partner at an early age to grow. I have no partner. What do you say? Is it mandatory to have a partner to grow spiritually? Does it mean that if there are no problems between husband and wife, they cannot grow? How can you know your absolute Nature through a relationship? It is absurd. *Brahman* is the 'One without a second'; so, how can the relationship lead to the Realization of the 'One without a second'? How can the non-dual be realized through duality or relationship? All relationships are in duality. Through a relationship you can only know what you are in relation to others. The relationship may be useful in the sense that both partners help each other on the way to God. However, in ninety per cent of cases, it distracts the seeker from realizing the 'One without a second'.

Q: Yes, all my problems are in relation to others. When I am alone everything is okay with me.

Swamiji: How can you say that everything is okay with you when you are alone? When you are alone, nothing is in your mind. When you are alone, there is no image of anything in your mind. When you are alone, you are alone! When you are alone, nothing is with you. How can you say that when you are alone, all things are okay with you?

Q: Of course, I don't wish to live on the top of a mountain alone; I am not ready for that.

Swamiji: So you are saying it will not be okay — because you are not ready. You are contradicting your first statement. How can everything be okay, when you are not ready to be alone? Who has told you to go and live on the top of a mountain alone?

Q: My difficulty is that I am jealous.

Swamiji: When you are alone, the question of jealousy does not arise. The question of jealousy arises only when you are not alone. So, you first want to create a problem and then you want to solve it. What is life? How can you enjoy it? How are you trying to enjoy it? Who can enjoy life? Can life be enjoyed by becoming subservient to your desires, emotions and impulses? Can you enjoy life by being dependent on situations?

We read that so many kings like Gautama Buddha, Mahavir and Bhartrihari abandoned their kingdoms in search of Truth even though they had all the objects of enjoyments. What is your conviction about how one can enjoy life? Long ago, I read Swami Vivekananda saying, "If life could be

enjoyed only by having objects, wealth, power, status, position, I would be the first man to do it. But alas, it cannot be done. It only brings suffering to run after them, in order to seek enjoyment in them”. He quoted the Buddha in favour of what he said.

Q: I think life is God. Is it necessary to surrender to God, to allow Him to come? What is the difference between the person who does wrong and the one who does right because, as we know, God is everywhere and everyone is God? The *Gurbani* says that even a blade of grass does not move without the will of God!

Swamiji: God is like light. You can read the *Gurbani* in that light or you can read a detective novel in that light. Without light, you cannot read. In the Holy Scriptures, it is said, “God is the Light of all lights”. The *Gurbani* is a holy book, full of devotion and praises to the Lord, and not a philosophical book. The statements are based on the highest experience of Truth but they have not been explained philosophically nor rationally. *Gurbani* is the essence of the highest spiritual experience. *Gurbani* also says that God is the destroyer of sins. *Gurbani* exhorts you to be free of lust, greed, anger, attachment and pride. How can you know the teaching of a holy book by reading or quoting only one sentence out of it?

If we say that a man commits a murder by the will of God, then we also say the police catches the murderer by the will of God, tortures and gives punishment to the murderer by the will of God. But does a murderer accept the will of God? He will always try to escape the hands of the

police and escape the punishment. He does not want to accept the punishment of what he has done. If one really accepts the will of God, one will not murder anyone out of self-will and self-interest. When you speak about the 'will of God', you are indirectly accepting that there is a self-will also, otherwise the question of God's will does not arise. You say that the will of God is supreme. It means that man has a will which is not supreme. Man has his own limitations, while God is omnipotent and omniscient. God's will may include the self-will of man, but the part cannot be the whole and should not be considered as the whole. The part does not have its own independent existence, and we cannot say that the part is the whole!

Q: Whatever we do or receive in this life, is due to our past *karma*. What I have now is through my past *karma*, and I have to just follow what is already prepared for me, and I will get the next birth according to my present life. Does it mean that everything is given to me by God and I have nothing to do?

Swamiji: People are very much confused about the theory of *karma*. *Karma* is not only fate. *Karma* signifies in fact, the relative freedom of man. Much has already been written (as fate) about your life but the process of writing has not stopped. Much has been written and much more is in the process of being written, according to your present *karma*. What we call 'fate', is only one of many factors which determine or tend to determine the course of the life of man. Man's life is very complex.

Q: It is very difficult for me to sit in silence.

Swamiji: You should learn to play badminton or tennis, then it will help you to sit quietly in meditation. The excess energy in the body will be released and it will be easier for you to sit in meditation. The ways of releasing the excess of energy from the body changes from time to time. The practice of different postures in *Hatha Yoga* also serves the same purpose.

Q: In reality, I am afraid to look inside. I don't know what to do.

Swamiji: Looking inside or looking outside does not make much difference. The difference is in how you look and not in where you look. If you look inside with self-interest and negative thinking, even looking inside will not help.

Q: I just look without thinking but it is boring.

Swamiji: It is the quality of looking that has to be changed and transformed and not the place where you are looking. It is more difficult to change the object or situation than to change your way of looking. The situation involves so many people and every person wants to change the situation according to his liking. So, if you want to change an outer situation, it creates confrontation, stress and strain. You have to fight with others, to make a situation according to your liking. On the other hand, to change your way of looking at a particular situation, you don't have to fight with others but only to deal with your own mind. Which is easier?

Q: I often feel it is easier to fight with others.

Swamiji: To try to change a particular situation is politics encouraged by materialism. To transform one's outlook on a particular situation is encouraged by spirituality.

Q: Is there any difference between an Awakened and a Realized One? Can we say *savikalpa samadhi* is linked with Awareness and *nirvikalpa samadhi* with Realization? Can the external *Guru* be a mirror for me to discover what is false? What are the barriers which hide the Self? I have the feeling when I ask a question that my real demand is to get, along with the answer, your attention and to become important through your eyes for a moment.

Swamiji: Awakening is the beginning; Realization is the end, the consummation. An Awakened One has a flash of the Truth but when the Awakening is established in one permanently, it can be said that one is a Realized One. That is the difference.

Savikalpa samadhi and *nirvikalpa samadhi* have nothing to do with Realization. A person having even tasted *savikalpa samadhi*, may not be Awakened, and a seeker who even had a flash of *nirvikalpa samadhi*, may not be a Realized One.

The demand of every seeker is to be fulfilled and, to be fulfilled, Realization is a must. There is no other alternative or option. The external *Guru* is the mirror to discover what is Real. You can discover the false through right thinking and reflection, and in that process also, the external *Guru* can help you, if you are not very stubborn, inflexible and deeply attached to your ready-made beliefs.

