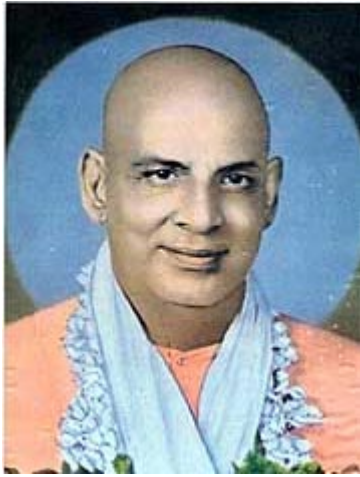


PONDER THESE TRUTHS

Early Morning Meditation Talks

By

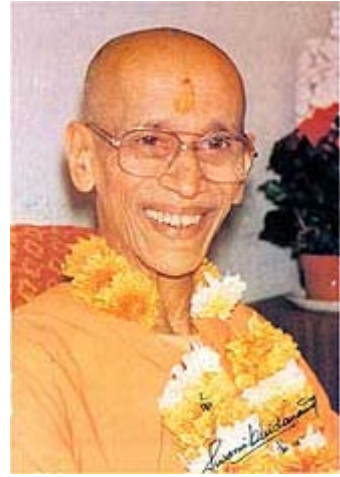
Sri Swami Chidananda



Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE**
So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda



Sri Swami Chidananda

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Early morning group meditation has long been a part of the life at Sivananda Ashram. Usually held in the sacred Samadhi Shrine of His Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the saintly founder of the Divine Life Society, it includes chanting, *kirtan*, *guru stotra*, *santi path* and silent meditation, followed by a message from one of the senior Swamis.

For many years these prayer gatherings were a daily occurrence, but by the 1980's they were being held only on special occasions. One such special occasion was the birthday celebration of Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj on September 24, 1984. During his short talk, Swamiji suddenly said: "What would really be a wonderful birthday gift for me is if you were to hold these group meditations *every morning* at this time. And if you will, I promise that whenever I am in the Ashram I will come and give the message."

Immediately, one of the senior Swamis offered to lead the prayers, and the very next morning the regular early morning gatherings were resumed. They have continued to this day, and, true to his word, whenever Swamiji is in the Ashram, regardless of the condition of his health or the weather, he has never failed to attend and give a message.

Many of the Ashram residents noticed that there was a very special quality about these talks. They felt that the talks were so helpful and valuable that they should be shared with others. So, taping and transcribing began. This volume contains a selection of 75 of the talks recorded from the beginning of August 1987 until the end of December 1990. They are being brought out in 1991, the year that marks Swamiji's 75th birth anniversary (platinum jubilee).

In the editing of these talks, no attempt was made to convert them into essay style. Rather, the intent was to stay as close as possible to the spoken word, so that Swamiji's messages, frequently spontaneous and highly inspired, would be conveyed as he spoke them.

Sanskrit language words have been put in *italics* with the exception of a few words like Brahman, Atman, Yoga, Vedanta, Guru and Ashram which are commonly found in an English dictionary. Often, while using a Sanskrit word, phrase or verse, Swamiji would give either a translation or a free rendering of it. These have been included in the text. Otherwise, the meaning follows in parentheses or can be found in the glossary.

The publishers would like to acknowledge the very valuable and helpful contribution of all those residents of the Ashram who taped, transcribed, edited, checked, and prepared the talks for printing. Many were involved and our grateful thanks to them all.

The talks are full of the inspiration and wisdom of a true son of our ancient Indian culture. They have been an inspiration to those who heard them and to those who have prepared them for publication. May they be an equal inspiration, help and solace to you!

The Divine Life Society

Guru Purnima, 1991

PREFACE*

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Devotees of the Lord, spiritual seekers and aspirants, *sadhaks* upon the path of *sadhana*, Yogis engaged in Yoga practice while living your life in different fields of secular activity, either as Ashramites upon the banks of the Ganga in this holy Ashram of Gurudev, or as people in service, people in business, or people engaged in different professional fields!

Engaged thus variously, you are nevertheless seeking souls trying to make this life a steady upward movement towards the great Goal which infuses a new meaning into your life, which infuses a certain purposefulness into your life, a Goal which makes life worth living, a Goal which makes life a very clear means to the accomplishment of a sublime end. Thus, in your own personal subjective inwardness, you are engaged in this quest towards spiritual awakening, unfoldment and progress towards ultimate divine perfection by attaining Self-realisation.

To you all, a cordial welcome to the spiritual presence of Gurudev in this sacred Samadhi Hall of his holy Ashram on Divine Mother Ganga's bank. Welcome to Muni-ki-reti which is the entrance way to the Himalayan shrines that make this entire area a divine area. It is an area of penance and prayer, seclusion and silence, deep meditation and struggle for Self-realisation. Welcome to this sanctified area of blessed Mother India!

...Above all, the central purpose of these daily sharings is that you may benefit yourself and that you may enrich your life, strengthen your aspiration and move Godward with greater determination. That and that alone is the object of, the purpose behind these daily sharings; there is nothing else. If you are able to see the path clearly, if you are able to move with determination, if you are able to keep the shining Goal ever before you without forgetting it even for one split second, and if you are able to lead the divine life, then I am richly blessed, I am richly blessed indeed. I seek nothing else.

God's divine grace and Master's choicest blessings ever shower upon you and make your life a life of glory, moving gradually towards the supreme Goal, the divine goal of your life! This is my prayer at the feet of Gurudev as well as God Who resides within you as your Indwelling Reality, as the Light of lights beyond all darkness, shining in the innermost chambers of your heart. Be aware of that Light within you. Be aware of that supreme Light which is your goal, and live a life illumined and radiant with divinity. God bless you!

Swami Chidananda



* Salutation and conclusion of the early morning meditation talk December 24, 1989.

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1

YOU ARE UNIQUE IN THE EYES OF GOD

Blessed Atman! The key to blessedness lies in being aware of blessedness. If your awareness is turned in different directions, towards what you do not have, or what you think or imagine you do not have, then this wrongly directed pattern of thought will make you unaware of the many things that you have.

Each one is distinct and unique in the eyes of the Creator; there is none like that particular being, there is no second. So each one is precious and specially valuable to the Creator. In the eyes of God, therefore, each one is something special. This should always be remembered. No one can replace you in the role that you fulfil in God's creation at any given place and at any given point in time. You are most necessary and indispensable for that particular set-up, in that particular time-space context. And therefore rejoice and be grateful to the Lord that He has given you a role to perform.

Whether you perform your role perfectly and in a meaningful manner or not is irrelevant, because God expects each one to do what one is capable of, at any point, at any time. God does not expect an ant to haul a great timber as the elephant does in the forest. Nor does God expect the elephant to fly gracefully in the air as do swallows and doves. He expects birds to fly and He loves them for what they do. He expects elephants to fulfil their role, giving dignity to the forest and doing incredible jobs of strength. And He expects man to live as man. And each one in his own place, in his own sphere, can fulfil a task and gladden the heart of the Maker and contribute something to His plan on earth.

And this is the truth. And to be aware of the truth is to be worry-free, anxiety-free. To be aware of the truth is to be grateful to God: "You have made me unique, You have given me a role, and You have prompted me and brought to me all helpful factors to fulfil my role and play my part. For that I ever give thanks."

No one is dispensable. No one is useless. No one is lesser in the eyes of God or in the eyes of those who try to avoid human judgment and human standards of criticism, who accept God's creation as it is, because God created it. For them, whatever God thought fit to make, in any manner whatsoever, is perfect; there is nothing wrong in it, and it is acceptable. For them, whatever emanates from God partakes of His divinity and perfection, and therefore in God's own plan, and in God's own way, is fully complete.

In this way, if we accept this truth that to God we are unique, and so we are to all those who are trying to look with the impartiality of God's vision, then in the presence of God and of those who are devotees of God, we must feel at home, we have arrived; we may no longer feel distressed in heart. One should rejoice in serene calmness of spirit: "I have arrived, I am at home, I am in the presence of God and I am totally accepted, I am totally accepted."

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

Things are as they should be. The Lord is in heaven and all is well on earth. This is the faith, the firm belief of those who have faith in the infinite love of God, who have trust in the infinite goodness of God and who are sure that in God's heart they have a special and unique place. This is ever kept reserved for them and no one can take it away from them, because God's infinite heart is large enough to hold the entire cosmos and everything within it.

Thus knowing, we should have great comfort in our heart, great satisfaction and contentment. And that is the secret of inner joy, the key to blessedness and the pathway to peace, serenity and inner calm, where there is no fretting, agitation or restlessness.

The peace of God pervades the entire earth; the peace of God pervades everywhere, without and within. The peace of God is the one great truth underlying all things, ever-present, ever-accessible and available, ever-full and inexhaustible.

Try to live in the light of this truth, and the heart and mind will be at ease. Never compare and contrast, because there is no comparing and contrasting amongst unique things. Every little fledgling hatched from an egg is unique to its parents; so is each being unique in itself, for God is the parent of all. Hence, sages and saints and men of wisdom look upon all with equal vision.

Therefore, rejoice that you are special to God in His infinite love. Rejoice that you have your own special place and role to perform in this creation of God. And rejoice that His love is immediately available to you, for He is not a remote reality, but He is the indwelling Reality, nearer to you than anything else on earth. And rejoice that within you is the peace of God as your own Self. You are God's peace and you have a duty to perform, that is, to spread this peace which you are to one and all. Live to spread this peace!

2

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Blessed Immortal Atman! Spiritual life is an earnest endeavour to transcend sense-perceived, temporary appearances, unrealities, and attain to a vision and an experience of the supersensuous Divine Reality. It is an attempt to transcend changeful and passing sense appearances and to rise up and become established in the Reality that is ever-present amidst these ever-changing, temporary appearances as their very source, their support and their substratum.

That Reality is present as thread is present in cloth, as earth is present in pots made of clay, as gold is present in diverse gold ornaments. Even as thread pervades all cloth, even as earth pervades all clay pots, even as gold pervades all golden ornaments, even so is the invisible support, centre and source, our goal, ever-present in the midst of passing appearances.

That Reality is present even as oil is present in oil seeds. Though the seeds are dry, there is occult oil hidden within. Even as butter is present in milk, as silence is present in the midst of sound which is only superimposed over it, even so, invisibly, the Reality is present in the midst of

unrealities. A painting is possible only because there is a canvas behind it. A painting cannot be painted on an empty frame, a canvas is required. A movie can be seen only because there is a screen present.

Eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah (God, Who is one only, is hidden in all beings). It is hidden because of Its subtlety. It is hidden because It is by nature a principle, an essence, beyond and devoid of name and form, whereas the human mind and intellect are conditioned only to think on the basis of names and forms. The only things the eyes can see are size, shape and colour. But behind and beyond the names and forms there is the nameless and formless Being, a Being Who exists, a Being Who is of the nature of luminous consciousness, a Being Who is endowed with the quality of pure bliss—*sat-chit-ananda* Brahman.

And to attain this ever-present Reality, hidden behind the outer screen of ever-changing and passing names and forms, to perceive this ever-present Reality, you must develop subtle vision. And subtle vision is only acquired by purification of your heart and mind: the greater the purity, the greater the subtlety of mind; the greater the subtlety of mind, the deeper the perception. And to grow in purity so that the vision is purified, the mind becomes subtle, one should do *sadhana* (spiritual practice).

The objective of all human effort is to attain supreme happiness, peace and satisfaction. These the world cannot give. But being in the world, one can achieve peace, happiness and satisfaction in God. One attains the supreme peace and joy of God only by knowing God, only by worshipping God. But to approach and to enter into God, to have vision of God, one has to acquire the same state of subtle consciousness as God. The more you become godly in nature, the more you begin to become aware of God's presence in His universe. God experience comes when you grow in godliness.

Spiritual life means growing in godliness. *Sadhana* in its various forms such as *japa*, *kirtan*, *puja*, *svadhyaya*, *asana*, *pranayama* and meditation is a process of purifying and transforming your normal human nature into godly divine nature. And to ensure that your outer life of day-to-day living—speaking, acting, interacting with others and all life around you—to ensure that it supports your inner *sadhana*, you are admonished by Gurudev to transform your present outer life into a divine process, a divine life, not the life that you have been leading in the past, but a divine life. You have to make your life a divine life by bringing into it ingredients and qualities that belong to God, incorporating into it divinity, godliness, qualities that we do not normally associate with man, that we do not normally associate with this world, this earth plane.

So, on earth you have to be creatures of a realm beyond earth. Appearing as human beings you have to inwardly grow into the very form of a divine being, godly being. This is the secret of success in *sadhana*. This is the crucial test of the depth of your understanding of *sadhana*—grasping the quintessence of this inner process. It is to deeply understand the necessity of supporting one's *sadhana*, the process of life transformation, by a divinely lived daily life. Unless this is understood, unless this task is undertaken, one's *sadhana* will fail to bring about the necessary transformation.

Therefore, with full knowledge and understanding, you should proceed upon the spiritual path. It is no more or no less than a process of total transformation of the human individual personality, a total transformation into divinity. Understanding is the first thing needful; second is the will power and wisdom to translate understanding into actual life; and third is a persistent perseverance, which is the only guarantee of success in this determined pursuit of the divine life, this determined pursuit of godliness in daily life. These are vital facts for you to ponder, for you to reflect upon. God bless you!

3

YOGA AND VEDANTA

Blessed Divinities! *Sadhaks* and seekers! From your ancient, effulgent past, as your heritage and birthright, you have inherited two great treasures—Yoga and Vedanta. Vedanta is divine wisdom, knowledge of the Divine Reality, the great Reality. Yoga is the science of entering into a conscious relationship with that knowledge, experiencing that knowledge, realising that knowledge.

The quintessence, the principal essence of these two great treasures is the proclamation of Vedanta that you are divine. You are not human, you are not limited, you are not imperfect, you are essentially divine. The truth about you is divinity. Your human nature is a passing, temporary added factor to your identity. It is, however, an invaluable added factor, an unparalleled, unique, most precious added factor.

Divinity is all-pervading, It is everywhere. It is hidden in all names and forms; It is the heart-centre of all creatures. There are countless beings existing with us, outnumbering us, as companions upon this planet earth, which is our home. Nevertheless, their status—the bird status, worm status, reptile status, insect status, fish status, animal status—has not in it the necessary mechanism to enable them to realise their essential divinity. Whereas it is the uniqueness of the

human status that it is provided with these tools for Self-realisation, *atma-jnana*, because it contains the rare faculties of thinking, feeling, reasoning and purposeful activity directed towards this end.

Man was made in the image of God. So, already he has in him the God-essence or God-principle or God-nature and the God-abilities and capacities, the God-beauty, the God-sublimity, the God-perfection, the God-wholeness. This is the uniqueness of the human being. He is made in the image of the Maker, the supreme, almighty Cosmic Being, the Universal Spirit.

Therefore, this essential divinity of man is an experienceable or an attainable state of consciousness, and man has been given full adequate tools for this attainment. It is the utilisation of these faculties in the right direction, in a systematic manner, with full knowledge of the way to apply them for attaining the supreme state, that is the concern of Yoga Sastra or the science of Yoga.

So, the heart of Vedanta is your divinity, that you are unborn, imperishable, all-perfect. You are of the nature of existence, consciousness, bliss absolute—*sat-chit-ananda atman*. You exist, therefore you are *sat*. And your existence is not a dull, insentient existence, an unconscious, inert existence. You are filled with a luminous awareness, an effulgent awareness of your own existence, of your own being. You know that you are. You are conscious that “I am.” Therefore you are *chit*. You are not what is seen as the outer person. That is only *nama* and *rupa*—name and form. Within this name and form, which is the apparent man, which is the false man, which is the temporary, ever-changing mask which passes away—behind, beyond and hidden in this name and form, you exist as a radiant centre of luminous consciousness. And in that pure state, you are totally free from all imperfect experiences that pertain to this physical and psychological consciousness, totally free—no anxiety, no pain, no suffering, no worry, no bondage, no grief, no delusion, no fear. You are in a state of serene, unbroken, continuous, perennial joy, a peaceful, calm bliss that is your essential nature, your *ananda svarupa atma* (blissful essential self). *Sat-chit-ananda*—existence, consciousness and bliss, that is your true being. Realise this and be free. Attain this knowledge and become free. This is Vedanta. The essence of Vedanta is your divinity, and the practice of Vedanta is to be constantly aware of your divinity—*atmachintan*.

And the essence of Yoga is a continuous contact with the Divine within, which is the source and origin of your being, the all-pervading Spirit, Brahman, the inner Self, the unchanging. Yoga is constant, continuous, unbroken remembrance, an unbroken, conscious connection, a constant, living relationship with the Divine. To cultivate it by the various means is also Yoga.

Gurudev’s concept of divine life combines both the practice of Yoga and the spirit of Vedanta. Live in the awareness of your divinity, and live to utilise every conscious moment, every breath to be continuously, unbrokenly in close contact with the cosmic source of your divinity, with your divine origin, with your eternal divine ground, your divine abode.

Yoga and Vedanta form the two ingredients that go to make up the divine life of service, devotion, meditation and Self-realisation. Boldly Vedanta proclaims and wants you to know: “*ahamatma nirakarah sarvavyapi svabhavatah* (I am the Atman that is formless, all-pervading by nature).” “Beyond sense, beyond mind, I am the quintessence of luminous wisdom consciousness”—this is the awareness that Vedanta grants you and wants you to practise. And Yoga is continuous, unbroken, conscious, purposeful contact and relationship, ever progressive relationship with the Divine.

4

THE VISION OF OUR ANCIENTS

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! There are certain very significant, important and meaningful aspects of the Vedic way of life, as well as the culture of the sacred land of India, which form, as it were, the very heart of Vedic *dharma* and Indian culture. It is these concepts that enliven the vision of our great heritage and our culture.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

With what eyes, with what view, did our ancients behold this life, man, this world, human beings? These lofty concepts that were given to us, handed down to posterity, were not arrived at through reasoning or speculation, but rather through direct perception, direct personal experience (*aparoksha'nubhuti*) within the depths of their consciousness. And if these lofty concepts are lost sight of, the river of the stream of our life will run into a desert, become dried up and vanish without ever reaching the great destination of the ocean.

These fundamental concepts, the vision they had, the Indian vision, must become woven into the very fabric of our day-to-day living and our day-to-day awareness. Then alone we will be able to fully absorb and benefit from these concepts.

First and foremost, it is a vision and a way of life based upon an aspiration for light, enlightenment, to be ever moving towards the Light and ever turning away from darkness, rejecting all that is darkness. Because darkness binds and blinds and stops all possibility of onward progress and is the greatest stumbling block to the process of evolution. The meaning of life is transcending all darkness.

This Light is greater than any light within the gamut of human experience, within the entire range of earthly experience, where the sun does not shine, neither the moon, nor the stars, nor lightning, what to speak of ordinary fire. Because That shines with supreme effulgence, here on this earth all things have luminosity, effulgence, all things are able to be radiant and to manifest light. All light ultimately inheres in that great Light of lights, is derived from that Light of lights. Such was their experience. As such, it was not unusual to refer to the ultimate Reality as the transcendental Light. Thence is the great ancient Vedic prayer summing up the entire aspiration of the seeking heart of this culture, this way of life: “*tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*—From darkness lead us unto Light, take us up into Light.” And this aspiration after Light, seeking after Light and turning away from darkness, should be a constant, unbroken process within each one of you. That is the *sadhaka*, that is the *jijnasu* who seeks light. He is the one who aspires for knowledge, for wisdom, ever turning away from all that constitutes the contradiction of knowledge, wisdom and light, resolutely rejecting anything in life, in the environment, that is likely to come in the way of the process of moving towards the supreme Light of lights.

And the other great concept is that everything is sacred, everything is indwelt, pervaded, permeated by the Divine Reality. You live, move and have your being amidst that great Reality. The Upanishads, the Gita, the teachings of the saints who have followed this path of Yoga and Vedanta are full of this declaration. The presence of the Divine is in and through the great appearance, the phenomenon, the world appearance. In the midst of the ever-changeful, the ephemeral, the evanescent, there is the never-changing, the stable, the permanent. And thus the logical conclusion of it is that every movement, every force, every form of energy, all power, is a manifestation of this great Reality, the great Light of lights.

And out of this experience arose that entire school of thought conceiving the Divine not merely as an all-pervading Reality, an all-pervading Presence, a great Effulgence, surpassing the effulgence of more than a million suns, but also as the great universal Power, the universal Source. Everything indeed in this universe—all movement, all power, all force, all energy, is divine, is

derived from the divine Source. Therefore it is sacred. Therefore it is to be cultivated. Therefore it is to be nurtured. Therefore it is to be conserved, accumulated and preserved.

And through it everything is possible. All things that have to be overcome can be overcome. All things that have to be achieved and attained can be achieved and attained. There is nothing impossible, for the sanction behind this force or energy in this gross physical universe is the supreme source of all divine energy or force, Para-Sakti.

This great system of philosophy called the Sakta school conceived the eternal Reality as infinite, imponderable power or energy, *sakti*. They called it Para-Sakti, the transcendental Power, Adi-Sakti, the primal Power or Maha-Sakti, the great Power. And so everything is saturated by that great power or force. As you sit here this morning, it is that force that makes your heart pulsate and pump blood through your entire physical system. It is that force that makes you breathe, digests your food and makes you what you are, a living, moving, dynamic being. (It is not through eating food that this force comes; it is that great force which makes you live, and because you live and there are processes of wear and tear going on within the body, eating becomes necessary.) As the same force, grain nourishes, water quenches thirst, fire cooks food. It is that force that comes as my words. It is that force at work in your ears and makes you hear these sounds. And it is that force which works as intelligence when you are able to grasp, understand, interpret anew and absorb this message—*ya devi sarvabhuteshu buddhirupena samsthita* (the Goddess Who is present in all beings as Intelligence).

Therefore, the true seeker, the *sadhak*, the Yogi, treats all the force, energy and power at his disposal with great reverence. With reverence, with this awareness, wisely does the Yogi generate such force through *samyama*, through *sadhana*, through self-control, *tapasya*. The Yogi goes on cultivating, developing and wisely conserving this force. And with great skill through Yoga, he channelises this force for creative, gainful and constructive attainment, for progressing upon the path of Yoga. In the ultimate context, it is this universal force that enables you to be a Yogi. If you are a *paropakari*, it is this universal force that enables you to perform altruistic, selfless, egoless, motiveless deeds, to be a *karma yogi*. And you must daily be aware of and thank that force that enables you to help others, to serve others.

It is that force that is the *pranasakti* within you. It is that force that is the *kundalini sakti* within you. It is that force that infills each Divine Name, infills the *mantra* that you receive. It is that force that gives you physical, mental, intellectual, ethical, moral and spiritual enlightenment. In all these levels, it is that force that is at play. When prayer is offered it is this force that enlivens it and gives it a certain spiritual dynamism. *Gayatri* is this force; every Name, every *mantra* is this force. The dynamism of this entire physical universe, the entire creation, the phenomenon, and yourself included in it, as part of it, is the play of this Power of powers.

Therefore be aware of the sanctity of all things, the sanctity of all forces, all powers, all energy, and diligently cultivate a reverential attitude. Do not waste, do not misuse, do not misdirect or divert it into antagonistic channels that will thwart the very will of God manifesting in your life as evolution. God has made us for this ascent into divine perfection, and if forces at our disposal are misdirected and abused or wasted away, then we nullify the will of God in our lives. We thwart the

very purpose of our existence, and the upper ascent, the evolutionary ascent of our being, is retarded.

From one point of view everything that you behold may be gross, but from another point of view, all this is divine. All life is sacred. Everything is to be treated with reverence. And everything is to be made our means of ascending to that supreme state of perfection.

Therefore, being aware always of this great source of all power and energy in this world, and its sanctity, within yourself, in the universe around you, in all great *tattvas*, in *asana*, in *pranayama*, in the spoken word in *satsang*, in *japa*, in meditation, be a wise worshipper of Sakti. Relate yourself with reverence to It and make the highest and loftiest use of every force that you are able to take in from life around you and utilise it for this great attainment of God-realisation, *aparoksha'nubhuti*, Self-realisation. May this great cosmic Power of powers bless you and grant you success in your *sadhana*!

5

NEVER FORGET YOUR DIVINITY

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Never, never forget that you are radiant immortal Atman, you are the radiant, immortal, spiritual Light. You are a radiant spark of the Divine, a ray of the great Light of lights which is beyond all darkness.

Our physical personality, our body, mind, intellect, thoughts, emotions, desires, sentiments, memories, imaginations and the various processes going on within the psyche, the psychological self, may all be regarded as necessary in order to function upon this physical plane. They may even be valued in the light of the fact that they are necessary instruments, media and helpful factors in order to strive and awaken ourselves to our eternal, essential divine nature. So they have a value.

But except for this fact, that they are channels for *sadhana*, the instruments of Yoga for spiritual striving, for illumination and liberation, they are, by and large, only of nuisance value to be tolerated, because they are the prolific source of our bondage, our disharmony, our clash and conflict, within ourselves as well as with others. They are the prolific source of so many experiences that we do not wish to have. They constantly obstruct the awareness that "I am the radiant immortal Self, I am a spiritual entity beyond body and mind, name and form." By that little action of veiling, they drag us down to the lower plane of physicality, body consciousness and mental consciousness. That itself makes them serious obstacles in the unfoldment and the manifestation of our spiritual consciousness. Therefore they are burdens to be tolerated, and constantly we have to see them only as a temporary covering and reject them.

In spite of their veiling power, you must assert the Spirit; you must affirm your eternal, radiant, immortal nature. Constantly you should do that. Never, never forget that you are radiant, immortal Atman. Never, never forget that you are children of the Divine, essentially also divine. You are a part, *jivatma* is a part of the *paramatma*. If you forget ten times, recollect yourself ten

times. If you forget a hundred times, reject the wrong idea and again recollect yourself a hundred times. Keep up this *sadhana*. Live in divine awareness. Ever be centred in your true, eternal, immortal, divine identity, be centred in the Self.

If you wish to overcome the many factors within yourself that stand in the way of this radiant spiritual awareness, this constant positive state of light, power, joy, cheerfulness and inner peace, it is necessary to tap the power that is everywhere around you in nature and to be conscious of this power by sublating or setting aside the name and form that covers it.

Every object in this outer universe is a centre of spiritual force, because it is a manifestation of the primal cosmic power or energy. A tree, a stone, falling rain, the blowing wind, everything that you can see, hear, taste, smell or touch in this universe, whether immediate or remote, is infilled by the divine principle. This was the experience of the Upanishadic seers, and you have to try to be constantly aware of the hidden substratum of the apparent, ever-changing names and forms.

If you are rooted in this awareness, then you are conscious of being enveloped by a power, by a benign presence, a healing presence, a peaceful presence, a radiant, luminous presence. Thus it becomes much easier to relate yourself directly, either through prayer, or through invoking the Divine Name which represents this power, or through *svadhyaya* (study of scriptures) which raises your mind to sublime heights.

I wish to particularly call your attention to one aspect of this *svadhyaya*. *Svadhyaya* requires a book no matter how small it is. Suppose you are in a state, a condition or situation where, due to reasons beyond your control, you cannot take the book out to read, and yet at the same time you urgently need a little support from within. For such occasions you should have by heart a repertoire, a reserve of sublime, lofty, inspiring, power-infusing sayings from the sacred books. They should always be there. At any moment you must be able to recollect them and to repeat them mentally or even verbally.

Therefore during your spiritual study day by day, you must try to get by heart and make your own, certain essential parts, certain inspiring verses or lines from the Bhagavad Gita, from the Upanishads, from the New Testament, or some other scripture. So, if you have within yourself for immediate recollection, immediate affirmation, certain verses or lines by heart, then it becomes a valuable substitute for *svadhyaya* in situations where it is not possible to take out a book and read. When you repeat them, immediately you become inspired. Your inner atmosphere is transformed, because they are powerful. These great quotations are instant power.

For example, from the Bhagavad Gita have an inspiring line such as: *ajo nityah sasvato'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire* (Unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient, the Self is not killed when the body is killed); or for Vedantic inspiration, some verses from the Avadhuta Gita like: *ahameva'vyayo'nantah suddha-vijnanavigraha; sukham dukkham na janami katham kasyapi vartate* (I alone am imperishable, infinite, the form of pure Consciousness. I do not know pleasure or pain or how they affect anyone); or for peace, from the Guru Gita, such as: *chaitanyam sasvatam santam vyomatitam niranjanam* (...Who is pure Consciousness, eternal, peaceful, beyond ether and untainted). When you say “*vyomatita*” (beyond ether), you are already uplifted; you go beyond this world of name and form, being aware that you are part of the Being Who is spotless and

pure, and Who far transcends space and everything that is gross and material. Thus you must always have some very few selected verses for instant inspiration, instant upliftment of the spirit, instant infusing of power into your consciousness, into the centre of your being. This is one important point.

Secondly, make your prayer creative and powerful. Prayer should be understood as asking the Lord to keep you constantly in a state of inner awareness, of inner spiritual relationship and communion with Him; not to ask for anything He has created, but to ask for Himself and a continuous, unbroken, living, inner spiritual relationship with Him, so that the channel of power and light between Him and you is never blocked, never closed, never switched off; it is always open; there is always a constant inflow of His divinity, and all that it implies, into your own consciousness. This is the thing to ask, so that prayer also is something that enhances this awareness and infuses you constantly with that greater power. Thus make your prayer creative, constructive and progressive.

This is the highest form of prayer—not for gaining anything in this world created by Him, but for gaining only the most coveted of all things, Yoga, a constant inner communion and link with Him. This is the true purpose of prayer. Then you shall lack nothing. You shall have light, power and wisdom. You shall have an abundance of God’s grace.

6

PURUSHARTHA—SELF EFFORT

Blessed Divinities! Immortal Souls in the form of spiritual seekers, gathered together in the sacred spiritual presence of beloved and worshipful Holy Master! There is a word that is used in two senses in the context of Indian philosophy. In one sense it means certain values and goals to be striven for, that are to be kept before us as our aims to be achieved in life. In another sense it implies all the effort we put forth, all the endeavour that a person who wishes to achieve something, to attain some goal, engages in. It means, therefore, both the exertion, the dynamic effort and endeavour that enables one to achieve goals, as well as meaning the supreme values and worthwhile goals that are to be kept before our vision in order to attain them. That word is *purushartha*.

All of you know that Hindu philosophy speaks of the four *purusharthas* that every human individual strives to attain—*purushartha chatustaya*. And all of you also know that they are summed up in the words *dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha*.

In whatever sense these words are used, there is one thing that it ultimately brings home, namely, ends are obtained by endeavour. Worthwhile attainments and goals are the fruit—note that I do not use the word “result”—they are the fruit of endeavour. They are the fruit of effort. Gurudev sang a song: “Do real *sadhana*, my dear children.” He said, “Do real *sadhana*.” Doing is there, it means effort. It means action, it means dynamism. It means well directed, intelligent, purposeful *rajas, a rajas* that does not direct you, but that is directed by you.

Go through all the eighteen Puranas. Recently you have completed the Durga Puja and during that period you covered the thirteen chapters of the Devi Mahatmya. The whole narrative is filled with action, action, action, effort, every type of effort, all types of effort, repeated effort, ultimately granting the desire, fruit, victory. All the eighteen Puranas contain sustained effort: if one type of effort fails, another type of effort; if that fails, another type of effort—whatever is necessary for successful effort: go and do penance, get this weapon, get that weapon, go and obtain a boon.

This seems to indicate without any shadow of a doubt that no matter how much knowledge you may have, how much knowledge you may get out of the scriptures, out of study, Sanskrit and grammar, Upanishad, Vedanta and philosophy, no matter how much you may accumulate in your mind, unless it is backed up by effort, it will only be a liability, not an asset. It will be a burden and perhaps make your problem more complex, rather than simplifying your problem and being a solution.

Not to know is not very good. To know is perhaps better. But to know is not at all sufficient unless it is applied and actively translated into dynamic living and actively translated into sustained, systematic effort. All scriptural knowledge is in order to know what type of effort to engage in, what is the action to be adopted in order to reach the great Goal. They chart out the way and tell you the mode of action to adopt. And when that mode of action is adopted according to the way charted out, then you arrive, the journey is completed, the destination is reached.

Significantly, we have a hint at this in a very important part of an Upanishad, in what is otherwise a very puzzling passage. *Avidya* means ignorance or wrong knowledge or absence of knowledge or the opposite of knowledge. *Vidya* means knowledge. And the Upanishad says that one who follows *avidya* goes into darkness and bondage. Then immediately it goes on to say that one who follows *vidya* goes into greater darkness and greater bondage. At first sight it seems to be very paradoxical, very confusing. Those who follow *avidya* go into darkness—one can understand this. Those who follow *vidya* go into greater darkness—that becomes difficult to understand.

Here, *vidya* means knowledge of the scriptures and all that is studied, learned and stored. If it is not followed by the requisite effort, it becomes only a burden, sterile; it becomes a liability. Perhaps it complicates the issue by making one more egoistical. It can enmesh you more than you were enmeshed before.

Many of the greatest illumined saints were unlettered. They did not have schooling, they did not have Sanskrit *jnana*, they did not have knowledge. There was an illiterate Bihari village boy who was working as a servant in a rich man's house in Calcutta. That rich man had become very devoted to a saint and visited him frequently. And as you know very rich people do not move about unless they have some servant with them. And so this illiterate village boy used to accompany his master every time he went to this saint.

The proximity of the saint, the words of the saint and the *bhajans* he sang deeply impressed this young boy. He had no knowledge, he had no schooling, he was illiterate; but he was moved, these things went into his heart. Gradually these *satsangs* brought into him an eagerness to live like the saint. He kept it to himself; after all he was a poor servant.

Later on the saint fell seriously ill. The rich devotee used to send fruits and other gifts to the saint. He saw that the boy was eager to do any service connected with the saint. The master was not unsympathetic; he understood the boy's heart. He encouraged him and if he wanted to send something to the saint he gave it to the boy. Ultimately he permitted the boy to stay with the saint and serve him.

Later on this unlettered, illiterate, uneducated village boy from Bihar became one of the great *sadhaks* and *tapasvi* disciples of that saint. His name was Latu and he became a great saint himself. It was such a wonder that such a person could become a *mahapurusha* that he was called Adbhutananda—the Astonishing One.

I am just citing one instance. Sabari had no schooling, and peculiarly enough the saint who I was referring to also had no schooling. The person who inspired the great mathematical genius and Vedantin Rama Tirtha was a humble old villager who was not educated. Kabir was not a university man. Janabai was a maid-servant. Angana was a Harijan servant of a Brahmin landlord. Kannappa was a tribal. Dhruva had no schooling. But all of them—whatever little glimpse they had, they put into action. They did great effort. More than knowledge, effort pleased Lord Rama in Hanuman. For all that he did, He embraced him and hugged him to His breast—for all that he *did*.

So, therefore, *purushartha* is the key to realisation. You may know only a little, but you put it into practise. Gurudev said Twenty Spiritual Instructions are enough to grant you Self-realisation, and when he said that he knew what he was saying. And he was saying the truth. Not that he discouraged studies, but he wanted to emphasise action, not dry studies.

If you want to become a professor, a lecturer, then studies are very necessary, absolutely indispensable, very important indeed. But if you want to become a dynamic Yogi, more important than tons of knowledge is practice, action, *purushartha*, *sadhana*, *yoga abhyasa*. Spiritual life means engaging in active spiritual endeavour, it means *purushartha*.

That is what all the Puranas, all the scriptures very vividly, unmistakably and unambiguously bring out before the discerning one. Being and doing have precedence over knowing. Thus all the great ones have said. Let us deeply ponder this truth and be engaged ever in right endeavour. God bless you all!

7

STEADFASTNESS IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Radiant Immortal Atman! Blessed and beloved children of the Divine! *Nishtha* means steadfastness, establishment in a certain state. It is a word which does not find a place in *raja yoga* or in the description of *bhakti yoga*. In a specific manner it is not a part of your *sadhana*, yet throughout the individual seeking soul's spiritual life, it is the key, it is the key to success in his *abhyasa* (practice), in his *sadhana*.

Whether you are a Vedantin, whether you are a *bhakta*, whether you are a *raja yogin*, whether you are a *karma yogin*, whatever path you are following, whatever *sadhana* you are doing, whatever *abhyasa* you are engaged in, you must be firmly centred in it, and you must refuse to be drawn out of it by any temptation, attraction, any outer force or factor, whether it be an object or a thing, a person, a situation or an enjoyment—by anything in this outer, created universe. After all, what is this created universe? It is but an accumulation of *vruttis* and things, of names and forms and it is an accumulation of various tempting experiences—you can smell through the nose, taste through the tongue, see through the eye, hear through the ear, or touch through the skin.

The pilgrims who are passing by on the way to Nilakanth are not concerned with Haridwar or Rishikesh or Sivananda Ashram. They have come from villages hundreds of miles around in order to reach Nilakanth. They are only intent upon Nilakanth, reaching Nilakanth, carrying water for Lord Mahadev. Of course, if you ask them where they are going they may tell you, or if a car is coming they will move out of the way. But all that they will do automatically; they are not concerned about it. Their main concern is Nilakanth. They have *nishtha*, their whole attention is fixed upon Nilakanth.

Even so, you are a traveller upon this earth. You are a pilgrim soul; you have a destination to reach and you are moving towards it. While you are moving towards it, if you allow yourself to be attracted towards some external thing, fall into a temptation, allow yourself to be diverted into a bypass by some attraction, or by some delusion thinking that it is important, or by some idle curiosity or by day-dreaming or giving exaggerated importance to something other than your destination, then you are delayed, your progress is stopped.

Therefore, like a person with a definite destination, resolutely moving towards it and not allowing himself to be distracted or diverted hither and thither, a *sadhak* or a *bhakta* or a *Yogi* is a person of *nishtha*. He is firmly centred in the Self or absorbed in *bhakti bhav* and devotional practices, absorbed in the *ishta* or completely dedicated to an inner state of meditation, always in a state of meditation. But, nevertheless, he would be fulfilling all the necessities of worldly life, seemingly a part of the scene, but never really a part of the scene.

Even so, be rooted in the Self. Be firmly established in your ideal. Be firmly established in your quest. Be firmly established in your *abhyasa*. Be firmly established in your resolve. Do not budge from it. Do not allow anything to draw you away from the central quest. That is the hallmark of a *uttama adbhikari* (best qualified aspirant), of a true *sadhak*.

Again and again in his writings and teachings, Gurudev used the terms determination, tenacity, fixity and firm resolution. Become firmly established, never letting go of the centre, never letting go of the vision of the Goal. No matter how complicated a particular day might be, ever be established in the centre of your life, the quest, the ideal for which you are living. That should not in anyway be affected or altered. The inner promptings of your *antahkarana*, your consciousness, should always be the same: abidance in God, becoming totally established, *nishtha*. *Nishtha* in your *abhyasa*, *nishtha* in your *sadhana*, *nishtha* in your *Yoga* and *eka-nishtha bhav* in all that you do—that is very, very necessary.

Not only is this *nishtha* necessary for continuously moving towards the Goal and succeeding, it is also very, very necessary as a great armour, a great protection against influences that may try to draw you away from the path. When you are abiding in the Self, when your whole attention is centred upon *yoga abhyasa* and your *sadhana*, your inner way, then you have no time to be diverted by others. A hundred different forces or influences or attractions may be around you, but you are not aware, because you have no interest in them, you are no longer concerning yourself with them. Why? Because you have developed *nishtha*, you are practising *nishtha*.

Nishtha is your great boon. *Nishtha* is to be cultivated diligently and firmly adhered to. Continuously strive to strengthen your *nishtha*. That is your guarantee against all failure, all downward pull, all backsliding. *Nishtha* is your wealth, *nishtha* is your strength. *Nishtha* will be your sure protection.

8

MAKE THIS A PERFECT DAY

Beloved and blessed presence, adorable Holy Master, thou who hast drawn us into thy proximity at the commencement of this golden day! Bless us that we may live each moment and hour of this precious day, in our thoughts, our words and actions, in such a noble and divine way that sundown finds us higher, holier, happier for having entered into this day, finds us nearer to the goal of human existence, namely divine perfection through Self-realisation.

Radiant Immortal Atman! This day is a new day. It has not been before and it shall not come once again. Ponder the uniqueness of this day, its speciality in being the one and only day of its kind, never to be compared with any other day that has gone by or any other day that will dawn. It is a part of God. God is timeless eternity, and a day is a little unit in this timelessness measured by man's limited consciousness and bound by a now and then, a here and there.

Take this day, therefore, and make it into an ascending ladder to ever higher heights. Let not the close of this day find you the same as you were at the commencement. Wisely live this day. Go through it in such a way that at sundown you have enriched yourself by the way in which you have lived your life, have made use of the opportunities that have come your way, have responded loftily to the call of duty and have reacted ideally to things, events and beings around you. Make this day a unique one, memorable one. Enrich the day and enrich yourself by enriching it.

Today is a gift of God. Therefore it is not something ordinary, something casual, something just by the way. It is specially proffered to you. Take it with both hands with a devout *bhav*. Apply every bit of your energy—intellectual, mental, emotional, physical—in making it a perfect day. Live the day with calm determination to fulfil all your ideals and principles of living without haste, without hurry, knowing that you have all eternity. But at the same time be dynamically vigorous in the process of evolving.

MAKE THIS A PERFECT DAY

Knowing that you have all eternity, go through the day calmly, serenely, without haste or hurry, with a calm determination that “I am going to make the highest and best use of each moment of this day, and thus I shall progress slowly towards the Goal.” But, nevertheless, let not this idea give way to lethargy, to a *tamasic* attitude: “If I do not utilise today, I will utilise tomorrow better, if not in this birth, next birth... No, here and now I shall make this a perfect day. There is no tomorrow.” In this way be determined to utilise every moment of this day in the highest and best manner and at the same time with a calm, serene determination. Juxtapose these two. Make it a determined day, but at the same time a serene day.

A mystic once said, “Live your day as though your body is buried in the grave and your spirit has already ascended into the presence of the Divine. With this spirit live the day: ‘The flesh is dead. I am no more subject to any temptation, any assailments, anything that is purely gross and physical. None of the senses bother me. I have risen above the physical self and my spirit has ascended into the presence of the Divine. Therefore, whatever comes from me should be worthy of the Divine, be the highest, holiest.’” In this way, live as though this very day your body is no more and you dwell in the presence of God.

Another mystic gives us a similar view: “Live each day as though it were your last day on earth; you will not see sunrise tomorrow.” If today is the last day given to you, how precious you would make it. How valuable you would consider it. How much you would fill it with all that is highest, best, noblest, sublime, perfect. “Let me make this a perfect day. Let me be full of the God-quality. Let me be a centre of joy, let me manifest joy, bliss, *ananda*. Let me manifest peace, *santi*. Let me manifest luminous wisdom, *chaitanya*, knowledge, *jnana*. Let me be a witness to the eternity of God’s existence here and now, the presence of God: *sat-chit-ananda-santih*. Let it shine forth in my thought, word and deed. May I make it a day to express God in me, in every way.”

Remember these ideas given to us by these mystics as a basis of relating ourselves to this gift of each day that God unfailingly gives to us. Always this gift is there. You can depend upon it one hundred percent and plan for it before you go to sleep: “Tomorrow I shall make my day a golden day, a divine day, an upward ascent of the spirit towards perfection and Divine-consciousness. Each moment of the day will be a manifestation of all that is sublime in everything that I do, see, hear, touch, taste, smell, think, feel and act.”

Thus enter each day in a spiritual manner and fill it with everything that is spiritual and divine. This is the key to blessedness. This is a sure way to perfection. This is the secret of unfailing progress and certain attainment, sure attainment. God bless you all!

9

EARLY IN THE MORNING

Worshipful adorations to the sacred spiritual presence of beloved and worshipful Holy Master Guru Maharaj Sri Swami Sivanandaji, into whose presence and proximity you are all fortunate enough to draw near, day by day, morning after morning, to start the day in as sublime and perfect a way as it is possible to start it.

Pratah smarami, pratar-bhajami, pratar-namami (I remember Thee early morning, I worship Thee early morning, I bow down to Thee early morning). With these words several of the hymns of salutations and adorations, several of the well known *slokas* of Adi Sankaracharya begin. So much so, that this triplet of verses has come to be known as the *pratah smarami stotra*.

What is the speciality about praying early in the morning, worshipping God early in the morning? Mahatma Gandhi, in Sabarmati Ashram, as well as Sevagram, used to hold their morning prayers when it was still semi-dark. There is a reason. There is a speciality in this early morning hour.

“Start the day with God,” they say in the West. And very shrewdly, with a touch of humour, there is also a saying, “The early bird catches the worm,” which means it pays dividends to be early. The earlier you are up, the more time you have. The more time you have, the less hurried you are, the less under pressure you are. The less under pressure you are, the less tension, which is better for your health, your heart, your blood pressure, your entire nervous system, even your digestion. This is the pragmatic reason. If you are up early, you have greater leisure. If you are not up early, you are more hard-pressed for time, and it is not good to start a day being pushed for time.

But what is the higher meaning? The higher meaning is that it is a period when your consciousness is in the most suitable condition to receive higher impulses from the inner world of the Spirit, the divine world; your consciousness is most sensitive as well as receptive. Your inner *antahkarana*, the normal human consciousness, which you exercise during your active hours of waking, is in its most calm and *sattvic* condition at this hour. This is conducive to introspection and prayerfulness.

For, when you are fully awake and have started to move in this world, your entire mind is outgoing. It is completely drawn into the world of the many, into the field of names and forms and ever-changing activities. So it is completely occupied and caught up, dominated by the visible, the outer, the material, the phenomenon. Therefore it is not available to receive higher impulses, unless it has been trained to receive them even in this state of being completely drawn out. Then too, that same mind when it is caught in deep sleep is totally unreceptive and completely closed to all higher impulses, sublime divine impulses.

But in the early dawn the *antahkarana* is freed from the *tamas* of sleep and is still yet free from the domination of the *rajas* of the outer world, the compulsions and impulsions that catch it and draw it into this very hectic field of many tasks to be done, many people to see, and very diverse

types of thought forms, due to the diverse fields in which the mind is required to be engaged and involved in.

So you are free in this interim period from both the handicaps of the sleep state as well as the shortcomings and involvements of the fully wakened state. Here, therefore, is a period of openness, of receptivity, of *sattva*—a period most suitable, most propitious—when you can give yourself a lift and enter into God. And that sets the tone for the entire day.

If in this way you start the day with God, you start with *pratah smarami, pratar-bhajami, pratar-namami*, then the whole day is beautifully qualified with this *bhav* or attitude of prostration, of worship, of remembrance. And that is the secret of being in the world but yet abiding in God—being in *kriya* (action), yet inwardly there is a centre of silence, *nishkriya* (without action).

A mystical poet has beautifully given to us, in brief, this little secret of the right way of starting one's day, so that one reaps a golden harvest of fullest benefit from this charming, this wonderful, this magic period of the early dawn.

I met God in the morning
When my day was of its best,
And His Presence came like sunrise,
Like a glory in my breast.
All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long He stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness
Over a very troubled sea.
So I think I know the secret
Learned from many a troubled way,
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day.
—Ralph Cushman.

Thus it is that there is this special quality, a special state of consciousness prevailing in this interim period between the disadvantages of both the sleep state and the fully awakened, preoccupied state. Both are necessary, but both contain obstacles in total communion, inner communion with the Spirit, the Supreme.

I have great joy in sharing with you, therefore, this secret of why our ancients said *pratah smarami, pratar-bhajami, pratar-namami*. Because they knew this secret, this inner Yogic secret, the mystical secret of the state of consciousness that the individual possesses in this early morning dawn hour. It sets the tone for the entire day, and then you live with God, you move with God, you sail the troubled sea of *vyavaharic* life with perfect calmness and serenity, because God is with you. You do the sailing with God as your companion.

May we benefit ourselves fully from this golden hour and make each day a further ascent towards the great Goal, attaining which you become blessed. May you all be blessed!

10

ABIDE BEYOND THE PAIRS OF OPPOSITES

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Sadhaks and spiritual aspirants aspiring after the ideal and goal of divine perfection, which is the ultimate highest ideal and goal of all mankind, the purpose of human birth according to the vision of life conceived by the great, illumined seers and sages of the Upanishads! The central objective, the supreme goal of life as conceived by the Vedic vision was that man has not come here to weep and wail, to laugh a little, weep a little, suffer and die; he has come here, not for death but for immortality, not for sorrow but for supreme bliss, not for struggle and restlessness but for supreme peace, eternal satisfaction, *nitya tripti*. This was their great declaration based upon their own personal transcendental experiences, *atma'nubhava*, *aparoksha'nubhuti*.

Declaring this, they called man to supreme bliss. They called the individual soul upon its pilgrimage, journey to this goal, to wake up, wake up, and not stop until it reaches its great destination. "It is your birthright. Come, come, why do you unnecessarily prolong your bondage? Why do you delay this great experience which is awaiting you, for which you are meant? *Uttisthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise, be enlightened)." Down the centuries, again and again, successive generations of saints and sages, perfect masters, have called upon humanity not to lose sight of the great Goal, but ever to aspire after it, attain it and become blessed. This is, therefore, the global human inheritance and heritage, thanks to the great experiences and to the supreme state of beatitude attained by our Upanishadic sages and seers, which in the fullness of their hearts they declared to all mankind.

Nevertheless, they were not unaware that this is a world of pain and death. They were perfectly aware, but they said this is incidental to life. What is essential to life, and most important, is movement towards this great goal of perfection. It is therefore up to each and every pilgrim soul to keep in view its divine destiny. We have not come here to live and die as human beings. We are born as human beings, but we have come here to depart from life as all-perfect divine beings.

In the life of every aspirant there is always struggle. There is a swinging between joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery, success and failure, elation and depression, conviction and doubt. That is always there. It is inevitable, first and foremost, because of the simple fact that this is indeed a world that is made up of *prakriti* and *purusha*, *daivi* and *asuri*, the pairs of opposites. *Prakriti* is always there, ever actively manifesting, dynamically manifesting in the form of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. According to the manifestation of each *guna* (attribute) there are auspicious moods of the mind and there are also inauspicious, negative moods of the mind, because mind is part and parcel of *prakriti*. Also, sometimes there is health, sometimes ill health; sometimes there is comfort, sometimes discomfort; sometimes there is strength and energy, sometimes weakness and lack of energy. This is part of the play of *prakriti*.

Secondly, the reason for this swinging between these pairs of opposites is that the individual spiritual aspirant does not know how to do *sadhana*, does not know the right way of becoming well established in one invariable goal, which is possible only if one has firm faith, absolute faith,

absolute trust in God, conviction, total conviction, unshakable conviction—*sraddha* and *visvas*. *Sraddhavan labhate jnanam*—One who has total trust in God, who has *sraddha*, attains supreme illumination, wisdom, which liberates. *Samsayatma vinasatyati*—One who is doubtful and lacks faith, dire is his fate.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna reiterates this important truth about your life, your spiritual striving: it will become fruitful, and uniformly and steadily progressive, only if you have diligently cultivated trust in God, faith in yourself also, faith in the efficacy of your *sadhana*, faith in the spiritual practice, faith in the spiritual life, faith in the great Goal, faith in your Guru and the words of your Guru, faith in the teachings of the scriptures.

(If you neglect the study of the scriptures where comes the question of having faith or not having faith! If you study the scriptures then alone arises this question, not when you neglect *svadhyaya* or read only for passing the time, for entertainment or escaping from duties. Arjuna also escaped into philosophy and *dharmic* argument with Lord Krishna, because he wanted to escape his stern duty. Therefore the lack of cultivation of close and deep acquaintance with the scriptures becomes a great stumbling block; faith becomes wavering, it is not well established.)