The feeling of missing something even when one has all the comforts and conveniences and the capacity to fulfil one's desires, if reflected upon rightly, can lead the seeker to Awakening. The first and last barrier to Realization is the ego and only the ego.

Q: At the beginning of my *sadhana*, I had a very strong ego. Now, I am always complaining and crying as if I have no ego. Where am I standing?

Swamiji: To be a seeker you don't have to have a strong and solid ego like a rock. You should have a flexible, volatile ego. Animals have inflexible and stronger egos than men have, and different men have various grades of egos. The human ego is like the steering wheel of a car which can move the car in any direction. The ego of an animal is fixed; you cannot change the direction of its life or of its nature, though the animals which live among men, tend to be a bit flexible.

Q: My problem is that as I repeat my *mantra* and observe my breath at the same time, something happens, and I forget to do it. Then, I am disturbed and feel like an electric current. What can it be?

Swamiji: There are two kinds of electricity — AC and DC. When you touch the DC current, it holds you up. When you touch the AC current, it gives you a jolt and throws you. But both can kill you. Should you repeat the *mantra* in the right way and with the right spirit, it will certainly kill your ego.

Q: Can we say that all those who come and meet you are Awakened?

Swamiji: There are many types of people who come to me. Their backgrounds are different. Their bodies are different. Their idiosyncrasies are different. They may be Spanish, Italian, Irish, etc. The different types are:

– Those who are engrossed in worldly life. They seek nothing but worldly objects and pleasures. If they call on God, they call on Him only so that He should bless them with worldly comforts. They make God a means and the world their goal. They come to me and request me to pray, that they can get more worldly pleasures and comforts. They do not know what is right and what is wrong. They are not aware of even their existence. They don't feel the need to know anything.

– There are others who know what is right and what is wrong, but they are so much attached with what is false that they cannot follow the right. They become addicted to the temporal and passing pleasures and want to enjoy them through fair or foul means. Their desires are never satisfied. They are always restless, trying to find rest wherever they can, even if for a moment. Sometimes they feel guilty and helpless. They are tossed by their emotions and desires. Sometimes they are very much excited, at other times they feel depressed and frustrated. They know they are ignorant but do not do anything to remove their ignorance. They have a sort of vested interest in their ignorance, because ignorance gives them temporary excitement.

– People of a third type come to me. They are aware of their faults and they try to remove them. They want to know what the Truth is and they work for it. They are half-Awakened, half-unawakened. They are seekers. These seekers have many grades. Some are very sincere. Some only go to saints and

ask the price of wisdom and of God. They are not so sincere in having some tangible experience. Some only have intellectual curiosity to know what is what. Some follow the instructions and the way to realize the Truth. Some have a flash of the Truth but are unable to retain it or contain it.

– The last type is the Realized Ones. Actually, they are not a type. They go beyond all types. They are not opposed to any type. Whatever you can say of them is not complete. You cannot define them. They are very rare. They come to me without any self-interest. They have no self-interest. They come because they come!

Glossary

The Sanskrit words are spelled here without diacritical marks. The definitions of technical philosophical terms are not exhaustive but mainly indicate how these terms have been used in the context of this book.

acharya: a great scholar in some faculty of learning (viz. music, literature, etc.); a knower or exponent of *Vedas* and other Scriptures; a learned spiritual master; a teacher or principal in a school/college.

advaita: lit. 'non-two'; non-duality or absolute unicity.

Advaita Vedanta: the most influential School of *Vedanta* propounded mainly by Shankaracharya. It asserts that there is a total identity between *Brahman* (the Ultimate Reality) and *Atman* (the eternal Self of beings) and that the apparent multiplicity is only phenomenal and delusive. The Reality is "One without a second".

ajna chakra: the sixth of the seven *chakras*; it is situated between the two eyebrows in the forehead and is considered the centre of vision and ideas; it is sometimes called the 'third eye'.

akarma: an action performed without sense of doership and which doesn't produce any *karma*.

akasha: ether, space; the first and most subtle of the five fundamental elements of which all manifestation, subtle or gross, is made up.

anahata nada: lit. 'a soundless sound produced otherwise than by friction' between two or more physical entities; the primordial sound which reverberates throughout the universe and which is experienced by the *yogis*.

anahata chakra: the fourth of the seven *chakras*; it is situated in the heart region and is regarded as the centre of emotion and sound.

ananda: joy, bliss; absolute Bliss; one of the three essential attributes which designate not the characteristics of *Brahman* but its essential nature (*svarupa*), others being *sat* and *chit*.

anirvachaniya: indefinable, ineffable, inscrutable.

anusthana: to initiate some work or action; to undertake some rituals or religious practices associated with certain vows; to propitiate some deities for temporal gains or for one's spiritual advancement.

Arya Samaj: social and religious reform movement within Hinduism, founded by Swami Dayananda Sarasvati in 1875. It believes in the trinity of three fundamental principles: *Ishvara* (God), *jiva* (soul) and *Prakriti* (Nature).

asamprajnata samadhi: another name for *nirvikalpa samadhi*; a non-polar state.

asana: posture or mode of sitting; third of the eight disciplines of Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga*.

ashram: abode of sages, ascetics and spiritual seekers, meant for *sadhana*.

atma kripa: the grace of one's own self.

Atman: the real Self; one's innermost divine Reality, identical with *Brahman*.

avatara: lit. 'descent'; God assuming a physical body.

Avyakrita: the Universal Soul identified with the causal world, according to the *Vedas*.

bhajan: the art of remembering God; general term for meditation; devotional and popular religious songs.

bhakti: loving devotion to God.

Bhakti Yoga: the *Yoga* or path of loving devotion and surrender to God, through which a devotee finally realizes God.

bhava: feeling or emotion.

bhava shakti: the energy of emotional love.

bhuh: the earth and the lower regions.

bhuva: the space between earth and heaven.

bija: lit. 'seed', 'germ'; primary cause.

brahmachari: the one who practices continence [fem. *brahmacharini*]; a celibate; a religious student.

brahmacharya: lit. 'abiding in *Brahman*'; the first of the four stages (*ashrama*) or period of studenthood; celibacy; chastity in thoughts, words and deeds.