It is necessary, therefore, for the *sadhak* to understand that no matter how the inner mood may be changing, it is inevitable, because it forms part of *prakriti*, and *prakriti* is not only present as the three *gunas*, it is also present in the entire creation as the pairs of opposites. And it is necessary, as the Lord said to Arjuna, to be above the three attributes—*nistraigunyo bhava'rjuna*. It is also necessary to strive to go beyond the opposites, and it is not so very difficult as one may imagine. If one has never given it a trial one may imagine it is impossible. It is not impossible because that state of being beyond the pairs of opposites is your real state, your natural state, your eternal state. So to be what you are should not be a difficult thing.

The need is to stop being what you are not, not to be foolish, not to be self-forgetful, but to be always aware of your essential nature. Then gradually you can become established. It takes a little time because we have given in to the bad and pernicious habit of moving away from the Self and getting into an unnatural state by the uncontrolled movement of our mind. If we exercise rational control over the mind, channelling it and its moods and sentiments in the right direction again and again, and yet again, and keep on doing this, then one day the entire *antahkarana* (inner being) will become positive, become *sattvic*, become completely filled with *daivi sampad* (divine virtues). You will be *prasannachetas* (tranquil-minded). *Santosha* will be yours, and Patanjali Maharshi stresses that the inner state of contentment is one of the observances to be faithfully cultivated upon the path of Yoga.

Therefore, the world being constituted of *dvandvas* (pairs of opposites), the *antahkarana*, as part of the world, also takes up this *dvandva* nature. You being *dvandvatita* (beyond *dvandvas*) must try to understand your mind and affirm your real nature, which is beyond the pairs of opposites, and thus become firmly established in a state of peace and serenity. This is the *abhyasa*. This is the Yoga of the Bhagavad Gita and significantly the Lord says: “*samatvam yoga uchyate*—evenness of mind is called Yoga.” Therefore, to this end the *sadhak* should wisely and diligently strive as part of his training, discipline and spiritual *sadhana*. Then one can be established in a state where one is not affected by the inevitable *dvandvas* amidst which one has to live.

In this world we cannot escape either the play of the three *gunas* or the pairs of opposites. They are there to stay. We have come into such a universe. The universe does not owe us a duty to suddenly change just because we have come into it. We have to recognise this fact, do the needful, and be unaffected by this nature of *prakriti*.

Therefore, wisely let us understand this truth about the spiritual life and the world in which we have to live and lead the spiritual life, and cultivate a firm inner centre where we are forever established in our own nature, God nature. We have come here to go beyond the pairs of opposites and attain the supernal state of perfect bliss and peace.

11

THE PRACTICE OF TRUTH

Glorious Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of Light, engaged in spiritual *sadhana*, upon the path that leads beyond sorrow to liberation, to fearlessness and freedom, which is your eternal state! Yogis, moving upwards upon the path of spiritual evolution along the various Yoga paths according to your own taste and temperament, according to your previous *samskaras* or past impressions! Devotees of the Lord assembled together here!

The Upanishads have referred to that great Reality as the one true essence or principle in relation to which all other things are false appearances only, temporary appearances in time and space with no stable eternal existence. The Upanishads call the Reality *sat*, and everything other than the Reality they call *asat*. The Reality, the Cosmic Spirit is called *jyotishamapi tad-jyotih*, the Light of lights, *satyasya satyam*, the Truth of truths. Therefore, Truth is the ultimate goal to be attained.

Truth is a divine principle, that is not only the ultimate Reality, but also the path that leads to the ultimate Reality. It is the great *sadhana* that leads to the realisation of Truth. It is also the great penance that makes this *sadhana* fruitful, that supports this *sadhana*, infills this *sadhana* with a strength which is not of this earth, which is divine.

The penance of truth creates spiritual force within one's heart. The great Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, referred to this inner spiritual force as *atma-bala* and declared unhesitatingly that it was the source of all his strength and the secret of his success in whatever he undertook. The penance of truth gave him the spiritual power to overcome all that was inauspicious and unspiritual within himself. He had attained self-conquest, and above all he had attained conquest over falsehood in any form. So much so that he was bold enough to declare his viewpoint in the words: "Not only is it true that God is truth, but I declare that truth is God." To adhere to truth, verily would be to attain God.

Truth is therefore the penance. Truth is therefore the *sadhana*. Truth is therefore the path which allows the *sadhana* to be progressive. Truth is therefore the inner power that galvanizes this *sadhana* and makes it dynamic, and Truth is therefore the ultimate goal to be reached. The

worshipper of truth never fails to attain blessedness, ultimate Truth. Even though in the worship of truth, in the practice of truth, you may have to face various tests and difficulties, nevertheless, enshrine truth within yourself.

Actually Truth is already enshrined within yourself as your own true Self, as your own real nature, as your own essential being. In truth you are not of this earth. In truth you are not a physical, biological being. In truth you are not merely a bundle of thoughts, emotions and sentiments, of memories, imaginations and fancies, of desires, cravings and schemes, of likes and dislikes. All these do not constitute your truth. Distinct from this physical, biological self, distinct from this bundle of thoughts and emotions, distinct from this psychological set-up of questioning, doubting, reasoning, logic and intellectualising, you are a ray of that great Reality. You are a part of that eternal Truth which never fades, which never changes, which ever shines, shines, shines.

Therefore, to be aware of this truth about yourself and to live in this awareness is to adhere to truth, to worship truth. To express the divinity that you are, in your thoughts, in your actions, in your words, in all the manifested modes of the living of your life, that is the fulfilling of truth. “To thine own Self be true.”

To be true to your real Self and to live to manifest that truth so that your life becomes an expression of the divinity which you are, that is the practice of truth in its ultimate spiritual sense, in its ultimate spiritual form. It is this practice of truth that beloved Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj prescribed for the modern age. “You are divine, be divine; feel divinely, speak divinely, live divinely, make your life divine.” It is this practice of truth, in all its phases, that was the great shining path that he proclaimed to the modern world. This is the key to blessedness. This is the way to supreme illumination and liberation. Ponder this truth and you will be blessed.

12

CONNECT YOURSELF WITH GOD

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! *Sadhaks* and Yogis, *mumukshus* and *jijnasus*! *Jijnasu* means one who has a great thirst for *jnana*, spiritual knowledge, one who makes vigorous efforts to attain *jnana*. *Mumukshu* means one who is desirous of attaining *moksha* or liberation, one who has keen aspiration to attain liberation. So in the ultimate context a *jijnasu* who attains liberation is also a *mumukshu*. He wants knowledge because he wants liberation. Transcendental knowledge alone leads to liberation because bondage is due to ignorance. Ignorance cannot be removed or destroyed by any other means except by its contrary positive factor, knowledge. Darkness disappears the moment light comes. There is no other way.

Therefore, for attaining liberation or freedom from bondage, which is due to ignorance, which is ignorance, the remedy is the attainment of knowledge. You may ask then: “What about the devotee who only does *bhakti* (devotion) and therefore is not after knowledge? He is not a *jnana yogi*, he is not intently trying to master the scriptures, meditate over their meaning, trying to solve the riddle, untie the knot of the heart through *jnana*.” The answer is, that when the devotee attains

the object of his *bhakti*, that object of his devotion is *kevala jnana svarupam* (of the nature of pure knowledge), the Supreme Being. And that personal God, *sakara saguna brahman* (Brahman with form and attributes), is nothing but knowledge, supreme knowledge, pure consciousness that has taken form for the devotee's sake. It is nothing but pure bliss consciousness, pure wisdom consciousness. It does not have a gross material form like ours.

Neither is the name of the personal God like ours. Each Name is a name of cosmic significance, that which brings out some supreme, sublime quality or attribute of the transcendental, nameless, formless, indescribable, immutable supreme Brahman. When they say Narayana, they say that which pervades all space, which is infinite, most expansive, pervading everywhere. When they say Siva, they say that which is supreme auspiciousness, supreme blessedness. Krishna is that which powerfully attracts towards Itself everything that exists. Rama is that which being in their heart, delights the Yogis or takes delight in being in the hearts of Yogis. Vasudeva is that Being which pervades everywhere and dwells in all things that exist.

So the name and form of the personal God is no other than the impersonal Absolute, temporarily having assumed a certain form visible to the spiritual eye of the devotee. And through devotion, when he realises his *ishta devata*, that *ishta devata*, being no other than the absolute *parabrahman*, immediately blesses the devotee, conferring upon him supreme wisdom consciousness, supreme divine knowledge. “*Sraddhavan labhate jnanam*—He who has intense faith in Me and worships Me with one-pointed devotion, to him I give Supreme *jnana*.”

Therefore, Gurudev again and again drew our attention to the fact that the highest state of transcendental devotion is not different from transcendental wisdom. *Para bhakti* and *jnana* are one and the same. When devotion to the Lord is taken to its very pinnacle of perfection, fullness, then it is nothing but pure knowledge. He used to say cryptically, “*Bhakti yoga* begins with two and ends in One.” Therefore, there is no intrinsic difference between the path of devotion, or God-love, and the path of knowledge, or *jnana yoga*. They ultimately lead to the same realisation, the same supreme transcendental experience.

Knowledge, therefore, is the one means of attaining liberation from bondage, which is constituted of ignorance of the infinite, eternal Reality, ignorance of your true transcendental nature, ignorance of your essential ever-free, ever-pure, ever-full (*nitya-mukta, nitya-suddha, paripurna*) *atma svarupa*. When you realise your true self as ever-free, ever-pure, ever-full, then and there you arrive at a stage where you get *brahma jnana* or supreme knowledge, which is the ultimate liberator.

But then, how does knowledge come about? How did this light come and illumine this hall? Earlier, all was darkness. Now, all is illumined. It happened when the lamp was turned on, bringing about once again a connection between this bulb and a source of invisible power called electricity. Similarly, a plant flourishes as long as it keeps contact with its source and origin, the soil. Pull it out and it withers and dies.

So it is with each and every one of you. You must keep in contact with the source of your being, be ever linked and connected with the origin from which you are. Then, day by day, your

spirit will begin to unfold. It will grow, develop, progress, expand, and you will attain divine experience. You will become divine.

But when there is no connection, or you have alienated yourself from It, or forgotten It, or thought of yourself as something independent, then you are full of sorrow and anxiety, pain and suffering, misery and fear. You are full of a sense of want. Why? Because you have unwisely cut yourself off from the source of your being. The secret of a progressive and fruitful life is to be inwardly ever linked with God, linked with the Cosmic Being. If you neglect to do that, then your life will be just what it is, always in a state of discontentment, dejection, depression, dissatisfaction. All the negative things come to prevail, to dominate and torment you, to pull you hither and thither. You feel helpless, you weep and wail. You do not know what to do. You are in despair.

If you want to put an end to this, the only way is to link yourself with God, Who is your source, origin. Keep that connection either through enquiry and discrimination, or through constant unbroken remembrance of God and devotion, or through meditation and continuously thinking about Brahman, or through worshipfully dedicating all activities to Him. Do it by whatever means, but by any means do it! Put an end to this disconnection from God. Put an end to your alienation and forgetfulness of God Who is all in all to you. Then your sorrow, your suffering, everything will start receding and ultimately vanish. When the sun rises, darkness cannot remain. When you become filled with God, sorrow, suffering, pain, ignorance, bondage, fear, worry, anxiety, tension cannot remain. They disappear.

So remember, separation from God is the root cause of all human miseries, the centre of the human problem. That itself causes bondage. Put an end to this alienation and separation by Yoga, by *bhakti*, by *jnana*, by enquiry, by discrimination, by *sadhana*. Seriously strive after that supreme state of being constantly in a state of oneness, attunement with the Supreme and overcome the sorrows of *samsara*. Banish the darkness of ignorance and bondage and come into the light of supreme divine wisdom. That is the wise way. Do it now and become blessed. God bless you with success in your *sadhana*! Gurudev grant you ultimate fulfilment of your aspiration and your desire!

13

THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! You are assembled in the spiritual presence of Gurudev, who is the source and origin of this Ashram, the source and origin of the spirituality that pervades the atmosphere of this Ashram, who is the source and origin of the divine way of life that he proclaimed as a *sadhana* for Self-realisation for modern mankind.

Come out of the cage of your little, egoistical, selfish personality. Renounce and sacrifice this selfish personality at the altar of humanity. Where there is no "I", where there is no mind, where there is no selfishness, there is ideal *karma yoga*. It becomes *upasana* (worship).

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

You can be established in a state where even though acting, you are no more acting. *Karma* or work cannot bind you because you are acting without sense of doership. The feeling “I am doing” is not there; rather, “He is getting it done through me.” You are a witness of your own activity, a witness of your own actions, and the poison of *kartritva* or sense of doer-ship is removed from the activity; it becomes sublime activity. Then it is God’s will that manifests itself through you.

To be established in this state of inner absence of self, one has to diligently pursue a method of *sadhana* and persist in it, diligently continue to negate the ego, negate the self. It does not come in a day, but it comes if you are persistent.

In his “Song of Eighteen Ities,” Gurudev has used two expressions that seem more or less similar in their meaning. He used the expression “fixity”: being firm, firmly fixed in your vow, in your *pratijna* (resolve), in your determination. Be firmly fixed, let nothing shake you. Become so established in your *niyama* (observance) that nothing can move you. Fixity indicates a certain attitude, a state that you have achieved or attained in your interior. You have become strong within, unshakable within, firm within.

While fixity involves a certain inner state you have reached after much diligence and struggle, the second expression, “tenacity,” indicates an attitude, a certain inner attitude with which you live your life, engage in your *sadhana*. And that attitude is a firm resolution not to give up no matter what obstacles come, no matter what setbacks, no matter what disappointments or discouragements.

“I will not leave my pursuit until and unless I get complete success in it. I shall not give up this *sadhana*, I shall continue with this *abhyasa* (practice), I will not give up”—this attitude is called tenacity. Having taken up something wise, something good, never to abandon it, never to leave it, to be determined to come out victorious—this attitude is called tenacity.

Tenacity is different from obstinacy. Obstinacy is a negative, *tamasic* quality. You should not have tenacity with regard to some wrong things that you might have taken up in a state of folly. Tenacity is a positive quality, *sattvic*: never to swerve from your purpose, from your determination. In this way, there should be in the heart of the *sadhak* the determined adherence to one’s ideals, and one must be established in an inner state which is unassailable, not affected by anything.

A person of a very negative nature does not commence any serious undertaking due to hesitancy. “Oh, if I undertake this, who knows, afterwards this difficulty may come, that obstacle may come.” So thinking, even though he intends to have a good life and do good things, because of this nervousness and fear of obstacles, he never does them. This is not good. There are others who no doubt start doing something good, but when obstacles and troubles come in their way, they give it up. But the real spiritual seeker, the real *sadhak*, once having taken up something, no matter how many obstacles or difficulties come, how many adverse circumstances face him, he always thinks, “No, I’ll never leave it! I have taken this up, I will see it through, I shall not be deterred by anything.” This is the *uttama adhikari* (best qualified aspirant).

That is the thing needful in your spiritual life. Fixity of principles, and tenacity—never to let go. It leads to success. Lord Krishna says in His Gita *jnana upades* (wisdom teaching): “Never

leave your *abhyasa*, never give up your *abhyasa*. Because that is the secret of success and attainment. You may fail, that does not matter. If you are persistent in your *abhyasa* you will attain Me.” A seemingly impossible thing becomes possible in the face of sheer persistent *abhyasa*, regular, unflinching, unbroken *abhyasa*. It breaks down all barriers; it breaks down all obstacles on the way; it overcomes all hurdles and reaches the goal. This is the type of nature that the *sadhak* should seek to develop within himself. In that lies the guarantee of his success.

May the grace of the Supreme Lord be upon you, be upon your spiritual life, be upon your spiritual striving, so that casting aside any doubt, any misgivings like, “whether I shall attain or not, whether I shall succeed or not, whether I have chosen the right thing or not,” and not allowing any such misgivings or doubts to come into the mind, with determination and tenacity, be firmly established in *sadhana*. Let your *sadhana*, your *abhyasa* be *akhanda* (unbroken). And with firm faith and determination, may you through such unbroken *sadhana* enter into that supreme state which is beyond sorrow and suffering, which is peace and joy! For that is your birthright. For that attainment alone you have been born as a human being and with good *samskaras* (mental impressions) and good *vasanas* (subtle desires). May you not be indifferent to your own highest welfare. May you be serious in your *sadhana*. May God shower grace upon you!

14

TRANSCEND YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Radiant Immortal Atman? Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! The human mind is influenced and affected by all things that surround it. It is also equally true that the human mind, with its various moods and varying states, has an affect upon all things around it. Your mind is affected by people, things and occurrences, sights and sounds around you. Equally you keep on affecting everybody, everything, wherever you go.

If you are sitting beside a very calm, serene, collected person, a centre of serenity and calm, the vibrations radiating from that person, the aura emanating from that person, puts your mind also into a state of relative, comparative calmness. Even if you are by nature prone to be very agitated and restless, nevertheless, for the time being, to an appreciable extent, the calm goes into your mind. On the other hand, if you are sitting near a very high-strung, tense, agitated person, then you are likely to gradually feel uncomfortable and begin to feel somewhat agitated and restless.

This is the power of anything into whose proximity you place yourself. If you place yourself close to a fire, you will start feeling warm, even uncomfortable. If you are close to something very cold, you will be influenced by it. Different types of features and factors, certain odours, certain sights, immediately create a certain strain of thought or feeling within. Therefore, to a very great extent we are swayed and influenced by outside factors.

There is an important point here that you have to ponder with great earnestness, with great understanding. If you have to be constantly amidst various things, various persons and different environmental situations, does it mean that you can never be stable? Must your mind also be in a

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constant state of instability, always changing, always being influenced, always being made serene or made agitated, always producing some reaction?

Are you merely a bundle of reactions? Have you no personality of your own? Have you no intrinsic, basic, fundamental born nature which may be influenced but which also remains constant? It cannot be! Each one is born with a certain innate nature, inborn nature. One has a certain constant individual nature. From the highest standpoint that innermost, innate nature is divinity. It is *sat-chit-ananda*. Ultimately you have to find that centre and become fixed in it. It requires much effort, but from another angle it requires no effort, it should not require any effort at all, because it is that which you are already. But we have been so long accustomed to wrong thinking, that to get rid of that wrong thinking becomes the real task before us. We have indulged in wrong thinking since our birth. It has become a habit pattern, not our nature but a habit pattern. To change this habit pattern and liberate ourselves from this wrong thinking may take some time. It may spread over a period, but that does not matter. That should not deter us from calmly and silently initiating a process of right thinking, and as and when the wrong thinking reasserts itself, due to habit, calmly rejecting it, turning away from it, affirming our reality. That becomes the thing needful. That becomes the process of liberation. That becomes the process of transcendence, of rising above. And if this process is kept up, then ultimately the habit pattern of the wrong thinking way of life gradually recedes into the distance and ultimately vanishes.

This process is an inner process. In following this process you must know that it is Truth that will ultimately assert and manifest Itself, because It is positive. Erroneous thinking, being a negative thing, cannot persist for a long time.

We do not realise that we have to purposively take ourselves by the hand and initiate this process of transformation. If this process is started it will start giving effects. It will begin to manifest itself and bring about a desired transformation. But in the vast majority of people this process is never purposively taken up and carried on. Therefore, even after years and decades of *sadhana*, we still continue to remain what we were. That is because, together with our other *sadhana*, this inner transformation has never been attempted, this inner transformation has never been seriously pursued and effected. This is subjective *sadhana* within the interior of your own *antahkarana*, and day after day it must be simultaneously going on along with your *japa*, or meditation, or *kirtan*, or reading, or *satsang*, or *asanas*, or *pranayama*.

In this you have to understand an important truth. Even though environmental factors and features, occurrences or individuals may have an influence upon you—you may be irritated or frightened by someone, or you may feel a state of alienation or actual hostility from someone else; or you may feel kindness and composure from another person—nevertheless, if only you wish, you can successfully make yourself immune to these outer influences.

What is the key to understanding this? It is simply this: even though in the natural state it is a fact that the individual is affected by his environment, in the ultimate analysis it is the individual that endows these factors with the power to influence him. It is only if you give credence to the reality of these things, if you focus on them, give too much importance to these outside factors, that you expose yourself, make yourself constantly open and vulnerable to the influence that these things exert.

If you are practising *pratyahara* or withdrawal of the mind according to Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga, then you will find that things which once had a very powerful effect on you are no longer affecting you. Why? Because you are in a state of inwardness. You thus succeed in becoming introspective. Then the exaggerated focusing of attention upon things, occurrences and people outside, endowing them with too much importance, will gradually lessen. Because your attention, instead of being directed towards things, people and events outside, is directed inwardly, where there is the eternal centre of peace, stability, strength, light, power and wisdom.

Therefore, how much your environment will influence you is a thing that is not decided by the environment; it is decided by you. If you are wise, if you invoke in your mind *viveka* and *vichara* (discrimination and right enquiry) and resolutely turn the mind inward, then the outer environment becomes powerless to affect you, to influence you, or to keep changing you and agitating you. On the other hand, if you continue to regard these outer things as terribly real, as very, very important, as having power over you, then they will have power over you; they will go on constantly shaking you, influencing and affecting you.

Vedanta makes quite clear that this world, and all things in it, is only a long drawn out dream. It is temporary, it is an appearance only. So you should regard these outer things as ultimately not being very important to you: "Why should I unnecessarily distress myself too much over them? What does it matter what some person is thinking about me? Let that person think; it is his problem, not my problem." Because, if you keep thinking about other people's thoughts, you completely expose yourself to agitation and distress. So, if instead of being concerned about what other people may think of you, if you think about the indwelling reality, the indwelling splendour, the indwelling *satchidananda*, then you will come out triumphant. In all environments your mind will be in a state of *satchidananda*, in a state of peace and bliss. So, it is not what people think that affects you; it is, rather, what you think.

Therefore, mind your thought. Be wise, and wisely direct the thought within, into the centre of your being. Thus you can triumph over your environment and soon become established in a state of peace, poise, stability and joy.

15

SERVE LOVE MEDITATE REALISE

Radiant Immortal Atman! Blessed children of the Divine! Beloved seekers! You are wisely seeking for true happiness, peace and satisfaction in that eternal, infinite and all-perfect Being wherein alone it can be experienced; wisely seeking That, the eternal, the immortal, the abiding, that which is not affected by time; wisely seeking That because you have enquired, observed life and observed people who pursue happiness in the outside world. You have reflected deeply and discriminated between mere sensation and true happiness, and you have found that the world has nothing to give except complications, restlessness and the loss of one's peace of mind and happiness. Because happiness and peace are inseparable, you cannot have happiness unless you are at peace.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

Worshipful and beloved Holy Master, wishing our highest welfare, lived his whole life in inner research into what will benefit mankind, what will take beyond sorrow and grant him true lasting happiness, a happiness that will not diminish or vanish. Because, any quest that moves in the wrong direction has to end in disillusionment, disappointment and frustration. Wanting us to avoid folly, he tells us what worldly life is. Our scriptures too, the Mahabharata, Ramayana, all the Puranas, are filled with descriptions of what the world is like, its worth, its true nature, giving us ready-made experience. Why should we spend our whole lives undergoing the same experiences and then by that time life is spent away? Why not benefit from the experience of the world since its creation?

One yielding to a desire, one disobeying of a divine law which was meant for their welfare, caused the first man and the first woman to be evicted from an ideal setting, a wonderful, perfect state of affairs. This one lesson, which is the foundation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is a lasting sign of what life will do to you if you become a slave to desire and disobey the great laws which have been made for your welfare.

Today is Sankranti and thousands and thousands of people from all over India, from different cultures, with different natures and habits, have come to take a dip in the Ganga. Why? What is it? What clicks inside and draws them irresistibly towards the Ganga on this day? It is what they have put into their mind, what they, their tradition, their family and others believe in. Though from different parts of India, they all have the same idea: “Sankranti is a sacred day. I must go and take bath; it is very meritorious, uplifting. God will be pleased, it will be a blessing to us.” So, whatever has been taken into the mind, believed in, held, that is the propelling force that makes people do things. Our actions depend upon the contents of our minds. Positive thoughts manifest as positive actions, negative thoughts as negative actions.

Now, ponder for a moment. From 5.15 to 5.45 all of you were in meditation. Each one must know the content of one’s mind at that time. What was the content? The content can only be what you have put into it, what you have allowed to enter it, to take rest and abide. It cannot be anything else. Therefore, you have to learn by studying, by being aware of the content of your mind during meditation, what has entered into your mind, whether you or someone else put it in, or whether the way you live gave easy access for it to enter and abide there. You have to think; it is worthwhile knowing.

And to help one in a positive way, to make the mind rich with the right type of thoughts and ideas—elevating, uplifting, at once purifying, sublime, noble—they made this provision of daily spiritual study and attentive listening in daily *satsang*. These powerful transforming thoughts then become the fresh new contents of the mind. And if this process is kept on logically, even if something of a contrary nature has already gone in, gradually it is pushed into a corner, is weakened and ultimately dies a natural death. No wonder that all great teachers have laid the greatest importance upon spiritual study and *satsang*, for they are channels of enriching our mind with the right type of sublime and elevating thoughts, noble thoughts, transforming thoughts.

And from these powerful thoughts Gurudev has selected four wonderful recipes, four wonderful mottoes and maxims for our guidance, each holding a world of meaning, a world of

significance. These four words are meant to make our life full of peace and joy, free of restlessness, sorrow, clash and conflict. And these four are: *Serve, Love, Meditate, Realise*.

Serve: When you go out of yourself and seek to serve others, two great things happen: your ego becomes less important, and the off-shoot of the ego, selfishness, becomes gradually eliminated. Because where one is self-centred and egoistic, peace is not possible, happiness is not possible, neither for Oneself nor for others.

Love: Here it specifically means *bhakti*, love for the Supreme Reality. By *bhakti* we plug in, as it were, and make a contact or create a connection between ourselves and that which is profound and perfect peace, peace that passeth understanding, that which is the perfect joy, that which is the *param ananda* (supreme bliss). And naturally when you relate yourself, make a connection, with that which is the very embodiment, an infinite, limitless, immeasurable ocean of that very thing—then who in the world can prevent you from having that peace, that joy? So, *Love*, connect yourself with that supreme peace and joy, ocean of peace and joy. Then, what no one can get, you will get. What is nowhere available in this world is available to you, wherever you are. Whether you possess anything or not, whether you have anything or not, you will have peace, you will have joy, you will have a supreme state of fullness and satisfaction.

Meditate: Why be short of it? Once you have made this connection, take it to its logical conclusion and you yourself become the embodiment of peace. Instead of experiencing the peace and joy of the Divine, you yourself become the very ocean of peace and joy; you yourself become divine, for you are divine. Put an end to this forgetfulness once and for all, forever, and shine with divinity.

Realise: Keep what has just been said as the one supreme goal of your existence; never forget it even for one moment. Each day, when the sun rises and you begin a day, keep realisation as your supreme goal. Let that be the very meaning, the direction-giver, the propelling force of your life. Let your life be vibrant with the aspiration for realisation. Let this one principle, this one maxim and motto, this one factor of realisation enrich your entire life, your thoughts, your feelings, your actions. Let it dominate your entire life, so that you live your life and direct your actions towards that great consummation of realisation, liberation.

Serve, Love, Meditate, Realise! These four significant words have a relevance to each one of us in our attempt to seek and find happiness while we live upon this earth, which is *anityam*, *asukham*, *duhkhalayam*, *asavtatam* (evanescent, without happiness, an abode of sorrow, impermanent), while we are seeking happiness upon this earth which is *janma*, *mrityu*, *jara*, *vyadhi*, *duhkha* (birth, death, old age, disease, sorrow). Yet you can fully succeed in attaining the highest happiness, highest bliss, highest peace and satisfaction, if you hold on to these four words, ponder their meaning, and manifest them in your life. They will lead you to peace and joy.

God bless you all! I wish you peace and joy of the highest quality, not second rate, third rate, fourth rate, petty, petty, petty peace. No! Peace and joy of the unparalleled, unique, supreme, highest quality, which is divine peace and joy, which is ever your birthright. To attain this you have come here into this world of pain and death. To attain this you have been blessed with human status, with the power to think, feel, reason, listen, receive and understand.

May today become the starting point of a vigorous onward ascent into that state of peace which is awaiting you, to ask for it and get it, to seek it and to find it. It is awaiting you. Let us not lose the opportunity!

16

ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE

Beloved Immortal Atman! Blessed children of the Divine! The ways of the Lord are mysterious. But one fact is certain: no matter how other things might change, the Divine Reality, the Cosmic Being, the supreme Universal Spirit is always the same, the unchanging. He is always the ever-full, the all-perfect. He is always all-merciful. He is always the ocean of compassion, the ocean of love, an ocean of grace. And He is always *sarva-samartha*—omnipotent, all-powerful, capable of instantly doing anything and everything that He divinely wills.

For in Him there does not arise the necessity of doing anything. If He divinely wills, instantaneously, even as He is willing, that which He wills is immediately accomplished, immediately fulfilled. There is no interval between the Supreme Being divinely willing something and that something manifesting itself, occurring as a fact. The willing in the cosmic mind of God, and the manifestation of the will as a fact, are simultaneous. There is no impossible with the Supreme Being.

The human mind, limited, finite, having to function in time and space, a mixture of strengths and weaknesses, functions in a different way. We wish something; there arises in us a desire and the will to do it. But between the wish arising in the mind and the actualisation of this desire, there is sometimes a long period. There comes hesitation, there comes vacillation, there comes faltering and also numerous negative trends of the mind: “If I do this I may have this difficulty, this obstacle may come” and so on. So even before we initiate an action, we are already fearful of the outcome and we hesitate to take action. In this way, there is sometimes a long interval before we perform an action, and then sometimes we give it up before it is accomplished. Thus the human mind swings between opposite kinds of thought.

Because the human mind is limited. It is subject to the influence of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. A wish that arises when the mind is in a state of *sattva* is implemented immediately. A wish that arises in a state of *rajas* is implemented, but in a wrong way. Indeed, nothing comes out of it; something wrong comes out of it, because where there is *rajas* there is always an element of confusion. And if the will arises when *tamas* prevails, there is postponement, because lethargy, unwillingness to exert, is the defect of *tamas*.

But the Cosmic Being is beyond time, beyond dualities, beyond the three *gunas*. There, there is always purified thinking. There is no hesitation, no faltering, no procrastination. The will is to accomplish, and the thing is actualised.

Therefore, in the Divine Will all things are possible. To have absolute faith in this truth is to live in its light, to have victory over circumstances, to have an inward, steady, absolute progress, in the spiritual path. There is no hesitation in the inner journey godward towards illumination and liberation, no matter how vexing the outer factors.

You have seen the lives of saints, full of difficulties, full of persecutions, full of obstacles, full of adverse circumstances, many drawbacks and disadvantages. But through it all, in their interior, the mystics, the seekers, had absolute faith and trust in God. Take the life of Mira. Take the life of Jesus. Take the life of many a saint. In spite of fierce opposition from outside, their inner being went undaunted after the great Goal, had no hesitation, because it firmly rested on the faith: “All things are possible, all things are possible, all things are possible.” Why? Because they had absolute trust and faith in the omnipotence of God.

And God never changes. What He was a hundred years ago, a thousand years ago, ten thousand years ago, He is at this moment. And He will continue to be the same—all-merciful, all-love, omnipotent, capable of everything and all-powerful in His divine will.

And what a great thought, that we belong to Him. He belongs to us; we have a claim over Him. And He is all that you desire in the form of a life’s companion, a helper, a partner. When you contemplate this truth, that we have such a great Being, such an all-perfect, omnipotent Being, such a sympathetic, understanding and compassionate Being as our best friend, as our life partner, as our constant companion, as our ever-ready helper, you can do nothing but rejoice, rejoice and rejoice. You can do nothing but rejoice. It is the truth of our life, and that Being is the One who is closest to us, closer than anything else.

17

WHY DO YOU SUFFER UNNECESSARILY?

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! Ever abide in your real nature. Then this phenomenal world around you will not have the power to influence and affect you in any manner that is likely to take away from you the truth, the purity, the bliss, the peace, the wisdom and the perfection which is ever your unchangeable, natural state, which is ever your essential nature.

The essential nature of a thing makes it what it is, and therefore, if it is taken away, the thing will cease to be what it is, which is absurd, untenable. Sweetness is the essential nature of honey, you cannot take it away. You cannot take away the burning property of fire, the coldness of ice or the softness of butter. You cannot take away the hardness of rock, the wetness of water or the fragrance of sandal paste. Effulgence is the essential nature of light, you cannot take it away. The essential nature of a thing or being is that aspect or that factor which is permanent to it, which is beginningless and endless, inalienable and changeless, and therefore it is the thing-in-itself.

Scriptures declare that your essential nature is *sat-chit-ananda*. Being your essential nature it cannot be taken away. It is your eternal identity; it is unfailing, invaluable, inseparable. You are

sat, Existence Absolute, this is unalterable. You are *chit*, Consciousness Absolute, this is unalterable. You are *ananda*, Bliss Absolute, this too is unalterable. It is not something that qualifies you. It is not something that has come to you now as an added factor and was not before. You have ever been *sat-chit-ananda*, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute. You are this now as you are listening, you will ever continue to be this. This is the truth.

This establishes at least one thing: To weep and wail, to suffer and to have grief and sorrow, is not your mission in life. You have not come here for that. It may exist as part of this universal phenomenon, but you must know that you are distinct from it, that you transcend this universal phenomenon. You may be passing through it, you may come into contact with it, you may for the time being be brought into a state of proximity to what it constitutes—its imperfections, its dualities, its ups and downs, its pleasures and pains, its joy and grief, happiness and sorrow, but they are part of the phenomenal world, not part of you.

This very important point should be grasped. What you experience in this phenomenal world is not part of you. What you can ever experience without effort, and to which you have direct access, is *sat-chit-ananda*. It is ever there. Bliss is ever-present, without being affected by time or space, because you are Existence Absolute. It is valid and it is the truth in all the three periods of time. It is never absent. The ability to be aware of this, namely that you are eternal bliss, inheres in your own nature and is your birthright, because Awareness, Consciousness Absolute, is also your essential nature. A stone is not conscious that it exists, that it is hard, that it is heavy, because it lacks this awareness, consciousness or *chaitanya tattva*. It is not able to experience this, whereas you are endowed with the ability to be self-aware.

When this is so, why do you go a-begging? Why do you go a-sorrowing? Why are you depressed sometimes, elated at other times? Why? Now, this is not a question that Swami Chidananda should ask you. Rather, it is a question that you should ask yourself. It is for you to answer that is important, not for anyone else. “When bliss is my eternal, essential nature, because I am eternally existent, and to be aware of this bliss (because I am Consciousness Absolute) is also my essential nature, this being the fundamental truth of my very being, very existence, innermost being, why is it that I go about in the clutches of various moods?” Ask yourself this question. Try to ponder this question. Try to look into it. Probe into the scriptures and try to find out. Whether you find it out or not, the truth is that you are Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute, Bliss Absolute.

When a wave has risen in the middle of the ocean, where does it exist as a wave? Does it exist apart from the ocean? Definitely not. It exists as part of the ocean itself. So, in the finite name and form of the wave, there is the ocean as its inseparable, eternal ground which supports it, and having produced it is once again ready to absorb it back into its vastness, its immeasurability, its unfathomable depth. So, too, in your mysterious, inexplicable state of self-forgetfulness, which has no rhyme or reason, its secret puzzle has to be cracked if you do not want life to simply pass away, leaving you a miserable creature searching for peace and happiness but never finding it, ever swinging between dualities, sometimes laughing, at other times weeping, moving from pillar to post, always complaining, grumbling, “What is happening to me, why did God give me this pain?” This type of wasteful misdirection of this great opportunity God has given is not unavoidable, it is avoidable. It is unnecessary. You have come here to move towards this light, to attain this bliss.

Not without reason, in ancient times, the illumined, enlightened Vedic seers addressed humanity and called them children of Immortality. If you were subject to birth and death, they would not call you children of Immortality. Ponder this question. Find out. When it is unnecessary, why do you go through this thing called life, sometimes in distress, sometimes in frustration, sometimes in elation, sometimes worried, sometimes anxious, sometimes in a state of self-pity, sometimes in a state of acute sorrow? “You should not sorrow, you should not grieve.” This is the firm admonition that Lord Krishna gives to Arjuna in the Gita and the Upanishads issue this clarion call: “Awake, awake, be aware, be aware, open your eyes, become awake, become aware.” You exist in that immeasurable ocean of *satchidananda*, which is your beginning and your end—*aham adischa madhyam cha bhutanam anta eva cha* (I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings). And It is always everywhere about you. Infinitely it is so and It keeps on calling, because It is Awareness.

It is ever-present; you do not have to move one foot to reach it. You do not have to put forth your hand even a little to touch it or grasp it and take it. If you want to talk, you have to make effort, exert; but for silence you do not have to try, or exert, to bring it about. Why? Because it is an eternal fact. It is always there; you do not have to make effort, you do not have to exert. You have only to stop disturbing it, stop bringing in something else. You are constantly bringing noise, sound; otherwise, the stillness, the silence is there, ever-present, the reality, the substratum, the truth. Even so, *sat* is ever-present, infinite, boundless. *Chit* is ever-present. *Ananda* is ever-present because you are That. So, be aware of this truth. Live this truth. Base your life on the truth of your being, the fact that you are *satchidananda* ever, ever and ever.

Ponder this truth within. Make use of this truth. “When I am ever Existence Absolute, Consciousness Absolute, Bliss Absolute, immeasurable Awareness, when It is ever right within me as my very own Self, what is this strange thing? Why am I needlessly depriving myself of this experience? Why am I unnecessarily running after sorrow and grief and all such contrary states, running towards something other than my ever-present, essential nature?”

It is a serious question. It is a fundamental question. It is a question you must put to yourself and find the answer, and then you will be liberated here and now. Launch upon this process with earnestness, with sincerity, with vigour, with enthusiasm, with determination, and let’s see who can deprive you of this experience which is your birthright. There is no power in this universe, no power in heaven or on earth that can take from you that which is your birthright, the ever-present Truth. May God bless you in your earnest endeavour!

18

COMPANIONS UNTIL ILLUMINATION

Radiant Divinities! The way spiritual, which leads to true peace, everlasting joy, divine perfection, illumination and liberation, commences with *sad-vichara*—right enquiry into why we are here, what we are here for, what is this thing called life? Our presence, our being and doing upon this planet earth is characterised as life—what is this life? With what objective are we to live?

Kastvam koham kuta ayatah (Who are you? Who am I? Whence have I come?)—such enquiry is *sad-vichara*. *Sad-vichara* also leads to enquiry about the ultimate goal and meaning of our life. Is life meaningless or has it got some meaning? If life is but to lead to the grave or a handful of ashes, then what is its meaning? Has man come here only to die?

I had occasion to quote from a poem recently: “Dust thou art, to dust returnest was not spoken of the soul.” There is something within you which is timeless, beginningless and endless, immortal and imperishable, deathless and indestructible, *na hanyate hanyamane sarire* (is not killed when the body is killed). Enquiry leads to that inner depth of your being. And that gives a significance and a deeper meaning to your life: “There must be some meaning, it is not meaningless, it does not end in death, there is a hereafter.”

It is that which gives a higher purpose for human existence, and it is about this hereafter that young Nachiketas questioned Lord Yama: “Some say ‘everything is finished when the person here experiences death, nothing exists afterwards.’ Others say ‘no, there is something within that exists afterwards.’ Who is right? What is the truth? What happens when a person dies? What exactly is death? Please, I want to know. Is there something that survives physical death?”

Yama was astounded that a young boy should ask such a question. He had promised to grant him three boons, and so this was not a mere question. Lord Yama was both puzzled and perturbed. He had given His word, yet here was this young boy wanting to know something which even the gods do not know, something which is known only after life-long *sadhana*, penance, prayer, reflection, deep meditation, *yoga’bhyasa* (practice of Yoga). How can one just give this as an answer to a query? So he tried to divert the attention of the boy: “Ask something else, anything else. I will give you things much more relevant to your present life, seemingly much more desirable, attractive, pleasant.” But He failed to change the mind of Nachiketas—“No, I want only this knowledge.” That is a most fascinating and deeply interesting part of the Kathopanishad. Nachiketas sought to know something about that which gives meaning to life, which gives a greater significance to our existence here.

There is something that is not affected by birth or death. There is something that continues to be even after the body perishes, and that is the real “you.” *Sad-vichara* brings out all these things and launches the *jivatma* upon a quest, upon a pursuit, upon a determined seeking. *Sad-vichara* is the entry point.

But, if you are not able to control the urge of the outgoing senses towards enjoyment of sense-objects, you will persist in pursuit of pleasure and temporary things, and the *sad-vichara* will come and go away; it will come to nothing. It will only be a theoretical, philosophical, academic speculation, giving a little bit of *manoranjana* (mental entertainment) and a little occupation for the mind and intellect. But it will not be effective or launch you into the quest.

Therefore, you must be able to turn away from the glittering attraction of outer sense-objects. You have to have *samyam* or *dama* (restraint or control of the senses). And it is only a person of some inner strength that can resolutely turn away from the glitter and attraction of sense-objects that keep on dragging the mind out, attracting the senses. So, *viveka* (discrimination) is required: “No, this is not good, it is only an outer attraction, it is not going to bring me to anything

higher. I will only be a slave to my senses. My precious gift of human birth, my precious time, life, energy will blow away, become frittered away by these silly pursuits.” Having known this, one must resolve: “I shall not be deluded or fooled. I shall go the right way even though it does not look attractive. I must resolutely turn away from these outer attractions.” Thus you must discriminate between the merely pleasant and attractive, and the really good and sublime (*preya* and *sreya*). So the steps are right enquiry, restraint, discrimination and right resolution.

Thus one launches upon a course of good conduct, not allowing oneself to be enslaved by desire, deluded by sense-objects and their outer attraction. Rather one is led by reason, *samyak-drshti* (right vision) and *viveka* and therefore one becomes a *sadachari* (person of good conduct). One’s conduct and character become correct, in the right direction: as they ought to be, not as they ought not to be.

And it is not only the commencement of the spiritual life that rests on right thinking, right reflecting, right resolution, and the right directing of our entire human potential towards the attainment of the Goal that has been revealed to us by this process, but the edifice upon which our entire spiritual life rests, is based upon these steps. They are our companions at the commencement, and their presence with us is required until we attain illumination.

Even at the moment when He was upon the threshold of illumination, Buddha had to exercise great reflection, discrimination and resolution. He has to use tremendous will power. He had to exercise deep reflection and enquiry: “What is attracting me now, assailing me now, trying to overwhelm me now? Is this of any worth? Should I pay attention to this? Am I to succumb to this?” So, He had to do a great deal of *vichara*, *viveka* and once again arouse tremendous *vairagya* (dispassion)—not at the beginning of His spiritual life, not at the commencement of His quest, but upon the threshold of illumination. Ponder this point in Buddha’s life again and again. Never forget this. Remember this again, and again, and yet again.

A tremendous crisis overtook Jesus—one entire night in the Garden of Gethsemane just before He was about to consummate His life in the great sacrifice of the crucifixion—a tremendous struggle. The Bible says that He struggled so much against the desire to give up and to take the easier way, that out of the pores of His skin came drops of blood instead of perspiration. He was in a state of agony as He struggled between two pulls. And this was after years and years of *sadhana* and then three years as a Guru, teacher, preacher, calling people to the Kingdom of Heaven, awakening the world. Yet this was His condition: when it came to the point of a crucial test, He had to undergo a tremendous crisis.

Therefore, the need of enquiry, restraint, discrimination and resolution does not drop away the moment you become a Swami, or a *sadhak*, or an inmate of an Ashram, or you have entered the spiritual life. Do not delude yourself into thinking that the need for these important ingredients of the spiritual life is only at the commencement and then you can afford to become something else. They have to be with you until you attain illumination. Until you attain *samadhi*, you cannot afford to give them up.

This has been the teaching of one and all—all the great saints, all the great sages—based upon what they have had to undergo until the very threshold of illumination. What about you and

me? There may be rare exceptions—one in a million. One does find exceptions. But it is not very wise to start by thinking, “I am the exception,” to count yourself as the exception. That is not very wise. God knows who the exception is; you should not think, “I am the exception.”

Thus, earnest, continuous right enquiry, right thinking, right reflection, right resolution, right directing of all your faculties towards the great end, as well as restraint and good conduct are to be your constant companions until you attain liberation. If you reflect over the matter, you will be greatly benefited; your spiritual life will be of a high quality, high calibre. If you forget this, God help you, God help you. We are very prone to easily forget the basic truths of spiritual life and then suffer.

There is a significant saying: “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” This does not merely mean after having attained liberty, if you want to keep that liberty, you will have to be eternally vigilant to safeguard it. It also means that if you wish to attain liberty, that throughout your quest for that liberty you must be eternally vigilant that you are not diverted away, pulled in the wrong direction, or allow yourself to slip and fall.

All sincere *sadhaks* must, therefore, be *vicharsila*, *vivekvan*, *samyami*, *sadachari* (engaged in enquiry, discrimination, be self-controlled, with right conduct). These are to be constant companions. They are the ingredients. You cannot afford to enter the battle with all your weapons and armour and then in the middle of the battle give them up. They are more necessary than they were at the beginning. Until the battle is over, you cannot afford to give up your weapons.

Reflect deeply and be benefited. Then your spiritual life will proceed unhampered day by day. You will move steadily towards the goal of liberation and divine perfection. There is no doubt if you fulfil the conditions. Therefore think deeply, be wise, and attain perfection and liberation. Then rejoice!

19

SUBHECCHA—GOOD DESIRE

Radiant Divinities! Desire is the enemy of peace. Desire is the greatest problem of the human psyche. Desire is the most vexing of problems. Desire is indeed a great *satru* (enemy). Therefore give up all desire. *Vihaya kaman sarvan* (abandoning all desires), *jahi satrum mahabaho kamarupam durasadam* (slay thou, O Arjuna, the enemy in the form of desire, which is hard to conquer), *kamat krodho' bhijayate, krodhat... smritivibhramah* (from desire arises anger, from anger loss of memory). So repeatedly it is said, become *nishkama* (without desire), become *nishkama*. That is the admonition.

But, nevertheless, we have to carefully understand the import and implication of teachings. Become *nishkama*—give up all desires. It means all desires that stand in the way of your fulfilling the central purpose of your human existence, all desires that stand in the way, divert your attention and hold you bound down to a lower level of gross human consciousness, earth-consciousness.

Such desires are to be given away ruthlessly. They have to be found out by daily introspection, inner self-analysis, keen scrutiny; and they have to be uprooted, given up. They have to be destroyed and eliminated.

But part of the process of overcoming this array of desires is to generate a great, all-consuming desire for Divinity, a strong desire for perfection, a strong desire for Self-realisation, a strong desire to make one's life sublime, ideal, holy, sacred. This is the starting point of the process of overcoming everything that stands in your way to Divinity, to God, to *atma-jnana*, liberation, perfection.

Therefore, Vedanta says that the entry point in this awakening and in this process that ultimately leads to liberation in life, the very first stage, is *subheccha* (good desire). It is desire, *iccha*, and it is necessary. If a thorn has pierced your foot, the only way of getting it out and relieving yourself of pain is to take an equally sharp, or maybe even a sharper instrument in the form of another thorn or needle, and through it remove the thorn that has embedded itself in your foot.

This *iccha* is divine desire. It is God manifesting in the human heart. It is God's grace expressing itself in the aspiring heart of the individual soul. It is indispensable. This *subheccha* starts a right-about turn and the determined movement in the right direction. It is a changing point in life, from human to Divine, from the limited, confined, finite life towards Infinity.

And to confirm this, the Supreme Lord goes out of His way to tell us: "I reside, O Arjuna, in the form of such ennobling and liberating desire in the hearts of those who are wedded to *dharma*, whose life does not deviate from *dharma*, who have a great love for *dharma* in their hearts. *Dharma* is the basis and I add this new dimension. I come into their life as a desire that takes one beyond *dharma* to the very source of all *dharma*, God Himself, the Cosmic Being Himself."

God, His Cosmic Being, is the origin and source of all that is good, all that is beautiful, all that is of the nature of truth and discipline, all that connotes *dharma*. "And to those who are thus established in *dharma*, I appear in their hearts to take them into a new and higher dimension, into the spiritual dimension. I manifest as holy desire, spiritual desire, and thus liberate. *Dharmaviruddho bhuteshu kamo'smi bharatarshabha* (I am desire unopposed to *dharma*, O Arjuna)."

It is this holy desire, this great hankering, this longing, this yearning, this great fiery keenness, *mumukshutva*, that sparks off within you all that is auspicious and blessed brought over from a previous life, in the form of good *samskaras*, spiritual *samskaras* and *vasanas* (subtle impressions and desires). Until and unless this igniting spark of good desire comes into contact with these latent *samskaras* and *vasanas*, they remain in a state of dormancy only. They are not active. You are richly endowed, but the riches are not invested, the riches have not started to yield anything because they have not been awakened, they have not been put into circulation. The factor that ignites them, makes them blaze forth and starts them into dynamism is *subheccha*, a holy desire, a pious desire, a keen longing.

The individual soul must have a keen longing: "Wonderful thing I have received; I must put this to the highest use; I must not allow it to be wasted away. It is to me like a precious jewel in a

velvet box that has been presented to me. I must guard it carefully, I must be vigilant. I must take keen interest, and with great fervour and enthusiasm, with tremendous zeal, I must see that this is enhanced, this is multiplied.” Thus one must realise the precious value of this gift of human status.

Subheccha, satsankalpa, jijnasa, mumukshutva, good intention, desire for knowledge, longing for liberation—all these imply a certain inner mental condition. They all point in the same direction. They are a certain positive and creative mode of the mind which is the secret of successful spiritual life. It is the inner power that impels the soul higher and higher, day by day, towards the Goal Supreme. Therefore, to create within oneself this great longing, this great auspicious desire is very vital, very necessary in order to make our good *samskaras* and spiritual *vasanas* yield fruit.

May the Divine endow you with this keen desire for Divinity! May Gurudev’s benedictions enhance your inner being, *antahkarana*, with this keen desire, this *subheccha*, with this great yearning and longing for the attainment of supreme experience, achievement of the great Goal! God bless you in this quest!

20

TWO INDISPENSABLE TRUTHS

Homage unto the Divine, the all-pervading ancient One beyond time and space, eternal and infinite, the source and origin of countless millions and billions of universes, *anantakoti brahmanda*. Homage unto that divine, universal Spirit that is at the back of and beyond all religions; that existed when no religions existed, no scriptures had come into being, no prophet had appeared on earth because there was no earth, there was no creation, all was unmanifest, uncreated. To that ancient Spirit our reverential homage.

Adorations and devotion to the spiritual presence of Gurudev who is the link between us and that ancient Spirit, attaining which one goes beyond sorrow and enters into a state of immortality, Divine-consciousness. In this modern age, Gurudev appeared as a voice from the Eternal, a call from the Immortal. He came as a message, and a messenger, from that ancient Being. He came also as a link. He came as a powerful, inspiring force to turn the attention of the human earth-pilgrim towards his divine destiny and his divine abode. He came to call, awaken, arouse and direct us towards the fulfilment of our life’s divine destiny. And he is still doing it. His spiritual presence is an awakening call, a perennial inspiration and a powerful impetus to the life spiritual. His spiritual instructions form for us a light upon the path.

I wish to place before you this morning two indispensable truths for you to ponder. The first is in reference to the conflict and confusion in seekers, in these modern times, caused by a difference in the teaching of various teachers. Gurudev and those like him preferred to give specific instructions. They advocated following certain practical disciplines. They said: “Have a certain daily routine, take certain resolves, adhere to certain principles.”

Other teachers said: “Be free. Do not bind yourself to anything, to any of that nonsense. It is all self-hypnosis, indoctrination to condition yourself, whereas you must become unconditioned. Conditioning is as bad as anything else—you go from one prison house to another prison house.”

So they declared discipline, system, daily routine, resolving to follow certain principles all to be a prison house: “It is foolish, it conditions you, it makes you a slave. Freedom is your birthright!” As though teachers like Gurudev did not know that freedom is our birthright, that we are the unconditioned Brahman, *nitya nirupadhika satta* (eternal unconditioned Truth), as though they did not know.

So there are these two extreme views: one, a rigid hide-bound system and pattern of *sadhana* and discipline, and the other: “Do not bind yourself to anything. Do not enslave or condition yourself. Be free, be free.” This is due to a fundamental lack of understanding. There is a time and place for everything.

There is a time you must bind yourself to discipline; otherwise you will be lost. Rules and regulations are necessary. Discipline is necessary. Taking certain vows is necessary. Making resolves is necessary.

Adopting certain principles for living is necessary. But that does not mean one stays there forever. One gradually evolves, goes beyond, and a time comes when they fall off by themselves. But to say that all these things are nonsense, that they enslave, that they are unnecessary right from the very beginning, is to demonstrate a short-sightedness of vision, a lack of sense of proportion.

It is in this that Gurudev is the ideal modern prophet. He insisted upon discipline—spiritual diary, Twenty Instructions, resolve form, daily routine; he insisted upon all. But, at the same time, if these became mechanical, meaningless, routine, hide-bound, he was ready immediately to say, “Give them up—be free.” He was both, he knew both, he had seen both sides. He knew what was necessary and when you could transcend it, it was no longer necessary for you.

He was both a *bhakta*, who believed in the *sakara saguna* Brahman (with form and attributes) and, at the same time, a Vedantin, who believed in the *nirakara nirguna* Brahman (without form and attributes). However, he never changed his view on one point: that human selfishness and ego die hard, they are not easy to eradicate. Therefore, never leave selfless service. Never leave egoless, motiveless, selfless service. On that one thing he never budged; he stuck to it all his life. Because he knew how difficult it is to remove ego, how difficult it is to give up selfishness, and how much need of compassionate, selfless service there is in this world. So about the indispensable necessity of motiveless, selfless service he never changed his ground. He never budged; he insisted upon it.

Otherwise he was always very flexible, very flexible. However, he did not like *sadhaks* being lax, having a “don’t care” attitude, having a light-heartedness in their approach to God. He never approved of this, he never appreciated this. He said that unless you discipline yourself you cannot generate spiritual power, you cannot have *tapasya*.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

Therefore, the truth lies between the two extremes. There is a time when system, discipline and the adherence to certain principles is absolutely necessary. There is a time when one gradually transcends them, but one should not foolishly imagine that one has gone beyond and leave them. If they fall off by themselves, it is a different matter. Nature has taken you beyond; you no longer need them.

This is the first truth I share. The second truth is: We say all is pervaded by God. God has become manifest as this universe; He is everywhere in all things. Every atom of matter, every speck of space contains Him. He is all-pervading, immanent. We say that, we quote scriptures, we tell others; but when we say this, we do not apply it ourselves. We do not apply it to *ourselves*.

If all is God, the power of our speech is God, the vision of our eyes is God, the strength of our hands and feet is God. Our intellect, our mind, our body are also parts of God. If God pervades everywhere, is present in everything, then everything we possess, our body, mind, intellect, our faculties, sight, sound, taste, smell, speech, they are all God. Therefore we should regard them with reverence, use them with reverence.

You should not misuse your speech to harm anyone, to insult anyone, to speak with disrespect, for then you are making perverted, wrong use of God, power that is God. Have purity of sight. Do not use your sight to express ill-will, hatred, anger, for then you are misusing this faculty of God. Hear what will be beneficial to you, that which is pure. As Gandhiji said, “Close your ears”; otherwise you are putting a divine faculty to an undivine, unspiritual use. Let your hands and feet move only in a divine and spiritual way; otherwise you are misusing God’s presence and power in the form of this faculty.

In this way, try to apply the concept or the truth about the presence of God in the form of all faculties in your own self. Knowing this truth, make only divine use of all your faculties that are God, dynamic God, Sakti, Para-Sakti.

If you read the Devi Sukta you will understand what I mean. Our ancients had the concept that all our limbs are pervaded by the presence of Divinity in different aspects. Each limb has an *adhithana devata* (presiding deity), and from head to foot we are pervaded by the presence of God in different manifestations. All our faculties, limbs, strength, speech, sight, hearing, movements, everything is presided over by God. Therefore the presence of the Divine is to be felt in us, and as all our faculties, as everything we possess.

“*Ya devi sarvabhuteshu buddhirupena samsthita, namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namah*—I salute that great Cosmic Power Who is present in all beings in the form of intellect.” So the intellect also is pervaded, yet we pull down this divine faculty to a lesser level, which is not meant to be done. Instead, ever try to uplift it, elevate it, take it to a higher and higher level; never bring it down by your misuse of it.

If we misuse it, for that time we are atheists. We forget that God is present in us as this faculty and therefore it is meant to be put to a sublime, noble use. And we also forget that God is present as the witness of all that we do, all that we see, hear, taste, touch and smell, all the

movements and manifestations of our lives. When we forget this and act in a contrary way, for the time being, we are atheists. For us, God does not exist.

We need not deny God, say that He is dead. By our very life and actions we demonstrate that, at that time, God does not exist for us. This is worse atheism than the atheism of the communists, who say there is no God. They at least declare that there is no God and go their own way. We have no quarrel with them. But when we say we believe in God and yet live in a way as though He does not exist, as though He is not present, then this is the worst type of non-theism.

Ponder this point. All faculties are divine, therefore they should be regarded with great reverence. They are God in manifestation, Para-Sakti in manifestation. Therefore relate yourself to them with reverence, deal with them in a divine way. This will bring you to your highest good. God bless you!

21

BASE YOUR LIFE UPON WISDOM

Beloved Immortal Atman! Blessed children of the Divine! Blessed are all of you who have entered into a life that leads to the realisation of the divinity inherent in you as your own essential nature. In all that you do in this life, day by day, morning till night, in all that you say and do, make sure that it springs from wisdom and not from wrong understanding or ignorance. Where there is wisdom as the basis of your life, as the basis of your action, there is no sorrow, there will be no sorrow for you. Where you allow wisdom to be thwarted by thoughtlessness, forgetfulness, heedlessness, the letting go of awareness, wisdom becomes clouded. Letting go of awareness makes for your sleep. Falling asleep means ceasing to know anything, being in the dark, and such darkness the great sages term as *avidya*, ignorance. Such a state of ignorance is due to letting go of the awareness, "I am divine, I am divine."

All that is perceived through the senses is perishable. Nothing here is permanent, everything is impermanent. Therefore it is not wise to make these impermanent things our goal. Even though many teachers recognise their relative existence, they are not our goal. To forget this is unwisdom, and unwisdom is the cause of sorrow. In a state of unwisdom we take the impermanent to be both permanent and real in the absolute sense, and then we make them our goal. We superimpose a permanent value on them and then we get attached to them. Attachment is the cause of misery. Attachment is bondage. Attachment clouds one's understanding. It has the power to cloud one's intellect also, and when the intellect becomes thus overcome by such a cloud of attachment and lack of enquiry and discrimination, what happens? The Srimad Bhagavad Gita tells us clearly what happens.

Therefore, in your own highest self-interest, it is necessary to have wisdom firmly established in your heart, and from that state of wisdom you can act freely, go through life, extend your affection towards all, love all, be friendly to all, make use of things, but be detached within; do your duty, fulfil your obligations, behave normally, but be detached within. Be super-normal

within. It may be a secret between you and God. Be apparently normal, but be, within yourself, super-normal. This is the key to succeed over the world, attain victory over circumstances. This is the key to go into the world in a state of serenity, in a state of absolute inner equanimity unaffected by inevitable things. This is the key message proclaimed by the Gita—*anasakti* (non-attachment).

Established in this wisdom, you see a *vritti* (thought), but you know that it is impermanent. We know ourselves, but we know that we are not what we superficially know ourselves to be, but that we are divine, eternal, imperishable, all-pervasive. Established in this awareness, firmly established in this detachment, *anasakti*, we go through life straight towards the Goal, not distracted, not overcome. Established in this state of awareness, this state of wisdom consciousness, nothing can touch you.

Lord Krishna says: “In this there is no loss of effort, nor is there any harm. Even a little of this knowledge protects one from great fear”—one of those assurances given by the great World Teacher. They are wonderful assurances; they are assurances that infuse strength into you. They have been the solace of *sadhaks*, the inner support of Yogis and the firm abiding place of *bhaktas*.

And such a state of awareness totally transforms your entire life and all that you are and you do. It brings about a total transformation in the very nature of your living of your life and brings about an inner alchemy. Your life is not what others think it to be or see it to be on the surface, but what, in the deeper depths, is known to One Who abides within you as your Eternal Companion.

This inner transformation is essential and indispensable if you are to pursue your spiritual journey towards the great goal of peace and joy unhampered and continuously. And all the scriptures, all the great saints have shown this as the one and the only way. There is no antidote for unwisdom except wisdom; there is no way of banishing darkness except with light.

“There is nothing more sanctifying than *jnana*,” Lord Krishna says. And in strong words Sankara says: “Not everything that you may try to do and do, even in a hundred births, will be of any avail unless you awaken within yourself *jnana*.” To cross the ocean of *samsara*, *jnana* is the great raft. To burn up and reduce to ashes all *karmas*, *jnana* is the great fire. It is *jnana* that brings about right understanding, and right understanding brings about detachment, and detachment brings about equanimity—*sukhaduhkhe same kritva labhalabhau jayajayau* (having made pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat the same).

This is the result of this inner *anasakti* (non-attachment), and through *anasakti* one crosses beyond sorrow and moves smoothly towards the Goal. May God bless you to reflect over this truth and understand it rightly! May God bless you to be established in awareness and triumph over life!

22

MIND—YOUR GREATEST FRIEND

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers upon the path that leads to liberation and bliss! You are the few, you are the rare, you are the unique that have chosen a spiritual way of life. Other aspects of your life, physical, mental, psychological, social, professional, have become secondary to you, something you suffer or tolerate because they are inevitable. (A profession does not necessarily mean a career-building, income-producing, go-getting activity. If you profess teaching or religion or Yoga, that is your profession. It may be totally selfless, altruistic, dedicated; nevertheless, you have a profession.)

Your uniqueness is that you are trying to think out ways and means of making all the other aspects of your life supportive to the spiritual life that you have chosen for yourself, not obstacles to it. You are pondering these questions and are struggling to convert your personal life, professional life, and social life in relation to others into a supplementary and complementary process to your overall spiritual life.

In this process, more precious than gold or silver or diamonds, more precious than any wealth—your greatest wealth, greatest asset, greatest power, greatest friend, greatest helper—is your mind. In your mind you have an ally. In your mind you have an ever-ready friend, twenty-four hours of the day and night. Even when you are alone, abandoned, helpless, you are in dire distress, in a dangerous predicament, ever-ready at hand is your mind to help you, to guide you, to show you ways and means to overcome.

Do not underestimate the value of your mind. It is your precious friend. It is your great well-wisher. It is an invaluable helper. It is a source of all good. Know it as such, treat it as such, utilise it as such. Then you will be wise. Then you will rejoice.

It is not always right to denigrate the mind, to think of it as your enemy. You can make it your enemy; you can make it your greatest liability. If you are foolish, if you are thoughtless, if you are not wise, if you have failed to grasp this important implication of the scriptures and the teachings of great teachers, then you will always be struggling with your mind. You will be lamenting in your mind, “I want to be very good, but my mind is very bad to me; it is not allowing me to do good. I am really a good person, but mind is dragging me down. Mind is doing this, mind is doing that.”

It is not so. On the contrary, you do not give a chance to your mind, you are very unkind to your mind. You do not recognise its precious value; you have not understood it. You are doing what is called: “Give a dog a bad name and then hang it.” You are committing sins of commission, and an even greater number of sins of omission, towards the mind. Mind is Para Sakti, mind is God’s gift to the individual soul, mind can grant you liberation. There is nothing in the whole world that is so constantly at your beck and call, so constantly ever-ready, ever-present to do your bidding and to help.

The whole career of a surgeon may depend upon the condition of his surgical instruments. The whole career of a master painter is in his brushes and his colours. The life of a soldier depends upon the condition of his rifle. Have you considered how carefully they look after and care for that upon which their entire life depends, their entire career depends? Dancers will insure their legs for millions of dollars; master pianists will insure each finger for millions of dollars. They care for and guard carefully that which they depend upon, and it, in turn, is good to them, helps them, gives them everything they want.

Therefore, you also safeguard your mind, protect it, take great care of it, treat it with kindness. Its enemies are *rajo guna* and *tamo guna*. Its enemies are temptations in the form of outer attractions, the inveterate habitual tendencies of the senses towards sense-objects. Its enemies lie in the lower self-lust, anger and greed.

Therefore guard your mind from the lower self, from these dark, negative tendencies, from bad company, from idleness and from the assailment of old *samskaras* (mental impressions). Keep it occupied, keep it positive, take it into good company. Try to keep it in an elevated state. Do not allow the lower mind to drag it down. Be your own best friend. Be the best friend of your mind; befriend it.

Then, what will it not do for you? There is nothing that it will not do for you; it will do everything that you want. It depends upon your way of dealing with it, your recognition of its preciousness, its true place in your life, its great significance and its meaning for your liberation, for your highest good. Be good to your mind. Do justice to it. Do not always throw stones, make it a scapegoat. Realise that it is God Who has given you your mind, and therefore you are a human being; otherwise you would be an animal. And when God has made you a man with a mind, be a real human being.

Think deeply. Then you will realise what the mind is to you. It is to be utilised, channelled; it is to be educated, strengthened, and supported in every way. You must nurture it and make it your greatest asset. This requires clear perception, wisdom and active effort. It is laziness that ruins the mind. Take pains, be willing to take the trouble. You will not regret it. It will repay you a thousandfold. Ponder well this inner situation of yours. Ponder well this fact: how great a thing the mind is, how much you owe it.

23

WHAT HAS TO BE KNOWN?

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! You are all *mumukshus* and *jijnasus*. A *mumukshu* is one who aspires after *moksha* or liberation. A *jijnasu* is one who is in search of *jnana* and therefore is actively making endeavours to grow in knowledge and obtain wisdom. What is it that has to be known?

WHAT HAS TO BE KNOWN?

Everything in connection with the spiritual path has to be known. And if you do not know it, you have to pay the price. You will be made to know it in the bitter way, through experience. The mother teaches everything to the child when it is growing up and starts to move about the house. She teaches the child what to touch, what not to touch, what to go near, what not to go near. She teaches how fire will burn, a sharp knife will cut, a carpet edge can trip. All these things the mother carefully teaches; otherwise, the child will burn itself, cut itself or stumble. Similarly, everything about the spiritual life has to be known.

The spiritual life is lived by the seeker in a body. Therefore, laws governing the welfare of the physical body have to be known: suitable food, unsuitable food; healthy habits, unhealthy habits; right posture, wrong posture; the correct amount of sleep, the tendency of the body to develop good or bad habits if the same action is repeated. All of these one has to observe and try to know about one's own body. If one does not know, then one suffers and is not able to perform at peak efficiency. *Sadhana* also suffers.

Everything one does, one does through thoughts of the mind. You think, you plan, and then you put it into action. Therefore, knowledge of the mind is also essential. Mind is wayward. Sometimes it does not listen, it goes the wrong way, it does things which it regrets afterwards. So, how to keep the mind in the right direction? What is it that governs the mind, chastens it, checks it?

It is the discriminating faculty, the intellect. It is called the *buddhi*. Therefore, everything regarding the *buddhi* is to be known: how to initiate right enquiry in the *buddhi*, how to keenly observe and perceive differences between things seen and draw correct conclusions; how the *buddhi* must function in discriminating between the positive and the negative, that which elevates, that which takes you down; how to know what is *sattvic*, what is *rajasic*, what is *tamasic*, what are the signs of each.

So the *buddhi* engages in study in order to acquire knowledge. It reads the Gita: it studies the fourteenth chapter on the division of the *gunas*, the sixteenth chapter on *daiva-asura* and the sixth chapter, *raja yoga*. It learns about the behaviour of the mind, its habits, the laws that operate upon it. Not without reason, therefore, Guru Maharaj Swami Sivananda produced an entire volume, which is now known worldwide, *Mind, Its Mysteries and Control*.

And then, you may be very intelligent, full of knowledge, full of the ability to enquire, distinguish between right and wrong, but if you do not have a high sense of moral rectitude, a high sense of ethical correctness, then in spite of your knowledge, in spite of your keen, brilliant intellect, you will be a slave. You will be a little creature moving about in a petty circle upon a lower level, in darkness. Therefore, as Sri Ramakrishna used to say: "Such a person is like a leaky pot which you try to keep filled with water. No matter how much you might try to keep it filled, within a matter of hours or days it will be empty."

It is futile to gain and keep losing and therefore it is not without reason that Guru Maharaj wrote entire books called: *Ethical Teachings* and *How to Eradicate Vices and Cultivate Virtues*. He wrote many books on *dharma*, right conduct and behaviour. Look at his "Spiritual Diary," his "Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions," his "Sadhana Tattva" which includes sections on ethical culture, health culture, energy culture, will culture. In almost all his books he again and again

reiterates the importance of the moral and spiritual regeneration of the world. Reflect upon this; you have to know about this aspect.

And, of course, you must have spiritual knowledge, about Yoga and *bhakti* and *sadhana* in particular. You need to know about *viveka* and *vairagya*, *samadhi* and *jnana*; *dharana* and *dhyana*, *yama* and *niyama*; *navavidha bhakti* and *sraddha*; the *kundalini*, *asanas*, *pranayama*, *mudras*, *bandhas*. You have to know Vedanta.

All this knowledge must be gradually acquired. You have to know about your body, your mind, your intellect, about ethical principles, moral rectitude, behaviour, about spirituality, about Atman and *anatman*, about Brahman and *maya*, about the permanent and the impermanent, about the universe and man—everything. Therefore, Lord Krishna said: “Know that knowledge by prostration, by question and by service; the wise who have realised the truth will instruct thee in it.” Ask and it shall be revealed to you. You have to ask—going to *satsang*. You have to ask books also, tap knowledge from books. And books alone will not be sufficient; you will not be able to understand the import of books unless they are explained to you by an elder who has gone through the mill.

Integrated knowledge is thus necessary if you are to move towards the Goal sufficiently equipped. Therefore the entire personality in all its different dimensions and aspects has to come into active function. The mind, the intellect, the moral consciousness all have to be exercised. Then alone spiritual progress becomes progressive, positive and creative. We cannot remain half-hearted; it is a full time task. If you apply yourself to it as you ought to, you will not have any time for useless pursuits or vain occupations. It is only then that all things are in a very keen, alert, fit, sound condition.

If you exercise your body, your muscles grow, develop, strengthen. If you do not exercise, your muscles become flabby, they atrophy. The more active you keep your mind, intellect and moral consciousness, the brighter they will become day by day—sharp, incisive, alert, awake and efficient. They cannot do this for themselves. It is you with your discrimination, determination and intelligence that must keep them intelligently engaged in activity day after day.

The constant positive application of these faculties—the body, mind, intellect, ethical consciousness—is termed *abhyasa* (practice); and the protection of these instruments, preventing them from taking the wrong direction, from sliding down or from ceasing to move constantly upwards, is called *vairagya* (dispassion). This very important negative, protective *sadhana* (*vairagya*) may not bring you anything, but it will certainly ensure you against loss.

These two keynotes of *sadhana*—*abhyasa* and *vairagya*—have been placed before us in the Gita by Lord Krishna. He said, “This is the key to success.” These twin factors can work miracles for you; they can achieve for you what is seemingly impossible. Fully dwell upon their significance and importance and try to understand their implications.

Therefore, we have to strive for integrated knowledge, all-round knowledge, covering all aspects of our life, because all these aspects are very much with us and have to be with us. We have to function through them upon this glorious spiritual path that leads to liberation and blessedness.

Integrated knowledge backed up by a high sense of ethical consciousness, and this backed up by resolution and determination not to fail but to succeed—all these things are components of the authentic and genuine spiritual life, not an inferior or middling, but a superior spiritual life.

That is what you should strive after. To be thus engaged in a high quality spiritual life is your privilege. Therein lies your guarantee of supreme blessedness. Ponder these truths, so that out of them much benefit may accrue, so that your spiritual life may become dynamic and progressive and bring the Goal nearer day by day. God bless you in this sincere and earnest endeavour, in your *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, in your *sadhana* and in your striving for knowledge and liberation!

24

THE NECESSITY OF INTROSPECTION

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Scriptures and saints and those who have had their fingers burnt by running after objects of the world continuously warn us to be cautious in our dealings with the sense-objects of this world. For these sense-objects are deceptive, they are endowed with a false glitter and an indescribable power of deluding the mind, attracting it, enmeshing it and then enslaving it. Lord Krishna warns in the Gita that they are sources of pain, not sources of happiness as we foolishly think when we run after them like a wild-goose-chase. Then, another verse tells us, “*vishayan vishavat tyaja* (shun sense-objects like poison).”

So we try to be careful, and if sense-objects attract us we say “no.” We will use our will power, we will use our discrimination. We will try to look into the defects of these sense-objects and tell our mind, “O mind, do not be deluded, do not be foolish; you will regret afterwards.” So we want to resist temptations, we want strength. We pray: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” We have been taught to beware of things surrounding us in this *maya-bazaar*, this world of *maya*.

It is possible to be in a state where these temptations and dangers do not exist. To the one who has no desire for sense-objects, they do not constitute a temptation. He or she may be surrounded by hundreds of sense-objects, but, nevertheless, one is not even aware of their existence; they mean nothing. For example, those in whose life the drinking of liquor has never been a factor are never tempted to drink liquor and get intoxicated. They do not run the danger of cirrhosis of the liver and all the other evils that the drinking of liquor can bring. To them liquor and water mean the same thing.

But then, not only do you have to be cautious about things outside, but you also have to be aware and cautious about things right within you. For they can cause either happiness or misery, progress or downfall, spirituality or the opposite of it. They are called *adhyatmika tapa* (pain coming from within). They can torment you. They can make you suffer. Coming from within yourself, emanating from your own nature, uncontrolled, innumerable, countless desires torment the individual.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

Desires make the mind restless until they are fulfilled. When they are fulfilled they make the craving still stronger. And if you cannot fulfil them by righteous means, you may take recourse to means that are not good, not in accordance with *dharma*. You may tell lies, do something that is not correct. You may even do it by hook or by crook, fair means or foul.

These desires are not from outside you; they are from within yourself. They can even torment a secluded recluse living inside a cave in a forest. He may have hell inside that cave because of what is inside his head. Greed for things can destroy your peace, make you burn, cost you your sleep. Envy and jealousy can also eat into your vitals. No matter how much nourishing food you eat, you may be burning up and steadily losing weight.

People also suffer due to egoism, arrogance, exaggerated self-importance. If you feel you are not getting the proper respect, or are being treated in a slipshod manner, you can be terribly upset, incensed for the whole day. “That person ignored me, or spoke to me in that way; this person did not pay me the respect I am due; they did not give me the right seat.” Because you feel you are important, all these things can cause misery, sorrow and torment. They are not from outside, but are self-created, coming from within yourself.

Discretion being the better part of valour, it is usually possible to escape from things outside you or to be far away from them. You can master the external objects and say: “No, I will not let them interfere with my inner peace of mind.” You may be able to avoid them entirely. But how can you avoid things that emanate from within you? You cannot run away from yourself. So you have to realise that greater danger lies within yourself, more harm can be done to yourself by yourself than by all the objects of the external world put together. Hence you will have to engage yourself in an inner discipline, inner transformation, an inner restoration of a right state of affairs within yourself.

Think about it. Then you will find that because the state of affairs within you is not right, you are caused much misery. You are made restless. You are at the mercy of these things which come from within. And if you are not able to clearly recognise their presence within you, or if they are vague and illusive, you cannot deal with them. You know that they are there when they manifest, but otherwise you do not know where they are hiding, in what form they are lurking in the depths of your mind. Unless you find out, it is not possible to deal with them. How can you deal with an unknown, unseen adversary? They have to be brought to the surface. They have to be cornered. You have to go after them.

That is why Guru Maharaj Swami Sivananda said: “Sit alone, turn your mind inward, introspect, do self-examination, try to find out what is within yourself, analyse the inner contents.” This is indispensable. Otherwise you will not know yourself. And you will be surprised, amazed and even dismayed by what things can come up from within yourself when you sit for meditation, for example, or when you are moving about in society. You will discover things you never dreamt of, things you never suspected you are capable of. You can be such a stinker. You can be such a nasty person. Or, you can be dismayed by seeing within yourself qualities you cannot stand in others. Suddenly, you humbly experience, they are there, right within you. It is a chastening experience.

If you are honest with yourself, if you are wise and if you are keenly introspective and analytical, then these things can be found out. However, they are not found out in a day. One day's introspection will reveal nothing. One week's introspection will reveal nothing. They have been there for decades, from your birth, maybe from another birth. Therefore, you must be after this *sadhana*, this process of self-introspection, analysis, self-examination.

If you practise this unrelentingly, with determination, if you persevere in this *sadhana*, you will be rewarded with a lot of knowledge, a lot of revelation about yourself. Then you are in a position to bring about the desired change, not otherwise. Until you know yourself, you cannot work upon yourself, you will not be able to turn brass into gold, to bring about the transformation that Yoga and *sadhana* are supposed to bring about, that Guru, *mantra*, *japa*, prayer, worship and *bhajan* are supposed to bring about. And they must bring it about, but only when they are accompanied by this type of honest self-examination, earnest introspection, sincere desire to find out, see, know yourself, to discover the inner contents of your mind.

It is this *sadhana* that makes the other forms of *sadhana* effective and fruitful. If you do it sincerely, then, day by day, you will become better and better. Your inside will be purer and purer. You will become a better person. This is the thing that Gurudev drew our special attention to. He also gave various practical methods to achieve this—introspection, self-analysis, spiritual diary.

So you have to be honest with yourself; not only honest with God and the rest of your fellow beings, the world around you, but also honest with yourself. You have to be earnest and sincere. Then victory is yours. Then you will see yourself clearly, as you look into a mirror, a clean mirror. Then, with that knowledge you are better equipped to deal with yourself, to bring about the requisite change, the necessary transformation, and move towards divinity and godliness. May God bless you and may the grace and benedictions of Gurudev enable you to be successful in this all-important inner *sadhana*!

25

THE PEACE WITHIN

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved devotees of the Lord! Today, before the sun sets, it will be the solar New Year. Therefore, let us join together at this auspicious moment and pray for the unfolding of peace in the hearts and minds of people all over the world—in India, in nearby countries, in all countries. May people all over the world have peaceful thoughts, may they have peaceful feelings towards others, and as a consequence may they act peacefully towards each other and towards all beings.

The peace of the Supreme Being is within every human individual. This peace that passeth understanding, this peace that is supreme, higher than which there is nothing, which is profound peace, perennial peace, is the truth about your inner Self. It is the one real thing within amidst a thousand miscellaneous thoughts being allowed to flit and fill the mind, being allowed to agitate and disperse the mind. These fragmentary and fleeting thoughts have no basic reality. They are

temporary and momentary appearances of the *antahkarana* (inner being) in its different modes. It is its nature to put on innumerable appearances, and it is constantly generating what are known as *vrittis* or thought-waves.

But the wise person who wishes to establish peace in the mind, to remain integrated, not dispersed, creates centres which he can adhere to and abide in; and one such centre is the peace within. People call it variously. In the Islamic tradition it is called the Light of Allah or the Radiance of Allah. Christian mystics refer to it as the Kingdom of God within or the Kingdom of Heaven within. And in the Vedic tradition of the Hindus it is referred to in all these ways and many others as well—“*jyotisham api tad jyotis... hridi sarvasya vishthitam*—That Light of lights abides in the hearts of all.” They also say, “One Divinity indwells in the hearts of all—*eko devah sarva-bhuteshu gudhah*.” “*Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese’rjuna tishthati*—God dwells in the hearts of all beings.”

In these various ways, and many more ways as well, they bring out this great wonderful truth, that divine peace ever abides in you as your permanent inner background, as your real state. That divine principle or essence that ever dwells within you as peace, joy, perfection, great silence, is ultimately the source of your being. You are a little part of it. It is your origin, source, your stay, support, your eternal ground and your pristine home. That peace is therefore the one reality within you which ever abides and never diminishes. It is always available, it is your birthright, and greater than that there is no other thing—this profound, perennial peace.

You are that peace if you establish your identity with that peace instead of with the numerous other fancies and thoughts that come into your mind. Be as you are. And this peace overcomes time. For this peace there is no past, there is no present, there is no future. It is always. It is here, now, and it is for all times. It is beyond time—this peace which is your truth.

It being a fact that the world is plunged in violence, hatred, destruction, clashes and conflicts, and negative relationships of enmity, how do we understand the prevalence of such conditions in the light of this great truth? It is obvious that man has turned away or rejected this inner peace, or is ignorant of it, or, if he has a glimmering of knowledge, he has neglected it due to being fascinated by other things. As long as we give value to this external world of appearance—it has a reality, but the peace within is the greater reality—and individually as well as collectively opt for the lesser reality instead of the greater reality, we deprive ourselves of this peace. Due to this wrong behaviour of the mind we say, “I have no peace; where is that peace?”

Happiness cannot be had from temporary, limited, finite objects, limited by time and space. We have neglected the greatest treasure which is within; we have turned away from it. Once again, if we shall but affirm this great truth and determine to abide in that peace, be fully filled with that peace, and express that peace every day in our thought, word and deed, then the realm of outer actions can undergo a change.

For anything and everything that is happening is the outward expression of the inner condition of man’s mind and heart, which are the source of all actions. Actions are but the manifestation of what we think, feel, desire and determine. The seeds, the source, the origin of all human life, actions, behaviour, and its inevitable results, are in the mind of man. And if the mind of

man is aware of the divinity within and tries to turn to that side and absorb that divinity, that peace, that compassion, that kindness, that goodness, that balance, that auspiciousness, that light, which is God, then one is able to convey it to others, transmit it to others. And this is not a task which only some great mystics did, but it is the birthright of every human individual, for within you is that peace.

To share it in a collective way becomes a privilege of all good thinking spiritual people who identify themselves with the world and all humanity, not with only a section of mankind. It is the duty of all such noble, generous-hearted, spiritually inclined people to try their best to pray for the peace of the whole world, to pray for peace within the hearts and minds of all human beings, for this holds the key to the manifestation of human nature and activity on the outward plane of *vyavahara*, this relative world outside.

May you, therefore, each day during this calm morning hour, have at least a minute of prayer for the peace of all human individuals throughout the world, the global human family. May they feel peace, may they live in peace, may they think in peace, may they talk in peace, may they act in peace, may they desire only peace, and may they, by their very life, bring about the peace that has been lost and has plunged man into great distress. Not knowing where to find peace, man has tried to find it in pacts and treaties and summit meetings. It will never come as long as the real key to peace is not recognised and is not availed of.

It is the duty and privilege of each and every spiritual person to be a living and moving centre of that profound divine peace, which is the substratum or the innermost support, ever there in all its fullness, in all its depth and perennial nature, inexhaustible, profound, unfathomable peace, ever-present within each one of you as your inner reality, never absent, ever available.

26

NULLIFYING EMBEDDED IMPRESSIONS

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! May the light of His grace and the glance of His compassion, *kripa-kataksha*, be upon us, now and always, so that through it we always strive to make ourselves worthy of His presence, which is constantly with us.

I place before you certain ideas that are necessary if we should come out gloriously successful as we are meant to, in this, our self-chosen path, the path that leads us back to our cosmic source and origin, so that there is no more wandering in this wilderness of *samsara*, there is no more wandering in this desert of dry phenomenal existence, dry in the most essential sense. Not that it is devoid of water or entertainment, not that it is devoid of pleasant diversions, that it has in plenty, and perhaps that is the problem of the awakened soul.

If phenomenal life were to be bitter, then the soul would no longer be attracted towards it, enmeshed in it and forever entangled by it. But because bitterness is soon forgotten and sweetness

always keeps nagging our memory, we fall into the trap again and again and yet again. This is called *maya*.

The pains, the bitter experiences, are soon forgotten. The humiliations and whatever suffering one has undergone are forgotten. But even a little bit of pleasant sense titillation, a little excitement, gets lodged forever within, with the potential to again and again trouble the enmeshed soul through memory, in dream as well as waking. It never gets dislodged, never.

You cannot root out these embedded impressions, nor eradicate them, nor take them out and throw them away. They are too deeply embedded, deep, deep, deep within, where you cannot reach, mind cannot reach, intellect cannot reach. It is helpless. These embedded impressions of previous pleasant experiences form the root of diversion and temptation. They form the root of losing the path, moving away from the straight path and going into byways, away from blessedness.

Therefore there is only one way. These deep-rooted *samskaras* (mental impressions) and *vasanas* (subtle desires) must be destroyed at their own level. They cannot be brought out, although there are various Western psychological methods where they try to help the individual to bring out everything from deep within. They have a variety of *psychotherapeutic* and psychiatric methods, including regression which takes a person back, back, back into youth, childhood, infancy and the womb. There are some foundations that claim that they can even take you back to previous life experiences, but that is only mere fanciful thinking. Some person with great vision may be able to regress, and may be able to tell about another person's past life, but one's own past life is forever a hidden thing. It is a locked book until and unless you are near Self-realisation. In the highest state of *yoga-siddhi* (perfection in Yoga) recollection of past births deliberately becomes possible, they say.

And for an illumined being it is a paradoxical situation. Neither there is a past nor there is a future when one attains the awareness of eternity. Past, present and future fuse into the here and now. Therefore there is no question of recollecting anything past; everything is known then and there. And secondly, at that time there is no necessity for recollecting past births. All births are then known to be so much of delusion, so much of illusion which never existed.

So various foundations in the West have arisen who say they will help you to regress and to root out these deep-rooted traumas, malaise, predilections and inclinations, *vasanas*. They may enable the person to become aware of and to some extent relieve themselves of the hidden effects of these inner things, but they do not have any technique of removing them. It is not so easy because they are in the *karana-sarira* (causal body) and the *karana-sarira* cannot be liquidated excepted through divine power. So, no matter what technique of regression or psychotherapy you use, you may get temporary relief from the effects, but the subtle desires and impressions will still be there.

Therefore, there are only two methods of dealing with them. One powerful method is to constantly affirm the Reality. Identify yourself with the true Self, your essential, real Being, which has neither birth nor death. Then the question of previous births and previous impressions itself becomes absurd. This is the super method, constantly identifying yourself with your *nitya nija svarupa* (own eternal nature) where there is neither *upadhi*, nor *samskara*, nor *vasana*, nothing. Therefore you do away with the very necessity of probing for and destroying past impressions by

identifying yourself with the transcendental reality of your Being, where all these things have no meaning, all these things do not exist.

The other powerful method is to destroy them where they are through deep meditation and the power of the Divine Name. That is the purpose of *japa*. This technique of deep meditation and the power of the Divine Name can do the impossible, it can do everything for you. These techniques are therefore to be adopted, and purposively the power of the Divine Name is to be taken deep, deep, deep within where you cannot reach—a constant creating of an inner divine atmosphere, a divine climate, a divine state, by the use of the Divine Name.

And while engaged in doing it, constantly be in a state of awareness, so that even with the impelling force of these deep-rooted inclinations, *vasanas*, and even with the constant surfacing of these *samskaras* in the form of *vrittis* and thoughts, you can nullify their constant manifestation by holding the awareness: “I am in the sacred presence of Gurudev, I am in the sacred presence of my *ishta devata*, I am in the sacred presence of the all-pervading Divinity. Never can I be unworthy of that Presence either through a wrong thought, word or action, a wrong motivation, inclination or impulse, or a wrong desire unworthy of that great and sublime Presence, never!”

So even the awareness of the constant presence of the Universal Being or your own *ishta devata*, shining in the chambers of your heart with the effulgence of a million suns, or the awareness of the constant presence of Gurudev will be enough safeguard, enough insurance, enough to prevent you from slipping into a lower level, slipping away from the straight path.

If you will but invoke this method, if you have a real strong desire to shine as an ideal *sadhak*, to shine with divinity, if you are really sincere, true to yourself, honest with yourself, if you are earnest in your professed spiritual path and life, then if you take recourse to this method, you are safe; your divinity is safe, you are insured against anything contrary to the life that you have adopted. You are protected; you have inner strength.

That is the deep significance, great importance and the indispensable necessity of invoking from within constant awareness of the sublime, powerful, divine Presence—always, everywhere, under all circumstances and amidst all distractions and experience. It is an anchor. It is firm ground.

May Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji’s abundant blessings and benedictions enable you to hold on to awareness, enable you to have an interior brightened with his effulgent presence within, and may that presence guide you across all ups and downs of life and bring you to the great, great goal of divine perfection, illumination and liberation! This is my humble prayer. God bless you, God speed you. May you prosper. May success be yours!

27

ENTHUSIASM—GOD IN YOU

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of Light! Do not lose opportunities. Each day is a opportunity. Each moment of each day is an opportunity. Never stop moving towards the Goal. Ever keep on.

The river keeps flowing and reaches the ocean. Stone upon stone great forts are built. Stroke by stroke the sculptor keeps on hammering away. It is not in a single day he creates a masterpiece that people gaze at in admiration and wonderment; no, not in a single day. Rain falls only in drops, drop by drop, and soon the drains are filled to overflowing, streams become swollen and rush towards the river which is soon in flood. But rain has fallen only drop by drop. It is only stroke by stroke that the master painter brings about a miracle of art such as *The Last Supper*.

The rogue Ratnakar did not complete his *purasharana* in one day. He repeated Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram. He repeated each Name one by one, one by one, one by one. He kept on repeating and shone as the great sage Valmiki. He became a *trikala jnani*, a knower of the past, present and future, and even before the birth of Lord Rama, he wrote the entire story of His advent, from His birth to the completion of His divine mission.

What anyone else has done, you too can do, for nothing is impossible. And those great ones have done what they did in order to show the potential of man, the possibility of man. That is their great value to us. And therefore we are only to keep on sustained effort. That is life, ever in the right direction.

But there is one thing: we have to get along with the mind. We have to reckon with the mind. And if there is one quality which can help you, if there is one quality which can ensure and guarantee to you what is due to you by sustained effort, it is enthusiasm, the enthusiasm that brings about all achievement, all attainments. Enthusiasm, *utsaha*, is Lakshmi, it is all auspiciousness, all blessedness. It is a manifestation of Goddess Bhagavati's *vidya maya*, the auspicious aspect of *maya*, the helpful aspect of *maya*—enthusiasm, *utsaha*, as well as *viveka* and *vichara* (discrimination and right enquiry).

Through *viveka* and *vichara* ever try to understand this world outside you, its hollowness, its transitory nature, its true essential emptiness. You cannot find anything that is worthwhile, precious, substantial here; everything is unsubstantial. Try to understand. And try to understand yourself; namely, that you have come here born to achieve, born to attain, born to regain the lost awareness of your divinity. And seek to understand God, your ever-ready helper, your never-failing support and guide, ever at hand, ever ready to help and ever helping in spite of yourself, never failing in spite of your occasional loss of faith, never, never failing. When He has taken you in hand, He will see to it that you attain the Supreme. He will not let go. Anything and everything may fail us, we may even fail ourselves, but God will not fail us. Believe me, *God will not fail you*. This is the truth and it is ever true; it is an eternal truth.

Therefore, with enthusiasm, keep on your effort day by day, with each breath, with each step, with each moment. Do not enter into forgetfulness, do not enter into heedlessness. That is something which you must always guard yourself against every moment. Again and again I say—heedlessness and forgetfulness—you must always be on the alert that these two do not assail you. Otherwise all effort will come to a stop.

There was a time many years ago when these motor-boats did not ply Mother Ganga. Boatmen had to row, and as we watched them, one thing we noticed: that if they stopped rowing, the current started taking them down the river. It was only the continuity of their rowing that took them in any direction they desired, to any point on the other bank that they wanted to reach.

A great truth is revealed here. Through sustained effort everything is achieved, but heedlessness and forgetfulness brings effort to a close, and if a moment passes, it goes into eternity, it is no longer yours. Therefore understand—through *viveka* and *vichara*—understand. Understand your inner content, how the mind can lapse into forgetfulness, lapse into indifference and lapse into a state of absence of enthusiasm. If the fire is not continuously fanned, it dies down. Enthusiasm is the great source of all strength and power, it is the great source of all activity, dynamism. It is your greatest friend.

Therefore remember, it is not without reason, it is not for nothing that God has drawn you to this great centre of spirituality, India and Rishikesh. It is because you deserved it that He has sought to bestow it upon you. Therefore, if you have deserved this, deserve something higher also, and that too will be given. Ask, and it will not be withheld.

You have been called because you have been found worthy and deserving. Therefore, realise your worth and keep on deserving more and more, not *desiring* more and more but *deserving* more and more. That is the key. Keep on sustained effort and back it up with a cheerful robust enthusiasm. God speed you. May you attain to the other shore of immortality and shine as a liberated sage, saint and Yogi! God bless you!

28

BE AWARE ONLY OF THE ONE

Glorious Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! You are upon the path to divine perfection, a divine perfection that is your birthright, a divine perfection which is your birthright because it is inherent in you, a divine perfection which is inherent in you because you are an *amsa* (part) of the supreme, all-perfect, *paripurna* (all-full) *parabrahman*.

You are not only an *amsa*; *aparoksha'nubhuti* (direct experience) will establish it beyond doubt, make you experience beyond doubt, that you are identical with *parabrahman*. *Jivo-brahmaiva naparah* (the individual is not other than Brahman)—that is content of *aparoksha'nubhuti*. Therefore *jivatva* (individuality) is a superimposition due to *upadhis* (limiting adjuncts or additions). *Brahmatva* is your *sahaja avastha* (natural state).

It is not that *jiva* is identical with Brahman. It is Brahman alone that appears as *jiva*. *Jivatva* is only an appearance. *Brahmatva* alone abides: *ekameva' dvitiam brahma* (Brahman is one alone without a second). It is the Reality: *brahma satyam* (Brahman is the truth).

It is to try to explain this central truth, to explain this mysterious, incomprehensible situation, that Vedanta devotes its entire exposition. Vedanta *siddhanta* (doctrine) makes use of many analogies and comparisons, brings in many logical arguments and proofs to establish this one truth: *jivo-brahmaiva naparah* (the individual is not other than Brahman), *sarvam khalvidam brahma* (all this is verily Brahman), *ekameva' dvitiam brahma* (Brahman is one alone without a second).

To regard Rama or Krishna as different from Vishnu or Lord Narayana would be as foolish as to regard cloth to be different from cotton. It would be as untenable as regarding pottery as different from clay. It would be as meaningless as to describe or regard gold ornaments such as bangle, ring or necklace as something different from gold; they may appear to be different, but they constitute gold only. It would be as absurd as saying that sugar cubes are quite different from sugar—sugar is different, sugar cubes are different. The cube aspect of it may be different, but the sugar aspect of it is identical. And to see a difference is to miss the point, to take the structure for the substance or identify the substance with the structure. It is to leave the essence.

Therefore, divine perfection is inherent in you and it is your birthright, because you are in essence the ever-free, ever-pure, ever-full, ever-enlightened Supreme Brahman. This is the truth to be grasped, meditated upon and to be reflected upon again and again—to be lived and ever held firmly to in spite of the vagaries of the mind, in spite of its restless and outgoing nature. To abide firmly in this central truth of your being is the core and essence of all *sadhana*.

The ultimate teaching of the Upanishads and Vedanta is *tat tvam asi* (you are That), and one who is able to hold firmly to this truth, one who is able to be rooted in this awareness, one who is able to always abide in this consciousness, attains victory over life. For that person, there is no sorrow, there is no bondage. That person ever rejoices. That person has conquered death itself. And that is what you are engaged in doing: conquering death. This is the central theme of the Mandukya Upanishad and is what is indicated by the Kathopanishad and the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.

How then does the *bhakta* who is in a state of duality consciousness harmonise with the supreme Consciousness? Very simple, the *bhakta* does not bother about himself or herself, or *parabrahman*, or the relationship between the two. *Bhaktas* solve their problem by thinking only upon the One. Who is that One? *Ishta devata* (chosen Deity). Ram *bhakta* does not think of himself or herself—thinks only about Rama. So there is no problem, because it is only if you think of yourself, and then God, that you have the problem of how to relate the two. The *bhakta* disdains to think of himself. He thinks only of his *ishta devata*, day and night, one hundred percent, whole heart, whole mind. He becomes saturated, filled with this thought.

For the Siva *bhakta*, for the Ram *bhakta*, for the Krishna *bhakta*, there is no other consciousness except “*jidhar tidhar tuhi tuhi* (everywhere You, You alone are).” “*Premki gali ati sankari, isme do na samai* (The path of love is very narrow; here two cannot enter).” Knowing this

the *bhakta* renounces the feeling of his own ego consciousness and dwells constantly in only one unitary consciousness, the consciousness of Bhagavan, the consciousness of the *ishta devata*. Thus his entire interior assumes what is known as *bhagavata kara vritti* (thought of God). It is no other than *brahmakara vritti* (thought of Brahman) because in both of them it is *ekakara vritti* (thought of the One). This is the method to triumph over the appearance of duality and become established in the unified consciousness of the one *tattva* (Reality).

To train the mind, to train the interior to assume this state is the greatest achievement. All *sadhana* is constant, determined, unremitting effort. What is Gangaji meditating upon? Gangaji is meditating only upon *sagar* (ocean). Day and night she meditates on *sagar* and flows steadily towards it. And the culmination is that there is no Ganga afterwards, there is only *sagar*.

That is the essence of the spiritual process. The Ganga of your mind should always be aware only of *sagar*. Call it *satchidananda brahma sagar*, or call it *bhagavat sagar*, or call it *vishnu svarup bhagavat sagar*, *ram svarup bhagavat sagar*, Bhagavan. *Bhakta* has only one consciousness: Bhagavan, Bhagavan, Bhagavan, God, God, God. Start the day with God, end the day with God, fill the day with God. Always pray to the Lord. So it is God, God, God. And the one object of the inner content of the Vedantin's mind is the Supreme Brahman, *satchidananda*, *ek omkar satnam* (the one Om is the real Name). That is the remembrance, that is the constant; the inner content is that *eka omkara*, the One, the *One*.

That is the secret of going beyond all sorrow. In duality there is fear, there is sorrow. The secret of passing beyond sorrow and becoming established in bliss, peace, fearlessness, freedom is this inner state of being aware only of the One. That is the *antahkarana* (inner being) that leads to *kaivalya samrajya moksha* (the kingdom of final liberation). Any other form is a trap and a net. Where the *antahkarana* is unified in this one single truth, one great reality, one great contemplation, *bhagavata kara vritti* (thought of God), *brahmakara vritti* (thought of Brahman), there is *jivan-mukti* (liberation while living), because that supreme *tattva* (Reality) is *svatantra*, *sarvatantra* (independent, free, all-powerful), *ekameva' dvitiyam* (the One alone without a second).

You are constantly That. Truth, Reality, cannot be changed and you are that Reality. So no matter what you may regard yourself to be, in spite of bad habits of wrong mind thinking and its various undesirable results, you are constantly That and That only because That is Truth, That is Reality. It never changes, It is always the same.

This is to be contemplated upon, reflected upon, meditated upon. This is the highest good, and to do this, this human status has been given. One who does this is a human being in the true sense of the term.

One who does not do it is a human being in name only. May God grant you *sagara buddhi* (one-pointed, sharp intellect) to keep up sustained thought of this truth, to think about it with your keen, analytical, intellectual instrument! May this lead you to *jivan-mukti*! May God confer this supreme blessedness upon you in this very life! God bless you!

29

NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESS

Beloved Immortal Atman! Blessed children of the Divine! Sometimes very common sayings which are current in normal society, passing off as ordinary clichés or oft-quoted sayings, will be found to have originated either from shrewd psychological observations and truths about human behaviour, or to have originated from deep philosophical truth.

One such saying may be of interest to all who wish to succeed. Succeed in what? Succeed in any endeavour. We all want to succeed in our spiritual quest, in our spiritual *sadhana*. We want to succeed in the efforts we are putting forth to attain a certain goal which we know is really worth attaining. Who does not wish to succeed? Everyone aims to succeed. There are any number of books written on success, and those who write them usually succeed in becoming both rich and famous. The word success itself has an attraction, and the saying I mentioned is popular in Western society among ordinary people: “Nothing succeeds like success.”

What is the speciality about this saying? The speciality is that it tells us something about the mind and how events influence the mind. You all know that the sure way of failing is to have a negative state of mind: lack of self-confidence, diffidence, hesitation, nervousness. “I may not succeed”—if this idea is already implanted into the brain, you work for failure only. You do not expect or hope to succeed, and therefore naturally you create conditions whereby this inner mental condition manifests itself in your outer circumstances. Even if you were capable of success, yet by the mentality of your mind you lose that opportunity, deprive yourself of success. The reason is because you already have an “I cannot succeed” idea, and once you have this idea, there is not much that other people or forces can do for you.

This defeatist mentality is sometimes ingrained due to our wrong way of thinking, and Patanjali Maharshi seems to have known it. He said: “Keep the inner mechanism in a positive state always; never be depressed or dejected, never be in a state of negativity; be always cheerful, contented, keep the mind always positive.” It is only a positive mentality that can ultimately bring you success. So in his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali insisted that when you determine to become a Yogi, to enter into the field of *yoga sadhana*, that you first correct yourself by correcting your outer actions through taking a vow of firm adherence to certain virtues, so that you will never swerve from those virtues, so that your actions will always be good, virtuous, godly, holy, always *daivi* (divine). Thus you correct your outer condition first—all your actions in *vyavahara* (society).

The next step is to correct your inner condition by keeping the interior clean, keeping both the body and mind clean, always pure. Keep your interior in a state of cheerfulness, contentment, positivity, never negativity, never having diffidence, never having a mentality of defeatism. Always say, “Yes, there nothing I cannot do; I will succeed.”

And thus your interior becomes well geared, an instrument fit for Yoga and meditation, because Yoga and meditation, Yoga and spiritual life, *sadhana*, is a process of constantly facing defeat and yet constantly being determined: “This next time I shall succeed, I have to overcome, I

shall overcome; this defeat is only a passing phenomenon, but success is the final outcome, I know it. Therefore, until I get that final outcome, I am going to persist and carry on this effort.” So without at all caring for even ten defeats, a hundred defeats, a thousand defeats, you carry on and succeed.

Because this controlling of the mind and the senses and trying to make the mind go inward through *pratyahara* is not an easy joke; it is a stupendous task. How difficult it is, how much effort is necessary, has been compared to reversing the Ganga and making it flow towards its source, Gangotri. So *pratyahara*, making the outgoing mind inward, is a real task, but the Yogi is not perturbed because he says: “I can do it. I know I have to succeed in doing it, I shall succeed in doing it, and one day everything will be under my control.” This is *tapasya*, a constant state of determination inside.

Tapasya is constant determination when being confronted with the opposite, negative side, *asuric* side: “I will never give up, I will never accept defeat, I will never allow the negative to overcome me.” That determination is the essence of successful *tapasya*. This is present in a Yogi. The Yogi is a *tapasvi*, a *samyami*. And the Yogi is a person of great inner and outer cleanliness and purity. He is a person of absolute cheerfulness, absolute contentment, *santosha*. There is no defeatist mentality; he is all positive, all determination and all dogged perseverance. He says, “Never give up.” Why? Because his strength comes from two sources.