Brahman: the Absolute, the Divine or Godhead; the absolute Existence-Consciousness-Bliss; the ultimate all-pervasive and transcendent Reality or Truth; identical with *Atman*, *Paramatman*, *Purushottama*.

Brahma vichara: reflection on the nature of *Brahman*, the Divine or Absolute.

chakra: energy-centre situated inside the spinal chord.

chit: consciousness; absolute Consciousness; one of the three essential attributes which designate not the characteristics of *Brahman* but its essential nature (*svarupa*), others being *sat* and *ananda*.

Dharmakaya: one of the three bodies or 'Enjoyment-Body' of the Buddha in *Mahayana*; the real body of the Buddha or true nature of Buddhahood, which is all-pervading, formless and eternal; used as a syn. for the ultimate Reality.

darshana: lit. 'looking at', 'seeing' (pronounced as 'darshan'); vision of God; sight of a sage, a saint, a sacred image, etc.; also used as a technical term to signify the respective views of the six orthodox Hindu philosophical Schools.

dhyana: meditation; the seventh discipline of Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga*.

drashta: the one who sees; the witness; the Seer.

Dvaitadvaita: lit. 'two and not-two'; the School of Nimbarka and Ramanuja which combines dualism and non-dualism, and seeks to explain the concept of *Brahman* in theistic terms.

Gayatri mantra: one of the most sacred *vedic mantra* addressed to *Savita* (the Sun) and interpreted as a prayer to the Source of everything.

giri: a mountain; a distinctive name given to one of the ten Orders of the *Dashanami sannyasis*.

Gita: song; designates usually the *Bhagavad Gita*, the best known of the Hindu sacred Scriptures. It contains the spiritual teachings given by Lord Krishna to his disciple Arjuna, on the battlefield.

guna: a basic constituent of *Prakriti* and chief quality of all existing beings (viz. the three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) according to *Samkhya* philosophy.

Gurbani: lit. 'the *Guru*'s utterance' [Punjabi]; Sikh Holy Scriptures, also called *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Guru: a teacher; a spiritual master.

Gurudeva: lit. 'divine master'; a spiritual master (pronounced as 'Gurudev').

Guru parampara: a *Guru*-disciple lineage.

Hari: holy name of God. It has become a very popular holy name of God in Hinduism.

Hatha Yoga: a particular *Yoga* based mainly on *asanas* and *pranayama*.

havan: the act of offering an oblation into the holy sacrificial fire [Hindi]. It is conducted to propitiate God or deities, or for one's spiritual advancement.

Hiranyagarbha: lit. 'golden womb'; in early Hinduism, the source of all creation and life; the Universal Soul identified with the subtle world.

ida nadi: one of the main *nadis*; it rises from *muladhara chakra* and ends in the left nostril.

Ishta: lit. 'chosen'; the personal God; the chosen deity of an individual worshipper (also called '*Ishta devata*').

Ishvara: God as Creator, Controller, Preserver and Destroyer of the world; in *Advaita-Vedanta*, *Ishvara* is *Saguna Brahman* as *Brahman* is related to the manifest world of appearance, and is thus worthy of worship.

jagrata: the waking state.

japa: the repetition of a *mantra*.

jijnasa: an investigation or enquiry; a deep urge to know the Truth.

jiva: the individual; syn. with *jivatman*.

jivanmukta: one who has attained *moksha* while still living in the physical body.

jiva srishti: the world of projection by the soul or *jiva*.

jivatman: the individual soul.

jnana: knowledge; knowledge of the Absolute.

jnana shakti: the power of knowledge, the energy of understanding.

Jnana Yoga: the path of knowledge.

jnana yogi: a practitioner of the *Jnana Yoga* [fem. *jnana yogini*].

jnani: lit. 'one who knows'; one who has realized the Self; currently used to refer to a seeker following the path of *Jnana*.

Kaliyuga: the fourth and final of the *yugas* (or ages) characterized by increasing disorder, distress, lack of morality and spirituality, in which the world is at present.

kalpa: a cosmic cycle, a very vast period of time at the end of which the universe dissolves to become unmanifest.

karma: action.

Karma Yoga: the yogic path of selfless service and action without any desire of the fruit thereof.

kashta mauna: complete silence.

krama mukti: gradual Liberation.

kripa: grace.

kriya: activity.

kriya shakti: the energy of action.

kundalini: the *shakti* which remains latent in the *muladhara chakra* as a coiled snake and reveals itself when roused by specific yogic exercises.

lila: the divine play; an action which comes out of joy.

loka: a world; a division of the universe; the sphere of a divinity.

Mahabharata: one of the greatest and longest Hindu epics, relating the combat between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. It includes the *Bhagavad Gita*.

mahapralaya: the complete dissolution (*pralaya*) of all that is manifest, into its unmanifest and seed-form, after a great expanse of time.

Mahayana: lit. 'Great Vehicle'; collective name for the Schools of Buddhism of later development, which advocate the *Bodhisattva* ideal.

mala: a rosary for Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs.

manana: deep reflection on the *vedantic* teaching; one of the three inner disciplines of *Vedanta* as propounded by Shankaracharya.

manipura chakra: the third of the seven *chakras*; it is located near the navel region. It is considered the centre of *prana*, the vital force.

mantra: a formula comprising words or sounds believed to be of divine origin, and used in a ritual or meditative practice.

matha: a monastery.

mauna: silence.

maya: the delusive power which makes the Infinite appear as finite.

Mayavada: syn. with *Advaita Vedanta* of Shankaracharya.

moksha: Liberation; release from the cycle of death and rebirth (*samsara*).

mukti: syn. with *moksha*.

muladhara chakra: the first of the seven *chakras*; it is situated in the lowest extremity of the spinal cord where the *kundalini* is coiled.

mumukshutva: intense aspiration for *moksha*.

nadi: inner energy channel of the subtle body.

nama: name.

nama japa: constant repetition of the name of God.

nididhyasana: unceasing meditation on one non-dualistic thought alone, exclusive of all other thoughts; one of the three inner disciplines of *Vedanta* as propounded by Shankaracharya.

nirakara: without form.

nirguna: without attributes.

Nirguna Brahman: *Brahman* without attributes.