He daily draws inspiration, courage and fresh energy from *svadhyaya*—thrilling inspirations, inspiring ideas. They are positive ideas, full of spiritual force. He drinks of these living waters of spiritual inspiration, spiritual instructions and spiritual strength and force from *svadhyaya*. Every day he is freshened, he is invigorated.

The second source is *isvarapranidhana*: “I am always abiding in God, so I lack nothing. I have the infinite resources, the inexhaustible strength of God at my back. So how can I ever fail, how can I ever be incapable of doing anything? How can I ever lack energy or force to succeed in my quest? Never! I have the infinite resources of God always with me, always at my back, because I always live with Him, I abide in Him. He is my support, my strength.” And thus *isvarapranidhana* is placing yourself in the Divine always, living in the Divine, being aware that the Divine is within you and you are in the Divine. These are all transformers of the interior of the Yogi even at the very beginning of the great Yoga pilgrimage, Yoga quest.

Therefore, the mind-state should be always success oriented, and once it succeeds then that success itself gives it a new urge and puts it into a positive state. Therefore, they say never discourage little children, even if they have not performed well. Say, “Well done, wonderful!” That was Gurudev’s mentality. Little children’s mind-natures are in a state of developing, and so if at that time you go on giving them positive suggestions, always encouraging, always praising, always admiring, then they soon develop a very positive mentality, ever able to succeed.

Thus I place before you for your consideration the inner significance and import of this apparently common but very shrewd and correct saying: “Nothing succeeds like success.” It is true, success puts you into a positive state, makes you self-confident. Then the door to success is thrown wide open for you. Therefore, always have this state of positive self-confidence, a robust,

determined state of mind, and attain the Goal, not in the distant future, not in another birth, but in this very life, and become supremely blessed!

God bless you! Gurudev's teachings grant you this positive state of confidence—*atmavisvas*, and may you constantly, with diligence, cultivate this success mentality. *Uddharet atmanatmanam* (Let a man raise himself by his own self). It will pay you infinite dividends. May God's grace and Gurudev's *guru kripa* and your own *atmavisvas*—right state of mind, grant you the supreme goal of liberation and divine perfection in this very birth!

30

A POSITIVE MIND—YOUR GREATEST ASSET

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers! We have been discussing the wisdom of positivism in our mental state as opposed to the folly of negativism. Because, the mental state is the ultimate deciding factor and the *antahkarana* of the mind and intellect the ultimate deciding ground where your life and the ultimate outcome of your life—its fruition or its frustration—has to be worked out. Outward things are nothing, outward things are a creation of your inward state, and all outward things become nullified or overcome if your inward state is of that nature where it gathers within itself and activates its potentials and begins to become a conquering instrument.

If your interior state assumes “*nashto mohah smritirlabdha tvatprasadat mayachyuta; sthito'smi gatasandehah karishye vachanam tava* (Destroyed is my delusion as I have gained my memory (knowledge) through Thy grace O Krishna; I am firm, my doubts are gone; I will act according to Thy word),” if this type of robust dynamism comes to prevail in your mind, then there is no power on earth that can stand in the way of you taking your life to its ultimate pinnacle point of perfection and total fruition. This is the simple truth. And if Napoleon declared that there was no word “impossible” in his type of dictionary, he declared a fact, he declared the simple truth.

We are constantly being faced with new situations, new circumstances. If such a situation is seen, to draw attention to that situation is necessary; otherwise, it cannot be corrected. And to focus our mind on that situation is also perhaps necessary because it sets us thinking. But to lament that situation is incorrect. I would disagree with the wisdom of it, the logic of it, the rationality of it. It is irrational, it is non-productive, it is negative, for it affects all hearers. Not only that, the very purpose of drawing attention to a specific situation is nullified, because to lament that situation demonstrates a basic and essential lack of faith in one's self, which is not Vedanta, which is totally contradictory to true and classical Vedanta.

Vedanta does not accept even a vestige of hesitation in having this faith: “I am indeed Brahman, I am indeed the Absolute, no other than the Absolute—*aham brahmasmi; ahameva'vyayo'nantah suddhavijnanavigraha, sukham dukkham na janami katham kasyapi vartate* (I alone am imperishable, infinite, the form of pure Consciousness, I do not know pleasure or pain or how they can affect anybody); *janma mrityurna te chittam bandhamokshau*

subha' subham, katham rodishi re vatsa. namarupau na te na me (You have no birth, no death, no mind; you have no bondage, no liberation, nothing good, nothing bad; why do you weep, O child. You have no name or form, nor have I any); *vedanta sarasarvasvam jnanam vijnanam eva cha, ahamatma nirakarah sarvavyapi svabhavatah* (This is the sum and essence of all Vedanta, this is wisdom and knowledge: I am the Atma that is formless, all-pervading by nature)." This is Vedanta.

Vedanta is a clarion call; it is a bold declaration. It is the assertion, the affirmation of a firm conviction, because it is truth. Truth is stronger than anything else, *satyameva jayate* (truth alone triumphs), and therefore any lamenting of a fact is contrary to the very spirit of Vedanta. Because when a situation is posited and one draws attention to the situation, the motivation should be to offer it as a challenge. Here is the situation, now what are we going to do about it?

"*Kshudram hridayadaurbalyam tyaktvottishtha parantapa* (Cast off this mean weakness of the heart. Stand up, O scorcher of the foes.)"—that is the call of the Gita. "*Nayamatma balahinena labhyah*"—that is the declaration of the Upanishads—"This Atman, O seeker, cannot be achieved or attained by the weak, by the negative, by the diffident, by those lacking in self confidence." That means those who are negative in mentality. A situation is brought to one's attention and notice so that the person may call forth all the reserves that are within, and there is an infinite power within each one. Immediately call forth these reserves and do the needful in the situation—that is the attitude!

The stuff of each individual is measured by one's response to the challenge. The attitude which ultimately made Arjuna say: "I am standing up, I have got my bow in my hand, I am ready to fight," is inherent in all healthy individuals. If you put a riddle before a group of children, they become excited and eager to solve it. They will not leave it until they get an answer. You drag the bleating lamb to the water and ask it to look at its reflection, not for it to continue to bleat like a lamb, but rather for it to roar like the lion it really is. That is the thing needful. There is no other way for a real human being who is made in the image of God, who is Divinity awaiting to be liberated, awaiting to break forth from the shackles that bind one's infinity and eternity.

That is real Vedanta, and anything other than that is to be rejected as not being part of classical Vedanta. It is to be summarily rejected; it should not be given a place for even one second. Because we are talking about the need, the importance, the wisdom, the indispensable necessity of having a positive, creative, constructive attitude and approach of the mind. That is the key, that is the only thing needful. Everything will be overcome by it, everything will be provided by it whether you are a *bhakta* or a Vedantin.

This indeed should be our state of mind. For that only has mind been given. Mind has been given to us in order to conquer everything, conquer *maya*. And therefore the Upanishads leave no doubt about it. What was the strength of mind of Nachiketas? What was the strength of mind of Markendeya, of Savitri, of Bhagirata, of Mira? What was the strength of mind of all those great ones who achieved anything whatsoever? What was the strength of mind of Prince Siddhartha (Buddha)? He proved to us that such a state of mind is the one thing desirable, the one thing necessary, the one thing that shows the wisdom within you to overcome everything. Each one has this potential.

Mind, therefore, is your greatest asset, your greatest wealth. By some aberration, by some mistake, it has been rather regarded as a problem. It has not been properly understood. You may even consider it to be your greatest problem. If so you have to convert it into an asset, because it is an asset. It has not been given to you to be a problem, but, on the contrary, it has been given to you to be utilised as the greatest thing that has ever been given to a being, for it throws wide open the portals to liberation and perfection. Mind is the one great endowment of the Universal Soul to the individual being. Mind is the endowment that makes man God. May you use it in a wise and positive way and become blessed!

31

SURRENDER

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! The Gurudvaras (temples) of our Sikh brethren, including the famous Golden Temple at Amritsar, do not enshrine a *murti*, a statue or any symbol. All these Gurudvaras, large and small, enshrine only a great book, and they do not call the book a “book,” but refer to it with a term of great reverence, “Granth Sahib.” “Sahib” is a term of great reverence used for a person of superior status; sometimes they even use it to refer to God. Sahib is the boss, the one in charge, the one who directs affairs, the ultimate authority, the Lord before whom we bow. The Granth Sahib enshrines the teachings and compositions of all the ten Sikh Gurus commencing with Guru Nanak. And this is the only holy thing enshrined in these great Sikh temples. Every morning they go to pay reverence and bow before it as though they were giving honour and bowing before a majestic personality. They, therefore, do not think that they are in the presence of a book, but rather in the presence of a great Being. And they speak to that great Being, offering their reverence, their allegiance, and their surrender.

Similarly, when you are before the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, you are not before a book, you are in the presence of the great World Teacher, Lord Krishna, the Supreme Being. It is the teaching of a Guru to a disciple, because at the very beginning, unable to know what the way is, completely confused, Arjuna, the great redoubtable warrior, who was regarded in those days as the great unconquerable Arjuna, places himself at the Feet of the Lord and says: “Remove my confusion. Please teach me, tell me what is right, show me the way; I shall follow. I surrender myself to You. I am a disciple at Your Feet.” Therefore, right at the commencement of the Gita narration, Arjuna places himself in this attitude. Then alone the wisdom teachings of Lord Krishna are evoked. And whenever we take up the Bhagavad Gita, we too are in the presence of Lord Krishna, and in His presence we should be like Arjuna, saying: “I am at Your Feet, I take shelter, I surrender. Take me as Your disciple, teach me, I shall follow.”

At the same time, the spiritual Being embodies all that He taught and declared about the spiritual life, life in general, values in life, great principles of conduct and character, about the great ideals we have to fulfil, the ideals of Yoga and Vedanta. All this His presence constitutes, His presence signifies. And therefore, when we put ourselves before the Presence and say, “I surrender myself, guide me,” it means we must follow these ideals, these great principles, this supreme way of life that He taught and declared.

SURRENDER

Arjuna, however, after having surrendered, after having invoked the blessings, the instructions and the guidance of Lord Krishna, as soon as the Lord starts instructing him, begins to oppose, to contradict, to argue: “What is this You are saying, Krishna? You are saying something wrong, You are misguiding me. It is not proper, it will lead to very bad results.” So, one moment he has surrendered himself; the next moment he starts arguing.

Therefore, if in the presence of great teachings, such a reaction comes from our mind, we should not be too perturbed: “What is happening to me?” It is the normal behaviour of the mind. It always wants the highest truth, but when it is confronted with the truth, it does not want to accept it. It wants to argue, it wants to debate, it wants to contradict. This is the nature of the mind. And therefore, knowing this, you must be very, very wise and vigilant; you should not identify yourself with that mind. You must distinguish between the wrong promptings of your lower mind and the call of the higher factor in you. You should not yield to the promptings of the lower mind; the higher factor must be your guide.

But in the beginning there will always be arguing, doubting, questioning, refusing to accept easily, saying even: “You are wrong; You have described to me the technique of controlling the mind; this is useless, impossible, because no one can do it. You can even control the wind, but you cannot control the mind.” In this way, like a lawyer, Arjuna argues with Krishna. Your mind will also argue, but at every step you must say as Arjuna ultimately did: “I accept whatever You say. I put myself wholly under Your guidance. What You say I will do.”

This should be the established state of our mind and heart within, especially after years and years of discipleship, years and years of *sadhakhood* and Yoga life, years and years of human life. If we are still not yet established in that state, if we are still doubting, vacillating, questioning, it means that we are the losers, that there is something essentially wrong with us which requires to be set right. We have not fully entered into a state of at-one-ment and harmony with the teachings of the Supreme Being.

We must definitely and finally put our entire faith into the hands of the *daivi*, the higher side, the teachings, the side of wisdom, not of unwisdom. We must say: “I hand over the reins of my chariot to You. You carry on.” We should have surrender of that type. And afterwards we must say: “No,” to the other side, “no more listening to you”—then it will be ineffective. “I have turned myself over completely and finally into the hands of the Divine. And thus will be my life.” Then, you are always guided, you are free of care and worry.

One thing I would like to add which is always a matter of great discussion, great debate, great argument. There is a view of equating surrender with inactivity: “If you surrender then you become inactive, saying, ‘Let God do it.’” It is not known why this idea came. The one who surrendered himself completely to Lord Krishna said: “I am ready to fight. Tell me anything, I will do it.” And he did do it. This is the opposite of inactivity. So surrender is not incompatible with activity, and activity is not incompatible with surrender. It is our ego-sense that we surrender, the idea “I am doing.” We surrender our self-will and put ourselves into His hands, so that we act as He dictates, we act as He teaches. So action is there, but no more self-will, no more action prompted by the mind, but action according to the will of God, according to the wisdom teachings of God and His saints. That type of activity is certainly there. Surrender does not put an end to or eliminate activity;

however, it is no longer ego-directed, or desire-directed activity, it is God-governed, God-directed activity.

So, surrender and activity do not conflict with each other, but are part and parcel of a total act of spiritualising yourself completely, stepping aside and asking God to take over. If God takes over, everything is under control, everything is working perfectly. If we are there, nothing is under control—mind is not under control, senses are not under control, everything is upside down. When you put yourself under the will of God and His wisdom teachings, then you are a self-controlled person. You will not allow the senses to do whatever they wish or the mind to do whatever it wishes. You will only do that which is in accordance with the will of God, the teachings of God and the saints. If it is not in consonance with the will of God and the teachings of the saints, you will not do it.

So there is an exercise of a certain will, a certain control. Thus surrender does not contradict self-control, self-government, discipline. Surrender to God and continuous self effort and self-control are not conflicting; they are in harmony. They go together because what has been surrendered is the false ego-sense, the false idea, “I am the doer.” What has been surrendered is the self-will of the mind-nature, the desire-nature, the activity of the senses. These are all given up once and for all. “I will act according to Your word”—“My” gives place to “Your.”

That is the essence of the dynamism that follows surrender or the dynamism that is based on surrender. Let us all take to this type of active following of God’s will, active fulfilment of His teachings in our own lives. God bless you all! May God grant you the clarity and the depth of proper understanding, and success in your life of dynamic surrender and surrender-oriented, surrender-guided dynamism! This is divine life.

32

THE IMMANENCE OF GOD

Radiant Divinities! Blessed *sadhaks* and seekers! Spiritual aspirants aspiring to follow the spiritual life, aspiring to progress upon the spiritual path, aspiring to attain success in your spiritual *sadhana* and aspiring to achieve the great, glorious, spiritual goal of divine perfection and liberation! To all of you I recommend the awareness of the spiritual presence of Gurudev.

During the day everything is illumined by the sun. When the sun sets the darkness may be illumined by the moon. If there is no moon the darkness will still be illumined by the stars in the sky. And if it is a cloudy night in the middle of the rainy season, and even the light of the stars are denied to us, then it is fire that illumines—like that *akhanda dipam* (oil lamp burning silently there behind the glass door).

The current may be cut off, that lamp may go out, and we may be in dense darkness—you cannot see your hand in front of your face—yet, you know that you are there. By what light is your presence known? You are aware of yourself and the presence of people and things around you, even

though they are not visible. What is it that knows their invisible presence? That is the Light of Consciousness. And that Light of Consciousness is the presence of God within.

Silently that Light is observing everything that is going on here. It not only observes our physical bodies, but what is going on in our hearts and minds. It also knows what we do not know. It knows what is lying in our subconscious minds, to which even our conscious active minds have no access (except only occasionally during dream). And it is this silent Light of Consciousness that observes all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep.

For the individual consciousness as well as the universal consciousness, the innermost self-essence is consciousness, awareness, knowledge that *I am*. Philosophy uses the same identical term for both—*atma-tattva*. The universal consciousness they call *paramatma* or *visvatma* and the individual they call *jivatma*. Atma is the same to both because it means self-awareness. And this self-awareness is both in the aspect of the universal source of all being and the source of your own present limited, separatist self-consciousness. It is the source of both, and the relationship between the two is of the utmost importance.

Eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah sarvavyapi sarvabhutantaratma, karmadhyakshah sarvabhutadhipasah (God, Who is one only, is hidden in all beings. He pervades all and He is the inner soul of all beings. He presides over all actions and He dwells in all beings). Three times the indwelling presence of God has been brought out in this single verse—*sarvabhuteshu gudhah* (hidden in all beings), *sarvabhutantaratma* (inner self of all beings), *sarvabhutadhipasah* (immanent in all beings). *Sarvavyapi* (all-pervading) only once, but the indwelling presence thrice within a single verse. Here also: *saman sarveshu bhuteshu tishthantam paramesvaram* (the Supreme Lord is equally present in all beings). Again, twice that I am within all creatures: *ahamatma gudakesa sarvabhutasayasthitah, aham adischa madhyam cha bhutanam anta eva cha* (I am the Self, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings).

This is something very, very important. *Sarvabhutahridayastha* (present in the heart of all beings) has been raised to that supreme height because of this fact—He indwells all creatures. *Vasanat vasudevasya vasitam bhuvanatravam, sarvabhutanivaso'si vasudeva namo'stu te*—Thou indweldest all beings, O Lord. Therefore I bow to you in all. And Gurudev said: “Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms. Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms.” He did not say in all these men. Rather, he said in all these names and forms, whatever the name might be, whatever the form might be—not necessarily a human name and form, but whatever living beings God has created.

These are all powerful inducements to the three cardinal virtues that lead to liberation: *ahimsa*, *satyam* and *brahmacharya* (non-injury, truth and purity). If you are aware of the indwelling presence of God in all creatures, *ahimsa* is inevitable. If you are aware that He dwells within you, and He is *satyasvarupa* (essence of truth), *asatya* (untruth) to you is impossible and *satya* becomes imperative. If you are aware that He is within all creatures and within yourself, then our relationships have to be of the same quality as the indwelling presence in both us and in others—that is divine. And God is supreme purity—*nitya suddha, amala, vimala, niranjana*. Therefore man's relationship to all fellow beings will also become pervaded by a supreme divine

quality of purity. And *samyama* (self-control) and *brahmacharya* will become automatically realised if man keeps himself in the awareness of the presence of the silent Light of God within himself and all creatures.

Therefore, the relationship of each being to that indwelling Light of God is of the very essence. If that relationship is always borne in mind and kept in our heart, then our relationship with all other things automatically becomes right, proper, ideal and as it ought to be. Even the good that we do we will do because the Spirit of God indwells all creatures.

To be aware of this and therefore not to harm or do anything bad to any creature is a very essential part of our *sadhana* and spiritual life; otherwise, you will be offending God Whom you are trying to realise. If you are hostile towards nature, you are hostile to God, because God is immanent in nature and indwells all. And to be hostile and thus relate yourself destructively to any creature would be to destroy the sensitive ecological balance that has been created by the Master Mind, the Great Intelligence, which is no other than God Himself. Everything will be upset if any species of creature is harmed beyond limit. Our relationship with the environment, nature, with all creatures, with all other fellow human beings and ultimately our relationship with ourselves will become perfect if the relationship of ourselves and all beings to that indwelling Light of God is ever borne in mind.

Thus you see the four-fold relationship of awareness of man: awareness of the immanence of God in nature, awareness of the presence of God in all creatures, awareness of the presence of the Light of God in all fellow human beings and awareness of the ideal way to relate oneself to oneself—make oneself an instrument of God, make oneself a channel for the manifestation and expression of God's divinity and God's purity. This becomes *sahaja* (natural) to one who lives in the awareness of God's indwelling presence in the form of the inner Light of lights beyond all darkness, which is in all hearts. And to be in awareness of this is to set right immediately your relationship to yourself. You can never stoop to harbour anything that is undivine or unspiritual either in your feelings or sentiments, nor in the thoughts of your mind or intellectual process.

Thus it is that immanence is key to divinity. Awareness of God's presence within and without, in all beings, in all creatures, in all nature becomes the key, the secret of living in the awareness of the Yoga of the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, the Yoga of the first verse of the Isopanishad. What more can I say? Be aware, be aware of God, aware of your relationship to Him, and make your life sublime and divine and attain the supreme, grand goal of all spiritual aspiration, of all spiritual life, of all spiritual *sadhana*, of all spiritual living, the grand goal of God-consciousness and divine perfection and liberation.

May God help you in your sincere endeavour to attain this supreme state here and now in this very body, in this very life! This is my prayer at the feet of Gurudev's presence, at the Feet of God Who is within and without. Gurudev's grace and God's grace be upon you always and give you sure victory in this great quest!

33

TRUE DISPASSION

Beloved Immortal Atman! Blessed children of the Divine? Most fortunate spiritual seekers! You are seeking the Reality hidden behind and beyond passing appearances, seeking the Reality that indwells all appearances, seeking that Reality which is the permanent and the eternal within your own being which is made up of this non-eternal, impermanent physical body, this non-eternal mental phenomenon we call my mind, my thoughts, my aspirations, my ambitions, my memories. All these are impermanent, ephemeral. Within you dwelling as the eternal within the non-eternal, the imperishable within the perishable, the permanent within the passing body and mind, is that same Reality which is behind and beyond all thoughts.

Therefore, even as in this external universe, this outer phenomenon, there is the eternal and permanent hidden behind the non-eternal and perishable appearance of names and forms, even so you hold this same combination within your own self. The *pindanda* is the same as the *brahmanda*, the microcosm is a replica of the macrocosm, the great universe. This little being, your own personality, similarly is a replica; it holds within itself the eternal and permanent within the non-eternal and passing name and form.

To discriminate and try to analyse this two-fold co-existence of the *nitya* and the *anitya* (eternal and the non-eternal), the *sasvata* and the *asasvata* (permanent and the passing), the *purna* and the *apurna* (perfect and the non-perfect)—that is wisdom. To analyse, to distinguish it, to know the difference—that is wisdom. To make your life a demonstration that you know the difference, make your life a process of converting this intellectual knowledge and conviction into an actual experience, so that you become a Self-realised person, you have *atma-jnana*, so that you do not merely know and understand, but you experience and you yourself become that Reality—that is wisdom.

To bring about this shift of consciousness from having extended and identified itself with temporary added factors and thus deprived itself of the awareness of its true Being, from that temporary identification to shift it back into its primal, pristine state of Self-abidance, Self-awareness—that is knowledge, that is the process of realisation. This knowledge, *jnana*, is the quintessence of the Upanishads and Vedanta.

Recently, I mentioned that this quintessence could be summed up in a very brief way: firstly, the unreality of appearances and the reality of an eternal background which is the source, support and the supreme goal of all existence; secondly, the divinity of man, your own divinity. So if you give too much value to the outer universe, make it your goal and run after it, then you are in a state of *ajnana* (ignorance), no matter how much you might have studied the scriptures. You might even have all the Upanishads by heart, but if you still have the idea in your head that these outer things have got some importance, some value and so they are to be striven after, then you are still in a state of *ajnana*. You are not a true Vedantin. This is the simple truth you must grasp.

And among the ephemeral unrealities that Vedanta wants you to discard is the ephemeral unreality of your own ego-consciousness. If you think you are someone, something which has a reality, then you are in a state of *ajnana* no matter how much you might have read, how much you might have listened to, how much you may even be able to tell to others. If you still give a credence, a credibility, a validity and some status of reality to this ego-consciousness, to this “I”—I am something, I am someone, I am important, I want this, I must be looked after—then you are in a state of *ajnana*. Your Vedanta is green. And, no doubt, your *bhakti* is green also, because it is “I am nothing, Thy will be done.” *Bhakti yoga* is based on the same state of consciousness as Vedanta, only the *bhakta* expresses it in a different way.

There is the full realisation of the non-existence or non-importance or non-entity of this ego-consciousness as the basis of both *bhakti yoga* and Vedanta. If either your Vedanta or your *bhakti* is to be real and effective, there must be the firm, settled conviction out of knowledge, out of keen reflection, out of discrimination, out of analysis, that this “I” is the greatest imposter, it is the greatest hoax. It is something non-existent which wants to clamour and prove that it is existing. Realising this is the beginning of true *bhakti* and true Vedanta.

The Srimad Bhagavatam tells you the secret of attaining this: it is only if you have *vairagya*. *Vairagya* means non-attachment. Non-attachment is usually thought to be to wealth and motor-cars and family and house and property and all. That is the lesser aspect of *vairagya*. The greater aspect is non-attachment to your passing ego-sense, to your false human personality and all the things which you have added upon it to build it up, to boost it and make it appear as though it is something.

The non-existence of this ego can never be realised if you allow it to have anything as a prop. This ego can be boosted by the prop of wealth, the prop of status, the prop of authority, the prop of position, the prop of learning: “I am a great Sanskrit scholar,” the prop of youth, the prop of beauty, the prop of strength, the prop of accomplishment: “I am a great linguist. I am a great musician, I can sing very well. I am a great *sadhu*, a very saintly person, I am very holy. I am someone whom everyone regards as something great. And what is more, I am a man of great *vairagya*.” If you have that idea, finished. You have been very, very duped; you have been taken for a ride; your Vedanta is unripe, green.

Guru Maharaj said give up *sanyasa abhiman* (ego), give up Brahmin *abhiman*, give up *vairagya abhiman*, give up *tyaga abhiman*. The ego of renunciation is as terrible an obstacle to your Vedanta and *bhakti* as the gross ego of any proud person filled with the pride of wealth or status or anything. Anything that props the ego, boosts it, is a vice. It may be renunciation, it may be dispassion, it may be learning, it may be *sanyas*, it may be devotion—anything that boosts this false ego and perpetuates its existence is a vice. It is not a virtue, it is vice, and it is the quintessence of *ajnana* (ignorance). It is against all spirituality and *sadhana*. The whole of *sadhana* is exposing the ego which may try to take shelter and support from anything and everything. It is capable of doing anything. And as long as you allow it to do this, to still hold on to a semblance of reality, you have a long way to go.

Therefore, in *tyaga* (renunciation), in *vairagya* (dispassion) there should be *tyaga* of the false notion of the reality of the ego-sense. There should also be *anasakti* (non-attachment) towards the ego-sense itself. All other *anasaktis* become fruitful if this *anasakti* is there—non-attachment to

one's own ego. All other *tyaga* will yield fruit and become effective in supporting true *jnana* and true *bhakti* if there is this *anasakti* towards this false ego, which is the most persistent, the closest and therefore the least recognised. If an object is at a distance you can see it, but if something is in your eye you require the help of someone else to see it and remove it for you.

Even so, the ego being the closest and the most difficult to perceive and remove, they conceived of this super method of giving this task to the *sad-guru*, putting it in his hands, letting him do it: "I shall reduce myself to a zero and humble myself at his feet. What I cannot do, he can." And the second way is to reduce yourself to a zero and humble yourself at the Feet of God and the Divine Mother and say: "I cannot do it; You please do it for me O Lord, O Divine Mother." This is the one and the only way.

But to be aware that it is something that is meant to be given up, and not to be maintained, fought for and quarrelled for—that is the beginning of true wisdom. That is beginning of Vedanta. That is the beginning of authentic and genuine *bhakti*. Let this be pondered. Let this be deeply reflected upon. The more you understand the significance and meaning of it, the more you will advance and grow in *bhakti*, *jnana* and *vairagya*, be a true Vedantin, true *bhakta*, and attain knowledge, realisation and God-consciousness. Reflect deeply upon this. God bless you!

34

NO ONE CAN GIVE YOU SALVATION

Blessed spiritual presence, Gurudev, who art the heart of this holy abode of thine on the right bank of Divine Mother Ganga in sacred Uttarkhand!

May you ever continue to shine and manifest in the hearts of all thy followers, thy seekers, thy devotees and disciples as one-pointed adherence and wholehearted devotion to the ideal of divine life. May thy grace manifest and shine in their hearts and minds as earnestness of *bhav* and sincerity of purpose. May your grace and spiritual presence manifest and shine in all as perseverance and a determination to stick to the divine life of truthfulness, purity, compassion and kindness, of service, devotion, meditation and a dedication to Self-realisation every moment of their life, so that their life itself becomes a monument worth being enshrined in human memory, so that their life, dedicated to a lofty and sublime ideal, becomes a reward in itself, so that their life becomes a great blessing to mankind of today and tomorrow. May thus their life be endowed with beauty, spirituality and divinity. This is my humble prayer at thy feet.

Radiant Atman! This morning I share something with you that came to me from across the Ganga. Yesterday afternoon a holy man was admonishing gathered seekers and devotees at Swarg Ashram, and as it was otherwise quiet, I could hear what he was saying over the loudspeaker. He was telling them that all individual souls who are striving to attain the good life, striving for Self-realisation which is the purpose of human birth, it is better, early or late, that they should know one truth very, very clearly, and it is this: "No one can give salvation to any individual except that individual himself or herself."

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

He was saying: “You have to work for liberation from sorrow and the attainment of bliss; no one can give it to you; you obtain it by your own effort. In spite of all that has been said about Guru’s grace and divine *kripa* and miracles, nevertheless, the truth is that supreme state of blessedness is something you can give to yourself; no one else can give it to you.”

He went on to elaborate: “What is it that makes it so very specific that it is the seeking soul that must ultimately grant to itself whatever it wishes to attain? Abundant divine grace of the Lord Almighty is always available; it is never denied, it is ever available. But it will enter into your being and transform you only if you open yourself to it. If you do not open yourself to it, then there is no means by which grace can force itself into you, try to do something against your wish, will and co-operation.”

Coming to the practical aspect in the life of the seeker, he went on: “What is it that enables the seeker to attain grace, and what is it that prevents one from attaining grace? You will attain grace if you always place yourself in front of the Lord. If you want grace you must face the Divine. You must place yourself in the presence of the Divine, and you must lift up your face and look at the Divine. As long as your attention is diverted to other things, to that extent, it is you yourself who deprive yourself of His grace, not He. His grace is abundantly present at all times, to all beings.”

He then gave two examples. One is, a number of earthen pots are left outside during the rainy season. Some face upwards towards the sky, some are on their side, some are upside down. When the rain falls, only those pots that are upright, open to the skies, will be fully filled. In the self-same open space and rain, those on their side will be partially filled and those that are upside down will receive nothing.

He gave another analogy: “On a day when the sun is shining brightly, if you open all the doors and shutters, your house will be brilliantly lit up, illumined. But if you close the doors and shutters, sunlight may be everywhere else, but the inside of your house will be in darkness.”

“In this way,” he said, “it is only you who can give liberation to yourself, not anyone else, because it depends upon whether or not you recognise this truth. If we expose ourselves to God, God pours into us, and blesses us and makes our life divine. If we are not ever in a state of being exposed to Divinity, then naturally our life, to that extent, will be denied divinity, peace, bliss, light.”

He said: “The onus, the main responsibility, is on the seeking soul and not upon God. God did not want to lay the responsibility of granting liberation upon God. Therefore, you must face the fact that it is you who can give liberation to yourself, for God’s grace, that grants liberation, is always available; it is never denied, never withheld.” This is the truth. I am thankful I have been able to share this with you for your sincere reflection.

TEMPTATION

Vibrant spiritual presence, beloved and worshipful Gurudev! Adorable Presence Divine, Thou Who art the all-pervading, the all-immanent, our source and origin, our support and inner sustainer, our fulfilment and Goal Ultimate! One Thou art—manifest as Guru, unmanifest as the Universal Being. *Gurur-brahma gurur-vishnuh gurur-devo mahesvarah; guruh sakshat param brahma tasmai sri gurave namah* (Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Siva, Guru is the Supreme Brahman Itself—prostrations to that Guru).

Thus those who have realised through their highest transcendental spiritual experience the oneness, the inseparable unity of the illumined and enlightened *jnani* and the Supreme Brahman, have uttered this sublime ideal: *yasya deve para bhaktih yatha deve tatha gurau, tasyaite kathita hyarthah prakasante mahatmanah* (He whose devotion to God is supreme and whose devotion to the Guru is as great as to the Lord, to that high-souled one all the knowledge of the scriptures stands revealed). The path-pointer, the remover of the veil and the truth hidden behind the veil, the destination to which the path leads—they are linked up and bound up by a relationship of identity and unity.

Knowing this, vibrant spiritual presence, Gurudev, in whose proximity and before whom we have come this beautiful day, and adorable Divine Presence, Who art the all-pervading, the all-immanent, alpha and omega, the beginning and end of all things, we bow to Thee, two in one. We bow to Thee, offer our heart's devotion, our gratitude for this perennial flow of continued grace, for the gift of proximity, the grace of spiritual fellowship and the blessedness of this silent hour of meditation and prayer to commence the day in an ideal way. May your benedictions and grace be our wealth and our treasure, our sure support and strength, our unfailing help and light upon the path!

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved seekers and *sadhaks!* Great is your good fortune, unparalleled is your supreme good fortune. Most blessed are you, thrice blessed, even more so. Sankara spoke of three blessings: human birth, longing for liberation and the proximity of liberated sages, spiritual masters and their wisdom teachings. We have a fourth blessedness which makes the other three blessednesses worthwhile and fruitful: that is an environment and a facility affording every favourable factor for the practice of the living of the inner life, practice of spiritual discipline, contemplating the Divine and engaging in *sadhana*, a facility affording every factor that is necessary, helpful and favourable.

If you reflect upon it seriously, contemplate it earnestly, consider it with great sincerity, you will be amazed and you will start wondering what you have done for this unutterable, unparalleled, incomparable good fortune. This four-fold blessedness conferred upon you in this age, which they call the iron age, the godless age, the age of materialism, hedonism, atheism—in this age, if you will consider your unique position, then it will percolate into your mind, you will begin to wonder, and then you will understand what *ahetuki kripa*, motiveless grace is.

Turn to God with sincerity. Turn to God for help and you will receive it. Turn to Him day after day. Meditate. Direct your mind, focus your heart and meditate upon Him with faith, with love and with humility. What you ask for shall never be denied.

But then, as we have to contend with God, we also have to contend with our own unregenerate, self-assertive, persistent, die-hard, lesser nature, the animal in man. As we have to connect ourselves with God, we have also to contend with ourselves, our grosser, lower, unspiritual, carnal nature—carnal passion, physical appetites, lust, greed, and anger which is inseparably linked up with carnal passion and desire. These are the dire enemies of the *sadhak* upon the spiritual path, hard to overcome, but not impossible. It is possible.

Jahi satrum mahabaho kamarupam durasadam (Slay thou, O Arjuna, the enemy in the form of desire which is hard to conquer). This is the fact, this is the *ades* (command): “O Arjuna, slay this enemy, great enemy, in the form of impure desire, carnal passion and physical lust.” It is formidable, but slay it. It is difficult to overcome, but can be overcome.

Therefore, the seeking soul should never lay down his arms before this enemy and surrender—never, never! But more often than not, not recognising this foe, this enemy, we think it is our well-wisher, friend. We befriend it. Such is the beguiling, alluring nature of this dire enemy. The devil comes as an angel; the poison comes as delicious sweetness. It is only one who is on guard, it is one who is awake, standing ready for action, that can contend with this enemy within one’s own self. *Uttisthata jagrata* (Arise, awake).

“*Kamah krodhascha lobhascha dehe tisthanti taskarah jnanaratnapaharaya tasmad jagrata jagrata*—Lust anger and greed, they are dacoits to rob and plunder the pearl of wisdom, not coming from outside to assail or invade you, but residing within your own body. Therefore, be awake, be awake,” says Sankaracharya in *Vairagya Dindima*. But such is the folly, the ignorance, such is the extraordinary delusion, the perverse nature of deluded seekers, that seeing not the enemy about whom ample warning is given again and again by all masters, all teachers, all Gurus, all saints and sages from the most ancient times up till Gurudev himself, we go into the camp of the enemy as though it was our well-wisher, our friend.

We invite temptations; we go into that area where we are tempted. We cultivate the company of such persons who are our temptation, who are our downfall, who are the ones through whom these lower propensities assail us, by whom they are stimulated and made manifest.

Therefore, a wise seeker, a true aspirant, an authentic, genuine Yogi, a true lover of God, will and must shun those persons and places where temptation lies—not rush in where angels fear to tread. It is only if you are true to yourself, honest with your teacher, and before the eyes of God you are His child, His devotee, His lover, then alone these teachings will mean a turning point to you, these teachings can transform you once and for all.

Turn to God for help and you will receive it without fail, unfailingly. Turn to Him every day in meditation—meditation with faith, meditation with love, meditation with humility. And be on guard against these inner enemies to which you are host, inner enemies dwelling within your self, meaning you no good. This is the mystery of God and His creation, the great *maya* which is

duratyaya (difficult to cross). Be on guard, never lay down arms, never give way. Always know that one day you have to overcome and you will overcome.

Nothing is more formidable than intense aspiration, *mumukshutva*. Nothing is more powerful than the power of faith and determination, *sattvic* determination. Nothing is more powerful than the Name of God. Nothing is more powerful than sincerity. Everything can be overcome. But then, you should not multiply, you should not strengthen the enemy, you should not run into his camp and then bewail. It is futile, in vain. For our undoing will be ourselves and not anyone else.

With all the four blessednesses, nothing will avail if you are not true to yourself and if you are not determined to avoid all such places and all such persons that constitute your temptation—morning, noon and night, every hour of every day of this golden gift of God, this piece of life we call a day. If you make each day given to you through His unutterable love, immeasurable love, a day of alertness, vigilance, watchfulness, wakefulness, a day of sincerity, earnest determination, true aspiration, a day of genuine love for God, then each day you will be a step nearer to that grand, glorious goal of life. Thus, day by day, living in a perfect way, making it divine, a life sublime, bless yourself, bless yourself, bless yourself! In this task, God speed you! In this task, Gurudev bless you!

36

WORSHIP GOD AS VIRTUE

Radiant Divinities! Beloved seekers of God! On the 14th of July, exactly a quarter of a century ago, that great one, that great being who has been the inspirer, awakener and source of a new light in our lives, and who is still, even today, the light of our life, the very life of our life, completed his earth career. He set aside his physical body and withdrew himself from this active field of worldly *vyavaharic* life.

He lived and felt for humanity, and he took up a great work. He toiled night and day until his last breath and left for us a legacy, not only proclaimed by him, but, what is more, practised by him in his own personal life. He did not merely come like a comet across the sky, which while it lasts sheds light, but after it is gone there is darkness once again; but, on the contrary, he has left a great light, an eternal light. If we open our eyes and see that light, live in that light, and make that light the illuminer of our path of life, we shall never be in darkness. That is one reason why we should always rejoice for his having been amidst us, amidst mankind, whether we have known him or not, whether we have seen him or not.

He has given us a great treasure. He has been to us an unfailing and undimmed light upon our path of life through his wisdom teachings in which he lives. For in his teachings there is a power, there is a force. In his teachings there is a peculiar transforming quality which is able to communicate itself to anyone who tries to make his teachings one's inner sustenance, one's nourishment, one's support and strength, and what is more, one's light and life.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

As I said, he did not merely preach and proclaim, but more, he gave us truths which he practised in his daily life. And one of the things which he would like us to remember, and to live by, is that God is not only worshipped through private altars and temples, symbols and images, saints and sages, spiritual beings and holy people, but God is also worshipped in His manifestation as virtue. God is also to *be* worshipped in His manifestation as virtue.

Virtue comprises *dharma*, and *dharma* is the presence of God's Spirit in this world of human activity. *Dharma* is God's own Self. *Dharma* is the manifestation of God in human life. And if you worship God as virtue, then you realise God as the transcendental Essence, as the Cosmic Being, as the Universal Soul, as the Divine Spirit. And he gave us certain fundamental values, fundamental virtues, *daivi sampad*, not only to live by, but to regard as God, and in our life to worship as God. And I can assure you, if you worship these virtues as God, you will realise God. Your life will be crowned with divine experience, God-realisation.

Worship virtue by practising virtue. This is a way to spiritual transformation and realisation. "My God is truth," Mahatma Gandhi said, "I worship truth. I do not merely revere truth, practise truth, I verily worship truth. I am a votary of truth; truth is my God." God is truth, it is true, *tat sat*, but Mahatma Gandhi boldly said: "Truth is God, and through truth I wish to attain whatever is beyond it, the Reality. Because now I am in this life, so I want to relate myself to something here, now, not something that is unseen, supramundane." He said: "That *tattva*, that principle essence, which I shall worship in my life, physically, verbally and mentally is truth." Worship truth, worship compassion and kindness worship the supreme virtue of not hating anyone, not having ill-will towards anyone, not hurting anyone, not injuring anything. And that is through the active practice of kindness, compassion, mercifulness. Worship shining purity in thought, word and deed. In all states of consciousness—waking, dreaming, sleeping—worship the virtue of purity, celibacy, chastity, *brahmacharya*. Worship that way of life, that way of conducting your self, that way of conduct and character, that would take you to *brahma-jnana*, realisation of Brahman—that is *brahmacharya*, the path of purity in thought, word and deed.

Brahmacharya is the path of asserting the mastery of your higher self over the lower self, the path of asserting the supremacy of *sattva* over *rajas* and *tamas*. It is the path of asserting your control over mean, purely gross, animal passions, asserting your higher divine nature. It is the path of self-control, the path of discipline, the path of *samyam* (perfect restraint), the path of conquest of desires, the path of mastery over mind, the path of establishing the hegemony of the divine over the merely human. *Brahmacharya* means all this and much more. Ponder it. But anyhow, worship—try to understand, but worship. Worship *brahmacharya*, worship *satya* worship *ahimsa*, worship compassion and kindness, worship truthfulness in life, worship purity in conduct and character, in thought, word and deed, and let this be your God.

Have no other God. You can contemplate God, you can contemplate eternity, infinity, ocean of bliss, Light of lights beyond all darkness—all these things you can contemplate, think about, reflect over, but you cannot love and worship peace, or *ananda*, or *jnana*. Because they are abstruse, abstract concepts, and you want something more, something for which you can live and something for which you can be prepared to die also. That is virtue.

Read the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, you will understand. You may want, you may desire, peace, joy, light, but you cannot love them, you cannot worship them. But twenty-four hours of the day and night, with every breath, you can worship virtue, you can live to fulfil virtue. That you can do. That is *sadhana*; that is supreme Yoga. Thus worship. God will reveal Himself in His transcendental, concealed form.

Therefore, this great message, this great *sadhana* that Gurudev left for us, this inner secret of the spiritual life that he bestowed upon us as his special legacy, is that through virtue one can attain the source of all virtue, which is God. God dwells within your heart and is the source of all goodness. He is your indwelling reality, the source of your conduct and character, the source of your virtue and goodness, the source of your truth, purity and compassion, the source of the divine living of your life.

Therefore, be a worshipper of virtue. Worship virtue through your life and conduct, in every action throughout the day and night. Then your life will become sublime and divine. You will become a divine being and you will enter into the highest state of divine experience. God bless you in this sublime task! God bless you in this great *sadhana*! May Gurudev's inspiring life, which is ever before you as a shining example, goad you on to persist in this great *sadhana* of worshipping virtue as your God on earth! May his inspiring example give you the strength and courage and the perseverance to persist in this path, pursue this path to its very logical end, become a glorious divine personality and become established in divine experience!

37

KNOWLEDGE IS MEANT TO BE LIVED

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved seekers and *sadhaks* who are gathered together here in the spiritual presence of worshipful and beloved Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, in his sacred *samadhistan* at this holy hour! You have been here for a period of chanting, *kirtan*, *guru stotra*, *santi path* and silent meditation with which you have opened your new day in a very *sattvic* and holy way, so as to give it a proper spiritual direction, so that this *bhav* may be carried throughout the remainder of the day until you retire for the night. In participating in this spiritual *sadhana*, I have the good fortune to place before you an important truth about Yoga and Vedanta, an important truth about philosophy and spirituality.

Philosophy and spirituality, of which you are all students, are to be known, but more than acquiring knowledge, a student of philosophy and spirituality must also try to acquire the practical wisdom of how to fit this newly gained knowledge into his daily life, thoughts, words and actions. In short, "how can I live in the light of this philosophy? how can I base my life upon this philosophy? whatever I have learned in Yoga, how can I turn it into a new form, into my day-to-day life and actions?" This you must know.

Philosophy and Vedanta are both for knowing and for living. If they are only known, you become a *pundit*, a scholar, a professor, a lecturer. You will be highly regarded. You will be able to

teach philosophy to others, impart the knowledge of Yoga to others, but you yourself will not be a Yogi, a *sadhak*. For it is whether the philosophy, which has made you a learned person and *pundit*, is seen to manifest in your everyday life and actions, philosophy in action, philosophy in application—that determines whether or not you can be regarded as a spiritual person.

This is the special difference between secular philosophers, who have learned philosophy in order to become professors, doctors, *pundits*, writers, become world famous, and those who have studied philosophy in order to bring about a transformation in their lives. The latter have studied philosophy, not to know what philosophy has to say, but in order to know how it can “transform my life, bring me from the darkness of ignorance to the light of wisdom; how it can bring me out of *maya*, above *maya*, beyond *maya*; how I can live this philosophy and attain liberation.” Philosophy for him means attainment of liberation; it is not for *prapanca* (worldly life) but for *paramartha* (supreme value).

We all know that philosophy teaches that this is a world of *dvandvas* (pairs of opposites): *sukha, dukkha* (pain, pleasure); *harsha, soka* (joy, grief); *labha, hani* (gain, loss); *jaya, parajaya* (victory, defeat). All this we know, but if a good thing happens and we rejoice and its opposite happens and we are shocked, then we are not true philosophers. We have not gained anything from the knowledge that the world consists of *dvandvas*. It is only when this knowledge can bring us a firm abidance in unshaken equanimity, when our consciousness is not assailed by anything, it becomes firmly fixed, unshakable, then you are more than a philosopher, you are a *sthitaprajna* (one who is unshakably established in superconsciousness).

In this way, knowledge of Yoga, knowledge of *dharma*—all these knowledges—if they are merely known, it is better than not knowing them; but if you stop short of living them, then you have committed a great blunder.

We know that this world is made up of three *gunas*—*sattva, rajas, tamas*. The Bhagavad Gita says which of them is desirable, which of them should be treated with caution, which of them should be rejected. You know that, and if your life becomes a conscious process of living in such a way as to be constantly engaged in encouraging *sattva*, rejecting *tamas* and being wise and cautious in dealing with your *rajas*, then you are a *sadhak*, you are a Yogi, you are a *jnani*.

Otherwise, even if you know that this world is made up of *trigunatmika maya* (*maya* characterised by the three *gunas*) and that *sattva, rajas* and *tamas* are constantly present in every little thing, if this knowledge is only knowledge in you, if in your daily life there is not the careful selection of *sattva*, the rejection of *tamas* and the careful handling and directing of *rajas*, then you are only a *sushka* (dry, empty) *jnani*, a *sushka* Vedantin.

Your Vedanta will not flower; it will not give fruit. It will not keep on growing; it has no scope for expansion or growth or unfoldment, because it is dry Vedanta, *sushka* Vedanta. And *sushka* Vedanta will soon become a burden; it will cease to benefit you even though you may get admiration from the world. But, does the *sadhak* come into the spiritual life in order to get admiration from the world? Does the *sadhak* study philosophy only in order to know, or is it to understand from that knowledge “how I can live my life in a sublime way, how I can wisely direct my path towards the goal of liberation.”

What is the purpose in knowing? This has to be well thought out. The correct attitude towards all philosophy, all Vedanta, all Yoga has to be cultivated, and it should be constantly, actively applied in daily life.

If we are in an Ashram, we are also in a world, and as anywhere else, the *dvandvas* are here. The three *gunas* are also here. It is up to you how you live in the Ashram. If you wish to have maximum benefit out of Uttarkhand, Ganges bank, a Guru's teaching, spiritual life, then this process of the selecting and welcoming of *sattva*, the rejecting of *tamas* and the wise handling and channelising of *rajas*, along with constant discrimination between the *dvandvas* must be going on in your life. Then it will yield results.

Now it is up to us, each one of us to ask: "Does this very special quality, does this *sadhana* of enquiry, discrimination, selection, rejection, does it characterise my life here?" If it does, you will know the reason why you have progressed so much. If it does not, you will know the reason for not having progressed so much. The environment, the atmosphere, the surroundings, the set-up are not to blame. If you know whether you are doing this or not, then you will understand why you are progressing or why you are not progressing. You will know where to set your life right. This is a very essential study for all *sadhaks*, Vedantins and Yogis who are earnest seekers, who are *jijnasus*, who have got keen *mumukshutva*.

Yes, Gurudev has done a very special act of grace. Perhaps he knew human tendency. So ninety percent of his spiritual writings and teachings are admonitions: "Do this, do that, think in this way, act in this way, live in this way, engage in Yoga in such and such a way, carry on *sadhana* in this way." He solved the problem directly. He did not merely use *sushka* knowledge. Even while he gave knowledge, he immediately said, "Do it," and showed the way how to do it. He emphasised action, emphasised *kriya*, emphasised actual *abhyasa*. Perhaps that was his greatest gift to the world of *sadhaks* and seekers? God bless you?

38

THE PARADOX OF GOD-REALISATION

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! You who are *jijnasus* searching for knowledge that enlightens and wisdom that liberates, you who are *mumukshus* yearning for liberation, liberation from ignorance, darkness and bondage, from finite limitations, know this truth: that though God-realisation, or the supreme state of liberation and illumination, is not the product of *karma*, is not the result of an act or the fruit of a certain process or exertion, but it is *nitya prapta avastha* (eternally attained state), *nija svarupa* (one's own true nature), nevertheless, precisely in order to become convinced of this, to know this intellectually, to develop faith and belief in this truth, and to realise this as an experience, one's own personal experience, tremendous effort is necessary. Action is called for and that action is called *sadhana*.

Vedanta *siddhanta* (philosophy) says that the supreme experience, the realisation of the Absolute, is not the result of *karma*, because if anything is the product of an action, it means there

was a time when it did not exist and it has since come into being. The grain harvested by the farmer did not originally exist upon the field. It was through his labour—ploughing, sowing, watering, weeding—that ultimately the field yielded a harvest. The harvest is relative. It is related to something else and is limited in time and space; it is related to a cause. Whereas the Absolute is not related to anything. It is the causeless cause of all things; it is beginningless and endless, unlimited.

Therefore Vedanta *siddhanta* declares: “Even continuous activity carried on for hundreds of crores of births will not be effective in bringing about *brahma-jnana*, precisely because the Absolute does not come under the confines or the limitations of a cause and effect phenomenon, an action and the fruit of action process.”

You cannot become something which you already are. It makes no sense. You cannot become something which you eternally are, which you have never been not at any time in eternity. Anything that was not and is brought into being will also become once again not, it will go out of being. That is the defect if it is the end product of any process. It becomes subject to the law of causation. There is no up and down in Self-realisation. It is always full, never changes, never alters.

But, nevertheless, the one thing all Gurus insist upon to attain Self-realisation is act, act, act, ceaseless *sadhana*, ceaseless struggle, ceaseless endeavour, do this, do that. Nothing illustrates it better than the extremely strenuous effort put forth by the Zen meditator in order to attain *satori*. Unbelievable, incredible, how they have to exert and break their head for hours and hours together engaged in inner meditation. They struggle, break out in perspiration; some even collapse from the intensity of effort.

Our revered Sri Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj wrote a treatise called *Revelation of the Ever-Revealed*. If it is ever revealed wherein comes effort? What is the truth in the juxtaposition of two contradictory statements both from the highest authority of the scriptures and from realised beings?

Is it paradoxical? Do the Gurus go contrary to the declaration of Vedanta *siddhanta*, to the ultimate thesis of Vedanta? There is no paradox. The Vedanta *siddhanta* is true. It is not the result of effort. But strenuous effort, life-long effort is required. Totapuri, the Guru who gave *advaita jnana upadesa* to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, is known to have told him that he struggled hard for forty years before he could attain realisation.

Sadhana means effort, *purushartha*. The simple fact is that without *sadhana* God-realisation is impossible. Without earnest, sustained, continuous effort combined with great interest and enthusiasm, realisation is impossible. Maharshi Patanjali declared: “Sustained, continuous *sadhana* for a long period of time, with keen interest and enthusiasm, brings about results.” It is absolutely true. It is necessary. This *sadhana*, this effort, is necessary not to attain Self-realisation, which is an ever-present experience, but to remove all that stands in the way between you and that ever-present experience, to remove the covering of ignorance that hides it from being experienced.

A person in poverty sitting in a miserable hut is told by a spiritual personality endowed with intuition: “All your poverty can vanish, for there is a buried treasure twelve feet beneath the place

where you are sitting, right here in the centre of this hut.” Now, the treasure is right there. It has not been created, it has not been brought into being. But will it make any difference to this man’s poverty, will it buy him a morsel of food notwithstanding the fact that the treasure is already there, it is inside the boundaries of his hut, he is sitting over it?

No. He will have to start digging, straining every limb, wiping perspiration. He has to exert, dig and dig and dig. The treasure may be there, but he is the same poor man until he digs and digs and penetrates the twelve feet of earth. Even if he has dug eleven feet, eleven inches, he is still the same poor man. It is only when he has gone the full twelve feet that he is able to put his hand on the treasure and lift it up. Then alone his poverty vanishes and he is wealthy beyond his dreams. Exertion alone allowed him to attain the treasure. Exertion alone could bring him into living contact with what already existed in all its fullness.

This is the way you can understand the necessity of exertion to attain that which is already there in close proximity. Tulsidas says: “You can create a blaze of fire from a block of ice, you can squeeze dry sand and make oil drip out of it, but this is sure, without *sadhana*, without worship, without adoration, you can never cross this ocean of *samsara*.” This rule will never vary—therefore, exertion, exertion, exertion, *sadhana*, *sadhana*, *sadhana*.

“Do real *sadhana* my dear children,” sang Gurudev. Upon the spiritual path a happy-go-lucky temperament is no good. Laziness is no good. Vain excuses for not doing *sadhana* are no good. And fanciful notions that without *sadhana* you can get realisation are no good. *Sadhana* is the one thing necessary; effort is indispensable. Through effort you attain that which needs no effort to actually be experienced. But effort is needed to remove all that is intervening without and within.

Thus understand your life, your present need, and the ultimate Goal in this light. Be true to your name *sadhak*. Engage in spiritual *sadhana*. Do not allow lethargy to overcome you; do not allow cynicism to develop. Every act of *sadhana* is valuable if it is done with a spirit of surrender, with a spirit of being an instrument through whom God is gracious enough to get these things done. Selfless service, meditation, *japa*, reflection, *viveka*, *vichara*—all this is *sadhana*. Always feel: “Blessed am I to be the instrument on which the Divine is playing in the form of spiritual *sadhana*.”

Thus stand apart, and with humility, in a spirit of dedication, engage in vigorous *sadhana*, never allowing fatalism to overcome your spirit, never allowing doubt to stand in your way. Doubt should be rent asunder with the sword of determination, wisdom, common sense, intelligence. Never allowing any of these dire negative states to even approach your mind, consciousness, vigorously moving forward, with enthusiasm, engage in spiritual *sadhana*! This is the great necessity! This is the great good!

39

HIGHER KNOWLEDGE AND LESSER KNOWLEDGE

Radiant Divinities! Immortal *atma-svarup* assembled together here in this sacred Presence! *Jijnasa* means thirst for knowledge, a desire for knowledge. Our ancients were men of *brahma-jnana* (direct knowledge of Brahman). They were *brahma-jnanis*, *atma-jnanis*, they had knowledge. Modern scientists, physicists, mathematicians, nuclear physicists, they also have knowledge. They are also *gnanis*. But then, what is the difference?

Our ancient *gnanis* realised the oneness of all existence, that life is one: *Isavasyamidam sarvam yat kimcha jagatyam jagat* (All this, whatsoever in this universe moves (or moves not) is indwelt by the Lord). Therefore, to harm anyone is to harm yourself. Recognising this oneness of life, the immanence of the one hidden Spirit in all things that exist, they realised the sanctity of all life. So they declared *ahimsa paramo dharmah* (non-violence is the highest duty). Not to injure anyone, not to harm anyone, not to hurt anyone, is the supreme good, supreme law. And therefore their prayer was *lokaḥ samastah sukhino bhavantu* (may all beings be happy), *sarvesham svastir-bhavatu* (may auspiciousness befall all beings). And they lived in order to fulfil this prayer *sarvabhutahiterataḥ* (engaged in the welfare of all beings)—living only to constantly work for the good of all, the happiness of all, the auspiciousness and blessedness of all. They lived to benefit life around them. Their life, therefore, was a source of *satyam*, *sivam*, *sundaram*—all that is true, all that is good and auspicious, all that is beautiful—to life around them.

In contrast, out of scientific knowledge and progress in technology, the entire world is gripped with fear, anxiety, in a state of acute anxiety neurosis, a state of uncertainty about the future and insecurity in the present. That means that due to this knowledge and its utilisation, humanity has become sick. Humanity is ill, suffering from the maladies of fear, uncertainty and insecurity.

Why this difference? The Upanishads say that it is because of knowledge being of two kinds. If over emphasis is laid upon the lesser knowledge, it leads to knowledge about things and ignorance about oneself, ignorance about life and the laws that prevail in the universe, the laws that govern life. Whereas, if the emphasis is laid upon the higher knowledge, *para vidya*, that higher knowledge liberates one from ignorance, liberates one from all that is narrow, limited, that which separates. It makes one divine by granting the knowledge that bestows the vision of the universal oneness of all life.

So the Upanishads spoke about the higher knowledge and the lesser knowledge—*para vidya* and *apara vidya*. Those who know only the lesser knowledge, *apara vidya*, are very advanced in knowledge, but they lack wisdom. They know about everything else, but they do not know about themselves. Therefore they fall a prey to egoism, to selfishness, to megalomania. They fall a prey to small goals dictated by the selfish view of things. They do not see divinity in humanity. They do not know about the law of love that prevails for the happiness and benefit of all mankind. They only see in a narrow way; their vision is fragmented; their experience is not universal.

Therefore, not knowing about themselves, not knowing about the oneness of all life, their knowledge has turned into destructive knowledge, into a negative knowledge, whose application has resulted not in welfare, but in fear. Whereas the knowledge of those ancient sages, who experienced the Supreme Reality, their *jnana* was *para vidya*; their *jnana* was wisdom, spiritual wisdom. And it made them centres of supreme compassion, centres of universal love, centres of friendliness towards all life, and centres of intense pre-occupation with the welfare of all, the benefit of all. *Bahujanahita* and *bahujanasukha* (the welfare and happiness of all people) became the throbbing of their heart, the very spirit in which their life moved.

It is, therefore, that knowledge that is to be sought after. That knowledge is the knowledge which *jijnasus* in the spiritual life, in the spiritual path seek—not merely to know about things, but the “Thing-in-Itself,” which is the Light of lights beyond all darkness, knowing which one becomes liberated, knowing which there is nothing higher to be known.

That should be sought after, and the beginning of this quest is to know that we still do not know certain things. “There is still something to be known, something which I do not know, something which I have to know.” It is this that opens the door to ever widening and ever progressing knowledge. Where there is this basic acceptance of one’s limitation in knowledge, basic acceptance of one’s need to know, then alone one will seek knowledge. If one is self-sufficient, if one thinks, “I know,” then one closes the door to knowledge. Therefore, one should think: “I know little let me know more, let me proceed from the darkness of less knowledge into the ever increasing light of more and more knowledge that leads ultimately to the supreme knowledge of all things, knowledge of Brahman, knowledge of the One.”

To that end one should live a life of seeking, a life of questioning, a life of inner enquiry, *vichara*. And through *svadhyaya*, through *satsanga*, through the company of similar seekers on the path, one should study singly as well as collectively, one should enquire both singly as well as in *satsang*. “*Tadviddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya*—Know that knowledge, O Arjuna, through offering reverence to those who know more than you, through earnestly questioning and through serving,” says Lord Krishna. *Pranipata*, *pariprasna* and *seva* mean prostration, earnest questioning and service.

Thus it is that *jijnasa* is based upon the acceptance of one’s limitation in knowledge. *Jijnasa* is based upon the keen desire to know more and is made progressive through reverence, through devout and earnest questioning and through sincere selfless service. This is the true hallmark of a spiritual person. This is the essence of spiritual seeking, spiritual aspiration. And this is the hope of the world of tomorrow. If one would not become blinded by the ego of secular knowledge, if one would release oneself from the net of satisfaction with mere secular knowledge, then one should humbly turn towards the source of all spiritual knowledge.

The wisdom treasure, in the form of the world scriptures, left by our ancients is the most priceless part of the global heritage of mankind. Rejecting the scriptures one will perish, one will go from darkness to darkness. One will go deeper into bondage and ignorance and become a source of danger to society. Scriptures embody eternal truth for the guidance of man, for the welfare of the world. Scriptures ought to be studied reverentially. Patanjali Maharshi laid down in his Yoga Sutras

that *svadhyaya* should be diligently pursued by the Yogi, by the seeker, by the *jijnasu* and the *mumukshu*.

Thus it has been said. May you reflect over it and be benefited! God bless you!

40

THE PART OF TECHNIQUE IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers! The name of Swami Vivekananda is known to all of you. He was a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and had the distinction of being one of the earliest of the monks of India to take the great message of Vedanta and the universalism of Vedanta to the Western countries. His Guru had many disciples, many of them young men, some of whom were very highly educated and qualified, a few of them unlettered. But they all became accredited spiritual leaders after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna.

The second most important disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, whom even Swami Vivekananda treated with great deference and reverence, was one Swami Brahmananda. He was the first president of the Sri Ramakrishna Mutt and Mission when it was founded near the end of the last century. Swami Brahmananda was a very serious person, always dignified, not given to easy change of moods. He was patient, understanding, and a kind teacher.

Disciples who took initiation from him sometimes used to go to him a year or two later and complain that they could find no progress in their *sadhana*, bemoan the fact that they had had no “experience”—they had not seen any light, their *kundalini* had not risen, they had not had any vision of Gods or Goddesses, there was no higher consciousness. He used to listen to them patiently, and after they had fully stated their problem, he would tell them: “Yes, yes, I understand your difficulty. I understand your eagerness to have experience. Yes, it will come. Continue your *japa*. Repeat your *ishta mantra* regularly without fail every day for another year. Please come back to me after the end of the year.”

He used to reassure them, tell them to continue their *japa*, be very regular, gradually increase the time, and practise for another year. After a year the same people would return and repeat the same story. He repeated his patient hearing also. He heard them patiently as before, repeated his same instructions and asked them to come back again after a year. Sometimes this was repeated a third time also, and then after the fourth year or the fifth year when they came, they no longer had a complaint. They had found an answer. The agitation had gone. They gradually began to feel peace and inner joy.

Later on he used to say: “*Sadhaks* are very impatient. Before they hardly start their spiritual life and *sadhana*, already they want to have experience; they want to have experience as the very beginning of their spiritual *sadhana*, not as the later part. And they think that such experience only, constitutes the sign that they are progressing. So what could I do, what could I tell them? I could only tell them to carry on with their *sadhana*, continue their *japa*, be very regular in it.” Therefore,

he used to tell them: “My dear son, you should not be too impatient. You must have sufficient *abhyasa* (practice) before you start looking for results and before you want or wish to complain. You want to have a tree within days of planting a seed. You want to have fruit before the tree has become a real tree.”

This impatience in a *sadhak* is impractical and is a result of not realising that a good part of the *sadhana* goes not into the structure of spiritual life but into its foundation. When the foundation of a building is being built, no structure is seen above the surface of the ground. Someone looking from far off will see nothing there. Yet something important, something indispensable, is being done. If within a few days of starting construction you already want to see walls and rooms, it is an impractical view and approach.

Swami Brahmananda was an experienced teacher, so he was able to be patient and ask them to carry on. However, this problem is still acute today. Therefore many spiritual teachers purvey to the common market of *sadhaks* and offer techniques which will show results. In three sessions in a darkened room someone wants to press your eye-balls and make you see flashes of light. “Oh yes, I will give you illumination.” What is illumination? Illumination is flashes of light. If someone hits you on the head with a club, you will have lots of flashes. If you hit your head against the wall by accident, you can have many stars. There are organisations and foundations that promise this type of spiritual experience, awakening of the *kundalini*—you will get *siddhi* (psychic power).

But then, are you trying to lead a spiritual life or do you want to practise some techniques and get some results? What is it that you understand about a life of *nivritti*—of renunciation, of seeking? When you say I am seeker, aspirant, what are you seeking after, what are your aspiring for? “No clear idea. I want happiness, I am seeking for peace.” What do you know about peace? What is this peace you are seeking for? What is this happiness you want? How do you know it is not there? We have to define our goal and first of all ascertain where it is and whether it is there or not.

You must know the connection between the technique that you are following and the life that you are leading. Are they two unconnected things? “I go my way, but every morning and evening I do something; I practise some technique and technique must yield. If I keep a hen, I must get an egg every day.” Does this work? What about your life? Are you paying attention to your life or are you paying attention only to your mental acrobatic? This question has to be considered. This question has to be very, very definitely made part of your consideration.

Swami Brahmananda adopted a pragmatic method. He neither spoke about spiritual life nor results. He said, “Carry on your *sadhana*.” Of course, together with the *sadhana* spiritual teachers lay down some principles, they lay down some way of life. They also put before the seeker a certain ideal. If this ideal is always kept in mind and the principles put before the disciple by the Guru are adhered to, then even the practice of one’s minimal, daily, routine *sadhana* will yield fruits—more surely and perhaps earlier. A wrong emphasis upon technique and insufficient importance given to ideals and principles can lead to frustration, can lead to delay in success.

First and foremost try to know that all *sadhana*, all technique, all these various items of *yoga abhyasa* have one aim: to remove the distraction of your mind and focus your mind, and thus bring about a state of *ekagrata*, one-pointedness, concentration, and to integrate your life, your thoughts,

your feelings, emotions, sentiments, imaginations and aspirations towards one unified quest, one clearly defined goal. If that is there, all things fall into place. If this centre of unification, this factor of integration is not there, naturally you are bound to be buffeted hither and thither.

In olden days before television and movies were invented, the main diversion in the cities and towns was always the circus, where the audience not only saw wild animals, but they watched human beings performing extraordinary feats. One such feat would be performed on a rope or wire stretched near the roof of the tent, perhaps forty or fifty feet from the ground. There was no net; if a person fell from this height—finished. The performer would carry a long stick and, step by step, slowly walk across the rope as the audience held its breath.

How were they able to successfully do such death defying feats even though thousands of people were there? The focus of their entire attention, entire mind, entire being, was only on their balance and getting across. They were oblivious of the audience; their entire consciousness was on their feet which were gingerly moving step by step along the rope. Their concentration was so powerful that the whole audience became concentrated, spellbound, with eyes riveted and breath held.

That is the thing needful. That is the purpose of all *sadhana*. *Japa*, meditation, *kirtan*, *puja*, *upasana*—everything should make you totally absorbed in the task that you are doing. Be absolutely one-pointed, completely focused. And it is the solution of ninety percent of the problem of all seekers—this ingathering of the mind and the disciplining of the attention towards one task.

The focusing of the entire attention of the mind in one direction, towards one goal, in one task—that is Yoga, that is *sadhana*, that is *abhyasa*. It is the key to success. It is the guarantee and assurance of progress and it is the solution to all problems. And it does not come in a day. As patient as Swami Brahmananda was, a disciple has to be even more patient. This focusing of attention, this complete concentration upon the ideal, the goal, and the day after day cultivation of this practice of all-absorbing concentration upon the objective, becoming established in it, is helped by cultivating the habit of patience in everything, the habit of attention in everything that you do.

This, therefore, is the great thing desirable—to have a goal and to focus your mind and heart and soul upon it and not to pay attention to irrelevant details, not allow the mind to distract you from this total concentration towards your ideal, your principles, your way of life, your *abhyasa*, your goal.

Therefore, be absorbed in your practice and try to develop this inner state of total attention, total focus, complete absorption, and see the results. Then you will find that there is no longer room for being frustrated or discontented. If this is not there, then your whole life will be nothing but murmuring, complaining, grumbling and dissatisfaction, because these things grow where there is a lack of this total focusing, attention and concentration. All *abhyasa* is for concentration. Concentration overcomes distraction, and distraction is the bane of all human beings, whether they are spiritual *sadhaks* or whether they are purely worldly, materialistic people. Therefore, if this focusing is made, if you become ingathered, one-pointed, integrated, then whatever is to come, it will come in due course.

This is how spiritual practice should be understood and spiritual life lived. Life is not to be subordinated or given the less important place. In a life governed by principle, moving towards an ideal, technique forms a part of the entire thing called Yoga and *sadhana* and spiritual life. God bless you!

41

FOUR POWERFUL TRANSFORMING FACTORS

Adorable Spiritual Presence, glorious all-pervading Reality, O Father of all mankind, Almighty Being, eternal, supreme God of grace, love and compassion! To Thee Who art the origin, support and ultimate end of countless millions of created universes that exist within Thee as drops exist within the vast, immeasurable, unfathomable and boundless ocean, to Thee our reverential adorations and worship at this moment, at this hour of the morning when Thy children are gathered together here in silent prayerfulness and spiritual fellowship to begin their day. May Your divine grace be upon them, and may they utilise this day to draw nearer and closer to Thee in dynamic awareness of the awakened consciousness of their real Being within!

Radiant Divinities! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers! Today let us consider four valuable means of making your life sublime, four valuable factors that will keep your life moving towards the grand divine destiny, to fulfil which you have been endowed with this human status. For the power to feel, think, reason, understand, expand in knowledge and grow in wisdom is verily the uniqueness of this privileged status of yours as a human being on earth. These factors will enrich your human status, adorn your spiritual life, enrich your *sadhana* and *abhyasa*, and augment your movement towards your grand divine destiny of *atma-jnana*, transcendental experience, God-realisation.

The first factor is the great power which the Supreme Power has manifested and given to you, the power which can awaken, enlighten, illumine and bring about Self-realisation. That is the power of *sabda-brahman*, *nada-brahman*, the Name. The first primal expression of Brahman took place as the mystical cosmic sound vibration, *adya spandana*, in the form of the solemn, mysterious, divine cosmic sound, the *pranava* (OM), the Divine Name. Maharshi Patanjali identifies this particular sound symbol as the Name of that Nameless One, the Word that expresses That which cannot be expressed—*tasya vachakah pranavah*. It is the source and origin of all names, the *mantra* which successive saints and mystics, again and again, have dwelt upon and glorified. They declared: “When you have the Name, what have you to fear? It is God within you and without you, in your heart, in your mind, on your tongue, on your lips.” Let the Name be your constant companion. Let It be a propelling force and factor to take you towards God.

The second great force, power, dynamic unailing factor, is remembrance of God through the mind. When the tongue is uttering the Name, the mind is to remember the Supreme Being. Again and again the saints have stressed this one means of keeping our life moving towards the glorious Goal—keeping our consciousness centred upon that grand Reality—remembrance, remembrance.

The third factor is the feeling that you bring into your every thought, every word, every action. What does it mean to you? Does it mean something mundane, something prosaic, something material, something worldly? Or does it mean something sublime, lofty and spiritual, divine? What does it mean? What is the feeling that infills you when you are living, moving, acting, day after day, moment after moment, through your thoughts, your words, your actions, through your *vyavahara*, your dealings with persons, beings, things, with life around you? What is the *bhav* that infills you? That is something which you have in your hand, because your *bhav* is your treasure. It is your domain, your territory, your monopoly, your inner kingdom where you have total say. If you have the sincerity, earnestness, wisdom, let this inner kingdom of *bhav* decide for you whether your life is mundane and prosaic, or lofty and spiritual, sublime and godly.

Last but not least is the fourth factor. What is the vision with which you behold this world? Do you behold this world as something sacred? See what the scriptures say, how the true *sadhak* should look upon everything. Again and again our scriptures reiterate this great vision, this great truth: The world is indwelt by the Divine, pervaded by the Divine. What should be our vision? What should be our *bhav*? Everything is sublime, everything is spiritual, and every act of mine—physical, verbal, mental, sentimental—is verily divine. With this vision, this *bhav*, whatever is seen, heard, tasted, smelt, touched, thought about, remembered is my *ishta devata* (chosen Deity). Read again and again Gurudev’s sublime composition, “Song of Immanence of Ram.” Ponder its implication to you.

These four powerful forces, powerful transforming factors, can enhance your spiritual life, make it fully God-oriented, give it a push in the right direction, take you towards the Goal Supreme—the power of the Name which immediately links you up with the Unmanifest, the transcendental Reality; constant remembrance of God in the mind; *bhav*, the right feeling, sublime spiritual feeling in your heart; and fourth, the right vision, which beholds the Reality everywhere, so that you live, move and have your being in God.

With these four factors or powers accepted and applied, what power is there in this universe that can stop your progress? What need is there for you to think of miscellaneous things, fill your mind with doubts and unnecessary, avoidable, superfluous questions, when at your doorstep is the key to heaven? These forces will help you to overcome everything, conquer *maya*, overcome life itself here and now. They are living spiritual forces, powers that are real in this world of passing unrealities. They will transform you and take you irresistibly to God-consciousness.

42

CULTIVATE PEACE

Radiant Divinities! Beloved Atman! Cultivate *santi* (peace) within your heart. Cultivate the habit of peace and serenity which is a covetable possession, that is a positive force to take you towards your supreme Goal. Cultivate *santi* in your mind and in your heart, for it is a condition prerequisite for the inward process of bringing the mind to rest upon the Eternal and the Divine. There can be no concentration for one who does not cultivate the habit of peace. The Lord poses this

question in the Bhagavad Gita: “*asantasya kutah sukham?*—How can happiness come to one who is not at peace?”

The Supreme Reality, Atman-Brahman, is immeasurable peace, profound, boundless, indescribable peace. The great transcendental experience of your ancestors and of the supreme mystics of all times and climes is that the Reality pervades everywhere, which means that peace fills all existence. From their transcendental experience our ancestors declared boldly that the Supreme Reality dwells in the core of your own heart. One divine Reality dwells hidden in all beings, which means that peace dwells within you permanently as the innermost centre of your being.

When peace pervades all existence and when peace ever dwells within you, why this injunction to cultivate peace? Why are great books written on how to find peace, the way to peace? Does it not seem a contradiction that when peace is everywhere, when peace dwells at the centre of your being, that there is even a possibility of people being without peace and therefore being deprived of happiness?

That this contradiction exists is proven by our own experience and the experience of countless millions of people who are restless, agitated, have no peace, go from pillar to post. There is peace and yet people are *asanti*, they have no peace. Peace pervades all existence; peace is everywhere; it ever dwells within you. Peace is the one great Reality, and yet we find people pining for it, trying to create it, going on holidays, going on picnics, going into seclusion to search for it.

Why this contradiction? We have turned away from the ever-present Reality. “*Tesham santir...netaresham*—To such beings who take the path that leads to the knowledge of the Supreme and find that Supreme Reality, to them only is peace, not to other beings.” We are pre-occupied and we are also foolish. We do not know what is good for us. We also persist in folly. We close ourselves to wisdom, do everything that militates against peace and do nothing to cultivate peace within our heart.

That is the reason the great ones who analysed human life and discovered the three afflictions spoke about *adhyatmika tapa*—afflictions created from within one’s own being. And that which is created within one’s own being has to be dealt with within one’s own being.

It is in this context and connection that the great value of *svadhyaya* (spiritual study) and *satsang* has been spoken about. They are the companions of peace. They are the companions of an inner awakening of wisdom within us. *Satsang*, *svadhyaya* and also *sad-vichara*—making use of our intellect in the right direction, in right enquiry such as: “If I have no peace, why do I not have peace? If peace is present everywhere, why is it not available to me or why am I not able to avail myself of it?” If the sun is shining and you are turned in the opposite direction, then the sunlight is not available to you. “Is it maybe such a situation with me?” This is to be enquired into—*vichara*. “Why do I not feel the presence of that ever-present peace right within me? Maybe I pay no attention to it, I do not cultivate it.”

We pay a price for even the most petty thing. For even a broom stick, a leaf plate, a clay cup, we pay a price. Do you think it is reasonable that for such a great thing, something for which the whole world is seeking, which is the one condition of happiness—supreme peace, the peace that

passeth understanding—do you think it is reasonable that such a thing could be had without paying a price? Is peace alone the commodity we wish to have without paying a price for it, without trying for it and fulfilling its conditions?

How to find peace? Scriptures are full of descriptions. Contentment brings you peace. Renunciation brings you peace. Renunciation of ego brings you peace. Wisdom, *vichara* (enquiry), *viveka* (discrimination) bring you peace. *Svadyaya* can give you all. *Svadyaya* can give you *viveka*, can give you *vichara*, can give you contentment. It can awaken within you the light of higher understanding.

More than anything else, the peace within is not felt because our gaze, our stream of thoughts, is constantly directed towards things other than ourselves, things other than that which is within us. Our awareness is completely occupied by *aneka* (the many), and *aneka* is always *asanti*. And what is more, when the thought current is ever moving towards this and that, naturally it loses awareness of that which is in the source of its being. Peace dwells in the source where thought arises, and when thought occupies your attention that peace is bypassed. Therefore, it is necessary to turn the mind within. Practise the *sadhana* of turning the mental gaze within, not the physical gaze alone, but turning the thought current towards the centre of your being where peace abides.

Svadyaya helps us: Anything that intends to move towards a particular goal needs to keep direction. It must make provision to see that its movement is always in that direction, not diverted away. Even if forces beyond its control make it swerve from that direction, it must have the ability within itself to once again get back on course. It requires a propelling force for movement towards the goal as well as the ability to correct its direction and to keep its balance. Flight into the Infinite, ascent unto Divinity—in these terms the spiritual process has been described. And it is through *svadyaya* that we can steer the direction of our life always towards that supreme, ultimate Goal. It is through *svadyaya* that we can keep an inner balance while pursuing our Goal. It is through *svadyaya* that we can keep on propelling ourselves towards that Goal without stagnating, without, still worse, having a set-back.

Ever, ever moving onwards, day after day, hour by hour, every moment of our life, slowly and steadily, with peace within, we must keep on moving in the right direction. And we must keep an inner balance, not allowing ourselves to be influenced by everyone, everything, every event, every occurrence, every passing scene.

Thus cultivate peace. Look towards the peace that is ever-present, and try to cultivate the ability to become aware of the peace that pervades everywhere, that is ever-present, everywhere in abundance. *Sarvam brahmamayam* (All is pervaded by Brahman); *isavasyamidam sarvam* (All this is indwelt by the Lord). Peace pervades this entire universe, pervades everywhere. Cultivate this ever-present peace through right vision. This is the great need.

The Upanishad says *asantamanas* (restless mind) is a barrier to the attainment of supreme enlightenment. Therefore the *sadhana-chatushtaya* (four-fold means of liberation) includes *sama* (control of the mind) and self-possession, control of one's senses, as being necessary for this inner *santi*. They said *sama* and *dama*—inner serenity and control of the senses—are inter-related, they go together. And prayer also puts you directly into contact with that great peace.

To make us aware of all these things, beloved Guru Bhagavan draws us near him morning after morning to be silent and become aware of the peace. Such is his grace. May his benedictions enable you to understand the significance and value of this morning hour of closeness and proximity to one who has ever become one with that great peace, that great silence. May the blessings of the supreme Almighty Being speed you onward in your quest for that immeasurable peace, peace profound, the peace perennial that is your innermost Being! Live in peace, cultivate the habit of peace, move towards the innermost centre where peace abides. This throws open the portals of liberation, immortality and illumination. God bless you!

43

DYNAMIC SRAVANA (HEARING, LISTENING)

Radiant Divinities! Great sages have revealed to us many invaluable facts about this life of ours in this universe created by the supreme, cosmic Intelligence-Power, *chit sakti*, *chaitanya sakti*. They have placed before us many subtle truths, which are not truths arrived at by speculation, but the outcome of their own deep, inner, direct personal experience, their state of illumination, enlightenment and Self-realisation, what the Upanishads call *aparoksha'nubhuti* and *sakshatkara*. These gems are scattered throughout the scriptures, and night after night in this sanctified hall choice selections of these truths, of these invaluable experiences, stated as authoritative declarations, as wisdom revelations, come to you through the discourses of people who graciously give of their time, presence and service to share.

Through the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Panchadasi many truths are given. We hear them not merely to pass a little time in *satsang*, but to receive, cherish, reflect upon, and to grow in our own inner state of consciousness, to acquire more and more *jnana*, so that gradually our interior is more and more illumined. That is our prayer: “*dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*—Illumine our inner being, may darkness vanish and light prevail.”

Thus, day after day, as we listen to each discourse, we cannot deny that at least one gem of truth, one revealing truth, a fact of life, is sure to be obtained if we listen with attention. Each occasion is an occasion for ceaseless onward progress—continuous inward ascent unto ever higher states of consciousness, understanding and wisdom—to liberate ourselves from all that we desire to liberate ourselves from, to attain all that we desire to attain which we now feel is perhaps not attained.

So, it is in such a creative way, a positive and constructive way, that receiving is to be done. Listening is for renewal. *Sravana* (listening to scriptures) is for rebirth. *Sravana* is for steady forward movement towards the Goal. *Sravana* is for stage by stage, higher and higher ascent unto illumination and enlightenment. Receiving them, we are also ultimately meant to reach that self-same state of experience from which these truths were declared, shared and given in the ancient past by all the illumined, perfected sages.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

Among these truths, paradoxical and puzzling, but worth reflecting upon is a simple declaration in the Isa Upanishad: “*taddure tadvantike*—That Spirit, the Supreme Spirit, the Reality is far off, is remote. No, It is ever near, It is close to you, you are ever in Its immediate proximity.” Why did the sage say this? And if it is so, what does it mean to us?

Let us not try to find out what it means to A, B, C, someone else, some seeker, some *tapasvin*. “No, why should I be concerned about these truths in their relationship to others, to human society? I am, and should be, deeply concerned about what they mean to me.” Because it is the privilege and prerogative of each seeker, each *jijnasu* who listens, to ponder the truths received from this angle: “What does this truth mean to me? Why has it been shared with me?” Thus commences a process of dwelling upon what has been heard with keen eagerness to receive it in a creative and positive way: “In what way can this truth I have listened to, that has come into my life, in what way can it enrich me, raise me higher, take me nearer to that great Goal?”

“If It is near, what does this imply to me?” If a mother or father is near, a child is fearless. If a policeman or soldier is near, a citizen is fearless. He feels safe; it is an immediate reaction. Even a small dog is filled with rare courage if it is walking with its master. It will bark at a dog ten times its size, that normally it would run away from. Why? Because it has got courage, the strength of someone behind it, the feeling that when he is there nothing can happen. And this is a normal and natural reaction; it is not merely a fanciful feeling.

Great sages have sometimes declared: “Be fearless, do not worry.” And you all know the famous assurance of Sai Baba of Shiridi, (it has gone into all languages): “When I am there, why do you fear?” Likewise: “Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.” Has this great truth evoked this robust feeling within you, in your life? When the Gita says, “*ma suchah* (do not grieve)” or the Upanishad, “*tarati sokam atmavit* (the knower of the Self goes beyond sorrow),” has that come to you as a wonderful, great assurance, banishing all grief and sorrow from you? And when you hear, “*tadantike*—It is near you, that great Spirit is ever at hand,” what has it done for you?

Each seeker approaches Reality in order to become transformed, in order to be reborn and enter into a new consciousness. And God, out of His infinite love for us, keeps on bringing us these great truths every day. One who receives must receive with a positive intention, a living, vital purposefulness. Listening, *sravana*, is not a passive process. It is a process of giving and receiving, both done in a vital way. For it is filled with the power of the realisation of great sages. *Satsanga*, *sravana*, is therefore a process that is vital, living, dynamic, gainful. In this dynamic way, therefore, *sravana* should become for us an ever progressive *sadhana*, a process of daily living, a daily revivification of our aspirations, our spirit, our enthusiasm, our spiritual life.

Ponder, therefore, this truth revealed in the Isa Upanishad. It is almost as if the sage said, “It is remote, far off. No, no, I am sorry, it is an error. It is close by, nearer than the nearest, ever close, closer to you than anything else.” It is as though he corrects himself and tells you a greater truth.

Let us, therefore, take a fresh look at our *satsanga*, *svadhyaya* and *sravana* and re-orient our approach and our daily encounter with such *sravana*. Let it be for a renewal of our awareness of what we are, what our life is to be, an awareness of the direction in which our life, our thoughts, our

emotions should flow, and an awareness of the Goal which has been declared to us to be that supreme attainment that takes one beyond sorrow and bestows upon one bliss, peace, freedom and fearlessness. May it be a process of ever recurring rebirth into ever higher and higher levels of awareness, consciousness and understanding. Thus let our spiritual life proceed ever onward, ever towards the Goal, progressive, never stagnant. That is spiritual life. That is the purpose of all processes of spiritual *sadhana*, including *sravana*. God bless you!

44

GOD IS LOVE

Immortal Atma Svarup! Beloved children of the Divine! We are in the presence of beloved and worshipful Gurudev. We are constant recipients of his goodness, his grace and above all his motiveless, infinite love.

In this world of human beings and living creatures, it is said that the greatest manifestation of love is the love of the mother for her child, a love in which the mother holds back nothing, desires nothing and considers no sacrifice too great. And this phenomenon is observed all over the universe, not only in human behaviour or human society but in the behaviour of all living beings.

When the eggs have hatched and the little fledglings have come out, you have only to see the way in which the entire life of the mother and the father birds becomes a total absorption in the feeding and protection of the new-borns. From morning till night, even in the worst of climates, they will forage for food and come and feed the young ones, protect them, and even die for them.

A cow that has calved, with what tenderness she licks the calf and looks after it day and night! If anyone approaches, the docile cow loses all fear and is ready to attack the intruder. It is said that when the young one is there, an animal will attack even a tiger or a lion if it approaches; it forgets all fear.

Thus it is with every species—the tenderness with which a cat licks its kittens or a ferocious animal like a tiger puts up with the playful antics and annoyances of its cubs. When herds of elephants move in a forest infested with beasts of prey, the youngest are kept in the centre of the herd, while the elder ones, the strongest and most experienced, take up the periphery. Thus they move about protecting the young ones.

This protecting, feeding, nourishing of the young is the most universal and vital manifestation of love. It is to be observed everywhere as the one common universal phenomenon in all forms of life. For every such observed phenomenon, there may be a hundred, nay a thousand unobserved, because many forms of life are not under our direct observation. To what extent the mother bird or mother animal goes, maybe even starving itself, going to any trouble and not regarding it as trouble, is known only to God Who observes it in the mother, and not to the offspring because it is not in a position or condition or state to intelligently know what is going on. All it knows is to look to her for this protection and nourishment and there it is available. Thus in a world

of change, there is one thing that never changes and has been so ever since creation: this phenomenon of the love of the mother for its offspring manifesting in the form of care, protection and nourishment—and at the time when the offspring is most helpless, most vulnerable and needing protection.

And all the great mystics who have attained God-consciousness or God-realisation or God-experience have vouched for this and borne it out, that this is the one truth about God: He is infinite love, immeasurable love, boundless love, that does not know barriers of time and space. One great mystic from the Dravidian culture explains and says: “Anpe Sivam—That Supreme Reality is nothing but absolute love.” And he adds: “One who has known that the Supreme Being is an embodiment of love, he indeed has known. And one who does not know that the Supreme Being is all love, what has he known? He has not known, he has yet to know.”

And this has been successively borne out by the experience of all the great mystics. One great mystic of Europe, from Bavaria in Germany, wrote a dialogue between a master and a disciple which has brought this out. He says: “What do you know about the power of divine love, O disciple? It is such that it cannot be fathomed, it cannot be described. It is something that will follow you wherever you go, whatever you are, whatever you have done. If necessary, even if you go to hell, it will reach out for you there and break hell to pieces and redeem you.” He uses the expression, it will “break hell to pieces.” Such is the nature of the love of God.

What is the *tattva* or principle behind all the *avataras*? All the *avataras* took place because God, out of His infinite love, wanted to come and help, protect, save and liberate His devotees from all fear. “Do not fear, do not sorrow. There is nothing for you to fear or be sorrowful about.” And thus the entire phenomenon of *avatara* is a manifestation, an outcome and expression of this great love of God. Because, He is concerned about the highest good and when He is called, He comes—“I come again and again to protect the righteous, to censure the unrighteous.” Why? Because God is love. And His love is one unchanging, ever-present truth that one has to know, one has to experience and one has to have firm abiding faith in.

Many a time we think God’s love is not available to us. However, one poet declares the truth that when you think that God’s love has been withdrawn, “now I do not have it, it is no more available to me, it is no more extended to me,” perhaps that is the time when it is most extended to you. Some unknown author has brought this out, giving it in the form of someone narrating a dream. In that dream the person had a very vivid experience and suddenly feels deprived of the love and protection of God at a time when he most needed it. He then questions God: “Why did you not come to my rescue at that time?” The answer that comes from God is very revealing. It is worth knowing, and this truth, expressed in the form of a narration of a dream, is under the caption “Footprints.”*

* A man dreamt he was walking along the beach with the Lord. He looked back and noticed that at the lowest and saddest times of his life there was only one set of footprints instead of two. He questioned the Lord as to why, when he needed Him the most, the Lord had left him. The Lord replied: “My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you only see one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”

God's love is manifest in all His creation. It is that love which made God give the wisdom teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. "Thou art dear to Me, therefore I shall reveal this truth to you. Even though it is very, very difficult of knowing, yet because you are dear to Me, I will reveal it to you." Thus through the abundance of love that Lord Krishna had for Arjuna, an individual soul, a representative human being, the experience of the eleventh chapter of the Gita has been made available to humanity.

Love is the central fact of this universe. Without it the universe will not stand; it will disintegrate and fall away, because it is love that upholds. It is present even in inert, gross matter as a power that scientists know as cohesion. Cohesion is the outermost manifestation of His love. It is that which holds everything together. Thus it is that the whole of the solar universe is held in its place by this great attracting power of cohesion, the power of gravitation.

It is this love that is ceaselessly flowing forth from Gurudev, that is manifesting to us in the form of protection, in the form of nourishment, clothing us, giving us shelter, helping us along the path, giving us inspiration, giving us guidance. All that love means, he manifested in and through this Ashram, providing a place where the necessities of a sincere seeking soul are made available, so that he may pursue his spiritual life free of anxiety, free of fear, free of the pain of want. If one could see the reality of this set-up and what it means and one could impartially ponder it, then one would be amazed at the abundant love, the motiveless love, the unceasing love and grace and compassion of that being whom we call Gurudev. It is a manifestation of his love for sincere seekers, be they deserving or be they undeserving. His love is showered upon all without distinction. Because of their inner sincerity and because of their need of his love, it comes forth spontaneously.

Whenever he used to move about, Gurudev always carried some spiritual literature with him for free distribution—to convey some divine thought, some inspiration, some enlightenment, some insight to whomsoever he came across, be it a seeker, a devotee of God, an unhappy human being, or a dejected individual. In this way, he always had something to give to people to tell them the truth. And if you live in the truth, you will get rid of fear, you will get rid of sorrow. All such things go away when you live in truth.

Following the practice of the Master, some devotees recently shared a poem written by the late, well-known and beloved American poetess, Helen Steiner Rice:

"The seasons come and go,
And with them comes the thought,
Of all the various changes
That Time in flight has brought.
But one thing never changes,
It remains the same forever,
God truly loves His children
And He will forsake them never."

And it is for the children to feel that they are His children. Then they will immediately experience the presence of His love or recognise the love that has always been present in their lives.

“Just close your eyes and open your heart,
And feel your worries and care depart.
Just yield yourself to the Father above,
And let Him hold you secure in His love.”

—*Helen Steiner Rice*

When I read the poem I thought, how wonderful, how amazing that what this poetess of the twentieth century writes was also experienced thousands of years ago by mystics of India and medieval mystics of Europe. In the Indian experience, in the Indian vision of the ancient sages, they came face to face with this fact, with this great truth, and they called the Supreme Being, *bhakta-vatsalya*. He has *vatsalya* towards *bhaktas*. *Vatsalya* means mother’s love to the child. And you know that in India, in the context of devotion, the Supreme is addressed as: “You are my mother, You are my father, You are my relative and friend, You are my knowledge and my wealth, You are my all-in-all.”

God’s love is boundless, motiveless, and it is available in abundance to each and every one of His creatures, man and animal, all forms of life. And more so to the human beings whom He made in His own image, who are a part of His own Being. They are all a manifestation of the supreme principle of love that is the innermost essence of God. Thus in this world of change, in this world of phenomena, if there is at all anything that is unchanging, ever-constant, ever-present, most dependable, it is that God is love and God’s love is available to you. This is the one great fact of your own life. “Anpe Sivam! God is love!”

45

EVER KEEP THE SUBLIME IDEAL BEFORE YOU

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! Amongst the innumerable human beings on the surface of the earth, those few individuals who have before them an ideal and a goal, who live in order to strive, to fulfil an ideal and to attain a goal, they alone can truly be said to live their life in a very, very special way. For those who have no particular ideal before them to fulfil, who do not have as yet a clear-cut goal to attain, life is not being lived by them, but rather they are helplessly carried down this onward rushing stream called life. It is not they who are in charge, who are in control, who are engaged in a purposeful pursuit, but rather it is life in all its various implications that is in control. They are creatures of circumstance. They are caught in the midst of situations and are dragged along the currents of certain appetites and urges. They are caught in the net of desires and cravings and are pushed and propelled by inner compulsive cravings and desires.

In the eleventh chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna, with his *divyachakshu* (divine eye), beheld both the benign and the not so benign aspects of the great cosmic Power in all its dynamic manifestation. In one direction he beheld a glorious Being, wonderfully adorned, shining, radiant, awe-inspiring. Yet, simultaneously in another direction, he saw another aspect, a terrifying aspect of It: something terrible, all-consuming, all-destroying, with a stream of living beings falling

into Its jaws to be crushed, consumed and to disappear. As constantly as life was emerging, death was also consuming.

In this same way, life can be a creative process where every moment adds something to you, heightens you, enriches you and takes you further up; and it becomes to you a steady, continuous progress towards the Goal Supreme and for the fulfilment of a grand ideal. For, already within you, within your vision and understanding, your range of aspiration, has come a clear-cut goal and an ideal, something noble, something more than the common. Therefore, to you, in total, life means a creative process, a progression, an attainment, a fulfilment.

When this is absent, life consumes the individual. The individual is not living life. He is hurried away, as it were, down the stream, helpless, impelled, propelled, pushed hither, pulled thither and lamenting, but sometimes, very strangely, thinking himself to be fully in charge, imagining himself to be very, very purposeful. That is the mystery of *maya*. That is what is known as *kartriva abhimana*, the ego of doership. One is not really doing anything; one is made to do, and yet one thinks, “No, no, I am doing, I am doing it very cleverly, I am doing it in a wonderful way.”

And this is what is known as *moha* (delusion) and *bhranti* (erroneous thinking). It is a mysterious working of an illusory power about which we know nothing. We only posit its presence because of its effects. We know that millions and billions of human beings are totally deluded, totally in a state of intoxication, totally in a state of enslavement. They are not able to control their anger and their passion, but they think they are manifesting great power. Anger, a weakness, is taken to be a strength. Passion, a terrible overcoming process, is taken to be something to be proud of. Even so, various other enslaving forces, that propel one hither and thither, are mistaken for embellishments.

Thus, not aware of what one is doing, one is constantly allowing oneself to be made to dance by this mysterious power called mind, which is another name for *maya*. And so totally identified is the *jiva*-consciousness with the mind that the individual never knows that he is enslaved, never knows his exact situation. Rather, he rejoices in it, thinking “this is it, this is life.” As such, even while being made to dance like a puppet, one imagines oneself as being master of the stage and putting on a great performance. This is total delusion. And this is the position of ninety-nine percent of humanity, ninety-nine percent of the world’s population.

In this state of total identification with the mind, one does not know of one’s reality apart from the mind, different from the mind, distinct from the mind, something far above. And not knowing one’s real identity, one lives one’s entire life and passes away without ever affirming and asserting the Self. The Self is never manifested, is never given active expression to. Rather, in a state of total delusion, caught and enslaved in delusion, one thinks oneself as the master of the situation and as expressing one’s Self, whereas one is in a state of stupor.

A sage says that this is the condition of the vast, vast majority of human beings—*pitva mohamayim pramadadiram unmatta bhutam jagat*—they are in a state of intoxicated spiritual stupor, of slumber, of total forgetfulness of the real Self, of total delusion about their true identity. Days, weeks, months, years fly by and life rushes towards its conclusion, yet they are not aware of the passage of time. They are so totally in the grip of the ego, so constantly occupied by worldly

affairs, that they have no time or inclination to try to pierce the gloom, rise above delusion and know themselves.

And the greatest concern is that in this condition the intellect further aids and abets *maya* by making the individual think how wise he is, how clearly he perceives. So there is intellectual delusion also. The intellect functions, but only to conform to this pattern of delusion and to further confirm one's mistaken identity, even while imagining that by its exercise it has managed to go beyond deluded identity and be established in truth.

This is the very peculiar part played by the intellect. Seemingly it exercises knowledge, but it exercises its knowledge within the state of delusion, augmenting the delusion instead of destroying it. Whereas the intellect was meant to be the sharp, pointed spear to rend this dark curtain of delusion and go beyond it under the leadership of God-consciousness, it too succumbs to *maya* and further confirms the delusion by imagining that its knowledge is wisdom, imagining that *apara vidya* (lower knowledge) is *para vidya* (higher knowledge). This is part of the great delusion.

But those few fortunate beings into whom God has given this great grace of an awakening, and a continued active exercise of this awakened awareness as the basic part of their consciousness, having this inner state of light, they clearly perceive the Goal and are always aware that life is meant to be a fulfilment of a great, important, spiritual, philosophical, moral ideal. They indeed really live. They indeed make use of life, using it for the fulfilment of this ideal and for purposeful propulsion towards the great Goal. They are blessed.

Their purposefulness is because of their wakefulness, their awareness. And this active, inner wakefulness is progressive because a goal has already been set, and that goal is powerfully pulling it up every moment. This progressive awareness makes life meaningful for them as a constant movement to fulfil a great ideal, to attain a sublime goal. Ideals and goals are seemingly also present in the lives of others, but not in their true implication, in their true sense. For, there is but one ideal: movement towards Divinity, towards perfection, and there is but one goal: eternal awareness of one's essential nature. These two make life real life. Otherwise, we imagine we are living, but actually we are in the darkness of stagnation.

Thus should the awareness be awakened and kept constantly awake through constant pondering, *manana*, of the great truths presented to us by the scriptures like Vivekachudamani, Atmabodha, Bhagavatam and the Upanishads. That is our only guarantee of making life a purposeful process. That is the only guarantee. That is the only possibility of keeping away from the inner consciousness all delusion, all *moha*, all intoxication—a constant living in the light of these great truths and our own constantly exercised *vichara* (enquiry) and *viveka* (discrimination). Without actively and constantly exercising *vichara* and *viveka*, there is no *sadhana*, there is no spiritual life, there is no Yoga. One cannot be a *jijnasu* or *mumukshu*, and there is no true life. Life is not being lived; it is making use of you as a pawn, as a puppet.

Therefore, let ever within you ring that Upanishadic call: *uttisthata jagrata, prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise, be enlightened), and let every moment of your being be a response and an answer to this call—“Yes, I am awake, I stand up and move towards the Goal, I move towards wisdom supreme, I move towards the ultimate state of illumination and

enlightenment.” Then every moment and every movement of your life and being will be a response to that Upanishadic call. It should ring with every beat of your heart. It *will* ring with every throb of your pulse. That is life. That is *sadhana*. That is *jijnasa*. That is true *mumukshutva*.

May God endow you with this inner awareness and purposefulness, dynamism and wakefulness! May you be like Nachiketas. May you be like one of those great immortal personalities of the Upanishads. That *kshamata* (capacity) is within each one of you. Therefore God has brought you to a place, a set-up and a life where all these are possible—if only you wish it, if only you will it. God bless you all!

46

WE LIVE IN A FRIENDLY WORLD

Radiant Divinities! Let us pay our devout and reverential obeisance to the gracious and radiant Spiritual Presence in whose proximity we are gathered together at this moment. May we adore the great Reality that is the one unchanging, imperishable, eternal, conscious Being that pervades and envelops all things, that indwells and sustains all beings ever since the dawn of creation and for ever and ever. May we accept the gift of this dawn hour of spiritual fellowship with deep gratitude and great rejoicing, for it is extended to us day after day, asking nothing in return except that it be utilised for our own highest good and our own supreme blessedness. And for this great opportunity to enter into life each day and rise one step higher, one step nearer the Goal Supreme, let us also be filled with utmost thankfulness, for we enter into a world which is kin to us, part of us, related to us.

Each *jivatma* is an *amsa* (part) of *paramatma* and therefore related to *paramatma*. The world also has emerged out of the *paramatma* and is therefore related to *paramatma*. The relationship between man and the world is therefore *sahodara* (like brothers). It is the same relationship as that which exists between Kartikeya and Ganesa. Kartikeya was created by Lord Siva and Ganesa was created by Mother Parvati. We are direct *amsas* of *paramatman*, and all the universe is *prakriti sambhava*, born of *prakriti* (Nature), the outcome of God’s inexplicable, indescribable cosmic power, which Vedanta emphatically says is not different from *paramatman*. Great sages who had *brahma-sakshatkara* (direct experience of the Absolute) found that *purusha* and *prakriti* are inseparable and one; they are identical.

This is the relationship between you and Nature. All Nature is kin to you. We live in a friendly world in which everything that exists is eager to assist us. Everything seen, heard, touched, tasted, smelled, thought about, imagined are all eager to help in our evolution. As a matter of fact, they are not only there to help evolution, but you have been put here amidst them in order to assist and achieve your own evolution unto perfection. Everything wishes to help us; all things are part of our evolution.

If we could only see this, it would be a fascinating life-long study of how we could utilise each and everything that we encounter, from morning until night, to assist us in our evolution. This

research would be never-ending. This research would be ever renewing your knowledge of the universe in which you live. Everything inert as well as alive, both animate and inanimate, will be found to have a place and a purpose, apart from their own place and purpose, in your evolution. They are there to help and assist you. They are there to make you overcome.

Everything in *prakriti* (Nature) including yourself, your body, mind, thoughts, emotions, sentiments, actions, the sum total of your personality and its innumerable facets and aspects, all contain the three *gunas*. They all hold within themselves *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. All the three *gunas* are indispensable; without them nothing can exist or function properly. Without *tamas* we would not be able to sleep and recoup energy expended; life would become a rapidly degenerating process. *Rajas* too has its function to perform. But then, we should be diligent and we should also be intelligent. Wisely we must know how to be helped by everything, know how to invoke the *sattva* within everything.

You all know that food sustains life. It nourishes the body as well as the mind, intellect and our very nature, *svabhava*. And you know that all the three *gunas* are in food. It is up to you to make a beeline to *sattva*, to take *rajas* in the right quantity and to avoid *tamas* as much as is necessary and possible. Fire is indispensable in the kitchen; otherwise, we cannot cook food. A sharp knife is also indispensable for cutting the vegetables. And if we use the indispensable factors of fire and steel with caution, they will help us, and we will benefit from them day in, day out, year after year. They become indispensable to us; we cherish them. But unless we have been cautioned and have learned how to use them with diligence and intelligence, we will burn ourselves, cut ourselves.