Nirmanakaya: one of the three bodies or 'Apparition-Body' of the Buddha in *Mahayana*; used to represent the physical form of Shakyamuni Buddha which is visible to ordinary seekers.

nirvana: lit. 'blowing out', 'extinction'; in Hinduism, it is the extinguishing of worldly desires and attachments, so that the union with God or the Realization of the Absolute is possible (syn. with *moksha*); in Buddhism, it represents also the condition of absolute cessation of attachment which enables one to be delivered from the ocean of suffering.

nirvikalpa samadhi: the *samadhi* in which the distinction between the knower, the knowledge and the known vanishes absolutely.

nishkama karma: lit. 'desireless action'.

niyama: the second discipline of Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga* concerning the inner mental purification. It comprises five observances: *shaucha* 'purity', *santosha* 'contentment', *tapas* 'self-discipline', *svadhyaya* 'Self-study' and *Ishvara pranidhana* 'surrender to God'.

OM: [or *AUM*], the most sacred syllable in all the religions which were born in India.

OM Hari sharanam: a revealed *mantra* meaning, 'I take refuge in God'.
The *vedic Rishi* Sanatan Kumar is the seer of this *mantra*.

Parabrahman: lit. 'the Supreme *Brahman*'; the Absolute, the Supreme Being, Godhead.

paroksha jnana: indirect knowledge of the Divine.

pingala nadi: one of the main *nadis*; it rises from *muladhara chakra* and ends in the right nostril.

prajna: wisdom (common meaning); also the individual soul identified with the causal body.

Prakriti: primordial material Nature composed of the three *gunas*; in *Samkhya*, the ultimate material Reality and the material cause of all matter and energy; in *Vedanta*, syn. with the cosmic divine manifestation or *maya*.

pralaya: the dissolution of the world at the end of a *kalpa* (cosmic cycle), leading to re-creation.

prana: breath; vital force.

pranava: the sacred syllable *OM*.

pranayama: regulation of breath which is the fourth discipline of Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga*.

prarabdha karma: the past *karma* that has started bearing fruit.

prasad: divine grace or favour; consecrated food which is shared among worshippers.

puja: ritual ceremony performed as a worship to God.

puri: a town; a distinctive name given to one of the ten Orders of the *Dashanami sannyasis*.

Purusha: lit. 'man', 'person'; in *Samkhya*, the first principle (*tattva*) and pure contentless Consciousness, witness to the *Prakriti*; in the early *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, it is used to mean the immortal Self.

Purusha vishesha: special entity; distinct Consciousness; God.

Purushottama: lit. 'the highest person'; the Supreme Lord; *Brahman* beyond his both aspects (*nirguna* and *saguna*).

rajas: the second of the three *gunas*; it represents the vital energy, activity and desire.

Raja Yoga: syn. with Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga*.

rishi: lit. 'seer'; the *rishis* are the ancient sages to whom the *Vedas* were revealed.

ritambara prajna: the state of refined, purified and integrated intellect in which the Truth is revealed.

sadhaka: the practitioner of a spiritual path [fem. *sadhika*]; spiritual aspirant.

sadhana: a general term for spiritual effort.

sadhana chatushtaya: the fourfold outer discipline according to Shankaracharya, comprising the four preliminary means of spiritual Enlightenment (viz. *viveka*, *vairagya*, *shat sampatti* and *mumukshutva*).

sadhu: an ascetic who has controlled his senses, renounced the world and who is dedicated to the search for God [fem. *sadhvi*].

saguna: with attributes.

Saguna Brahman: *Brahman* with attributes.

sakara: with form.

samadhi: perfect absorption of the mind in the object of contemplation; it comprises a variety of higher mental states; the eight discipline of Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga*.

Sambhogakaya: one of the three bodies of the Buddha in *Mahayana*; used to represent the quasi-physical form of Buddha as a preacher appearing to *bodhisattvas* in the celestial realm.

Samkhya: one of the six Hindu *darshanas*; a dualistic philosophy which posits two fundamental and ultimate Realities, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*.

samput: a cover; that which envelops or gives space to something else in it as a notch; in the religious/spiritual context, some holy words as *OM*, prefixed and suffixed to certain *mantras*.

samprajnata: a stage of *samadhi* in *Raja Yoga* preliminary to *asamprajnata samadhi* and in which there is a clear and distinct consciousness of the object of contemplation.

samsara: lit. 'wandering'; the cycle and bondage of life, death and rebirth; the worldly existence.

samskara: subliminal impression.

Sanatana Dharma: lit. 'eternal law'; the absolute and eternal Law, Truth or Religion; in modern usage, it designates Hinduism as an eternal and ever-existing religion.

sanchita karma: latent karma which has yet to reach fruition.

sankalpa: volition or will.

sankalpa shakti: the energy of volition, will-power.

sannyasa: renunciation; the fourth and last state (*ashrama*) in life; the monastic life of giving up worldly ties and of contemplation, dedicated solely to the goal of *moksha*.

sannyasi: a renunciate [fem. *sannyasini*]; one who has taken *sannyasa diksha* 'initiation into *sannyasa*'; in earlier times, usually a monk/nun of the *Dashanami* Order of Shankaracharya, consisting of ten monastic lineages.

sarvajna: omniscient; the all-knowing God.

sarvavid: the knower of the essential Being of all.

sat: real; absolute Existence; one of the three essential attributes which designate not the characteristics of *Brahman* but its essential nature (*svarupa*), others being *chit* and *ananda*.

Satchidananda: lit. 'Existence-Consciousness-Bliss'. It represents *Brahman*, the absolute Consciousness.

satsang: to be in the presence of Truth/Reality; to be in the company of Enlightened Ones.

sattva: the first of the three *gunas*; it represents the modality of luminosity, intelligence, purity, selflessness and inclination towards spirituality.

savikalpa samadhi: the *samadhi* in which a sense of difference between the knower and his/her object of knowledge survives.

seva: lit. 'service'; selfless service in the name of God.

shakti: lit. 'power'; divine power or energy conceived as the female and creative aspect of the Divine.

Shaktivada: the School of thought which emphasizes the *Shakti* as the fundamental Principle.

shastra : treatise.

shat chakra bhedan: lit. 'piercing of the six wheels/energy centres'; the movement of the *kundalini* in the *sushumna nadi*, from the *muladhara chakra* up to the highest cerebral region. This upward movement involves sequential opening of the *chakras*.

shat sampathi: the third outer discipline taught by Shankaracharya, known as the sixfold virtues or qualities (also called 'shamadi shatka'). It comprises *shama* 'calmness of mind', *dama* 'self-control', *uparati* 'self-withdrawal', *titiksha* 'forbearance', *shraddha* 'faith', *samadhana* 'intellectual satisfaction'.

shishya : disciple.

shmashan vairagya: dispassion generated in the mind temporarily when one looks at the dead bodies at the cremation ground; temporary dispassion.

shraddha: deep faith.

Shrauta Smarta Dharma: Vedic and Smarta Tradition (see 'Shruti' and 'Smriti').

shravana: hearing of the *vedantic* teaching or study of the Scriptures under a competent guide; one of the three inner disciplines of Shankaracharya.

Shruti: lit. 'that which is heard'; the sacred and eternal Truth in Hinduism, revealed to the *rishis*; syn. with the *Vedas*.

siddhi: attainment, perfection; supranormal powers attained by *siddhas* by means of *Hatha Yoga*, *Raja Yoga* and other disciplines.

Smriti: lit. 'recollection', 'memory'; the second part of the Hindu Scriptures (e.g. the *Puranas*) remembered and handed down by tradition, and distinguished as such from the *Vedas* or *Shruti*.

sthita prajna: one who is established in the perfect spiritual equanimity of mind, being unmoved by all the pairs of opposites (viz. pleasure and pain, praise and insult, likes and dislikes, etc.); a perfect *yogi*, a Realized One.

sushumna: the central and most important inner energy canal, located in the middle of the spine and through which the *kundalini* arises and flows in the subtle body; also known as *brahma nadi*.

sushupti: the deep sleep state.

sutra: thread; link; aphorism. The best-known *sutras* are the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Yoga Sutras*.

svah: the sky; the word 'svarga' ('heaven' or 'paradise' of Indra) is perhaps related to 'svah'.

svami: lit. 'master', 'lord' (pronounced as 'swami'); title of respect for a Hindu monk/nun, a spiritual teacher [fem. *svamini*].

svapna: the dreaming state.

taijasa: the individual soul identified with the individual subtle body.

tamas: the third of the three *gunas*; it represents the modality of static inertia, ignorance, stupefaction, darkness and psychic obscurity.

Tantra: general term for the *tantric* cults of India (Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina) and whose doctrinal texts are called '*Tantras*'. Tantrism emphasizes the feminine energy (*shakti*) of a bipolar reality and seeks to unite these polarities to attain *moksha*.

tapas: asceticism; the practice of austerity which is part of *niyama* in Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga*.

tirtha: a shrine or sacred place of pilgrimage; a distinctive name given to one of the ten Orders of the *Dashanami* sannyasis.

turiya: lit. 'the fourth'; the fourth (stateless) state of absolute Consciousness, beyond waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

Udasin: an ancient monastic Order of *Sanatana Dharma* founded by *Rishi* Sanatan Kumar, the foremost of four *rishis* known as the Kumara brothers. They are the psychogenic sons of Brahma, the Creator, and are believed to be always existing like God till the world lasts. The mention of these *rishis* comes both in the *Vedas* and *Puranas*. *Acharya*

Shri Chanderji, the elder son of the great sage Guru Nanak Deva, had been the 165th great master and exponent of the *Udasin* tradition. He revived this monastic tradition in the 16th cent. and is considered as an *avatara* of Lord Shiva.

Upanishad: lit. 'sitting down near' [the *Guru* to receive spiritual instructions]; the concluding sections of the *Vedas* containing the *Vedanta* philosophy.

vairagya: lit. 'absence of passion'; dispassion; an indispensable qualification for spiritual aspirants in all Indian spiritual paths.

vartman karma: lit. 'the present *karma*' [Hindi]; the new *karma* one is presently creating. While some of this *karma* bears fruit already in the current life, some other will manifest in future births (syn. with *agami karma*).

vasana: underlying desire, latent impression.

Veda: lit. 'knowledge'; the supreme knowledge contained in the four *Vedas* and the sacred texts appended to them, i.e. the *Brahmanas*, the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*.

Vedanta: lit. 'end of the *Veda*', i.e. the essence or the complete knowledge of the highest teaching of the *Vedas*, as expressed in the *Upanishads*; one of the six Hindu *darshanas*.

vedantin: a follower of *Vedanta*.

videhamukti: Liberation (*mukti*) of the *jivatman* from all bodies, gross and subtle, which is attained after the death of the body.

vidvat sannyasa: the life of a renunciate accepted by an already Realized One.

vikarma: wrong or unlawful act.

vimarsha: lit. 'deliberation'; a technical word in *Shaktivada*, implying the playful activity of the divine Power.

vipassana: the central form of meditation in *Theravada* Buddhism [Pali].

Virat: the Supreme Soul in its universal physical form.

vishuddha chakra: the fifth of the seven *chakras*; it is located at the throat.

vishva: the individual soul identified with its physical individual body.

viveka: discrimination between what is Real and what is unreal.

vividisha sannyasa: the common form of *sannyasa*, taken as a means to *jnana* and *moksha*.

vyahriti: lit. 'utterance', 'declaration'; the *vyahritis* represent the mystical names of the seven worlds. The first three names (*bhuh*, *bhuvah*, *svah*) are called 'great *vyahritis*' and are uttered after 'OM' by every *brahmin* at the beginning of his daily prayers.

yajna: worship, sacrifice; syn. with *havan*.

yama: lit. 'restraint'; the first discipline of Patanjali's *Ashtanga Yoga* comprising five ethical rules: *ahimsa* 'non-violence', *satya* 'truthfulness', *asteya* 'non-stealing', *brahmacharya* 'celibacy' and *aparigraha* 'non-possession'.