So there is a stage when we should be cautioned against Nature around us, cautioned against this world. But it is a stage, only a stage. It is a warped idea that we have to fight against Nature, that everything is there to torment us. If we get stuck in the idea that Nature is alien, then we lose a great gift of God, a wonderful facility afforded to us by God to make use of Nature, to utilise the kinship of Nature in order to attain divine perfection. On the other hand, if wisdom, caution and common sense are exercised, then the whole universe, everything in Nature, will be known to be your own, your kin, your well-wisher. And you will know how indispensable they are, how they are necessary, that they are put there to help you in your evolution. Nothing is inimical. You do not live in a hostile world. It is a wise God Who has created you and this universe and put you here—an all-knowing, omniscient Being.

There is a beautiful story in the Upanishads about a seeker who came to a Maharshi and was assigned to do *karma yoga* (selfless service). Years and years go by. He never sits before his Guru, but he is taught by everything around him and shines with *brahma-tejas* (divine light). Without ever sitting before his Guru or learning a lesson, he becomes an illumined being, a *brahma-jnani*. It is just an indication of what Nature is meant to do, what Nature can do for you.

So it depends upon how much we have learned the art and science of calling forth and invoking the *sattva* that is in everything in this universe—without yourself and within yourself. Make use of Nature, utilise the kinship of Nature in order to attain divine perfection. We live in a friendly world. We are surrounded by friendly things which are ever eager to help us in our evolution. This is the truth.

Pondering this truth, one will behold the world as God, behold the world as angelic and not demonic. And it will arouse in one a great joy, a great hope, a great feeling of gratitude, a great feeling of friendliness to all life around, for all things around, animate and inanimate. For God made them all and put us amidst them. May this truth enlighten your onward march towards the great Goal!

47

DYING TO THE LITTLE SELF

Reverential prostrations to Gurudev's glorious and gracious spiritual presence and loving adorations to the all-pervading Universal Being. May the divine grace of the Supreme and the choicest blessings and benedictions of beloved and worshipful Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji be upon all of you and grant you the intuition, and enable you to have the vision, to perceive and to recognise that you are living in a friendly world, to perceive and to recognise that Nature, *prakriti*, surrounding you, the universe in which you live, has been created for your benefit, to help you to evolve and to assist in your quest after supreme bliss, peace and perfection.

In the ultimate context of your life and its hidden meaning, its inner purpose, it is but a gradual process of manifesting the perfection that you are, the perfection which is already within you. The potential for God-nature, the potential for God-consciousness, is inherent in human consciousness. And the means of manifesting it is by obliterating the human consciousness through selfless service, through devotion directed to a goal, to a point other than the self, and the turning away of the mind, not only from the external universe of multifarious names and forms, but also from one's own human personality and its various expressions and tendencies, its various demands and clamourings.

There is a very significant saying: "Be still and know that I am God." When the human consciousness is constantly saying, "I am, I am, I am, I am this, I am that," it does not give a chance for the reception of the constant signal from within of the Cosmic Being: "I am, I am, I am, eternally I am. I exist, I am the reality, I am the truth, I am the one being, I am your highest good, I am your supreme glory, I am your ultimate destiny." This is not heard because of the little "I am, I am, I am"—its constant unbroken note.

And therefore the great illumined and enlightened sages and seers evolved a method of gradually silencing this little "I am" by transcending it through thinking of others, through the sublime giving of oneself for the joy of others, for the benefit of others. By giving oneself for the good of others, you create a counter-situation where you have no time to listen to the constant clamour of this little "I am." By understanding the rationale and purpose behind this method and thus transcending oneself, focusing one's attention upon something other than the self, the self is gradually and ultimately weaned out of its puerile habit of "I am, I am, I am," which is spiritual childishness, a spiritual aberration, spiritual infancy, an infantile manifestation. And this spiritually infantile, constant affirmation of the little "I" is very wisely transcended, by-passed, by bringing the focus of the *antahkarana* (inner being) upon sublime *dan*—giving of oneself; sublime

sacrifice—*yajna*; and sublime *tapas*—the restraining of the constant manifestation and vehement affirmation of the human consciousness represented by this “I” personality.

And thus when the attention of the *antahkarana* is gradually diverted towards noble things other than the self, several things are achieved simultaneously. The affirmation of the “I”, the little self, gradually ceases its hold upon consciousness. The human consciousness gradually becomes refined, it is thinned out; it is on its way to being eliminated. That is what *nishkama-karma-yoga* (selfless service), *matri-seva*, *pitri-seva* (service of mother and father), *samaj-seva* (service of society), *guru-seva* (service of the Guru), *daridra-narayana-seva* (service of God in the form of the poor), *bhuta-daya* (compassion to creatures), does. Consciousness is now being liberated from the constant nagging harassment of the little self.

This process is initiated and set going by shifting the consciousness from being I-centred to being we-centred, you-centred, all-centred—the concern of all, the welfare of every creature you encounter in life, be it an ant, a spider, a plant, a flower, a leaf, or any creature, bird or beast. All human beings become your concern and your human nature is ennobled, uplifted.

And now, at this stage, a second phase of this liberating oneself from human consciousness is brought into being. A great love is created for the Divine, for the Reality. Self-love becomes God-love. Self-love is subdued and overcome first by compassion towards all creatures, and then it becomes diverted towards the Divine, Godward.

An intensification of this process marks the third phase, when the mind is withdrawn not only from the external world of multifarious objects, it is also withdrawn from oneself. One empties oneself of oneself, and the attention is withdrawn from all the numerous nuances that go to represent this barrier, this screen, this thing which holds you back from attaining the supernal consciousness of the God which is “You,” the God which is the inner real identity, the real “I AM,” the great “I AM.” And thus moves on this wonderful process of unfoldment.

And the culmination of the process is what Guru Maharaj has summed up as, “Die to live, lead the divine life.” “When shall I be free? When I shall cease to be.” “Then shall I be free, when I shall cease to be.” Then shall be the great orb, the great sunrise of God-awareness, God-consciousness, the great day of days, of rejoicing, of hallelujah, of *vijaya* (victory). And forever this human consciousness is set to rest, *atyantika abhava* (total, complete absence) of the false “I”. “For it is in dying to the little self that one attains to ever-lasting life.” It does not mean some grand or imaginary, fanciful, post-mortem stage or other-worldly stage. Everlasting life is here and now, and dying to the little self is the process of Yoga.

This “dying to the little self” of St. Francis and those words of Gurudev are all built into these spiritual processes called *nishkama-karma-yoga* and *bhakti yoga*, where the *jivatman* has no time to think of himself. All thought is upon the beloved, upon the Lord, upon the *ishta devata*, upon the Universal Being. And it proceeds to an oblivion of the little self by constant focusing upon the Supreme Reality, meditation.

Meditation does not necessarily mean sitting with closed eyes in some corner in *padmasana*. Meditation is a state of mind. When it is God that holds the field, God that pulls the

attention, when the focusing is not on the self and its ways and various manifestations, but on the Overself, that state of mind is called meditation. And it is this constant state of meditateness, God-centredness, that ultimately brings about God-consciousness.

And it is the world that gives us the opportunity to come out of the cocoon, the net, the prison house of I-life where “I” is the constant subject of concern. The world has been put there to help us evolve from this morbid metaphysics and to gradually expand the consciousness. And to this end, having recognised that we live in a friendly world where everything, every object, every situation, everything that surrounds us, is there to help us in this process of evolution, we have to also recognise the necessity of similarly making our interior a friendly world, a friendly inner universe where everything is helping us towards this supreme glorious consummation.

As long as this inner universe has not also been converted into a benign, friendly environment, you will be opposing yourself, delaying that great day, that wonderful day. *Subha samskaras* (auspicious, good mental impressions) have to be invoked, *subha vasanas* (auspicious desires) encouraged, cultivated, strengthened, activated, and constantly indulged in, and in every way *sattva* (harmony) is to be made to prevail. And the further the “I” recedes away from the horizon of our inner vision and awareness, the more friendly becomes the inner environment for our self-unfoldment.

Then we bring paradise. We live in a friendly outer world, we live in a friendly inner world. *Prakriti* (Nature) becomes our real mother and our *antahkarana* (inner being) becomes our real best friend. It becomes our greatest asset, our supreme help in transcending the human consciousness and emerging into the glorious state of Divine-consciousness, God-consciousness, which is our reality, which in truth we ever are—*jivo-brahmaiva* (*jiva* is verily Brahman).

May we thus have the discipline and learn the skill, the know-how, of this all-important process of making for ourselves a friendly world in both the exterior and the interior. *Prakriti* (Nature) immediately becomes a friend of those who are befriended by Bhagavan (God). Bhagavan befriends those who give themselves to Him, befriend Him, want Him, think of Him. Lord Krishna says: “Always place your mind upon Me, your intellect upon Me, become Mine, salute Me, then I give you everything that is worthwhile.”

Thus, if God becomes to us our supreme value, we are constantly dwelling in Him, then He befriends us and *prakriti* becomes our greatest friend. Then our own interior, through the grace of God, also transforms itself into an environment conducive to our highest welfare.

May God’s divine grace and Gurudev’s benedictions enable us to perceive and to take up this task of transformation and achieve success in it, attain the glorious state of God-consciousness which is awaiting us! God bless you all!

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WHAT PLEASES THE LORD

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved seekers and *sadhaks* assembled together here upon the very auspicious concluding Monday of this holy month of Sravana! The entire month of Sravana has been traditionally regarded as a very auspicious and specially favourable month for the worship of Lord Siva. The day of the week set apart for Siva *aradhana* (worship) is Monday. For hundreds and thousands of devotees, all four Mondays in this month of Sravana are days of pilgrimage to the shrines of Lord Siva, wherever they be.

And what do they take to worship Lord Siva? Water. They do not take any elaborate paraphernalia; they carry water. So it is that you saw yesterday hundreds and thousands of pilgrims crossing the Ganga to make the long steep climb to the shrine of Nilakanth, carrying only water. They are not learned in Sanskrit; they are not conversant with *rudri*, *mantra*, Vedas, Vedic chants, traditional Vedic rituals, or the ceremonial way of worshipping, but they are deeply devoted. They just take the Name of the Lord and offer water, do *abhisheka*. And as you know, Lord Siva is *asutosh* (quickly propitiated), easily pleased, and always ready to immediately extend His grace.

What is this phenomenon we see year after year, on Mondays during Sravana, millions on the march carrying water for miles and miles? There will be people who find this mere superstition, a blind following of some tradition: “Father did it, grandfather did it, great-grandfather did it; others are doing it, and we also are doing it.” That may be one aspect. But merely because of that it does not become meaningless, it does not become worthless. It is easy to stand in judgment through our little egoistic intellect, but it is more difficult to go deeper into the matter, to analyse and find out the truth.

Their only asset, their only recommendation is that they have a certain feeling with which they do all these things. The Lord prizes this feeling far, far more than anything else—this noble, sublime, lofty feeling. “*Patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayachchati.*” You see, “*bhaktya*” (with devotion)—“He who offers to Me even a leaf, a flower, a little fruit, a little water *with devotion...*,” if it is given with the right feeling inside, then it becomes far more acceptable than any pompous ceremony done with a great many things, a great show. Even if worship is not done for show, if this feeling is absent, perhaps because the worship has become routine or mechanical, then it is a great loss. One must be cautioned against it. One should keep this feeling ever-green, ever-fresh, ever-present in its authentic, reverent state.

For that you should pray to the Lord: “*dehi me kripaya sambho tvayi bhaktirachanchala*—Give me a feeling of devotion to Thee that never varies, that is constant, not present at one time and absent, at another. Grant me, O Lord, constant, unswerving, unwavering devotion to Thy feet.” This you must cultivate. This is the key to success in *sadhana*, in anything you do, in all spiritual *sadhana*, all Yoga, all devotional practices. Do it with a genuine *bhav*. If you lack it, pray to the Lord: “Grant me proper *bhav*; this is what I ask.” For, it is the feeling with which you do a thing that makes it meaningful, significant and valuable. It gives results.

Someone may be sitting in a government or business office typing or doing bookkeeping; the same work is done here in the Ashram. A businessman sells books; here also we have books for sale. Someone may come here and do the same work as he did in the world. What is the difference? There is a world of difference. A sweeper sweeps the street; a devotee also takes a broom and sweeps in front of Visvanath Temple. He may be a high official in government, but here he feels himself to be a humble servant of the Lord. The outer act is the same—sweeping—but then, what the Lord beholds is the feeling. The sweeper may be doing it reluctantly, cursing his fate and with his mind elsewhere; but the devotee may be sweeping with a totally different *bhav*: “The Lord is present in this Shrine. This is my sacred duty; this is my *seva*.” Therefore, it is the feeling that brings in a spiritual quality to an action, which is absent if the same action is done without feeling.

There is a narration about a little, neglected shrine of Lord Siva in a remote, deep forest where once in a while some priest used to come and worship. A forest-dwelling tribal, a hunter by profession, by chance came across this shrine and saw that someone had offered some flowers and leaves and had poured some water over the *linga*. He thought, “Oh, perhaps this is the way the Lord is worshipped; I must also do it here.” So, whenever he got a chance, he also tried to do a little worship. He was illiterate. He did not know anything beyond the outer action. But he felt, “Here is a chance. God is here; I must worship. Evidently He is pleased with this worship; therefore, someone has done it. I must also offer worship.”

So he used to hunt, kill some animal, cut it and take some raw meat. He took an arrow in one hand, some flesh and his bow in the other, and then plucked some flowers which he carried on his head as he had no plate. There was also no vessel to take water, so he used to put it into his mouth. He would go to Lord Siva and say, “O Lord, I have brought You all articles of worship, please accept them.” He spat the water from his mouth upon the image saying, “O Lord, I am hereby doing *abhisheka* for You; be pleased to accept it.”

In the context of the Hindu religion, anything that comes in contact with the mouth becomes polluted and is unfit for offering to any Deity, but he did not know it. He had feeling in his heart, and so he just spat the water. Then he offered the flowers. Thereafter he put the meat down and offered it, which is another sacrilege. Who will offer raw meat to God? But the tribal did not know it was forbidden; he did it and he did it with feeling, *bhav*. He offered what he had, but with that he gave something which is very rare to find, a feeling-full heart, a heart full of devotion, a feeling of devotion. And ultimately the Lord gave *darsan* to the illiterate, uncivilised, uncultured tribal, one who is considered very low in society. What was his merit that made the Lord give him *darsan*? It was the genuineness and the great depth of his feeling.

We have many such narratives in the lives of the saints in which the crux of the whole matter, the essence of it, is that what is most pleasing and acceptable to the Lord, more than anything else, is the feeling of the heart of the devotee. It is the feeling that converts *karma* (work) into *karma yoga* (work as worship). It is feeling that converts an ordinary action into a spiritual process, spiritualises your action. And that is the way of the devotee. It is specially the way of disciples and followers of Gurudev Swami Sivananda Maharaj; for he has given this secret, that the most important thing in spiritual life is the feeling, *bhav*, with which you engage in doing all things in the spiritual field. He revealed to us, he taught us the importance, the greatness, the indispensable necessity of *bhav* for successful spiritual life and successful spiritual *sadhana*.

Let us not forget this essential point. Let us purify our heart, and that purified heart will know the sublime *bhav* of devotion and love. And it is through such *bhav* that whatever we do, no matter how imperfect it may be, will become acceptable to the Lord as though it were perfect. *Bhav*, feeling of the heart, that is the one way of drawing down His grace. Think about it and cultivate it with diligence. Pray for it. Devotion, compassion, meditation, combined with *bhav*—everything in conjunction with *bhav*—becomes the highest qualification, pleases the Lord, draws His grace and makes your *sadhana* successful. God bless you!

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KNOW YOURSELF

Beloved Immortal Atman! Seekers and *sadhaks*! One day intervenes between this day and the coming New Year. The New Year will have its birth with a day of prayer, a day of abstaining from ceaseless, feverish secular thoughts, worldly thinking, worldly feelings. We shall not exercise our minds frantically, feverishly, in the field of “I” and “mine,” in the field of desires, passions, appetites and cravings, in the field of imaginations, anticipations and memories. For, all these constitute *prapanca*, *samsara*; all these constitute bondage, the world, the earth plane; all these constitute earthliness, earth consciousness.

Anything that is active in your *antahkarana*, in your mind, that is not of the Reality, not of Divinity, not of the Spirit, that indeed verily constitutes your bondage. Be it emotion or sentiment, thought or desire, imagination or anticipation, memory or wish, anything that actively occupies your inner being, your psyche, and vibrates on that level—this outside universe, yourself and your life in this outside universe, in this temporary frame of time and space, name and form—constitutes *prapanca*, *samsara*, your own created bondage, the level of your ignorant “I am the body” personality. And it is exactly, precisely this that we have to transcend.

Millions and billions of people are engaged in this type of thought, this type of consciousness, in this type of exercise of their interior in terms of this phenomenon, this temporary appearance, this many, this veil of tears, this arena of like and dislike, pleasure and pain, happiness and misery. It is all within the realm of *prakriti*, *maya*, all within the realm of our deluded thinking of ourselves as something other than our own *svarupa* (essential nature). It is all within the realm of this falsehood. And this *samsara*, this *prapanca* is what ails us.

This *samsara*, this *prapanca*, this earthly level of consciousness is what constitutes our afflictions, not anything outside. Tigers, snakes, scorpions, malaria, dysentery, war, pestilence, earthquakes, hurricanes, famine, fires are all occasions. Even if they do afflict us, there is not much we can do about them. The human being has severe limitations on his ability to change nature around him, to fight it and control it. Nature ultimately overcomes, ascends. Think of the recent air crash, the earthquake, the tidal wave. There is very little you can do. Even so with afflictions caused by disease, your ability to do something is limited. You are apt to go from the frying pan to the fire. Sometimes the remedy is no better than the disease.

Therefore, here is a case for endurance, for heightening your powers of bearing, forbearing. There is a very common but very wonderful, beautiful expression in the West: “Grin and bear it.” “Bear it and grin,” they did not say; rather, “Grin and bear it.” Make up your mind first of all that you will keep your mood positive, that this is the way you are going to face the world and go through all experiences. “Yes, this is the way. I will not cease to smile.” It is a wonderful philosophy in a common saying. “*Tan titikshasva bharata* (Endure them bravely, O Arjuna),” says Lord Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita.

Another wise adage, maxim, is: “That which cannot be cured has to be endured.” And this is supported by a very ancient Sanskrit saying: “*prarabdhakarma bhogata eva vinasah*—it is only through enduring, through undergoing, experiencing, that *prarabdha karma* is ultimately finished.” There is no other way. *Tasmat apariharyerthe na tvam sochitum arhasi* (Therefore, over the inevitable thou shouldst not grieve). That which cannot be cured has to be endured is backed up by thousands of years of wisdom. And this is what constitutes wisdom, the absence of folly, real inner strength, the way to go ahead.

It does not mean that we should allow everything to crush us. We have to strive to see how we can better our condition. But, at the same time, as long as the condition lasts, be like a stone, be like a fire, be brave, be strong, have the power of endurance. This is what the saints said and did. This is what the scriptures say and demonstrate by various incidents. How much Harischandra endured. How much Yudhisthira endured. How much Draupadi endured. How much Sita endured!

Thus, therefore, our world ultimately is this inner realm of ours where we create our condition, where we create our state, *avastha*. It is that which constitutes our *antahkarana* (inner being), not the afflictions that are caused by the various manifestations of nature. They are not our real problem. They are very minor compared to what we can produce.

Therefore, we have to draw our attention to the fact that the *prapanca* of the *samsara*, the earth consciousness or the worldly field of being is something within us, not outside. Anything that does not directly pertain, relate and is relevant to the Divine, the Reality, our supreme Goal, our mission in life, our great destiny, anything that is contrary to it, that falsifies the knowledge of its sole reality within our own inner contents is our problem—any imagination, anticipation or memory; any desire, sentiment or mood; any emotion, thought or craving; any state of mind, any mode.

Not without reason the great ones have said: “What one’s faith is, that the person is.” Not without reason have they said: “Man is what he thinks.” “As a man thinketh, so he becometh.” They say: “Tell me his companions, I will tell you what he is.” Who are companions? Those whose company we keep within ourselves—the thoughts we keep company with, the moods, the fancies—they are our companions. We may be free from all bad company of persons outside of us, but if your company within is not right and desirable, then you are heading towards trouble. Even bad company from outside cannot spend the whole twenty-four hours with you, but these inner companions never leave you, except briefly during the state of deep sleep.

Therefore, the need to understand yourself within, know yourself in depth—not in the height of philosophy: “Who am I? I am Atman, I am Brahman.” No, no, no, that can wait, that is not

very urgent. The immediate necessity is to know yourself in truth, not in fancy, not in deception, self-deception. Know yourself in honesty and frankness, in clear, perfect perception, in the light of deep introspection, in the light of self-knowledge through self-analysis, self-study. All real knowledge starts when you are trying to understand yourself.

Understand yourself in depth, and immediately it will bring forth much revelation and many solutions. Problems will start scattering and taking to their heels, vanishing, suddenly not there. As long as you are afraid to enter in and make a spring cleaning, a thorough cleaning up, you will always keep years old dust and debris cluttering up everything that requires to be thrown away. The free-flow of divine thought, God thought, positive thought, peace and joy, the spring sources of your energy, enthusiasm, will never be released. It will be held back because too much is cluttering.

You have, therefore, to turn the gaze within, introspect, know yourself. Know yourself not in the *advaita* Vedantic sense, but in common sense. In the real sense of the term, know yourself now, here, as you are. Then let us think of what you were before the world was created—*satchidananda brahman*. It will wait patiently for you to first of all clear up your way to It. For, if this first stage of self-knowledge is not there, then Brahman will ever be where He is, and you will ever be tied down to this level of earth consciousness only.

We have to know ourselves. And to that end, Gurudev said to make resolutions, draw up a daily routine, maintain a spiritual diary and do self-analysis. See what it reveals. It will tell you many things about yourself which you did not know at all. A spiritual diary not only keeps careful note of your morning to evening spiritual routine, it also keeps careful note of how you were, how you reacted, what you did: how many times you lost your temper, told lies, failed in controlling your senses, what virtues you are trying to develop, what self-punishment you did, etc. So, it tells you a great deal about this inner being which is the true source of all problems, all troubles, all vexations, all bondage, all your sorrows.

But, this inner being is also the source of your solutions, your revelations, your coming out of yourself, breaking this bondage. So it is not all a dark picture, it is not all negative. Because the solution has to be in the same plane of your being as where the problems not only abide but abound. So that is the bright side of the picture. The key is in your hand; all solutions are there. They did not say that God will teach you who you are, Guru will teach you who you are; they said: “Know thyself. Enquire, find out, know yourself and be free.” So, look for your solutions within yourself where all the problems abide. Find your solutions there. Do not search for solutions where they do not exist.

As I said, tomorrow is the last day before the New Year. Move towards the New Year with wisdom, with full and proper understanding of yourself and with self-knowledge. The self has several levels. Start with the level in which you are at this moment. Then proceed on to higher levels of self-knowledge. Then the higher levels will have a firm basis. Otherwise, the higher levels of self-knowledge, not having a firm basis, because there is still some other thing occupying the ground, will not last. It will only be a passing thing. “I am Brahman, I am *satchidananda*, I am neither mind nor body, immortal Self am I” will only be a transient phenomenon. But, clear the ground of the lesser aspects of self-consciousness; then self-knowledge in its higher levels can start occupying your consciousness.

God help you to be a success unto yourself by your own goodness to yourself, by your own kindness to yourself. If you mean well by yourself, you have to prove it. God is good. Humanity, whether it is good or bad, you cannot change it. But you can change yourself. You can be totally transformed if you wish. The sky is the limit. You have infinite scope to bring about not only a change or alteration, but even a transformation, even a transfiguration. God bless you! Gurudev's grace is there, I do not need to invoke it. But God, so help me God, to help myself!

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START THE DAY IN AN IDEAL WAY

Blessed Divinities! *Sadhaks* and seekers! The body is the spiritual manifestation of the Supreme Being in Its grossest form. The Spirit is the ultimate invisible form of gross *prakriti* as She is manifest as the material universe. It is not only Vedantic *siddhanta* (doctrine) that declares that *maya* is the *achintya, anirvachaniya sakti* (unthinkable, indescribable power) of *parabrahman*, it is not only the declared truth in great hymns like *Sivananda Lahari*, it is also the direct intuitional experience of great God-realised sages who discovered, who actually beheld the oneness of *prakriti* and the supreme *parabrahman*.

Thus there is only One; *prakriti* and *purusha* are not two. There are not two entities called matter and Spirit. Matter is involved Spirit; Spirit is evolved matter. There is one reality—*ekameva' dvitiam brahma*. At the grossest terminal of that reality it manifests as matter, and at its subtlest, transcendental other extreme, other pole, it is pure, imponderable Spirit, about which the only description is to be silent. What to say of voice, even thought is hushed into a solemn silence when it essays to utter something about that supreme, transcendental Reality.

This body is the receptacle of the Spirit, which is its subtlest inner reality, and the Spirit is a jewel within this body—a jewel within a jewel box. It is not for the jewel box that one prizes a piece of jewellery. It is because of the jewel that the jewel box also is important. If the jewel is not there, if the box is empty, it is not given much attention. It is because of the jewel within, that the box is treated with great care, is carefully protected.

In the second of his Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions, Gurudev, at one stroke touches upon both Spirit and matter—matter because it is the container of the Spirit, Spirit because it is that which makes matter valuable, precious, of importance. If the Spirit is not there, you burn matter into ashes, get rid of it as quickly as possible.

So, in his second instruction, Gurudev has something to say to us about both. “Sit on *padma, siddha* or *sukha asana* for *japa* and meditation for half an hour. Gradually increase the time. Do *sirshasana* and *sarvangasana* for keeping up health. Take some light physical exercises such as walking. Do breathing exercise twenty times.”

Thus the second of his Twenty Instructions speaks about physical health, but he opens first of all with the note of God. He does not speak first about walking or *hatha yoga* poses, but he speaks

first of all about the meditative pose: “Sit on *padma*, *siddha* or *sukha asana* for *japa* and meditation”—to sit for *japa* and meditation. “Prabhate mani Rama chintita java—early morning when you get up, first of all think of God.”

In his first Spiritual Instruction, Gurudev says get up at 4.00 A.M., *brahmamuhurta*; it is very favourable for spiritual practices. Why get up? So that you may sit on *padma*, *siddha* or *sukha asana* for *japa* and meditation. You get up in order to think of God, remember Him, take His Name, direct your mind and focus it on Him. This is the way to start the day. And gradually increase the period; do not be satisfied.

We are never satisfied with eating, tasting things. We are never satisfied fulfilling our little cravings—never, never satisfied. So let that not apply only to the lesser part of our being. Let that also apply to the greater and higher part of our being. Let us have this aspiration to gradually increase the period of our *japa* and meditation. Gurudev makes it quite clear that the purpose of getting up early in the morning is not to listen to BBC radio or take your bed tea or coffee, but to take the Name of God, meditate upon Him, focus the mind upon Him and to be eager to gradually increase the period of doing so.

Then, after having first dwelt upon the Spirit, giving It due importance, priority and emphasis, Gurudev, being a practical teacher, a sage of practical wisdom, said that in addition to sitting in *padma*, *siddha* or *sukha asana* for *japa* and meditation, do also a little of *sirshasana* and *sarvangasana*—*hatha yoga asanas* for health. “*Dharma’rthakamamokshanam arogyam mulam uttaman*—for all four *purusharthas* including *moksha*, earning wealth, even the fulfilment of your legitimate good, *sattvic* desires, the health of the body is necessary.” The health of the body is of paramount importance; never neglect it. It is folly to neglect it; it is wisdom to preserve it. When you draw nearer to old age, then you will realise the truth of this adage.

Gurudev did not stop with *hatha yoga asanas*. He said take some light physical exercise like walking, jogging etc. And do twenty breathing exercises. Ultimately, oxygen is the essence of life and breath is the bearer of oxygen into our system. The deeper you breathe, the more volume the lungs intake and the greater the amount of oxygen you make available to your body, blood stream, all cells. So deep breathing is of paramount importance. It is a combination of breathing, light exercise which quickens the circulation, and *hatha yoga asanas* that bring about vital inner health. And the purpose of doing all this is to keep the body a fit instrument for *seva*, *bhakti* and *jnana* (service, devotion and knowledge), for *japa* and meditation.

Thus, in his first two Spiritual Instructions, Gurudev gives us the ideal way of entering into a new day. First, get up early in the morning. Then start the day by sitting for *japa* and meditation: “Start the day with God. End the day with God. Fill the day with God. This is the way to God.” It means this is the way to bliss, to peace, to perfection, to illumination. For God is only a symbolic word summing up all that is supreme, all that is blessed, all that is most auspicious, all that is most desirable, all that human beings everywhere covet, crave for, seek for—the sum totality of human aspirations and deep desires. So start the day with God by sitting for *japa* and meditation. Then take care of the body, the house of the Spirit, through *hatha yoga*, light physical exercise and breathing exercises.

May these admonitions of Gurudev be pondered. May their true value be recognised. Because the more we recognise their value, the more we will be inclined to direct our attention to them and give effect to them in our life. God bless you!

51

THE DIVINE NAME

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers upon the path that leads to fearlessness and freedom, upon the path that leads to the cessation of all sorrow, that brings about eternal satisfaction and the attainment of supreme bliss!

God is intangible: *avyakta*, *adrishta*, *agochara* (unmanifest, unseen, imperceptible). All this is made very clear in the Vishnu-sahasranama. He is *gudhah* (hidden): *eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah* (The one Lord is hidden in all beings). He is *sukshmati sukshma* (subtler than the subtlest), *avangmano-gochara* (not known by the senses or the mind), *yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha* (whence all speech, along with the mind, turn back not reaching It). He is beyond thought, beyond speech.

What then is the way to approach God? We are bound in gross physical consciousness, severely limited to thinking in terms of name and form. Without the basis, support, of names and forms, there is no *vichara* (enquiry into the nature of the Self) in our *antahkarana* (inner being). That being the case, what is it that can link us with that which is beyond thought, speech and mind, beyond the grasp of the intellect? Is there some bridge for us bound us as we are in gross conceptual thinking, objective thought? All our *vruttis* are *vishayakara vruttis* (thoughts of sense-objects). We can only think in terms of time and space, name and form, here and there, this and that—not of the transcendental. Bound in this state of limited, finite consciousness, what is the possibility of trying to link ourselves with that which is infinite, with that which is beyond time and space, beyond name and form?

It is here that the great science of the practice of the Divine Name comes as an answer to this problem, this great barrier between the known and the unknown, the finite and the infinite, the manifest and the unmanifest, the individual and the universal. The Divine Name is like a boatman who touches both banks. He comes to this bank and he can take us across, because he goes to the other bank as well. The Name has this great advantage.

God is intangible. Whatever we know of God in temples and mosques, synagogues and churches is only created by man, conceptual. We have to superimpose upon the symbols and images our imagination, our ideas of the higher Being. However, this intangible Being is present with us in one tangible aspect, which we can actually create, experience, feel and practise. That is Name, which we ourselves can articulate very clearly. It has a sound we can hear with our ear, and we can write it with our hand.

The *rupa* of Bhagavan (the form of God) is beyond our comprehension. But here is something, an aspect of God identical with Him, discovered in ancient times. It is the *mantra* (sacred syllable or word) of the supreme absolute Being. Here is a “being” that is name, and yet it is formless. Therefore it has contact with the formless world. Itself being devoid of *rupa* (form), being *nirakara* (formless), it has contact with the *nirakara parabrahma tattva* (formless supreme Reality). *Parabrahma* is *nirakara, nirguna* (without form, without attributes), but here It is *nirakara* but *saguna* (formless but with attributes). It is in the form of *sabda* (sound). It is in the form of *nama*. It has vibration. It has a tangible sound form which we can hear with our gross ear. We can even put it on tape, reproduce it, amplify it, broadcast it. So, here is something which you can do what you like with.

And the greatest, astounding truth about it is: it is Divinity in manifestation as sound. It is Divinity manifest as *sabda* or *nada* (the primal mystic sound), which Vedanta refers to as *sabda-brahman, nada-brahman*. He Who is beyond *nada* is caught by *nada*. He can be thus approached by this particular *nada* because it is *nirakara*. So, it is at once a *tattva* (principle) that has access to the beyond, the formless *parabrahma tattva*, to that field, and at the same time it has access to *saguna* (with attributes), the field in which we are living.

For us, everything has some quality. And this has one of the five main qualities perceived by us (form, taste, sound, touch, smell). It has *sabda* (sound) and is identical with God. *Nama* and *nami* (The Lord and His Name) are identical. Thus, every *mantra* composed out of the Divine Name, containing the Divine Name, framed around the Divine Name—Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Sri Ram, Om Sri Krishnaya Namaha—every *mantra* is structured around this direct manifest form of the Supreme Self in the form of *nada*, that is *nam*.

Therefore, Patanjali has a *sutra* which says that perfection can be obtained through repetition of the Name. And Jagat Guru Lord Krishna says: “He who repeats My Name at the time of leaving the body attains Me. He does not return once again into this mortal world.” *Abheda, abhedata* of *nama* and *nami* (The non-difference, identity of the Lord and His Name) has been established by the direct experience of those who have practised this path and attained perfection.

And one among those whom we know within historical memory, who attained *sakshatkara* (realisation) sheerly through making use of the Divine Name, was the Guru of Shivaji, Sri Samartha Ramdas, who knew nothing, who did nothing except practise “Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram.” And on the other side of the Indian subcontinent, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu attained Divine-consciousness, was inebriated with God-consciousness, through *nam sankirtan*: “Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.” He spread this great way to God-consciousness throughout the length and breadth of India. He established the supremacy of the Name as the one unfailing, sure method in Kali Yuga. *Kaliyuga kevala nama adhara* (The Name of the Lord is the only refuge in this Iron Age).

And it is only the revival of an ancient method. Even before Lord Rama incarnated Himself in this world, the hunter and dacoit Ratnakar attained perfection through constant practice of the Divine Name. He was illiterate, uncouth, uneducated, of the forest hunting tribe, and he actually did the Name in the wrong way, *ulta* (reverse). As the great Tulsidas said: “The whole world knows that Valmiki attained Brahmic-consciousness, attained the realisation of *aham brahmasmi* by doing

japa, even in a wrong way.” He is renowned in Indian spiritual history as one who attained the supreme state of Brahmic-consciousness by *japa* and *japa* alone, because he knew nothing else. He did not know Sanskrit, nor Vedanta, nor the Upanishads, nor the Bhagavata, anything. He did not know *hatha yoga*, nor *ashtanga yoga*, nor *kundalini*, anything. He did not know *asana*, *pranayama*, anything. And, therefore, he could only do what he was capable of doing. He got hold of Ram Nam and became endowed with Brahmic-consciousness, became an illumined sage. He became the great sage Valmiki who produced the immortal epic, the Valmiki Ramayana. He had been a murdering desperado—cruel, violent, a sinner—yet he became one with Brahman in his spiritual consciousness solely through the repetition of the Divine Name.

All saints and spiritual teachers who have come in India over the past three or four hundred years have never failed to emphasise and lay great stress upon the practice of the Divine Name as the unflinching and certain way to attain God-realisation. And Gurudev, in the third of his Twenty Spiritual Instructions says: “Do *japa* of some *mantra* or just Om, according to your taste or inclination, from 108 to 21,000 times daily.” The Yogic calculation of human breathing is that there are 21,000 breaths within each cycle of twenty-four hours. They say that with each breath utter the Name of God. Therefore, the third instruction is to take up this unflinching, sure path. In this lies your highest welfare. The path of the Divine Name in this Kali Yuga is the supreme, the least complicated, the most efficacious, unflinching, simple and powerful path. May Gurudev’s grace and blessings give you success in your spiritual life and *sadhana*. God bless you!

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“BRAHMA SATYAM JAGAN-MITHYA”

Radiant Divinities! Blessed and beloved children of the Divine! When I was preparing myself to come to participate this morning there came this thought: “Are the declarations of Vedanta useful and applicable only upon the high plane of philosophy, metaphysics or higher inner spiritual realisations and experiences, or are these declarations capable of being interpreted and applied for our own immediate enrichment, upliftment, help and benefit, making a significant contribution to our life here, now, at once, in a practical, concrete, tangible and immediately fruitful manner?”

The answer was immediate: It was not a question of whether these great declarations and truths are capable of being interpreted and applied for immediate benefit spiritually and otherwise, but rather they are actually meant to start inspiring us, uplifting us, helping and benefiting us right from the very moment when our eyes alight upon them for the first time in some sacred scripture or book or even when our ears hear them for the very first time from the lips of some speaker expounding the truths of the scriptures. Right from the first moment a person comes to know about a certain truth, *immediately* it is expected, it is *meant* to bring about a powerful transformation in the reader or hearer or thinker.

The highest ultimate declaration, the quintessential truth, declared by people of the supreme absolute experience is *brahma satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva naparah* (Brahman alone is

real, the world is unreal. *Jiva* is not other than Brahman). The full verse is *slokardhena pravakshyami yaduktam granthakotibhih, brahma satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva napaarah*—I shall tell you within the compass of half a verse the quintessence, the heart, the very essence of the teachings expounded in innumerable scriptures and that is: Brahman alone is real. This phenomenal appearance before us is only a relative reality, ever-changing, unstable, unreliable, never dependable, limited, subject to time and space, subject to decay and dissolution, having a beginning and an end. Characterised by these defects and shortcomings, everything here seen, perceived by the human individual consciousness, is but a mere temporary relative reality. And the individual soul that thinks of itself as the knower of this, or the seer of this, or the experiencer of this ever-changing phenomenal flux, which is called *samsara* or the universe, is a non-entity, for Brahman alone is real and the *jivatman*, the individual, is Brahman plus *upadhis* (limiting adjuncts or additions).

If you take a pot to the Ganga and fill it full of water, the water in the pot no longer resembles the Ganga. It isn't flowing. Boats can't ply on it. You cannot take a bath in it. But a philosopher will dare anyone to challenge the truth that the water confined in the pot is in any way different in essence from the water that is flowing as the river Ganga. They are identical in every respect, and modern science will prove it. It is Ganga alone flowing and it is Ganga alone in the pot, but Ganga with some limiting adjuncts, some confining factors. It is a conditioned Ganga, but Ganga nevertheless. Therefore, this half verse ended up with the declaration: *jivo-brahmaiva napaarah* (The individual soul is not different from Brahman).

I then asked myself: "In what way can this great transcendental truth uttered as the very heart of the highest Vedantic experience, as the very quintessential central truth and fact of *kevala advaita*, absolute monism and the monistic experience, in what way can it be of immediate fruit, immense benefit and enrichment to the aspirant?" I said, "It reveals a whole series of truths."

There was no current at the time and so, except for a candle, I was in darkness. Immediately the truth flashed to me: "This darkness is not the reality. What exists is only brilliant sunshine scattering in all ten directions, pervading everywhere, prevailing always without change, without anything to bar or hamper it, filling everything with light, radiance, effulgence, brightness. That is the reality where everything is seen clearly; this darkness is only a temporary condition. As the earth rotates, the sun will rise and the whole place will be flooded with light. Even when I am lighting a candle and thinking I am in darkness, there is only light and light only. This darkness is a temporary superimposed condition due to certain limiting adjuncts. The light is the reality; this darkness is a passing unreality, a relative reality. The positive factor is the reality; the negative factor is a temporary mode or condition."

I said: "The full moon is the reality, not the eclipse. Silence is the reality, not the little sound that comes over it." That is the truth. And when the Vedantic experience is stated as *brahma satyam* (Brahman alone is real), it means that Truth prevails in all three periods of time without hindrance, without change; always it is full. And what is that Truth? *Anando brahmeti vyajanat* (He knew bliss as Brahman). Those who have drunk this honey, this bliss, declared: "Sweetness, sweetness, sweetness, everything is sweetness, sweetness beyond description; all is beauty, auspiciousness, bliss." And that is the Reality that is everywhere present in all its fullness, always, always

unchanging, without contradiction, successively borne out by the experience of all mystics, of all times, of all climes—ancient, medieval, modern, oriental, occidental, everywhere.

What a tremendous realisation! What a tremendous realisation that at this moment the bliss of Brahman pervades everywhere within and without! Bliss is the great Reality. Peace supreme, immeasurable, profound peace is the great Reality. To ponder this is itself an instant energiser, instant awakener, instant inspirer.

One thought led to another. “Now,” I said, “gloriously the sun will rise from beyond the mountain on the opposite bank of the Ganga. That is the reality, and in this reality we must live. In this truth we must act, we must pursue our spiritual path. With what great strength, elation, positiveness, with what wonderful sublime feelings of zeal, fervour, we can pursue our spiritual path if we keep ourselves in the awareness of this truth—*brahma satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva naparah*. That peace, that bliss, that fullness, that Light of lights alone exists, and I am That. In essence I am no other than That.”

The thoughts went on: “When that is so, then this is the time, this is the moment, that we must take fullest advantage of this awareness that is being granted to us due to our entry into the life spiritual and our great good fortune to be living in an atmosphere where this truth is always being affirmed, an atmosphere filled with this truth. If light is the great reality and not darkness and we are privileged and fortunate to live in a place of light, then we must make hay while the sun shines and live in this great truth. We must rejoicingly pursue our spiritual path and *sadhana* with great zest and not allow this period of sunshine to pass away.”

Then came another parallel idea: “Strike while the iron is hot.” The wise blacksmith heats his metal white hot. Then only can he hammer it into shape. If he let that moment go, the metal will become hard and no longer malleable. Then came a third idea: “Take time by the forelock.” In the Western concept, time has been conceived of as an old, bald-headed person with a long beard and only a tuft of hair or forelock above his forehead. You have to catch him by the forelock as he approaches; otherwise, as the rest of his head is bald, once he gets past he will slip away.

Therefore, we must be up and doing knowing the importance of the *now* and how to live in the *now* wisely, alertly and with vigilance. The Yogi is *daksha* (expert). The Yogi is ever vigilant and never misses an opportunity. Therefore, we must always be on the alert and put these truths together: Light alone is real, not darkness; make hay while the sun shines; strike while the iron is hot; take time by the forelock.

These truths are brought to our attention not to fill us with a sense of urgency, or then we will spoil the situation. There is a saying: “Haste makes waste.” It is not to build up tension, pressure, a state of anxiety—then everything will be lost. You have to be calm and cool, but at the same time, instantaneous should be your action. Never allow an opportunity to pass by.

It is not so much to create in you an undesirable state of urgency or haste, but to focus your attention upon the importance of the *now*, the reality of the *now*, the great significance, the vital value of the *now*. Life is lived only in the *now*, not in yesterday or tomorrow. *Now* is a state of light, a state of bliss. Each *now* is filled, is a cornucopia filled with an abundance of everything that is

necessary and desirable for your gaining supreme, divine perfection. *Now* holds the key to liberation, to joy, to spiritual blessedness, to perfection, to everything that is regarded as the supreme goal of life. It is in order to focus our attention on the importance, the significance, the value of the *now*, that these great teachings are given.

So rejoice now, and engage yourself in sublime spiritual life, in divine life. Then you will always have reason ever to be rejoicing. If you rejoice in the *now* and put yourself heart and soul into utilising the precious *now* by striking while the iron is hot, by making hay while the sun shines, then you will know that *brahma satyam jagan-mithya* is not only meant for some lofty state of inner realisation. It has a value and a significance, an immediate message, an immediate power to energise us and enrich us in our spiritual life, in our *sadhana*, in our *yoga abhyasa*, in everything which we call the higher life.

Purity alone, Truth alone prevails everywhere. Peace alone pervades everywhere. Joy alone, bliss alone, is the reality because Brahman alone prevails, and it is a declared experience: *brahma satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva naparah*. That means that all problems are self-created due to this one truth not being kept before us always. “In me there is no problem, in me there is only bliss, peace, shining divinity”—this truth must always be made the basis of your life, established in your consciousness, ever remembered, ever pondered, ever kept before you as you live your day-to-day life.

The moment you emerge into wakefulness you must emerge into awareness of your divinity. You must emerge into this consciousness of your wonderful privilege of being one with the Divine. “Essentially I am one with the Divine, I am Divine. Divinity is my eternal, unalienable, real nature, *nitya nija svarupa*.” We have to live in the truth, and the truth shall make us free. To live in the truth is the greatest blessedness.

And to live in the truth all facilities have been brought together in a concentrated form in this holy Ashram of Gurudev due to his infinite compassion, love and grace. And due to God’s special divine grace upon us, we have had these unique facilities placed in our hands to be utilised now. Do not allow this opportunity to pass away and later on regret. Now is the important life, now is the reality, now is Brahman.

God bless you to ponder your life in the light of this lofty truth: *brahma satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva naparah*. If *jagat* is *mithya* (the world is unreal), why unnecessarily endow it with so much power to disturb you, distract you, agitate you, upset you, worry you, to change you from your course? How can it? We are terrorising ourselves with shadows upon the wall, thinking that they have a semblance of reality. And the more importance we give these false temporary appearances by forgetting this truth, the more powerful they become.

By forgetting that Brahman alone is the reality and endowing these things with a reality they do not possess, we create our own problems, we create our own obstacles, we create our own temptations. We are afraid of darkness thinking it is reality, not seeing that light alone is the reality.

Therefore, this is a discipline, this is an exercise you must be engaged in: “This is nothing, it cannot come in my way, it has no power. It is *mithya*, it is only a false appearance. I am living in the

Reality. Who can assail me? What can affect me?” In this way *brahma satyam jagan-mithya* has to be invoked to help you at every step, each moment, every day in your spiritual life.

Then each day will be a victory. Each day will be an ever progressive liberation. That is the value of these great truths brought into our own context, our own frame of reference. Then immediately they will transform us. They are not meant only for books or scholars or *pundits* or ultimate realisation; they are meant for now also. Let us ponder how valuable this one little great truth, one central truth of Vedantic realisation, can be to us, to every *sadhak*, to every Yogi, to every *bhakta*. Ponder this, realise its importance. Be wise, apply it, live in its light and become blessed. God bless you all!

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FROM KNOWLEDGE TO EXPERIENCE

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! May the grace of Veda Bhagavan (the Lord manifest as the Vedas) be upon you all! Veda Bhagavan is the great Reality enshrined in the form of *jnana*, enshrined in the form of knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is the knowing of things and wisdom is the understanding and experiencing of things. Therefore, wisdom is to knowledge what a fully ripened fruit would be to a fruit in its beginning stages—green, without growth, without juice, sweetness or fragrance, without the power to impart delight, without the inherent nourishment and strength-giving properties that become manifest in a fully ripened fruit, which is full of juice, full of sweetness and fragrance, full of nourishment and the power to delight, satisfy and sustain.

Knowledge enables you to know many things, but it does not itself make you wise. Knowledge is an intellectual process where a wide range of things are known, but it lacks depth and a living quality of being able to impel the knower to be what he knows. That subtle factor which makes knowing into vital being is a gradual ripening of that knowledge into experience and a deep and essential understanding of the relationship the knowledge has to the knower as well as to life and the life which the knower has to live.

Veda Bhagavan is the Supreme Experience, the Experience Absolute recorded for our knowing, but simultaneously Veda Bhagavan also contains the quintessence of wisdom and the highest pinnacles of knowledge. When knowledge rises above a certain point it matures into wisdom and gains a loftiness. Then it turns into a flash of intuition. Everything becomes revealed, everything becomes understood instantaneously. Intuition replaces knowledge, knowing turns into being, and life becomes infused by wisdom.

This process of the fruition of knowledge comes through a constant, earnest, sincere and reverential process of contemplating knowledge, reflecting over knowledge that has been obtained and, day by day, trying to apply this knowledge, live in the light of this knowledge, bring this knowledge into our daily thoughts, feelings, attitudes and reactions to life around us—people,

things, occurrences, situations, experiences. In every one of them, apply your knowledge immediately. Let not knowledge be forgotten at that time.

Unfortunately, or a strange wonder it is, it is only at that time when knowledge should be applied, that it takes leave, is forgotten. Why? Because some other part of you dominates your consciousness. Unless you are keenly aware of this and deliberately make it a point to bring knowledge into active manifestation every step, every breath, every moment of your life, your knowledge will ever remain a sterile, unproductive burden upon you and not the valuable, indispensable asset and help it is meant to be.

Life is a multiple, relational process where the individual is placed amidst innumerable things and factors. Unconsciously we start developing attitudes, notions, biases, prejudices, preconceived ways of looking at and understanding or failing to understand things. In this process knowledge becomes side-lined and some other part of our psyche takes over. In spite of knowing, we still get caught in complications, caught and held a prisoner in a net woven by our failure to recognise that this knowledge is meant for me to *know*, to *be* and to *do*. Knowing and being and doing must fuse into one harmonious unitary process the moment one wakes up from sleep and moves into this waking world.

Although the great teacher Sankaracharya declared: “*brahma satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva naparah* (Brahman alone is real, the world is unreal, the *jiva* is not other than Brahman)” as the ultimate thesis of his *advaita* philosophy of absolute monism, he did concede a relative reality to everything as long as the body is real to us, as long as our mind, thoughts and intellectual processes are real to us. That they are presently real to us we do not need to question, for we live every moment of our life moving, breathing, feeling through the body; we live every moment of our life being guided by thoughts, reason and desires. Therefore, it goes without saying that we are very much operating upon the plane of relative reality only. That alone is the reality to us, whereas the existence of a higher Reality is only to us a known item of information. I cannot even say it is a known fact, because a fact is something which has already been established by our own direct perception or experience, whereas the Brahman of Sankaracharya and the other great sages and seers, who had direct personal Brahmic knowledge and experience, is to the *sadhak* only a concept taken from the pages of books or heard from discourses.

Therefore, if this stage of consciousness of relative reality is to gradually become the stairway to reach a transcendental state of non-dual consciousness, then every moment of this stage of relative consciousness has to be utilised to this end. Then alone the possession of this knowledge, these facts of information, can gradually become to us a progressive, enlightening, unfolding process. Then only this knowledge can gradually begin to transform itself into *sadhana*, into Yoga, into *upasana* and into *abhyasa* which the great World Teacher Lord Krishna says is the one and only way of overcoming the world, which means it is indispensable.

The essence of the *jivatma* is a constant process of seeing the unreal, mistaking it for the real, and ever forgetting the Reality. This constant process is the great barrier to be surmounted and crossed. Lord Krishna says this terrible barrier is very difficult to surmount, but not impossible. It can be surmounted through unremitting practice, *abhyasa*. Practice, therefore, is the essence of this process of knowledge maturing into wisdom and ultimately becoming fruitful as experience.

As early as the very earliest Upanishad they brought down this truth of the one, non-dual Brahman into normal daily life. They said: “That Being is the infant in the arms of its mother, the little boy or girl running and playing about, the youth going to school, the fully grown adult, and that Being is also the feeble, old person tottering with the help of a stick.” Now, this is not *samadhi*, this is not an experience in a mountain cave or in desert solitude. It is not in the depths of the forest, but it is an everyday experience of each and every individual in this world. Thus the admonition says that we must see that Supreme Reality as being manifest, as being seen in and through every being in this world.

This knowledge thus becomes applied; it is brought into every perception—sight, sound, touch, smell, taste, thought. Whatever is thought of, whatever has been thought of, and whatever can and will be thought of, you bring your knowledge into it and know the Reality behind all perceived appearances. Thus, moment by moment, day after day, ascend, move towards that ultimate state of illumination, enlightenment. Become liberated thus.

If thus you begin to practise this knowledge, this unity, make knowledge into *abhyasa*, then how can delusion catch hold of you? How can there be sorrow if you thus make knowledge a means of *abhyasa*? If knowledge is only kept for your *svadhyaya* time, reading time or discussion time, and if it does not free you from *moha* (delusion) and free you from *soka* (grief) in actual day-to-day life, of what use is it?