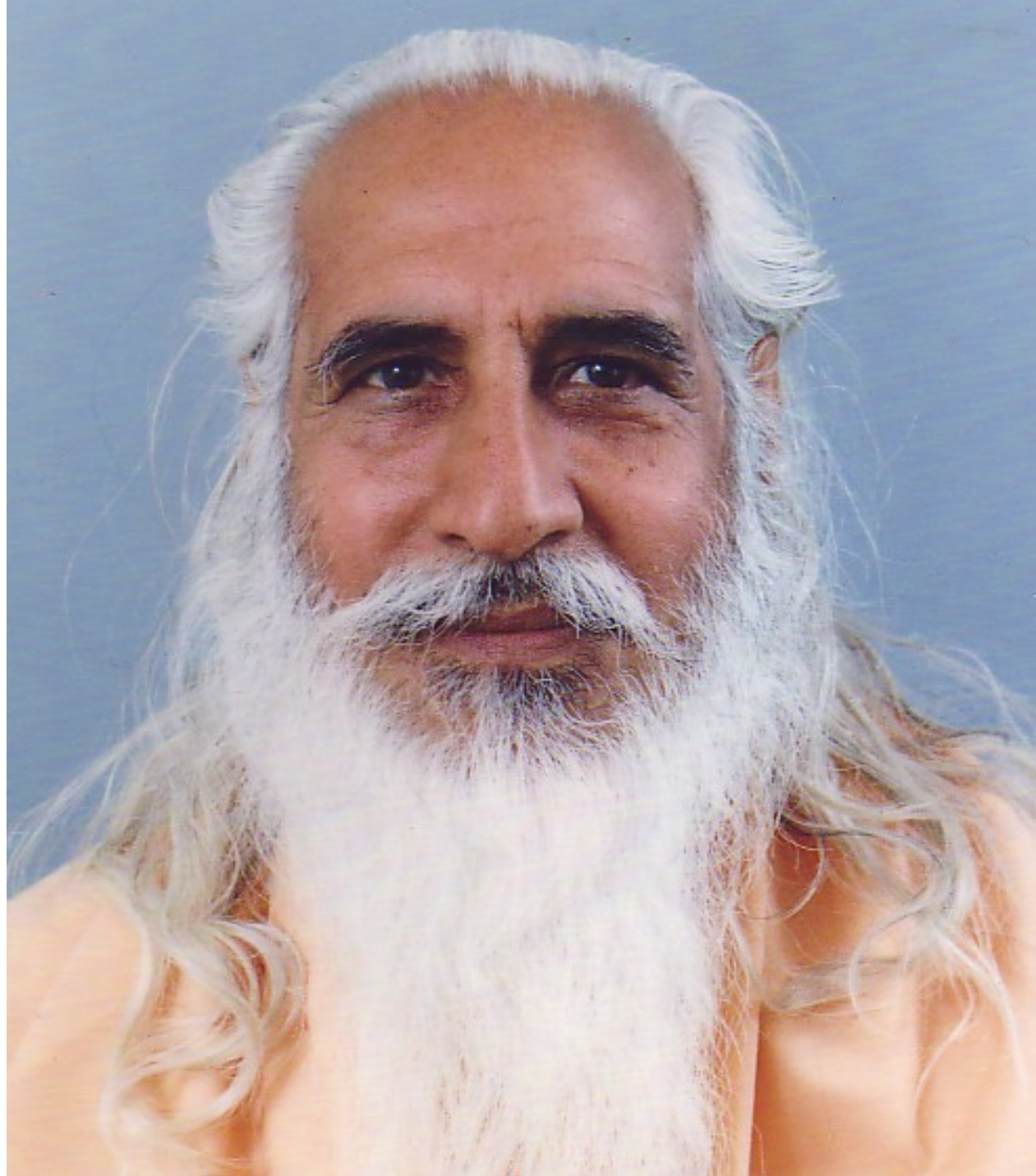
Yoga: lit. 'yoking', 'joining'; union with God; the techniques for transforming consciousness and attaining *moksha*; in its classical meaning, it is referred to as one of the six Hindu *darshanas* and expressed in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*.

Yoga Sutra: *Yoga* aphorisms expounded by Patanjali. They comprise the philosophy of Patanjali *Yoga* (or *Ashtanga Yoga*), one of the six Hindu *darshanas*.

Yoga Vashishtha: a voluminous treatise of 32.000 verses. It contains the teachings of the sage Vashishtha to his disciple, Lord Rama, as to how to realize the absolute Reality (*Brahman*) beyond the impermanent world.

yogi: a practitioner in one of the Schools of *Yoga* [fem. *yogini*].

yuga: the four periods or ages of the world's existence, each having its own general level of consciousness. The fourth and present one is called *Kaliyuga*.



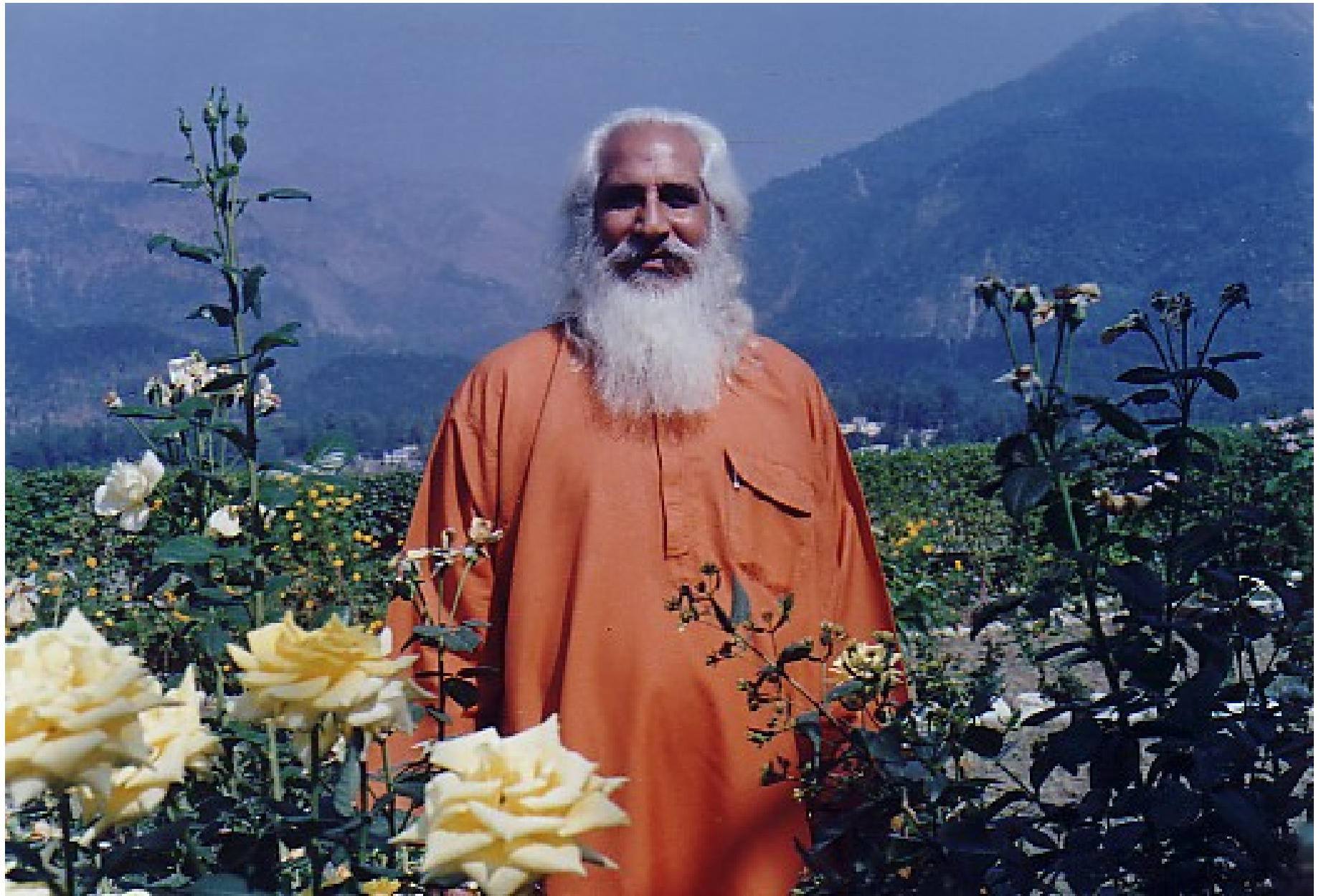


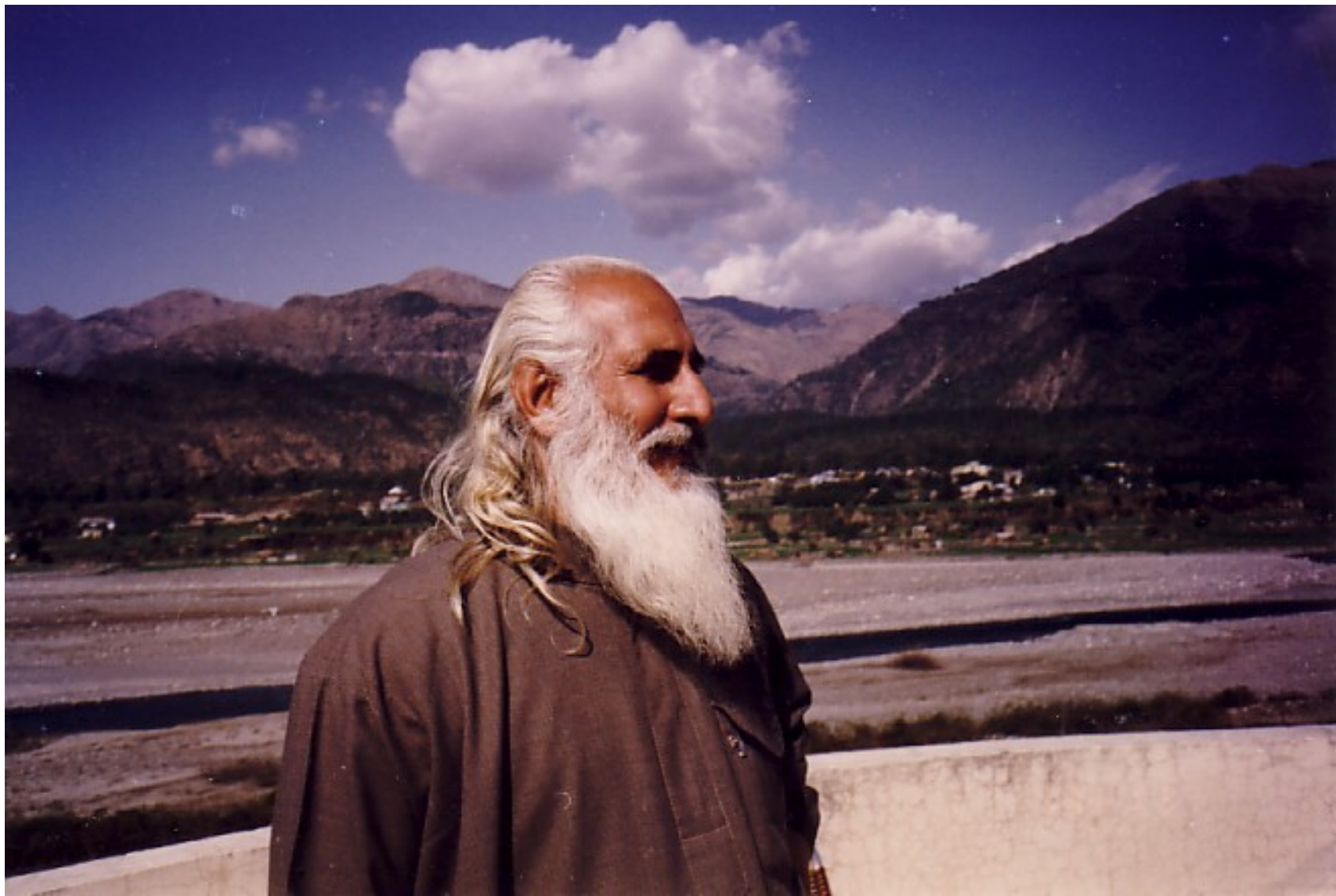
जागिये।
समय निकला जा रहा है।

OM SWEET OM

AWAKE!
THE TIME IS RUNNING OUT.