“*Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pasyati* (He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me).” “One who thus perceives Me, who is devoted to Me, who worships Me, who sees Me in all things, that being is not repelled by anything, does not hate the world, nor is the world repelled from such a being. And such a being is very, very dear to Me.” What the Lord expects a devotee to be, He has plainly stated for our reference in the last eight verses of the twelfth chapter of the Gita. It is not to remain inside the Bhagavad Gita; it is to become enshrined in our hearts. For the information, for the guidance, and as a term of reference for His devotees of all times, in all places, He has left these precious utterances, these wisdom teachings of His.

So whether you are a *dvaita* (dualist) Vedantin and a devotee, or whether you are an *advaita* (non-dualist) Vedantin and a devotee, whatever is known, whatever has been told, is to be taken with you into life from the moment you wake up until you go to bed at the end of the day. Throughout your entire day, your entire life, this knowledge is to be constantly by your side, in your mind, in your heart. And every step of the way is to be a continuous process of bringing this knowledge into a relationship with everything that you are and everything that you do.

Veda Bhagavan is, therefore, this embodied *jnana* in the form of eternal teachings. And how we should relate ourselves with Veda Bhagavan is told to us in simple terms by our great law givers like Manu—*vedo-nityam-adhiyatam* (Veda should be read daily). So study the Vedas daily, and whatever has been told in the Vedas let it be practised. Day by day go to the source, refresh your knowledge and then apply it. Practise it, follow it, live it.

Ponder these things. Ponder day after day and live a life of knowledge as an applied process-knowledge in practice, knowledge in living. And thus make life itself a gradual process of the fruition of this knowledge into wisdom and ultimately into experience that makes you a

liberated being. Gurudev’s choicest blessings be upon you in this slow and steady process of growth!

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THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR

Radiant Divinities! Beloved *sadhaks* and all those assembled here in Gurudev’s spiritual presence this morning hour! One of the fundamental basic teachings of Vedanta is that the whole problem of the individual soul, the *jivatma*, is due to *adhyasa*, identification with this human personality and all that it means. They say you have identified yourself with factors which do not constitute your real nature, your true identity. And this is the bondage in which you are caught, which prevents you from experiencing your real nature. When you are identifying yourself with all that goes to make up your human personality, how can you expect to experience your divine personality? You cannot think of yourself as two beings. Either you are divine or you are human with all its imperfections and drawbacks.

The basic mistake, the great error, the fundamental first sin, as they say, is *deh ko mai manna* (considering the body as “I”). It is due to this *adhyasa* (wrong identification) that you identify yourself with your *upadhis*, with your likes and dislikes, your prejudices and vices, your lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and jealousy. You identify yourself with these things and therefore you are one with them. They completely catch hold of you. You are in their power. For the time being you become that; you are no longer divine or even human; you take the form of that strong emotion or passion that dominates you. You become it, and in that state you are in total delusion. You do not know what you are doing. All reason, intelligence, common sense take leave.

This has to be avoided. And in the Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna has carefully spelled out the root cause and its consequences: “When a man thinks of objects, attachment for them arises. From attachment desire is born. From desire anger arises. From anger comes delusion. From delusion confusion of memory. From confusion of memory the destruction of discrimination. From destruction of discrimination, he perishes.” Thus the Lord spells out very clearly what leads to what and the root cause of it all: “when a man thinks of objects.”

We are constantly engaged in thinking about the things here. We are constantly thinking of sense-objects, this world, this creation of *maya*. We are not constantly engaged in thinking about that Being Who is beyond all sense-objects, beyond everything—*yattat buddhigrahyam atindriyam* (that which is beyond the senses but can be grasped by the pure intellect). If we engage ourselves in thinking upon *tattva*, upon Brahman, upon Bhagavan, thinking about *paramatma*, about *satchidananda svarupa*, then these aberrations will not occur.

But we are precisely doing what the Gita tells us is the root cause of our delusion, sorrow and ultimate destruction. When you do not avoid the root cause that Lord Krishna has clearly spelled out, then your fate is also sealed. Your fate also becomes inevitable, because you are doing precisely what Lord Krishna has warned you against. We are engaged in thinking only of

sense-objects, the world, things here, persons here, events and occurrences here. We are not engaged in thinking about Bhagavan. We are not engaged in trying to absorb ourselves—thought, feeling, heart, mind, soul—into that Being. If we did that, then there would be no problem, there would be no trouble.

We are not doing *tattva chintan* (reflection upon Truth), we are doing *vishaya vastu chintan* (reflection upon sense-objects). And thus it is inevitable that we identify ourselves with lust, anger and greed and go to hell. Because Lord Krishna has said that these three are the gateways to hell. We are in a state of identification with whatever comes into our mind, our heart, whatever takes hold of our emotional level, our sentimental level. We are completely in its grip.

Therefore, long ago they said: “Look here, you are not these things, you are *sakshi* (witness) of these things. Try to develop the *sakshi chaitanya vritti* (witness consciousness) within you. Do not always go on perpetuating this *adhyasa avastha* in your *antahkarana* (state of wrong identification in your inner being). It is not good for you. Be a witness, be detached, stand back.”

And now modern psychologists have discovered this same Vedantic reality. They say that as long as you are totally in the grip of your emotions, you will always be suffering. All these inner dramas, all these inner complexes and neuroses, are a result of identifying yourself with negative trends of thinking and feeling.

One of the great psychologists of Europe, practising, in Paris, said: “No, no, assert and affirm positivism. Say, ‘I am not these things; I am something getting better and better each day. I am ascending up, my life is going up, it is moving towards perfection and wholeness. These aberrations are not in me. As far as I am concerned, I am becoming better and better and finding myself higher and higher day by day.’ ” He gave this formula of asserting the positive state of the inner being.

If we apply the fundamental thesis that *adhyasa* (wrong identification) is the root cause of all these undesirable things and, therefore, make this determination: “I should not allow this *adhyasa* to characterise, to dominate my daily life; I must root out and oppose this *adhyasa*; I must refute, reject and eradicate it; I should not fatten it, or make it still stronger and more deeply rooted by my foolishness; on the contrary I must oppose it, eradicate it”—if this process of Vedanta is applied in our daily life towards our emotions, moods and strong passions, towards our strong likes and dislikes, then our whole life will undergo a transformation. It will no longer be conflict-ridden with strong feelings for and against people, and things, and events. Life will start flowing smoothly, harmoniously.

If we invoke our witness consciousness and say: “I am not the mind, the ego, the intellect or memory; I am not these things nor all the various modifications of these things; no, I am not, and I shall certainly not identify myself with this non-Self; all these various psychological states are not my true condition, and I will only affirm my *satchidananda tattva*”—if in this way you bring this great discovery of Vedanta into your daily life and you practise Vedanta in your daily life, the transformation will come. Your life will no longer be a slavish following of anger and passion and the other things that come into you. Your life will acquire a certain dignity, a depth, a certain serenity, and ultimately it will grow into divinity.

Ponder this point, this fundamental, basic central thesis of Vedanta: that *adhyasa* is the root, the essence of the problem of the *jivatma*. Ask: “What is the relevance of this wrong identification to my daily life? Because if that is the root of the problem of this mundane life, it means that my whole life is that problem diversified. I am living a problem; I am allowing the problem to proliferate and become more and more elaborate. Unless I alter the problem itself, I will be completely caught and submerged in it.”

For instance, when you are making a mathematical calculation, if in the beginning you make one error and do not discover it, then all your further calculations will be wrong. You may cover pages with figures, which may be correct as far as the workings are concerned, but your conclusions will be wrong because they are based on an original error. In the same way, if we keep this *adhyasa* with us and do not do anything to get rid of it, and upon the basis of this wrong identification go on living our life, then our whole life will be full of *ajnana* (ignorance). It will not be *vastavik jivana* (real, true life), it will be *vishama jivana* (a difficult, disordered, complicated life). Your life will be a caricature of what life ought to be. But if you live in awareness, in knowledge, in wisdom, if you live wisely, rejecting this false connection with the non-Self, and if you identify with the Self, then life will be true life, an authentic life. Otherwise, it will be a spurious life, a false life, a contradiction of your true nature.

Therefore, you being divine, being children of God, being the son of God, addressing God as Father, Mother, Friend, Relative, if you do not want your life to be a caricature, an anomaly, a contradiction of the Truth, then you have to bring Vedanta into your daily life. Realise that as long as *adhyasa* is there, you will be living a blind life. Therefore be determined: “I have to open my eyes, I have to stand up with clarity of vision, I have to live my life with divinity in action, Vedanta in daily life.”

That is the only way of liberating ourselves from the clutches of the enemies which are within our own selves. Unless you apply Vedanta in your daily life, subjectively, objectively, you cannot correct this undesirable situation and soar into a higher realm of consciousness. Ponder this and make Vedanta your cure, make Vedanta your *mahaushadhi* (great medicine) for the *bhavaroga* (disease of transmigration). Make Vedanta your great liberator! God bless you!

55

REFLECTION MUST NOT BE BYPASSED

Radiant Immortal Atman! Blessed seekers, *sadhaks!* Vedanta should be properly received, properly taken in, to be digested. If food is not thoroughly chewed in the mouth, it does not get properly digested in the stomach and intestines. In spite of eating the best of food, one’s health remains unsatisfactory. One feels something is wrong and looks for a cause outside—“perhaps the food is not properly cooked.” But the cause is inside, because one has not received it properly, one has not thoroughly chewed it. It is the same if Vedantic teaching is not properly received.

All of you are *sadhaks*, *bhaktas*, Vedantins; you know the scriptures. You are all familiar with the three steps of Vedantic *sadhana*, the path of knowledge: *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana* (hearing, reflection and deep meditation). Systematic *manana* is done by no one; it is not done by anyone. *Sravana* is done, but that also not with a concentrated mind. No systematic *manana* is practised as a *sadhana*, whereas it is one of the three fundamental *sadhanas* of the Vedanta—*sravana sadhana*, *manana sadhana* and *nididhyasana sadhana*.

If we listen to Vedanta, soon afterwards we get the feeling that we are *brahma-jnanis*; we get the feeling that we are well versed in Vedanta. And it is in developing this feeling that your *ajnana* (ignorance) has succeeded in deceiving you. *Maya* has attained victory. For this is the worst type of ignorance, and it means that the more you get the superficial outer knowledge, *apara vidya*, book knowledge, the deeper becomes your pride and the deeper becomes your delusion. You think you are a *jnani*, and thus your pride grows, your delusion increases, which means you have gone deeper into the darkness of ignorance.

So it is not *jnana* that has increased. Actually, seemingly it is *jnana*, because you are able to deliver lectures, you are able to answer questions. You are able to say “I know” and enter into arguments and discussions with learned *pundits*. You put very intricate, clever questions to senior mahatmas to test their knowledge and to display how well you are versed in Vedanta. This display makes one vain and pride is increased, which means you have gone deeper into the darkness of ignorance and bondage. This is a very great hazard upon the spiritual path.

Therefore, we should know how to listen with sincerity, with humility, with purity, with a sattvic attitude—“I do not know, pray enlighten me, I wish to know.” *Jijnasa* means humility—“I do not know.” Look at the attitude of Arjuna after initially arguing, discussing, debating and trying to show off his knowledge. He eats humble pie: “Please, I do not know what to do; please show me the way, tell me.” It is the beginning of wisdom.

Thus you must be very careful when proceeding upon the path of *sravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*. When you do *sravana* (hearing) you must do it in a proper way. Then only your *manana* (reflection) will yield. But the vast majority of Vedantic students do *sravana* and then want to do *nididhyasana*, attain *nirvikalpa samadhi*, *brahma-jnana*. *Manana* is easily bypassed. Very few people do *manana*, very few people do *sravana* in the right and proper manner, and therefore their knowledge becomes their great stumbling block. They go into greater darkness.

This is said because statements like *sarvam khalvidam brahma* (all this is verily Brahman) are so easily misunderstood. “Everything is only Brahman so why should I unnecessarily control my senses? Why should I avoid things—‘one should neither avoid things nor cultivate things.’” Also, *nigrahaḥ kim karishyati* (What can restraint do?)—that sentence from the Gita becomes the downfall of many aspirants. They justify their lack of self-restraint, lack of *samyam*, their subordination to sense appetites and desires under the guise of *sruti*, the teachings of the great ones.

Brandy also is Bhagavan’s. But then we know that Bhagavan’s *anirvachaniya sakti* (inexplicable power) is itself *maya*. And through *maya* He Himself has manifested as things that are conducive and favourable to your spiritual growth and illumination, as well as conditions and manifestations that are adverse and unfavourable to your spiritual growth. So you must know how

to discriminate between this manifestation of Brahman and that manifestation of Brahman, even though all are Brahman. There are certain manifestations of Brahman that are to be accepted and cultivated; there are certain manifestations of Brahman that are to be carefully avoided even though knowing that they are Brahman.

How you should do it is something quite up to you. It depends upon how much *manana* you have done. How can one accept one aspect of Brahman and reject another aspect? In this world it is necessary, and the scriptures are full of both injunctions of *nishedha* (prohibited actions) as well as injunctions for that which is *grahya*—fit to be accepted. They make no mystery of it; they speak very plainly.

What more could you ask than the very clear, unambiguous, categorical exposition of these two *vibhagas* (divisions) than the “Yoga of the Division between the Divine and the Demonical” given by Lord Krishna Himself in the sixteenth chapter of the Gita. He who said *nigraha kim karishyati* (What can restraint do?) has also given the “Yoga of the Division of the Three Gunas” in chapter fourteen as well as the “Yoga of the Division between the Divine and the Demonical” and tells us very plainly: “*daivi sampad vimokshaya* (divine nature is for liberation).”

So you must know how to understand a thing with reference to its context. If He has said *nigraha kim karishyati* and if He has given you the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, how do you relate these things, how to understand? Both are valued, and therefore you must understand the implication of *nigraha kim karishyati*. You must be very, very clear about your attitude towards manifest Brahman.

Brahman in the unmanifest state is our deity, our object, our principle to be worshipped and also our goal for attainment. But Brahman in manifestation through *maya* has to be related to in different ways. Brahman’s manifestation as *maya* is indescribable; it cannot be defined. This has to be understood. And this manifestation has given Herself as *vidya maya* as well as *avidya maya*. As *vidya maya*, Brahman is manifest through *maya* as divine nature. As *avidya maya*, Brahman is manifest through *prakriti* as demonical nature. These things have to be pondered, not blindly taken in. *Manana* has to be done.

You must understand the implication and application of Vedantic teachings and what the Guru says—what exactly it implies. If you think over it, deeply reflect over it a hundred times, then you will be able to assimilate it. Then only Vedantic indigestion will not ensue. You will not haphazardly do something somewhere and then suffer in spite of your so-called knowledge. Therefore, *avidya maya* should be understood; *vidya maya* should also be understood. And our attitude of *grahana* and *nigraha* (accepting and restraint) should also be well defined in relationship to these two as we move about in this world.

Also, it depends upon application. A knife is there. It is amoral, it is inert, it is neutral. If you grasp it by the handle, you are safe. If you grasp it by the blade, you are not safe. So the knife has no part in the result; it is the way you handle it. In the same way the world is full of *maya*, and even if you are surrounded by *avidya maya*, if you know how to handle it, then you are safe.

So, *yogah karmasu kausalam* (Yoga is skill in action). You have to know in what way you should relate yourself and how to handle *maya*, how to be aware of both of Her aspects and in spite of that not to forget Brahman. You have to know how to always be in a *brahmakara vritti* (thought of Brahman alone) and at the same time see all the differences, experiencing the oneness, see all the differences. You must be able to relate yourself to things upon the basis of these differences seen, because in this worldly existence one should be wise, be skilled. These are ideas I put before you for your *manana*, for your calm, deep reflection, *viveka* (discrimination), *vichara* (enquiry). “What could this meaning be? If I take it to be thus...no, it contradicts some other thing. Therefore, it cannot be that. If I take it to be this wise...no, it cannot be applied, it does not bring out the full meaning.” Thus you have to think with *viveka* and *vichara*, comparing it with other statements in the scriptures.

Therefore, every step should be done with *manana*; *manana* should be a systematic *sadhana*. And you must know how to relate yourself to Brahman in Its unmanifest state and Brahman manifest through *maya* as *vidya* as well as *avidya*. And these things should always be in our consciousness as we are moving about and dealing with the world. They should not be absent from our consciousness. Then only Vedanta can also be *vyavahara* Vedanta, and thus we can keep our *sadhana* always progressive and upward, and not get into folly and complications, not commit blunders through delusion.

God bless you to rightly receive higher teachings. God bless you with the ability to reflect deeply, do *manana* of received teachings. And God bless you to have the intelligence to know how to apply these received truths in your daily life and gradually, steadily progress towards *brahma-jnana* and liberation. God bless you! Gurudev’s grace be upon you!

56

MAN AND HIS MIND

Radiant Atman! Man is man because he has a mind. Thinking, reasoning, feeling, that alone makes man. If he has no mind he is an animal. But mind can make a man a beast also. Mind can make a man a demon. Because if the mind is not made *sattvic*, if it is not governed by an awakened, discriminating, ever alert, vigilant and keenly enquiring intellect, then mind becomes the greatest problem; it becomes the greatest trap, the greatest enemy, the greatest complication, the greatest source of all types of troubles to the aspirant, to the seeker. One can become helpless, mercilessly tormented by the mind. It takes charge of one’s life, and one is ruled by emotions, sentiments, passions and error.

Because the nature of the mind is to always create confusion and constant restlessness, constant activity, constant thinking of sense-objects, constant going outside, constant involving and entangling itself in things. It is a bundle of desires, cravings and imaginations. It is a companion with whom you should deal with great caution. It is there; you cannot help it. You cannot get rid of it; you have to live with it. But you must know that it is your problem, it is your trouble maker. You should not think it is your friend.

But it is the mind, the *manas*, that is your problem, not the *antahkarana*. The *antahkarana* (inner being) also contains your great helper. It contains your greatest asset which can make you divine. Because the *antahkarana* contains not the mind only, it contains the *buddhi* (intellect). And it contains the *chitta* (subconscious mind), Pandora's box, which contains all that is wonderful and beautiful and also all that is ugly and not so wonderful.

You have no control over the *chitta*. If you want to get the best out of it, you have to transform it where it is. Even without being able to control it, you can transform it. You can gradually lessen and eliminate all its unfavourable tendencies and subtle impressions by a constant process of deep innermost transformation, purification.

The power of the Name of God can reach where you cannot reach. It does not need to see. You are blind; you have to grope in darkness when you try to enter the mind, when you try to turn the gaze within and do introspection, analyse yourself, study yourself. The Name of God does not require any light to see, because it itself is the Light. The moment it goes, it goes on its own light. It goes deepest into the mind and through its power it gradually brings about a total transformation, a revolutionary transformation. It makes the mind no mind, fills it with *sattva*. It brings light into the darkness of the mind, and it is able to rid the *chitta* of all its negativity.

Because *chitta* is necessary. That which is in the *chitta* is not entirely valueless, though it is a constant source of thought, desire, craving and imagination. Nevertheless, it contains precious gems, all the nine gems. Because anything you hear or read, anything sublime, elevating, noble, inspiring, is stored in the *chitta*. You must know how to take it out. Anything ugly, dirty, indecent—that too is stored in the *chitta*. Whatever you perceive, whatever you see, whatever you hear, immediately gets lodged in the *chitta*. So you must know the necessity of being selective, closing the windows of the senses, not allowing wrong things to get into the *chitta*. Allow only that which is valuable, which can be a wealth, an asset to you. That alone should be given entry.

That which has got in from previous births you cannot help. That you have to transform through *japa*, meditation, prayer, *satsanga*, *svadhyaya*, *nishkama-karma-yoga*. That you must do. It is a gradual process.

But what gets into the *chitta* now and in the future—that you can help. That is under your control. That is why they say you must have *samyam*, self-control. That is why they say you must be discriminative, you must have *pratyahara* (withdrawal of the senses) when you go amidst sense-objects, when you go amidst people.

Some people will talk sense; some people will talk nonsense. Some will talk wisdom. You must know what to take in and what not to take in, what to ignore, bypass. Even in *satsang* everything that is said cannot be meant for everyone. You must know what is meant for you, take what is helpful or required and leave the rest. A listener is supposed to be a *viveki*. And when you go out, you must know what to open the senses to and what to close them to. You must be determined to keep your *chitta* pure. You should not allow impurity to enter through bad company or wrong perceptions, unnecessarily absorbing through the senses things which are likely to create problems.

So you must be wise, you must be alert. You must live and move through each day of your life wakefully, wisely. That is the hallmark of a *sadhak*—wisdom, wakefulness, alertness, discrimination, selection and rejection. Yes, this is the great necessity; otherwise, mind can bring about a downfall. *Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh*—mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation of human beings.

Buddhi is the balancing factor. *Buddhi* is the redeeming feature of the *antahkarana*. Mind is the mischief-maker, *buddhi* is the redeeming factor. *Buddhi* should be cultivated, enriched by *satsang* and *svadhyaya*, constant reflection, *manana*, also. Then *buddhi* becomes a valuable friend; it is constantly present to help you.

Aspiration too should be constantly kept up. It does not blaze by itself. The fire of aspiration has to be stoked time and again, day after day. It has to be fanned. Then alone it will always be fully blazing. Any fire if neglected gradually becomes embers and then covered with ash. And this fire of aspiration also can die out, God forbid. If further neglecting it, one dampens it with water or some contrary element, it will die out; you will have ashes only—neither useful to you, nor to anyone. Then no use weeping and putting those ashes on your body, no use. It is futile. And it will be no one's fault but your own.

Therefore, man is man because he has a mind. The hallmark of a *sadhak* is not merely activity of the mind and intellect, but the right activity of the intellect and the conscious control of the mind. Terrorists also have an intellect, but they use it in a perverted way, a horrible way. And often they imagine that what they are thinking, saying and doing is right. So, if the *buddhi* is perverted, it is dangerous. It must be alert and endowed with right perception and divine virtues.

Therefore, know your inside. Know what part mind plays. Know the great important part the intellect must play. Give attention to the intellect. Cultivate the intellect through *svadhyaya*, reflection and *satsang*. These are the three ways: daily study; daily introspection and reflection; *satsang*. Time and again the spiritual history of India recounts the downfall of various seekers through lack of *svadhyaya*, lack of *satsang*, lack of discrimination.

People who have ascended very high have had terrible downfalls. Visvamitra did not have *satsang*. He was alone, doing *tapasya* in solitude, seclusion. What happened? He had no one to keep his *buddhi* elevated, awake, alert, vigilant—no *satsang*. He was dominated by the ego; even his *tapasya* was dominated by the ego. What happened? He very easily had a downfall. The celestial nymph Menaka came—finished. All Visvamitra's *tapasya* was lost.

Helped by *satsang*, *svadhyaya* and discrimination, intellect becomes our friend. Mind is not our friend. *Chitta* is neither friend nor foe. It contains stored wisdom; it contains stored perversion, evil also. It contains both. What is important is how you manage to gradually purify it, what you take out of it. First let the intellect deal with it and then only let it percolate into the mind. If *chitta* and mind are directly connected—finished, you are lost. The *buddhi* must be there between the *chitta* and the mind. Then your *antahkarana* is in a proper situation. Think of all these very essential and important things. Be a *buddhisali*, *buddhiman* (one endowed with proper intellect). Therefore we say: “*dhiyo yo nah prachodayat*—May He illumine my intellect. Illumine my intellect with Divinity, O Sarasvati.”

Thus keeping watch over our intellect, keeping watch over our *chitta* and mind, making our intellect full of wisdom, discrimination, analysis and enquiry, let us proceed towards the Goal, attaining which we become blessed!

57

DECEPTION

Radiant Immortal Souls! For the being who receives the *ahetuki kripa*—the motiveless compassionate grace of God and God-men like Gurudev, and taking it seriously puts it into earnest, diligent, daily practice in his own life, more and more is given. He who proves worthy, not by feeling or thought but by being and doing, by living and action, to that being, more and more grace is extended, more and more blessings are given. The law is such, that to those who due to their good fortune are thus recipient and responsive, grace flows perennially.

But those who receive and pay only lip-service, or even go contrary-wise in thought and action to the elevating, inspiring and liberating divine teachings of God, sent to us through His saints, prophets and spiritual masters—those individuals cut themselves off from the inflow of God’s grace. God’s grace is not withheld, God’s grace is not withdrawn. We cut ourselves off from God’s grace, and no lamentation will be of any avail except remorse, repentance, a transformation and a renewal of our life in the Spirit.

It is, therefore, entirely up to the seeker, the individual soul, whether he will work for a restoration of God’s grace or whether he will continue to be deprived of grace. More than anything else, deception, cunningness, concealed crookedness, double standards, which are all children of falsehood, *asatya*, completely cut off the individual soul from the influx of God’s grace. We set up a rock barrier between God’s grace and ourselves through all manners and shades of cunningness, crookedness, deception and duplicity. These are great enemies of a *bhakta* and *sadhak*. They put a great distance between oneself and the all-compassionate, all-loving, all-merciful, all-gracious Supreme Being.

All saints, sages, mystics and teachers of all religions have been at one, in total agreement, regarding this one point. The great Guru of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadev, used to say again and again that unless you are free from deception and crookedness, you cannot draw near to God. You must be completely guileless, as guileless as a child, have a pure heart. Jesus said it nearly two thousand years ago: “Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.” “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” “Suffer little children to come unto Me for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Children have a pure heart, a nature free of deception.

And the greatest and most dangerous of all deceptions is deception of the Guru and carrying on as though not only the world does not know what we are, but that even God does not know. Such a deceiver is a true atheist, who apparently believes in God, but so far as his life and action are concerned, he lives and acts as if there is no God there to constantly witness what he is doing, no

God there constantly knowing his innermost, hiddenmost thought and motivation. That means he is really a *nastika* (atheist).

But there is only one deception worse than the deception of the Guru and the imagined deception of God, and that, the greatest of all deceptions, is self-deception. Such a *sadhak*, such a seeker, thinks: “I am deceiving everyone; no one knows that I am able to hide my inner being from everyone.” He forgets that he cannot deceive the indwelling Spirit within all. He cannot deceive God. So he deceives himself into thinking that he has concealed himself from everyone, and the poor deluded soul includes in this everyone God as well. There is no greater self-deception. And one who lives in a delusion of self-deception has got to go a long way, has got to put up a great deal of *sadhana* and struggle.

This is important to understand, because if this is overcome, seventy-five per cent of *sadhana* is done. If this is overcome we are very near to God. God is very dear to us, and we are very dear to God. He cannot keep Himself away from a truly pure heart.

This is the great need of today where deception and deceit are a way of life. And they are even accepted as something that is necessary, unavoidable. “And so if we do a lot of *japa* or are able to deliver good lectures, then we will be compensating for it.”

Now, I do not want to say that such a deceiver will be punished by God. God never punishes. But the great tragedy is, even if He does not punish, the deceiver will deprive himself of the greatest gain, suffer the greatest loss, miss the greatest chance, lose the most golden opportunity, and make a mess of his life. What more do you want? You have wasted away your life. This prospect itself is enough. The prospect of a *dunda* (stick) or a punishment is not needed. It is not necessary if you are really wise, really perceptive, able to see what a terrible thing it would be to lose this opportunity, miss this chance and deprive yourself of this great gain. They call it *mahati vinashti*—total loss.

Therefore, strive with all your might. Make a plan. Have a certain definite, systematic method to work upon yourself, to be always alert, always awake, always watching yourself. Always be self-analytical and keep a watch upon every thought, word and action. See that not even the least vestige of deception creeps into you. Unless you are eternally vigilant, unless you are always awake, aware, witnessing, watching yourself, unless you are always actively discriminating from morning till evening, it is very difficult to avoid this terrible pitfall. It is like slime on the surface of a smooth pathway. One little uncautious step, your foot will slip and down you will fall.

Therefore, pour over the sayings of the scriptures, the great teachings of the masters, and be eternally vigilant. At every step discriminate in an active way and follow that discrimination by right action. Pray to God from the bottom of your heart: “Make me completely sincere, earnest. Take away from me the least vestige of any type of deception. O God, this is the one thing I ask.” And ever be cautious, ever be watching yourself. For here in this inner realm of your own concealed thoughts, you are your own friend, you are your own helper. No one can come and help you.

Even God will not interfere. He is the witness, He watches. Because He need not interfere. He has given so much wisdom, so much teaching, so much awakening, so much guidance since the dawn of creation through His saints and sages, messiahs and prophets, Gurus and all the scriptures.

He has given everything that He has to give, and He has said everything that has to be said. He has enriched our life beyond measure. More than anything else, after giving everything, He has said: “If after having listened to what I have told you, all the knowledge and instruction I have given you, if you receive it and follow Me, act according to My instructions, then all will be well with you. But if out of your own self-deluded will you still persist in your folly and go contrary-wise to My instructions, you will perish, it will be over for you. Therefore be careful. I have told you, I have cautioned you, I have given you the best wisdom. Now, reflect over it, and do as you wish.” So even God leaves us to do as we wish.

Therefore, ponder all these things. *Manana* on *mahavakyas* (reflection on the great sentences) is not enough. *Tat tvam asi* (You are That), *aham brahmasmi* (I am Brahman), *prajnanam brahma* (Consciousness is Brahman)—only thinking about these alone is not enough. You must also think about the other great facts of the spiritual life that have been put before us through the Bhagavad Gita and the other great teachings. Therefore Gurudev said: “Introspect, analyse yourself. Search out the hidden motive of your actions. Be pure in thought, word and deed.” Time and again, in all his instructions, Gurudev brought this home to us.

May we be benefited by these great words of guidance, words of wisdom—*marga darsa* (indicating the path). May we seriously ponder our life and may we seriously do self-examination of ourselves every day and throughout the day. Therein alone our salvation lies, not otherwise. Gurudev said: “At the end of each day, introspect; go over the actions of that day.” He did not say it for fun. It is not as though it is meaningless.

How many of us actually do it, every evening—sit and review the actions of that day: “What I did from 6 to 7 A.M., from 7 to 8 A.M., the whole day?” Who sits and does it, and then jots down what one discovers about oneself, becomes humble, contrite and tries to correct it the next day? This is the touchstone of our sincerity, of our real genuineness, the authenticity of our spiritual aspiration. This is what we must do. In this lies our salvation.

Think deeply over what has been shared, be benefited and realise God in this very life. Make your spirituality first quality, twenty-four carat, not less. Opt only for the best, not the second best. This is what you should do, for if we fulfil the conditions, if we are pure, sincere, guileless, free from wickedness and sincere in our attitude, God will not withhold bestowing the highest. Without the least doubt, unfailingly, He will give fullest success in our spiritual life and quest. This is a law. For one who has deserved, the highest blessedness will never be withheld. God bless you all!

58

BE CONTENT IN WHATEVER WAY GOD KEEPS YOU

Almighty Lord, Father of entire humanity, beloved God of grace, compassion and love! At this moment of our prayerful gathering here, this servant at Thy Feet prays that Your divine grace may shower upon all. May your divine grace grant them a spirit of right enquiry, philosophical reflection, active discrimination between the permanent and the passing, the eternal and the

non-eternal, between the Self and the non-Self, between their real essential nature and the merely added, temporary, limited adjuncts like body, senses, *prana*, mind, intellect, ideas, imaginations, memories and aspirations, discrimination between these temporary adjuncts and their ever-full, ever-radiant, imperishable, indestructible, permanent, eternal, true Self which is beyond time and space, beyond name and form, which has neither birth nor death! Bless them with active discrimination or *viveka* which leads them gradually towards recognising their essential nature. Grant them the privilege of living as radiant spirits and divinities, parts of Yourself, rather than live and move as poor caricatures of the resplendence which they are, or as mere anomalies of the Truth! May they radiantly live in Truth, in Reality and shine with divinity! This is my humble prayer at this moment.

O Gurudev! I pray to you that your awakening touch, your glance of grace, may awaken them all and fill them with aspiration to lead a life in accordance with your lofty teachings, your sublime vision of man. Bless them and grant them the gift of divine life, a divine life of devotion, of selfless, worshipful service, a divine life of ceaseless service and constant devotion, a divine life of steady, unflinching, regular, daily meditation, a divine life that is a gradual, progressive process of blossoming into full Self-realisation that liberates them forever from pain, sorrow, suffering!

Blessed Divinities! Great mystics have appeared in India and placed before us a shining example of an ideal spiritual life, an ideal ethical life of righteousness and spirituality, of ethical conduct, character and devotion. They are for us shining examples to be earnestly emulated and followed. Many of them have also given to us wonderful philosophy and very mystical teachings of Yoga in the form of musical compositions, in the form of songs. Using mystical terminology and beautiful music, melodiously sung, these minstrels have gone from door to door trying to bring about an awakening, an understanding of the hidden truths within us, through devotional songs, *bhajans*.

These *bhajans* were all directed, meant to inspire, meant to awaken, to impart instruction. These songs are standing monuments of their abundance of love, their goodwill for fellow souls. They wanted all to walk the path of light and attain supreme blessedness in this very life.

One such *bhajan*, which has come into our life through various devotional singers, I wish to share with you. It is full of instruction, full of inspiration full of great strength, and full of great *marga-darsan* (light on the path). It goes to the heart of the life that overcomes and triumphs over all obstacles, all impediments, all tests, trials, tribulations, everything. Its starting two lines also form the refrain: "Sita Ram, Sita Ram, Sita Ram kahiye, Jahi vidhi rakhe Ram tahi vidhi rahiye."

The gist of it is: "O man, in whatever state the Lord has placed you, so far as your outer, earthly, secular life is concerned, be content. Be where God has placed you, and be full of inner serenity, be full of inner joy. Never mind what your mind may say. Never mind what people may say. For you know that all comes due to the supreme will of the Almighty, the Universal Being; everything is in His hands. He brings about all things. Knowing this be at rest, be serene, be peaceful.

"In all conditions, at all times, amidst all experiences, events and occurrences, in all tests, trials and tribulations, be serene; rejoice in the Lord, knowing that you are safe in His hands. For He,

the infinite goodness, infinite love, infinite compassion, infinite justice, infinite wisdom, can never do to you anything that is wrong, harmful or inimical to your highest welfare.

“Thus, having firm faith, firm knowledge, being set and convinced, and thus being established in this conviction, be serene in whatever way He has placed you. Be pleased to be there and rejoice. Chant: ‘Sita Ram, Sita Ram, Sita Ram.’

“Thus by accepting His dispensation, His will for you, surrendering to that grand, great will and being at rest, keep on chanting His Name, glorifying Him, praising Him, lauding Him, ever sending your voice towards His throne.

“Let your hands always be engaged in His service, and while thus engaged, let your mouth, lips, tongue ceaselessly keep chanting His glorious, Divine Name. Never think that you are alone, abandoned, forlorn, forsaken, for it can never happen. By the very nature of things it can never happen. For He is the all-pervading, indwelling Lord Who is ever with you, ever by your side. He is with you; you are never alone. Know this.

“Knowing fully well and understanding that He is the dispenser of the destiny of all beings, just forbear. In success or failure, gain or loss, good or bad, in all things, endure whatever comes, knowing ‘He is the Supreme Dispenser, and if it is His will it is most acceptable to me.’ Thus in all conditions, in the dualities that fill this world, accept it and be at peace. In whatsoever way the Supreme Being has been pleased to keep you, O beloved pilgrim soul, be thou content with His dispensation, and rejoice in His company, glorify Him and chant His Name ever and ever.”

This is the way to overcome all life—all obstacles, tribulations, troubles and so-called adverse factors—and smoothly sail through life and reach the great destination with God as your companion, with His Name as the power that propels you forward overcoming all obstacles for you. This is the quintessence of *prapatti marga* (the path of surrender) and *saranagati rahasya* (the secret of surrender) put into the three lines of each single verse, for the fourth line is only the refrain. I am sharing this with you and commending the wisdom teaching of this unknown mystic to you. He did not even put his name. God bless you all! God speed you and grant you success!

59

THE LAND OF THE GODS

Radiant Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* gathered together in Gurudev’s presence in his sacred *samadhisthan*, on the banks of Divine Mother Ganga, in this holiest of holy parts of our worshipful Bharat Mata, Mother India! This region is rightly regarded as *deva bhumi*—the land of the Gods, and as *tapo bhumi*—the land of austerity and penance. For that is what it was—the land of penance, austerity, serious spiritual practice, meditation and Yoga, a land where people came with the sole objective of attaining God-consciousness.

Their goal was God-realisation by propitiating the Gods through prayer, worship, adoration, *surya-namaskar*, Ganga *puja* and *arati*. In this way, by worshipping all manifestations of the one, supreme, non-dual Reality, the Universal Being, by making that non-dual, eternal Being the one and sole goal of their life and wholly devoting themselves to this great Goal, these sages and seers, recluses and anchorites, performed austerities and attained illumination.

No matter how much change has taken place in the life of the people dwelling in this region, no matter how much a life of penance, austerity, prayer, spiritual life, worship of the manifest God has gradually become a far cry in the lives of most people in this area, nevertheless, the land itself retains its vibrant spirituality. The very atmosphere is saturated with the penance, austerity, deep meditations and power of realisations of bygone seers.

Not only in ancient times, even in the last century and a half there were such spiritual stalwarts, steeped in meditation, totally established in perfect renunciation, who personified in themselves the descriptions drawn for us in our ancient scriptures. Thus a quality of spirituality and austerity is retained here in the very atmosphere, in the very soil, in the very surroundings. This territory of Ganga and Himalayas is vibrant with spirituality. Now, we have to set an attitude. We have to go to the essence of this area, the spiritual quality of the very atmosphere, the sanctity and divinity of this very place and concern ourselves directly only with that and not be overly concerned about these superfluous added factors: the busloads of people, blaring radio music through loudspeakers, noise of traffic, the shops and all the other distractions—it has become a market place.

In the midst of all this there are two great principles, which if firmly held onto, nothing can affect us. The first is the pervading presence of the present day saints who have sanctified the banks of the Ganga by taking up their abode in this very area where we are living, moving, eating, drinking, sleeping. They have recreated in all its power and splendour, in all its full force, that same ancient atmosphere of renunciation, austerity, penance and Self-realisation—that radiant illumined state of consciousness, *brahma-vidya*, knowledge supreme. They have done it both on this bank and on the other bank of the Ganga.

Therefore, we may find the ancient godly quality of penance, prayer, austerity vanishing from other parts of Uttarakhand, filled as it is with business, government officials, contractors and military personnel who do not harmonise with the quality of this area of the Ganges and Himalayas, the divine realm of the Gods, the divine realm of *tapasya*; nevertheless, the Ashrams of sages of Self-realisation, like this Ashram of Gurudev, are still as vibrant with spiritual force and power as any forest cave, mountain top or deep jungle seclusion where anchorites, sages and seers have meditated, attained illumination and become liberated sages.

This is the redeeming feature, and as the poet says, all is not lost if only we have eyes to see, if we have the right stuff within us to understand that they have captured and kept here for us that same ancient spirituality which sages and seers like Vasishtha and Vyasa created here in times of yore. It is here—the *tapasya* of Bhagiratha, the great wisdom of Vyasa, the divinity of Vasishtha. They are all here.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

The second factor is, that if your approach to spirituality has been on the right note, then in spite of all that has happened, is happening, and will go on happening evermore, you can still move in this area like a being dwelling in the land of the Gods, in the land of *tapasya*. That is, wherever you go, you are in God and God is in you. This is the basic truth of existence. This is the central truth of Indian philosophy.

In this way, there shines within your heart the Light of lights that is beyond all darkness, “where the sun does not shine, nor the moon, nor lightning, what to say of this fire; from that Light all things upon earth derive their effulgence and shine in this world of men.” That Light is the Reality enshrined within you as the silent indwelling divinity, silent splendour. You carry It wherever you go. Even when you forget It, It is there.

And if you are fortunate enough to remember It, It is still more there and in a way in which you can experience It, in a way in which you can immunise yourself totally from all that is the opposite of It in the atmosphere, in the surroundings, in the sights and sounds that you have to experience here.

Go with this consciousness: “Everywhere one existence pervades, the Divine Spirit pervades. Wherever I go, I may be able to move away from everything else, but from God I cannot go. Before I go anywhere, He is already there. He is nearer than the nearest, farther than the farthest—pervading all, indwelling all, me too.” If this truth is contemplated, if this truth is not forgotten, if this truth is made the basis of your own inner state, then notwithstanding all the modern roads, the military posted here and in the remotest passages of the Himalayas, notwithstanding all the businesses, contractors, government officials, the swarming crowds of people—good, bad and indifferent that come here—you can still remain in that same state of blessedness, in that same sanctified atmosphere that the ancients, the sages and the seers, had the advantage of.

Therefore in the ultimate context it is for you to create a world of your own, and it does not require any special exertion or any artificial effort. You have to dwell in Truth. You have to be aware of the Fact—of what Is. You should not forget. That you should make the ground of your being. Then blessed you will be; you will live, move and have your being in God.

May this be your effort, earnest effort. Never take this truth away from your vision. Forever enshrine this truth and contemplate it by day and by night. Dwell in this consciousness. Dwell in God. Dwell in the full experience of the atmosphere that has been created for you by Holy Master. He has left for posterity a centre of vibrant spirituality where every atom of matter, every speck of space, the very atmosphere is filled with the power of his *bhakti*, *jnana*, *vairagya* and illumination, by his devotion to God, his great wisdom and renunciation. We are here in a protected area. We are here safe, sound.

Thus may our effort be to cultivate the awareness of this reality, this truth, to dwell in this truth and bless ourselves by our own self, by the right attitude and the right receptivity. This is the least that each one can do, upon whom grace has been showered by the Divine, upon whom the choicest benedictions have been showered by the Holy Master. God bless you all!

60

THE CONSCIOUS AND THE INERT

Radiant Divinities! The conscious and the inert exist side by side in this creation of God. You constitute the conscious factor, the entity; the universe outside you constitutes the inert factor. You perceive a mountain, the mountain does not perceive you. You perceive a tree, the tree does not perceive you as you perceive it. A great rock of granite, existing for thousands of years—you perceive it, it does not perceive you. It is not even aware that you are perceiving it. Even though it may exist for thousands and thousands of years, it remains the same. It may gradually be worn away, but it does not evolve.

Whereas a conscious being like you comes into the world and from the moment of birth you begin to perceive things, you begin to react to them. Then as you grow you interact with them, and still later you begin to act upon them. Further on you investigate them, analyse them, enter into their very heart and core. Nothing can conceal its secret from you. You probe and wrest the secret out of everything. Why? Because you are a conscious being. The inert continues to exist as it is; the conscious ever advances, ever evolves, ever improves and masters everything. Thus man as the conscious being is the powerful one. He exerts his influence, and the inert yields to the power and the force that consciousness brings to bear on it.

Therefore, from a pragmatic and rational point of view, it is meaningless to say that the universe is bondage, that we are caught in *samsara* (the process of worldly life) and helplessly suffer. It is a wrong notion, a misstatement, a contradiction of the true, inner, essential fact. The universe cannot bind anyone. *Samsara* has no power because it is *jada*, or inert. It has no power to bind; it cannot hold anyone in thralldom, in bondage. It has no power of its own; it cannot cling to you, bind you, hold you down from becoming whatever you wish to become. It is you who cling to it. It is you who are aware of its existence, who act and set up relationships. Bondage arises from you, not from *samsara*, not from this world, not from this creation of God. It does nothing. You are the one who has become bound by your own way of relating yourself to *samsara*, by your own way of failing to understand *samsara* and by wrongly understanding things around you.

As a conscious being you have intelligence, you have perception, you have thoughts. You have the power of thinking, inferring, discriminating, enquiring, comparing, contrasting, analysing, knowing, selecting, rejecting. You also have the power to perceive “what binds me, what liberates me, what is inimical to me and what is beneficial to me.” All these you possess because you are a conscious entity.

Therefore, the way in which consciousness is applied and used throughout *prakriti* (Nature) determines what the universe does to you or what you can do to the universe. You can triumph over everything around you. The way in which you apply your faculties and express your consciousness depends upon your understanding of the universe and yourself. If there is knowledge at the basis, then everything you do you do rightly, and the universe around you becomes a help to your evolution. If the basis is ignorance, wrong perception, then you create bondage.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

The universe is as God created it. It was meant to be a help for your evolution, but you convert it into a hindrance. It itself is neither this nor that. It is you, it is man, it is conscious being that makes God's creation whatever it becomes to you—a help or a hindrance, bondage or a liberating factor. This is the truth.

The conscious is the powerful factor; the inert is powerless. We may endow it with power. Tobacco is an inert thing. It is a leaf, it does nothing. If you leave it by itself it will dry up, wither away, vanish. We began to relate ourselves to it in a slavish way, in a wrong way, in an unwise way. Then it became to us a hindrance, a bondage, a menace, a danger, a destroyer.

The degree of ignorance, the degree of folly with which we relate ourselves to these things determines the degree of harm they can do to us. By themselves they can do nothing. Tobacco, liquor, gambling den, narcotics, money, bad company, anything and everything around us—they do not attack us, they do not pursue us or have a malevolent intention towards us. They do nothing, they can do nothing, they have no power. It is we who endow them with power.

Therefore be wise. Know this central truth about yourself and the universe around you—yourself and all things. Gold exists. For a person who never thinks about gold, gold does not exist, whereas a criminal or an avaricious person becomes a victim of gold. Why? Not because the gold did anything. It does not pursue them or attack them, rather they develop intentions towards it, pursue it. It does not hook them; they hook themselves to it, bind themselves to it. As a result they can descend into any type of crime, even murder. Why? Because of the conscious, not because of the inert.

Therefore, again and again ponder this truth, again and again reflect over this fact, again and again think deeply of this situation. Know that bondage arises from our folly; bondage arises from utilising our God-given faculties in a manner they were not meant to be utilised in, in a wrong manner. Any endowment can either be wisely used or it can be misused, abused. If we do not use our human potential and our faculties—our eyes, ears, tongue, nose, sense of touch, hands and feet—wisely, they can all become problems to us. Sight, sound, taste, scent and touch were given to us for a purpose, a positive purpose, to help us. But we can make each one of them into a hindrance, into a problem. Not because they are problems, but because we have wrongly related ourselves to them. We do not apply them in the right way; we misuse them.

This is the crux of the human problem, the human situation, the *jivatma's* plight. It must be understood well. It can make a world of difference. Think deeply of this truth—you and the universe around you which is inert. Think very deeply. This is the central problem of philosophy—man and the universe. The universe is *jada*, it does nothing. Man is conscious, he does everything. And what he does and how he does it determines bondage or liberation, sorrow or happiness, peace or the absence of it. Everything is determined by what you do, how you understand this inert universe, how you relate yourself, and how you make use of the human potential.

Think about it ten times, a hundred times, a thousand times. Think about it morning till evening, day after day, all your life. In that lies your arising from unrealities to the Reality. In this deep reflection lies your arising from darkness to Light. In this deep reflection and contemplation

lies your arising from bondage and mortality into freedom, liberation and immortality. This is the truth. Grasp this truth and become wise. Become your own liberator now and here!

61

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

Radiant Divinities! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers! An intelligent person makes use of every opportunity that God provides him or her in this upward ascent towards perfection. An intelligent being is ever upon the look out for opportunities to elevate himself, to improve himself, to move forward, progress and to work inwardly for an unfoldment that will enable him to put forth the maximum abilities, faculties and talents that he knows are within him.

The really intelligent person not only makes use of every opportunity for self-improvement, for progress, but also, if need be, he tries to create opportunities for fulfilling the purpose for which he has come here—self-unfoldment, upward ascent. He even thinks and plans how opportunities can be created. Whenever Gurudev had the occasion to mention or teach about *karma yoga*, he would even go to the extent of saying: “If you do not have opportunities to serve, create opportunities and serve.” And he did it.

If, for instance, on your birthday you decide you will try to make all the inmates of the leper colonies happy by distributing some special *prasad* to them—now here is a way where you are creating an opportunity. They have not come here. It is not Dussra or Dipavali. It is not any particular time when it is supposed to be an opportunity to do something good. But, while there are diverse ways of observing one’s birthday, here you say: “Among other things I should do this also.” It is your intention, your own voluntary choice. So you have created an opportunity where it does not really exist.

For opportunities may come knocking at your door, or they also may not come. So it does not mean that you should wait for someone to knock at your door before you open it. Why not open it yourself? You are inside; come out into the sunshine, into the open, into the field of infinite opportunities in the world around you. Why confine yourselves to a room, under a roof, within four walls?

For the world is not obliged to come knocking at your door in the form of opportunities. This world does not owe anything to anyone, whereas we owe everything to it. Whether you are born or not born is not the concern of the world, whereas you are concerned now with how to deal with the world. So if you are intelligent, you will grasp this one fact, that the world does not owe anything to anyone. Though, the wonder is, even though not owing anything, it keeps on giving. That is the beauty of life. Not obliged to anyone, not owing anything to anyone, yet it keeps on giving. The bounty of the Lord’s world is amazing if you have eyes to see.

Does it seem selfish that you are intent upon improving yourself by not missing opportunities, by looking for opportunities, even creating opportunities? Seemingly selfish, it is

selfishness for a higher purpose. For it is discharging our duty towards He Who has created us in His image. It is the doing of a duty towards our own divine destiny. Seemingly selfish, it is really a duty. We owe a duty to the One Who has sent us; we owe a duty to ourselves. We owe a duty to the world which has given so much to us—that we give the best of ourselves to it.

And if you want to give the best of yourself, you must make yourself the highest and the best “you” you can. You must not be a second grade or a third grade “you.” You must be a first grade “you,” because you are yourself the best wealth and gift that you can bring to the world. So if you diligently work for self-improvement, self-unfoldment, self-progress, then you are only trying to make yourself into a first quality product and then give it to the world, offer yourself to the world. If you work for self-improvement, not only will you be the gainer, your neighbour will be the gainer, your nearest and dearest will be the gainer, and society, your country and the world will be the gainer.

If some machinery creaks and grinds and works with a harsh noise, then it becomes a nuisance to everyone. If a correction is made and it works smoothly, it helps everyone to tolerate it. It is the same with everything. If you are a good specimen of what you are meant to be, the world is the gainer. It goes without saying that you are the gainer also. But the world is the first gainer.

Because the impact of each one of us is first upon the world outside, and then it boomerangs and comes back on us. We have to enjoy or suffer what we are, for everything comes back. But the first impact is upon those amongst whom God has placed us. Therefore, be wise. Look out for opportunities. Make use of every opportunity. Create opportunities for self-improvement, to progress, to become a better “you,” and thus make the world happy that you are in it. This is the key to move towards perfection, slowly and steadily, day by day.

What a great amount of time, energy and exertion scientists put forth if they want to know something more about a phenomenon like a total solar eclipse—what great enthusiasm, what great earnestness, what great sincerity! What great desire not to miss this opportunity. What willingness to take great pains, not minding the hardships, energy and expense involved in it. And the world is the gainer. New knowledge is gained. When a prosaic, secular sector of humanity can be so sincere, so earnest, so willing to exert, so enthusiastic about gaining knowledge about seemingly remote things that have no direct connection with human life, how much more people who are dedicated to attaining the highest goal of life should have this attitude, this approach towards life.

Reflect for a while, are you having this attitude? We are concerned with our own life which is nearest to us, immediate to us, not something remote, something occasional, but right here and now. We have to deal with ourselves every day, and is it possible to do it without proper understanding? We have to understand ourselves, and we have to understand life. We have to learn how to live every day, morning till night. A great deal of light is thrown upon this great task, this science of life, upon all aspects and facets of the art of living life, in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita wisdom teachings. Go to the Gita for a better understanding of yourself—physically, vitally, mentally, morally, ethically, spiritually. You will not be disappointed; you will not return empty handed. You will be enriched. Many unknown things are brought to your attention: how to relate yourself to the body, to your senses, to your mind and its thoughts, emotions and sentiments, and how to deal with them, how to manage them. Mahatma Gandhi called it “Gita the Mother,” and

said, “It is more than a mother to me.” Are you taking advantage of the opportunity to elevate yourself through regular study of the Gita?