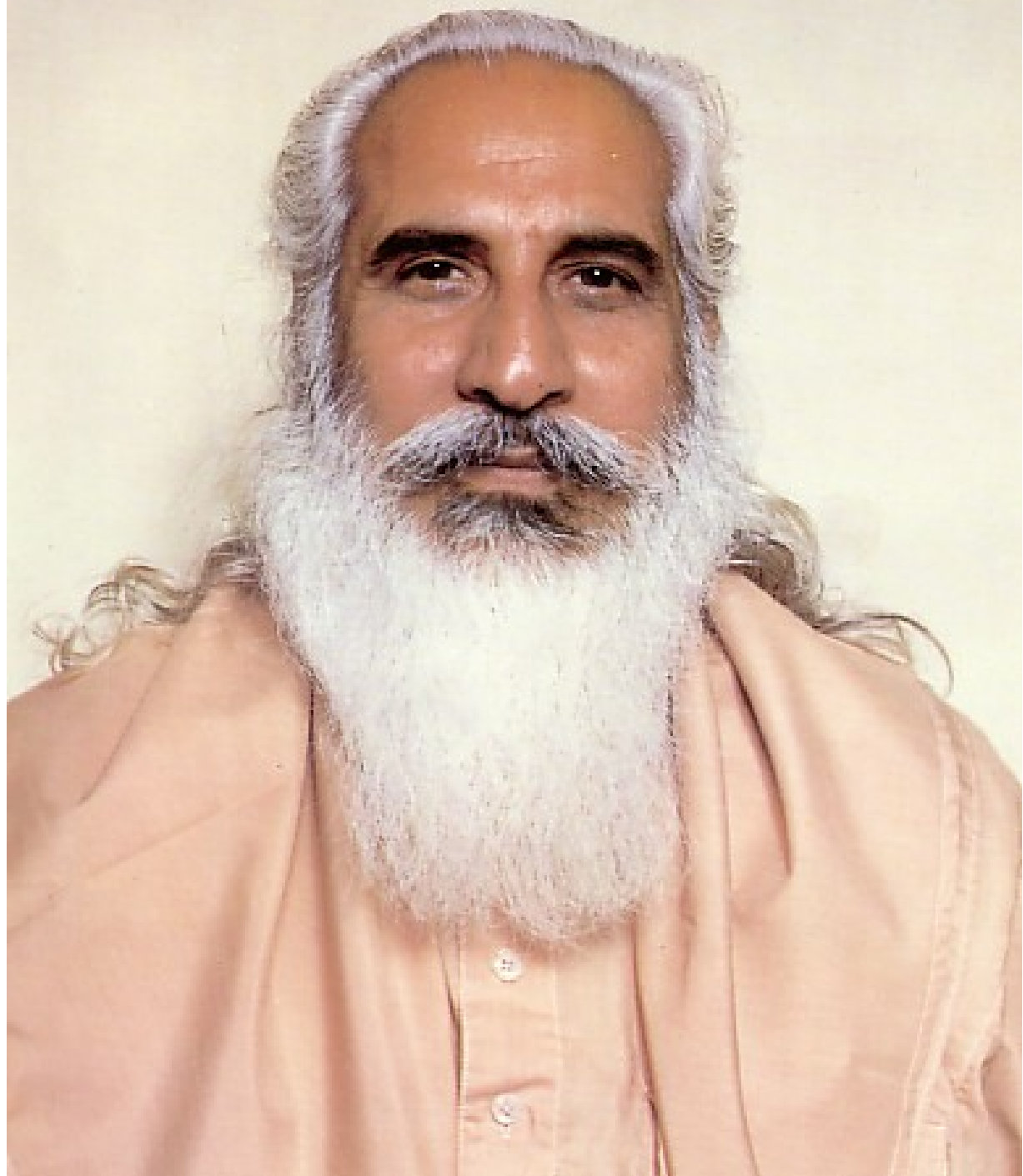




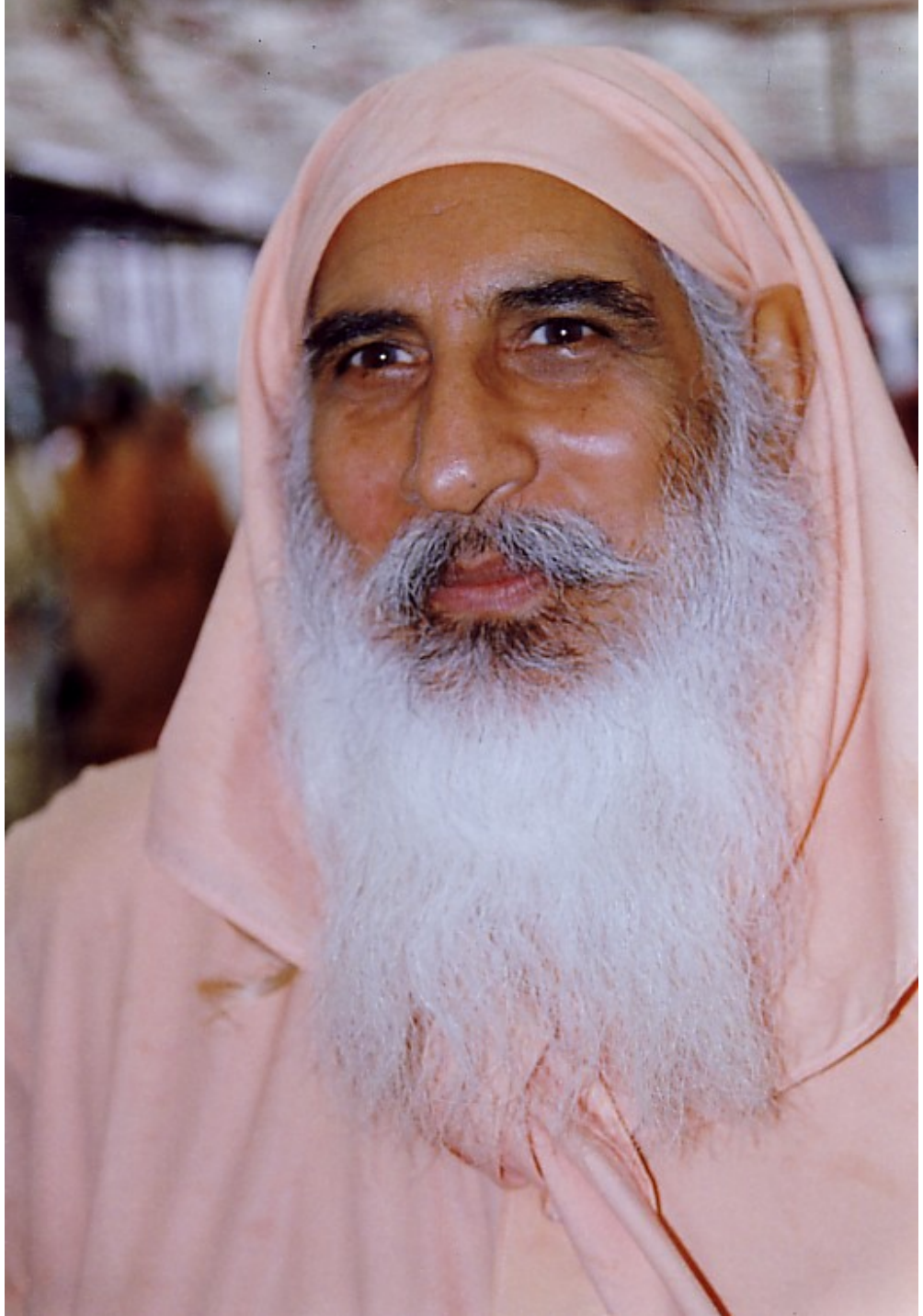














Chandrasekhar