Life is full of opportunities. If they do not present themselves to you, create them. Look out for them. God guide you. Gurudev’s blessings be upon you. More than anything else, may your own grace be upon yourself. May your own benedictions be upon yourself. May your own goodwill be directed upon yourself so that you can make of yourself a better “you” for other people to live with, tolerate, benefit by, and gain through. God bless you!

62

THE ARJUNA COMPLEX

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers! You have become aware of the presence of a thing called spiritual life and have been urged by wishes and desires to lead a life other than the merely secular life of pursuit of earthly things, of normal sense pleasures and worldly activities. You have been endowed with an aspiration to lead a higher life, a life which somehow you have been made to think is a better or more preferable or a superior one to the one which you had been living. Therefore, for reasons best known to each one of you, best known to yourself and to none other, you chose to adopt a way of life different from that lived previously in this incarnation.

Having thus chosen a certain way of life, it behoves each one of you to be sincere in leading that life, to be honest with yourself and to be earnest in the pursuit of this new life—wished for by you, chosen by you, and adopted by you. There should be loyalty and devotion to your choice, made after much deliberation and through coming to a certain inner decision. It behoves you to pay the requisite attention to it, to be one-pointed in the pursuit of it, and be prepared to overcome obstacles on the path, to face difficulties and keep on, keep on, bearing adverse circumstances and enduring certain trials and tribulations inevitable in any way of life, whatever it may be.

When one enters into an arena of one’s own choice, one has to face problems, one has to face difficulties. No one is free from them, either in the business or the professional field or in the domestic field. Each one has problems of their own. For one it may be a problem of strikes, for another it’s a partner who cheats him, still another faces bankruptcy. A professional man may make a mistake that costs lives, and a family man may be enduring an impossible household situation.

In this way, no field of activity is free from its own peculiar types of difficulties. Difficulties are the order of the day in human life. And thus when one has made up one’s mind, made a choice and entered into a way of life, one should also be prepared to endure, to face difficulties and problems, deal with them and overcome them, and sometimes be defeated by them, but yet not accept overall defeat—go on, push on.

To fight, to declare war on the Kauravas was the Pandavas’ own choice. Krishna did not compel them. They could have gone back to the forest. But, having decided and willingly entered

into the fray, it was expected that Arjuna would be prepared to face everything that comes, that is part and parcel of the choice, that is in-built, implied and already there in the choice.

“I did not know it would be so. I did not know that my uncle would be looking at me, or my cousin-brother and nephew would be standing against me in the opposite camp.” Nothing is to be unexpected. Everything is to be expected, because the future is always unknown. So when one ventures on a course of action, it is no wisdom to take anything for granted. It is irrational. It shows a puerile attitude. Because when you make a choice you have to take what comes. It is puerile to say, “I did not expect it would be this way.”

Arjuna demonstrated this childishness. That is why, in spite of Arjuna’s terrible clinical, physical and psychological condition, Lord Krishna talked to him with a smile on His face. He said, “This is irrational, this is puerile.” For when one has entered into a field of battle, there is nothing unexpected. There is no such thing as suddenly being taken by surprise. Everything is part of the bargain. And so Krishna did not sympathise with Arjuna’s mind.

And He said: “Difficulties and tribulations are part of this life, this struggle. *Tan titikshasva bharata*—O Arjuna, endure, endure, be strong within, weakness will not pay. In this path, in this field where you have entered, either to kill or to be killed, to do or die, there can be no attitude other than firmness, stout-heartedness, strength and courage.” All these things Lord Krishna says in so many words, thus giving us a hint as to what should be the attitude of a Yogi, a seeker, a *sadhak*, who of his own free choice has adopted a certain way of life. There is a saying: “If you want the rose you have to put up with the thorns,” and in Hindi: “If you decide that you want the honey, you must be prepared for the bee-sting.”

And thus the situation of the Gita fairly and squarely makes us take a look at ourselves. Because, here is a young man, entered into a course of action of his own choice, determined for it, having weighed the pros and cons and now appearing very, very unwilling and trying to back out. Not once in our lifetime, but several times during the course of our life we create for ourselves the Gita complex. If any one of these things is lacking—honesty of purpose, earnestness, full attention to the chosen path—then difficulties arise. We find ourselves in the Arjuna situation, the Arjuna fix. And the Gita comes to us with a great light.

Therefore, never forget what a treasure you have. The Gita is full of psychological guidance, psychiatric guidance. It is full of inspiration also, full of sympathy and understanding of your position, and it is full of great assurances. It infuses strength, clears the way, throws light upon the path. Because the human situation was not unknown to the Creator. “I know, I know this is the situation with human life, and here, therefore, I put everything that is necessary for your guidance.” Therefore, it is a manual of life given by the Universal Soul to the individual soul. So Adi Sankaracharya said: “Every day, without fail, read a little bit of the Gita, even half a verse.”

But there is a quality in the *jivatma*, which is the essence of the *jivatma*, and that is an unhealthy focusing of all one’s consciousness upon one’s own individual personality, “I-ness.” We have sold out to the “I”. There is a total inclination only to support the “I”, only to follow the “I”, only to give importance to the “I”, only to do what it is urging us to do. Therein is also a greater

vexation: a deep fundamental unwillingness to let go of the “I”. And Vedanta says that this is the essence of the *jivatma*.

In addition, just as you cannot see your own eyes, you cannot see your own *jivatva*. And it is the *jivatva* that is the problem. You cannot see it and yet it dominates; you are completely under its subjugation. That is the problem, that is *samsara*. It is very difficult to open your eyes and know that there is a greater wisdom, a greater intelligence, a greater understanding, in following which *alone* you can come out of darkness and in surrendering to which *alone* you can liberate yourself from yourself.

Arjuna was not able to liberate himself from himself. He was caught in his own view of things, in his own sentiments, in his own emotions, in his own reactions. He was caught and he was in a pitiable condition. And it required all patience and effort on the part of Jagad-Guru Sri Krishna to free Arjuna from himself and to enable him to see himself in the right perspective and to be fully and willingly prepared to follow the lead of Sri Krishna. Then the problem gradually began to resolve itself. Arjuna found that he was able to free himself. From whom? From himself. That is the inner *tattva* (truth), outcome, fruit of the Gita—not I, not I, but Thou.

But Arjuna did not yield, did not give up his self-opinion easily. Difficult was the task. He made Bhagavan go through sixteen chapters of teachings before he finally saw the wisdom. He especially got this clarity after the tenth and eleventh chapters. So deeply one must ponder these two chapters. For all of us have within us the situation of Arjuna in some way or other. It is the crucial problem of the *jivatva*—its unwillingness to renounce itself for a higher light, higher wisdom.

Arjuna was not initially aware of this situation, this aspect of his problem. He was trying to prove Lord Krishna wrong and to prove himself to be very, very rational, logical and wise. He accused Lord Krishna of misleading him, taking him on a terrible path, one that was wrong and would lead to hell. Afterwards he had to apologise and say: “I did not know to Whom I was talking, please forgive me.”

Jesus, at the last moment, at the peak of His career, as His life reached the grand finale of fulfilling His purpose on earth, faced one terrible night in the garden when He hesitated, there was a conflict: “Should I allow myself to be sacrificed?” How difficult it is to say “Yes.” And so He was tormented, He was tortured, He was in agony. Every pore of His skin perspired, but not with perspiration, with blood. He went through an agony which is difficult to even imagine, because it was the struggle of the “I”. That “I” principle felt great reluctance to lose itself, and Jesus says: “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” He appeals to the Universal Soul. It is only when He says: “Nevertheless, not my will but Thy will be done,” that the agony ends and a certain peace once again comes, along with the inner strength to face anything and everything.

Sitting under the Bo-tree, after taking a terrible resolution, there was a last assaillment upon Buddha. Something similar to the agony in the garden took place which shook Buddha to His foundations. And it was only when He saw through it, made a great decision and stood firm that enlightenment came.

So hints are given as to how reluctant the *jivatma* can be to yield to the Universal. If it can happen to souls of such calibre, super souls, what about you and I? We must have the humility and wisdom to recognise where we are, what the problem is, and where the solution lies.

Thus we pay homage to Bhagavan Sri Krishna Who has given to humanity for all times a deep understanding of the individual soul's situation and problem. He has also given a sympathetic teaching on how to deliver ourselves from ourselves and stand filled with strength to carry out the will of the Divine. So the Gita is something personal to you. It has an immediate relevance, is an immediate help to all individual seekers and souls. Let us all ponder, let us all recognise the Gita for what it is, for it is available to you as you are today. Let us be wise and benefit from it, benefit from Arjuna. Let us also benefit from Lord Krishna.

May the benedictions of Holy Master grant us all that is required to do whatever is needful to come out of ourselves, be triumphant and rejoice in the proximity of the Lord, rejoice in His great goodwill for us. "Having pondered well these teachings of Mine, now you decide, O Arjuna"—thus the Lord says. Arjuna took the right decision and rejoiced. May that be so with each one of us. God bless you!

63

WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN THE MORNING

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved devotees of the Lord! You are aspiring souls who aspire after the good life—a life that justifies our existence as rational beings, a life that is worthy of our existence as beings who are aware and who are endowed with the power to think and reason, to observe, understand and infer, to whom there is no limit to knowledge, and as beings who know how to profit by our existence.

Infinite possibilities lie within the reach of the human individual, purely because the human individual is an *amsa* or a part of the Cosmic Being Whom we call God. You are a part of that Being Whom all religions, all philosophies, all illumined and enlightened realised souls have known, have experienced to be, and have declared as being omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. Your very nature, your true identity, your *svarupa*, is identical with, none other than, essentially one with, the Supreme Being Who is also described as *sarva ananta guna sampanna* (having all virtues to an infinite degree).

How many of you make this truth the basis of your life? How many of you remember this truth, ponder this truth, first thing every morning when you wake up? How many of you constantly affirm this truth, assert the truth that you are inseparably linked up with the Divine, inseparably related to the Divine, inseparably a part of the Divine? Why do you not do it? Why do you not wake up and immediately become filled with the awareness "I am part of the Universal Spirit, *anantakoti brahmada nayaka, paratpara tattva* (the Lord of innumerable crores of universes, the Supreme Truth, the Supreme Principle)"? Why do you think immediately of something mundane, something

prosaic, something outside of you, something gross, material, earthly, bound in time and space? Why?

Have you ever wondered why “when I have the ability and the potential to enquire, seek and find, and when I have been given the opportunity, when the doors have been thrown wide open for my ascent into a state of absolute Divine-consciousness, why it is that I am still grovelling in this level in which I was born?” If you do not ask yourself this question and reflect upon it, who will do it for you?

Because all the scriptures, all the great realised souls, all the masters of wisdom again and again seek to declare to you: “You have neither birth nor death, neither bondage nor liberation; you have no name nor form; you are the Supreme Being, you are one with the Divine. Why are you unnecessarily weeping and wailing?” *Jnanis* say it, devotees say it, Sant Tulsidas says it, Kabirdas says it. Even the great *acharya* Ramanuja says that we are all like sparks that have come from a great blaze. A spark can also burn; it is fiery. Just as fire burns, you have got a potential; a spark has got a potential to create a blaze. When you have this ability, why is it you only think of small, ordinary, humdrum, mundane things which the Upanishad declares are *alpa* (little), in which there is no *sukha* (happiness) and which are *asat* (which have no enduring, permanent existence)?

The scriptures answer this question. It is because of the *achintyasakti* (inscrutable power) of *parabrahman*. It is because of *maya*. When Lord Narasimha came to Prahlada, Prahlada trembled and said: “O Lord, I am not afraid of You. The whole world is trembling before You because of Your terrific man-lion form—Narasimha *avatara*. But I am not afraid of You, I am afraid of Your *maya*. I am afraid of Your power of delusion, *maya*.” If Prahlada, who constantly thought about God, constantly uttered His Divine Name, constantly longed for Him and Him alone, if he says, “I am afraid of Your *maya*,” if he feared *maya*, how much must you be cautious, how much must you fear it.

Therefore, always endeavour to somehow or other constantly retain your direction towards God, your inner awareness of your divinity, of being a part of Him, in order that *maya* may not delude you completely. That is the one thing needful if you do not want to allow this delusion, this *maya*, to fill your heart, pervade your mind and take possession of your consciousness.

The Lord Himself says: “This divine *maya* of Mine is difficult to overcome.” But, it is not that He only brought *maya* into being and did not show the way out. It is not so. *Mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te* (Those who take refuge in Me alone, they cross over this *maya*). The supreme Cosmic Being has very clearly indicated how She can be crossed and who can cross Her.

The conclusive and ultimate assurance, ultimate declaration from the Gita is: “*ma suchah*—do not grieve. You have nothing to fear, nothing to worry about. I will see that *maya* cannot touch you. Do not grieve.” The Gita starts with grief, terrible grief and agony—the tormented soul of Arjuna. But the supreme culminating point of the Gita is: “*ma suchah*—O Arjuna, do not grieve.” And grief-stricken Arjuna was no more grief-stricken.

Our constitution gives us the right to vote. Even a beggar exercises his franchise when voting time comes. We have been given the right to divinity by the very fact of our human status. We can exercise this great privilege in order to attain the full awareness of our divinity. But if we do not exercise it, if we do not claim this birthright, we cannot say that it should be given to us. We cannot expect someone else to claim it for us. No one withholds it from you. No one denies it to you; you deny it to yourself.

So, waking up in the morning should not merely mean waking up into this *maya-bazaar*, waking up into this temporary world of pain and death. It should not only mean waking up into this little, confined, outer earth awareness. It should also simultaneously mean waking up into the awareness of your divinity which has been temporarily suspended in sleep. And keep up that inner wakefulness along with your outer physical wakefulness of the senses and the mind. Keep up the inner wakefulness of your *svarupa*. That is the great thing needful. That is what will make your life divine. That is what will take you, day by day, higher and higher towards the Goal Supreme. And this you have to do for yourself, with wisdom.

It is possible only if there is a keen longing for that Goal, a keen faith in your ability to reach it. Because there is the ability to reach it, God has made you educated, brought you into contact with scriptures, with great realised sages and their wisdom teachings, and brought you into an environment favourable, conducive, suitable and helpful to the unfoldment of your radiant divine nature. What has that supreme Cosmic Being not done? That Being has done everything; there is nothing that that Being has not done. We have to reciprocate, not emotionally or sentimentally, but earnestly and sincerely in life, in a living manner through *jijnasa*, *mumukshutva* and *sadhana* (desire to know, intense longing for liberation, and self effort, spiritual practice).

That is our privilege, our great privilege. If we lose this privilege then great is the loss. Therefore, we must realise every day, every dawn, every moment, the preciousness of what we are, the unparalleled, unique preciousness, value, the worth of what we are. If moving away from this awareness we think of things outside as being more worthy, more important, more precious, then deplorable is our lot. If we shift our sense of values from what is within, what we are, to something that is a passing appearance, phenomenon, then great is our loss. To allow this to happen would be throwing away an unparalleled golden opportunity that the Cosmic Being is proffering to us, offering to us.

Ponder this well. When you wake up in the morning, what do you wake up to? When you come into a state of awareness, what is that state of awareness? What is its level, what is its plane, what is its content, what purpose does it serve? Think deeply about it, and be a true *jijnasu*, a true *mumukshu*, a true seeker, a true devotee of the Supreme. Be a true part of Divinity, a true *amsa* of *paramatma*, and make your life divine. This is the greatest way in which you can bless yourself.

Just as there is full potential within each one of you for divine perfection, even so, like all the nine gems upon a golden plate, all things necessary for the supreme attainment have also been given to you. There could be no greater good fortune. Not to recognise this good fortune and fail to utilise it—there could be no greater misfortune than that. Both good fortune and misfortune are at our finger tips, in our hands. We must recognise the difference and do what is needful. That is the important need of the moment!

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GOD'S GRACE AND HUMAN EFFORT

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers! You have had the good fortune and blessedness of entering into that path which gradually leads beyond sorrow, liberates from bondage, grants infinite joy, eternal bliss and bestows upon you divine perfection—the experience, the permanent experience, perennial and inexhaustible experience of wisdom-consciousness, a state of divine consciousness characterised by eternal existence, transcendental wisdom and bliss, *sat-chit-ananda*.

You have entered into that path that puts an end forever to darkness and groping, uncertainty and vagueness. Flying as an arrow swiftly towards its target, you must make up your mind that through earnestness, sincerity and sustained exertion you will go straight to the supreme Goal. That is your duty.

Divine grace must be matched, must be responded to, must be augmented by human endeavour and effort. God's grace and human effort bring about divine experience. A matchstick alone cannot produce fire; a matchbox alone cannot produce fire. Fire results when they work together; it is a bilateral process. One cannot sit idle thinking that Divine grace will do everything. Nor should one commit the blunder of saying: "By human effort alone I can achieve everything."

Divine grace and human effort are supplementary and complementary to each other. They are twin factors that produce a certain ultimate experience. It is not contradicting Vedanta to say that they produce an experience. We know that the ultimate experience is never produced; it is always there. When a devotee realises God, he does not produce God, he does not make God. God is always there, God is always here, God is always everywhere, God is always within you. But yet what you are experiencing is something which is the direct contradiction, the denial of God. God is bliss, man goes about weeping. God is peace, man is restless.

So you prove for yourself that there is the possibility of the absence of the experience of God, even in the presence of God—even as you live, move and have your being in God. Therefore, whether the non-experience of the ever-present Reality, ever-present peace and joy, is factual or just imagination does not matter as long as you cannot get at it, as long as you are not experiencing it in this state of consciousness. Due to some reason or other the ever-present Reality is not realised. So there is something coming in the way. It is precisely to get rid of that which is coming in the way that self-effort is needed.

In a great feast and festival, a thousand people are enjoying themselves—music is going on, dance is going on, people are talking to each other, some are eating and drinking. One has fallen deep asleep. So far as that person is concerned, all these things are not going on. He may be dreaming that he is alone in a jungle. For him the jungle alone exists, not this festive place. That does not mean that the outer scene does not exist. It very much exists; it is existing all around him. But something is coming in the way—his sleep, his slumber. Someone has to shake him, wake him

up. Therefore, the effort that is necessary is not to produce the festivity, but to get rid of something in this individual which is depriving him of this ever-present experience.

Sometimes the government comes to help some village. They offer fifty thousand rupees for some project, but the village has to match the fifty thousand rupees from its side. It is called a matching grant. In this way, one must realise: “I should not sit idle, I should not expect everything to be done by someone else.” Therefore, *purushartha* (self effort) has been given a very great place in the context of India’s spiritual life. Early in his life, Gurudev sang a song: “Do real *sadhana* my dear children, do real *sadhana*”—*purushartha*.

Purushartha, *sadhana* and *abhyasa* are all one. They are the great need. In the Gita, Lord Krishna plainly states that that which is seemingly impossible is possible, and that state can be attained, by sustained *abhyasa*. Patanjali Maharshi in his Yoga Sutras also stresses the need for sustained *abhyasa*. If you have a dripping faucet, the drip, drip, drip will gradually wear a hole in the slab of stone underneath, even if it is granite. And in the low wall around a well, after many years, you can see a groove in the rock where the rope has been pulled to draw water. This is the power of a persistent process.

A poet has said that the great enemy of man is indifference, lethargy, laziness dwelling within his own body. And it is *purushartha*, regular, persistent effort, practice, that is the ultimate power, force, that overcomes this great enemy. *Sadhana* must become second nature. It should also be progressive. Just as the waxing moon starts as a small sliver and bit by bit becomes a full orb, so should be your *sadhana*, your *abhyasa*, your *purushartha*, until your life is filled with effulgence and you become “a light unto yourself and a lamp unto the feet of others.”

Therefore, *purushartha*, self-effort, should be understood as a complement and a supplement to God’s grace. And *purushartha* does not mean egoism; it is not egoistical effort—this has long been understood. We pray and thank God each day for all the grace, for all the opportunities and facilities, for all the benedictions and blessings He has showered upon us. Now we say: “Grant me the ability to humbly realise its value, to humbly utilise all these factors, this grace that You have showered, for my effort, for my *purushartha*.”

Purushartha is undertaken fully realising the magnitude of God’s compassionate grace, the magnitude of God’s love and blessedness and with a feeling of constant gratefulness. Thus, in a state of extreme humility one resolutely should undertake *purushartha*. Then *purushartha* will not give a false sense of *kartritva abhimana* (pride of doership). You will strive manfully, diligently, resolutely, determinedly, but with humility, with simplicity of heart, recognising that it is a gift of God. May God bless you all!

YOU HAVE BEEN CALLED

Glorious Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Blessed and fortunate *sadhaks!* The Universal Being has called you to a life higher and nobler and more sublime than a life of mere self-seeking, pleasure seeking, a life of mere searching after name and fame, a life of hankering after mere objective sensual pleasures, which are ultimately the sources of pain and sorrow, restlessness and despair. The Supreme has brought about an inner awakening, opened your eyes, and made you realise the fleeting and temporary nature of worldly objects, the evanescence, the transitory and perishable nature of all things created. Knowing their hollowness you have understood the great declaration of Vedanta: “Whatsoever is perceived is verily perishable, therefore seek the Eternal. He who seeks the Eternal Being, bright as the dazzling sun, beyond all darkness, the great Infinite One, such a being attains immortality.”

The great Reality, the Being beyond all darkness, has come into your life. You have felt a vocation, a calling, and you have heeded that call and entered into the life sublime. Constantly be aware of this dimension of your life, this true inner situation of your life. You are one who has been called. You are one who has been fortunate enough to answer that call. In you the Voice that has called has not been drowned by the clamour of the senses, the harsh and strident demands of your lower nature and sense appetites. In spite of the inner clamour you have listened to the Voice. You have come into the life sublime where you seek something that is not merely gross. You seek something beyond, something subtle, noble and divine, and that is verily the central truth and fact of your life.

And therefore ceaselessly your life should be a determined quest of that which is the supreme, transcendental Reality, that which is the eternal and great, beyond all things. “I seek That which is beyond all things”—this inner aspiration is to be ever present in you urging you onward and ever onward towards that glorious and grand consummation. Each day, each dawn, each effort put forth, each step advanced, will be a gain. That is the greatness of your life, and that is the true treasure that you have to put by: a steady, unceasing, unflinching, unwavering, unhesitating, determined movement towards the Divine.

Keep on this movement. You all have the same power, the strength, the force to do this. The eternal call keeps ever recurring in a thousand different ways from all sources, all around you. From all the scriptures, the Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavatam, Upanishads, and the saints of this inspiring land comes the reiterated call of the Divine: “Arise, awake and attain illumination, enlightenment.” Therefore be awake, keep your eyes open, keep your ears open, recognise the signs, hear the voice and call. In this lies your supreme blessedness.

In this lies the way of wisdom, not to think always of the distant future, the great Goal. It is good sometimes to contemplate the great Goal and become inspired, but not to be obsessed with that ultimate experience and then lose the immediate present. For the ultimate experience depends upon the here, the now, the immediate present which constitutes life. How are you? What is the state

of your heart and mind? How are you living at this moment? It is this that decides what you will really become, what you will be, what you will attain.

The immediate present is the key to the ultimate attainment. Therefore all attention has to be paid to the immediate present which is the *now* aspect of your life. Not what was, or what you aspire to be in the future, despite the fact that they both have their place, but the thing of essence, the most vital aspect of your life is the here-and-now present, today, this hour and this minute. That is life, and the striving has to be done in that life which is immediately present. This has to be properly grasped. It is within your power to bring all your faculties, all your attention, all your concentration, all your strength and all your energies to the immediate present, the here-and-now present. It is not given to you to project yourself into the future. You cannot live in the future; you have to live in the now.

It is important for every seeker, every aspirant, every Yogi to realise that *sadhana* is *now*. This minute is the moment of *sadhana*. This hour is the moment of *sadhana*. Today is life to be lived. Today is Yoga to be practised. You may draw lessons from the past, but you have to live in the present. Thus realise the vital importance of making the present a time of *sadhana*, making the present a time of striving, making the present a time of *abhyasa* (practice), Yoga. And where there is sincerity, where there is earnestness, where there is determination, there God is present, there God's help is available. There you will find His blessings in abundance—*kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati* (Arjuna know for certain that my devotee never perishes). Devoted to this ideal, fearlessly move forward on the great path of Light. Thus indeed you will crown yourself with glory.

66

THE KEYNOTE OF ALL YOGAS

Glorious Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! May we pay homage to the eternal, universal Presence Divine, that is the source and substratum of all existence, the one God behind and beyond all religions, Who is your origin and in Whom you are rooted, of Whom you are a part. Being a part of that great, supreme divine Presence, supreme divine Principle, the great divine Essence called Brahman, you are divine. This is the keynote on which you should base your consciousness: "I am divine."

The great World Teacher, Lord Krishna, forcefully recalls to us our divinity when He says: "*mamaivamso jivaloke jivabhutah sanatana*—An eternal part of Me, O Arjuna, becomes the individual soul in this world of birth and death of ever incarnating souls. This is *jiva loka* where individual souls are born due to the force of *prarabdha karma*, and it is a part of Me that becomes the individual soul."

And in our own times, beloved and worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji forcefully reminded us: "Thou art That—*tat tvam asi*." Again and again he used to say: "Do not identify yourself with this perishable cage of flesh and bones. Roar Om, Om, Om. Come out of this

cage of flesh and bones. Assert, affirm your divinity. Immortal Atman, thou art immortal Atman.” He was never ever tired of reiterating again and again this one great truth, the one great fact of your life—your divinity.

Therefore, let your keynote be divinity. Let your consciousness never swerve from this inner centre of divine consciousness, awareness of your divinity. Let that be the basis for all your thoughts and feelings, your actions. Think of it always, remember it always, contemplate it always, dwell upon it always, be centred in it always, be aware of it always, so that by sheer persistence and perseverance in this affirmation of truth, you emerge into a new being.

Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh (Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation of man). What you think, that you shall become. Ever be centred in your divinity. Then everything will follow. When the sun shines, then there is no more darkness. When this awareness shines in your heart, there cannot be anything contrary to it prevailing. There can be no *ajnana nidra* (sleep of ignorance) when there is *jagrata chetana* (awareness of wakefulness).

That should be the *sadhana* whether you are a *bhakta*, whether you are a Yogi, whether you are a Vedantin, *jnani*, or whether you are a *karma yogi*. All require that there should be no darkness in the centre of your being, that you should be centred in light, that the light should be awakened and it should shine—without any exception. The *bhakta* shines with that light because he knows that he is *amsa* (part) of *paramatma*. The Vedantin shines with that light because he knows he is the Light. The Yogi knows that he is not the bound *jivatma*, that he is *purusha*, free from afflictions, independent, ever transcending *maya*, always in a state of *jnana*, *satyam jnanam anantam* (truth knowledge infinite). And the *karma yogi*, more than anyone else, needs to be based in this consciousness. Otherwise, he is lost. The circumstances of the field of his *yoga abhyasa*, the field of *karma*, make it more necessary for him than for anyone else.

Therefore, this art and science of engaging in *karma* without becoming bound by *karma* is a central theme of the Bhagavad Gita. “*Yogah karmasu kausalam* (Yoga is skill in action)” is the unique definition given by Lord Krishna for Yoga, Yoga which liberates. “*Tam vidyat dukkhasamyogaviyogam yogasamjnitam*—that should be known as Yoga, that which brings about a disconnection of the soul from its condition of being connected with pain, that which brings about the cessation of this connection with pain.” That means it frees you from pain, liberates you from pain.

If your mind is agitated, if your mind is mixed up, if your mind is full of restlessness, it will be impossible for you to be in a state of *karmakusalata* (skill in action). You cannot perform action with skill, with wisdom, with discrimination, if your mind is completely confused, restless, agitated, full of peacelessness, always up and down. Therefore they said: “*samatvam yoga uchyate* (Evenness of mind is called Yoga).” *Samatva* (equanimity) is indispensable if there should be clarity of consciousness, if there should be the steady shining of the light of an awakened consciousness.

As a flame of a lamp burns steadily, unflickeringly, where there is no wind, where everything is calm and tranquil, even so should the flame of the inner consciousness of the Yogi be burning steadily, brightly, unflickeringly, radiating light in all the four directions. How can there be

this steady awareness, this inner state of steady radiance, steady wakefulness, if the mind is always flickering, always agitated, always up and down, in a state of restlessness? It is not possible. Therefore, great emphasis was laid on *samatva* (equanimity). Without this *samatva* it is impossible to keep awareness while you are in the midst of the turmoil of activity. Keeping *samatva* inside, if you act without being agitated, then action will not bind you. Then you can act with wisdom, with discrimination, not lose yourself, become fooled.

Therefore, “*yuddhasva vigatajvarah* (Being free from fever, fight).” This feverish desire for the fruit of action, this great agitation of craving, the desire for the outcome of action, it is this that catches a person in the net of delusion, and then they weep and lament. Because, if it is selfish, if it is motivated by desire to attain any state, acquire anything, enjoy an experience, obtain any sensation, then one is always agitated. “*Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana* (You only have the right to action, never to the fruit thereof).”

Therefore, freed from desire and craving, calmly, quietly, centred in the Self, in a state of oneness and inner balance, act. Then the action will not bind, because there is wisdom behind it. There is *jagriti* (awareness) behind it. There is awareness of divinity behind it. In such a state, action cannot bind. That is the field of the *karma yogin*. More than anyone, the *karma yogin* requires this state of awareness, of *jagriti*, of *samatva*, of *karma kausalam* (skill in action), freedom from personal desire of gain, freedom from craving for sensation, sense experience. That is the heart of *karma yoga*: to be above desire and craving, wanting nothing, not even success in one’s action.

A soldier does not fight to win the battle or the war. That is the business of the general. He fights to do his duty. His is the immediate action in which he is engaged. He does not think of the battle or the war, he thinks of his immediate duty. Then his action is complete. He has fulfilled his role, his particular assignment. That should be the consciousness of the *jivatma* in the field of worldly activity.

A building is not built by bricks only, nor by cement only, nor by iron rods only. It is a combination of many things that brings about a building. Therefore, we have to do one thing: we have to plod on. God in His own wisdom, in His own time, fulfils all things. It is not our effort only that brings God’s will. There are many other factors.

Sunlight alone cannot make a seedling grow. Neither can soil alone, nor water alone. If you put a seed in soil and do not give it water, it will perish. If you only put it in water, it will rot. If you expose it to sun only, it will wither and die. It requires a judicious combination. Then alone the seed will live and grow into a plant or tree.

Therefore, there is a combination of many factors. Ours is to do our part and leave the rest to the powers that be. If we think we should do the whole of it, we shall never have peace of mind. We shall always be agitated. At each step it is our duty to be based in the awareness of our divinity and make our concern in thought, word and deed to actively live this divinity, express this divinity, manifest this divinity, and go on doing this. That is our part.

Always to worry about *samadhi*, about Self-realisation, about God-vision—“I am meditating for so many years, I am not seeing anything”—is not productive. Why should you see

anything? Are you meditating for seeing something or meditating because that is why God has created you, because that is your highest duty? You fulfil the function for which God has made you. He will look after the rest of it. “*Kripanah phalahetavah* (Wretched are those who seek fruit).” The Lord castigates them—little-minded people always thinking of fruit. “I am doing something and therefore I must get something, I must obtain something.” Why should you? Never think of fruits. It is only small-minded people who constantly keep on thinking, “I am doing this, I am doing that; I am not hearing sounds, I am not seeing light.” They have wrong ways of thinking about *sadhana* and spiritual life.

Spiritual life is so great, so grand, so glorious, so sublime. It does not constitute these petty things: light or sound or all these things. You have to plod on, fulfil your part of the duty. Then the Cosmic Being Himself, of His own Self, will do the rest.

Therefore, think of nothing but the task at hand: “I am here to shine with divinity. I am here, given a glorious chance to express what I am. My body, mind, intellect, sentiment all have been given to me as channels to express what I am, to radiate my divinity. That is my business, my concern. That is life for me—to be what I am and radiate my reality in thought, word and deed, in my entire life. Let me concern myself with developing this life, day by day making it stronger, brighter, more dazzling, more radiant. In that let me engage myself.” That is *sadhana*; that is Yoga. Awaken the inner light. Develop it diligently, and go on dynamically manifesting it. That is divine life. That is your part of it. That is what you are expected to do. The rest will follow as a matter of course.

Therefore, move towards your divine destiny. Do not be petty. Do not hanker after fruits or results. Be impersonal. Be patient. And know for sure, that if you bring the right causes into being, the right effects are bound to follow. The result is bound to follow. Lord Buddha says: “As the wheel of the chariot follows the footsteps of the oxen, when a cause is created, the effect must follow.” This is a great law. So, if you fulfil your duty, whatever has to come, must follow. No power in this universe can deprive you of what you have worked for. No power on earth can deprive you of what you have deserved. Be assured of this.

And therefore engage in right *karma*. Be up and doing with inner calmness, unagitated interior, a state of inner balance, absolute calmness, with skill, with wisdom, with awareness. Act and ever keep linked within with the supreme Cosmic Being. In the midst of action, always be rooted in the Eternal, rooted in the Divine. That is the whole of the Bhagavad Gita for you. And that is the secret of success. That is the key to highest attainment. This is the way to blessedness. *Nanyah pantha vidyateyanaya* (There is no other way to That).

Ponder well these truths and be benefited. Be centred in your divinity always. Let divinity be your keynote. God bless you!

67

DHARMA KSHETRA IS KARMA KSHETRA

Worshipful adorations to the all-pervading presence of the ever-present Reality we call Brahman, God, Bhagavan, Allah, Ahura Mazda, Supreme Tao, the Kingdom of Heaven. Worshipful adorations to that all-pervading Reality, the ever-present Universal Being in Whom we live, move and have our being. May the grace of the Almighty enable you to understand life and make it the means of liberating yourself forever from bondage, fear, sorrow and the darkness of folly.

Radiant Immortal Souls! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers upon the path of divine life! Freedom is your birthright. Bliss and blessedness are your birthright. Fearlessness is the way. *Dharma kshetra is karma kshetra.*

We are not only what we think; ultimately our life is what we manage to put into practice, bring into action. A thinker once said: "Let not virtue wither away for want of its exercise." We may have all the virtue in our heart, but if we do not actively express it in action, upon the outer field of our life, then we fail to reap the benefit of it.

There is a concept in the Upanishads: When a thought arises that you know is contrary to the Law do not act, postpone it, brush it away. Direct your mind elsewhere. Engage yourself in doing something else. When a thought arises which is in consonance with *dharma*, in accordance with *dharma*, do not wait, do it immediately. Do not allow any interval to lapse, to intervene between your good intention and its corollary, the corresponding good action. Do it immediately.

Great wisdom is behind this direction, wisdom deriving from experience. So in this trite saying, *dharma kshetra is karma kshetra*, a world of meaning comes into being. Anything contrary to *dharma* should not be translated into action. It should not take the form of *karma* because it will rebound upon you in the form of sorrow. Whereas when any *dharmic* impulse or thought arises, immediately it should be translated into *karma*. *Dharma kshetra is karma kshetra.*

Our actions, mental and verbal, decide our destiny or future. Great scope has been given by the Supreme Intelligence, Whom we call God, for the exercise of wisdom and of restraint. You should exercise both wisdom as well as restraint according to the direction in which you are propelled and impelled, from within and without. A constant wakefulness, a wise alertness and a promptness are ingredients of a devotee of the Lord, a *sadhak* upon the path, a Yogi engaged in *yoga abhyasa*, of one who aspires for perfection in life. Constantly think before you take a step upon the path. Reflect and act. This is the wisdom teaching.

The Kathopanishad brings it out very beautifully, very early in the renowned conversation between the Lord of Dharma and the brilliant young seeker, Nachiketas. *Sreyas* and *preyas* (the good and the pleasant) are the two paths that present themselves before man, before the individual soul at all times. One leads to lasting renown, to your highest good; the other leads to that which appears to be pleasant and attractive, but is only a temporary titillation of the nerves. The wise

choose the former and turn away resolutely from the latter. That is the thesis, the declaration of the Kathopanishad.

Base your life upon the wisdom and direction of the Kathopanishad. Go forward in life with the ideal of the Kathopanishad. Above all, be absolutely fearless. Be absolutely fearless. Know fully that God has given you all the potential to overcome everything. That is His bestowal to you. “I am the Self within all, O Arjuna, seated in the centre of their being. I am their all in all.” This is His bestowal, that of Him which dwells within you as your own innermost Self. In that lies all potential for overcoming, all potential for the highest wisdom in daily life, the key to blessedness, the strength to overcome, the will to choose one’s direction.

Be absolutely fearless knowing that you have infinite strength within. The world cannot overcome you if you have courage. Your senses cannot overcome you if you know that you are strong. Nothing in this universe outside has the power to attract, ensnare and enslave you, if you are fearless in the knowledge of your own divine strength. You abide ever in that vast reservoir, in that inexhaustible source of divine wisdom and power. Fearlessness is the key to blessedness. Everything follows automatically if you are fearless and therefore strong.

“Tell me not in mournful numbers that life is but an empty dream. Dust thou art and to dust returnest was not spoken of the soul.” It means that “to dust returnest” was not spoken of you, because you are the Immortal Soul, the invincible Spirit Divine. For you everything is possible, achievable, practicable. That is the truth. That is the centre of the philosophy that has been inherited by the fortunate human race, thanks to our ancient sages and seers, thanks to the Upanishadic experience. Therefore the call: *uttisthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, reaching the wise become enlightened).

The great call of the Upanishads to all mankind is strength and fearlessness, the two factors that make for certain success, unflinching achievement. *Nayamatma balahinena labhyah* (This Atman cannot be attained by one who is without strength). And the central command of the Gita is: *tasmāt uttistha kaunteya yuddhaya kritanischayah* (Therefore, stand up, O Arjuna, resolved to fight). Arise fully resolved, determined to engage in the necessary and right action, to initiate the action whose ultimate fruit and result will be your own highest blessedness, to attain which you have come into this arena of evolution which you call the planet earth. It is also called *mrityu bhumi*. It means this plane of death, which has a very beautiful, inner, esoteric significance also. It is this beautiful, wonderful plane where you can die to the little self and inherit everlasting life. Here alone it is possible, not even in heavens. Because here the inner spiritual process of dying to the false self and emerging into eternal divine life can be worked out if you are wise, fearless, strong and resolute.

That is the *sadhana*, that is the message, that is the teaching. That is the order, that is the command, that is the directive. They have left us in no doubt. Liberation is possible now and here. This is the ultimate conclusion, proven conclusion, based on direct personal experience. Therefore a *sadhak* ultimately works out his liberation, not in some post-mortem plane of existence, but here, now, in this plane of human life which is both the *dharma kshetra* as well as the *karma kshetra*.

Engage in the desired action and reap a divine destiny. Engage in the desired action and whatever you aspire for will be yours, is yours. This is the truth.

68

THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

Almighty Lord, prompt these *sadhaks*, prompt these devotees of Yours to ever walk the path that leads to their own highest blessedness. Prompt them to live their life in such a way that it creates for them a spiritual *karma* that liberates them forever from all *karma*. That is my humble prayer at this moment.

Radiant Divinities! We receive from others what we make them do. It is not people who do things to other people, rather it is people who make other people do things to them, in a way which they have worked for, whether known to themselves or not. If you have keen introspection, analysis, then after a situation has occurred you find, “Yes, indeed, it is I who worked for it.”

Sometimes we invite temptations, sometimes we invite aggravated situations by working for them, many a time half knowingly. We play with life in such a way that things do not merely happen to us, but we make them happen to us. Most of the time this is so. *Karmic* occurrences and experience are there no doubt; we do not deny it. But over and above, in addition, it is we who many a time bring about situations through our folly or through our wantonness.

It is said: “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” And that is why many a time mystics have prayed to God: “O Lord, save me from myself.” This is a point seekers should be aware of. We, by our behaviour, our thoughts, our intentional acts, attract to ourselves situations. People act towards us in certain ways, not because they wanted to do it, but because we invited them to do it.

We then complain to God: “Why, how could this happen to me?” Why not? You have asked for it; you have worked for it. Therefore, when they speak of trying to discriminate between what is favourable and helpful to our spiritual life and what is not helpful, it is not only in regard to outer things and people, outer factors and environment, but also we have to discriminate within as well, find the very subtle, little known, hidden motivations for our actions.

If, day after day, a young girl in a house, instead of busying herself with helping her mother and trying to be a useful member of her family, continuously comes out on the balcony and attracts the attention of a neighbouring youth who then starts whistling at her, whose fault is it? Is it the fault of the person on the street, or is it the fault of the person in the house? She will say: “Father, that young person watches me and whistles to attract my attention.” Father will lodge a complaint with the police. They will go and interrogate the young man. And they will never know that the whole situation was brought about not by anyone else, but by the so-called aggrieved person who caused it by her own actions.

In this way, from inside, we many a time harbour thoughts and motives that attract towards us certain situations, and then we blame God, take a report to God: “How can this situation come to me? I am doing *japa*, I am worshipping daily, I am reading the scriptures, meditating.” Yes, you are doing all these things, but the fact is, that inside, you are also doing something else that no one knows. But you should not think that God does not know. Other human beings may not know, but

there is Someone within you and He is nothing but Consciousness, knowing, knowing, knowing everything from all the ten directions. Even if something misses you, it does not miss Him. He is awareness—*prajana*. He is *jnanasvarupa* (full of knowledge). Nothing misses Him.

So when this is the situation, how can you complain: “How can this happen to me?” How can anything else happen to you when inwardly, by stages, you have worked for it, you have created it outside from inside? Therefore, it is necessary that seekers and *sadhaks* be wise, not go into self-deception, not be asleep inside. Gurudev said: “Even inside, you must decide what is favourable to me, what is unfavourable, what are the deep, hidden motivations of my actions. Know yourself in this level, in this sense also and make the requisite adjustment, requisite change within.”

A deep thinker said, “Life is a mirror.” You see in it what you show into it. If you stand before a mirror and make a pleasant face, a pleasant face looks back at you. If you make an unpleasant face, an unpleasant face looks back at you. What comes to you from inside the mirror is created by you standing outside. Because happiness and misery, favourable environment and unfavourable environment, to a large extent depend upon our state of mind, how we look at it. Happiness is not contained in things, situations or the environment outside. Happiness or unhappiness is in how we look at it through our mind. It is, therefore, the situation within. It is the state of our mind that makes our happiness or unhappiness.

If that inner state is adjusted and corrected, then nothing has the power to give us any experience except that which we give to it. We give it the power to affect us in either this way or that way by the state of our mind. If our state of mind is right, then even a situation which may put an unwise person into sorrow or unhappiness will not have the power to put us into sorrow or unhappiness. Because our mind approaches the situation in a different state.

It is told that a traveller into a rural area asked a shepherd: “How do you think the weather will be today?” “Oh, it will be weather that I like.” “How do you know it will be weather that you like, how can you say that?” The shepherd answered: “It is like this, sir, knowing that over such things as the weather I have no control, knowing I cannot change it, long ago I decided that whatever weather comes I will like it. And therefore, now I am at peace. I am always sure that I will get weather that is to my liking 365 days of the year. Because I cannot change it, I have started liking whatever I get. Instead of always trying to get only that thing that I like, I decided that it is wiser to like whatever thing I get. Therefore, I always like the weather I get.” So it was not the weather that mattered, it was his inner state of looking at it, relating himself to it, perceiving it, that mattered. So, he had the key to happiness.

The key is inside. It is a state of mind that we diligently create within us that ultimately has the effect of creating happiness or misery for us. Therefore, mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation. Mind is the cause of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. Whatever it is, *mana eva karanam manushyanam*—for human beings, mind itself is the main cause. And in the higher metaphysical sense, Vedanta says: “*manahkalpitam jagat*—this world is created by your mind.”

That is too high for us, we need not bother about it. Let us not look upon it now from this great truth. Let us look upon it from a psychological angle, an immediate angle, that which is of relevance to us here, now, today. Today let us apply this truth, find out this truth: “I make my day; I

make my happiness and misery; I make my darkness and light; I from within create it.” A picture does not paint itself. It is the artist with his brush who paints it. If he dips it in green, he cannot expect blue to appear on the canvas; if he dips it in red, he cannot expect yellow. So what he uses, that appears for him. Apply this truth and then see what happens. God bless you!

69

FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY

Radiant Divinities! When an individual soul comes into this world, that individual soul, from a relative point of view, from an earthly angle of vision, comes alone, makes this journey of life alone and departs alone. All scriptures and philosophies declare, all saints and sages again and again reiterate: “Alone thou art, alone thou comest, alone thou goest.”

In this lone journey we seemingly have companions. But each one is intensely preoccupied with himself or herself. For each one, the most important person in the universe is oneself. A little attention is diverted outside, all other attention is directed upon oneself; morning till night one is centred in oneself, constantly thinking of oneself, self-preoccupied. This is individual consciousness, individual life. This is the truth about each individual. From the moment you wake up you are engaged and concerned in things pertaining to yourself—your eating, your drinking, your activities. Whatever you have planned for that day, that comes first.

This involvement in oneself—one’s own concern, preoccupation and constant thought of oneself—is called one’s subjective life. But willy-nilly, whether we want it or not, whether we like it or not, we are also pushed into relationship with others. Because, we do not live in a wilderness, in a desert or in a deep jungle. We live in communities of beings; wherever we are, we live amongst others.

In this too, one keeps up these relationships primarily for oneself—perhaps later on for others, but primarily for oneself. We are concerned with those who cook our food because they cook *our* food. If they cooked for themselves only and said, “Nothing for you,” then we will not have any relationship. We go to the bank not because we are interested in the bank, but because *our* money is in that bank. So relationships are there, but arising primarily out of our relationship with ourselves.

And thirdly, whether we want it or not, we have a relationship with that Being Who ultimately is our only resort. Because, before we came here we were related to Him only and no one else, and after we go we shall have Him only to fall back upon and no one else.

Therefore, we must have some norms to govern this triple relationship which constitutes life, which is an inescapable part of life. This triangular relational pattern of each individual soul going through this life journey towards the Divine was not unknown to our ancients. They had something to say about it. The Bible too speaks of the cardinal virtues of one who wishes to attain the Supreme Being.

In so far as our relationship with God is concerned, Jesus said that one who wishes to attain the Father, the Kingdom of God, must have absolute, unshaking faith in the Supreme Being. When someone started losing faith, Jesus said: “O ye of little faith, shame upon you, open your eyes. Can you not see? When a child asks for bread, the father does not give a stone. When an imperfect person like a human father, who has got selfishness and so many defects, fulfils the faith of one who turns to him in faith, do you think that the Supreme Being, Who is Lord of the whole universe, Who is omnipotent, omniscient, full of compassion and kindness, full of justice, do you think He will deny you your due?”

“Even if a contractor is corrupt, dishonest, yet when he has employed labourers he gives them their labour’s due at the end of the day. Shame on you that you do not repose faith in that all-perfect Being.” So He chastises them, takes them to task: “O ye of little faith, have faith. The result of faith is seen by you, day by day, all around you, even in this world. Why do you hesitate in reposing faith upon that all-perfect Being?”

“Towards Him,” Jesus said, “have absolute faith.” And in his list of prime virtues, Sankaracharya listed *sraddha*—faith in the Supreme. Long before Sankaracharya, Lord Krishna said: “*sraddhavan labhate jnanam*—that wisdom that releases, banishes the darkness of *ajnana* and grants liberation, is for him who has firm faith.”

The second dimension of relationship is our relationship to this world—to other beings, to other people, men, beasts, everyone, all things. Be considerate. You wish others to be considerate of you, so be charitable. Do not sit in judgment, do not condemn, be charitable. “It is Mine to judge. Do not usurp My place, My function. Leave judgment to Me.” Be charitable.

That is why Magdalene became eternally grateful to Jesus. And when others condemned the woman caught in sin, He refused to condemn. When others were about to throw stones at her, Jesus looked upon her with compassion. And when she asked, “Do you not condemn me?” He responded: “I am not concerned with your past, I am concerned with you today, at this moment in time, and I am concerned with your future. Go forth, walk the path of purity. Everything will be alright.” So exercise charity all the days of your life, every moment. Think how you would feel if you were being condemned. And therefore bear, forbear, tolerate—exercise charity.

And the third relationship, dimension, is how you relate yourself to yourself. Are you a good companion to yourself? Can you tolerate yourself when you are alone, or is it a mass of self-pity, self-hatred, self-condemnation, self-accusation—a turmoil, a mass of negativity inside? Or is it serene positivity? One said: “Hope, forever hope, while there is life, there is hope.” *Santushtah satatam yogi*—a Yogi is always contented. Be full of good cheer. Have hope, have faith in yourself also. Never despair, face the Light. When you have reposed faith in Him, all will be well. Have absolute hope, always be positive.

An English poet said: “Life is not an empty dream, heart within and God overhead. From dust thou art and to dust returnest was not spoken of the soul.” Like that, heart within, rely upon yourself, be confident, do not despair. Have faith in yourself and absolute trust in Him. All is well, take heart. And thousands of years ago someone said: “You must lift yourself up by yourself. Never allow the spirit to be depressed. Have faith in Me, rely upon Me, think upon Me. You will have

nothing to fear. *Na tvam sochitum arhasi, ma suchah*—it is not proper that you should grieve, grieve not.”

Thus the cardinal virtues arising out of the context of the Christian religion are faith, hope and charity—charity towards all of God’s creation which you have to encounter day after day, morning till night. Ever have a hopeful attitude towards yourself in your subjectivity; let your heart be filled with hope, never negative despair, never darkness. And in your relationship with that Being, have absolute faith. Similarly, in the Indian context we have *sraddha* (faith), *atmavisvas*—faith in yourself, self-reliance, ever a hopeful attitude, ever an optimistic view of life and *daya* (compassion). Tulsidas says: “Compassion is the root of righteousness, pride is the root of sin.”

“Yes, whatever has gone by has gone by. Now I shall work for a better future, and He will help me. He is all-powerful, all-wise, all-blessed. And while I thus live with absolute faith in Him, hope, reliance and confidence in myself, I shall be charitable towards others.” Faith, hope and charity—never let go of these. Always let them be enshrined within you—faith in the Supreme, hope for yourself and charity towards all.

Thus finish your journey and you will attain the Goal. The journey will take you to your destiny—your divine destiny, the fulfilment of which is the most important thing in life. All other things come afterwards; they are secondary. In this way, understand your life, understand yourself, understand your relationship to the Maker, and understand your relationship to the rest of creation.

May God bless you to understand. We have to live with wisdom, we have to live with understanding. That alone can take us to where we can ultimately shower ourselves with blessedness. Our intellect has been given to us to be exercised and to enable us to live wisely.

God bless you all! May you ponder these cardinal points of your life’s journey—charity towards God’s creatures, absolute hope about yourself, and absolute faith in the Being Who has brought you into being, Who has placed you among His creatures, so that you may become like Him and you can attain Him as your supreme Goal!

70

THE LORD’S PROMISE

We bow in devotion, in reverence to the worshipful presence of Gurudev. We bow with gratitude and thankfulness of heart to the adorable presence of Gurudev, who silently, invisibly sustains our spiritual life, who continues as during his physical presence to sustain, protect and provide for his spiritual family.

Thousands of years ago the great World Teacher, the worshipful Lord Krishna proclaimed: “*yogakshemam vahamyaham*—I safeguard all that my devotee possesses, and I provide for him all

that he does not possess, but requires; I provide for him, I look after him with regard to his secular, material needs as well as with regard to his higher, spiritual, divine needs.”

That was millennia ago. That was a different age, but it has made no difference to the Almighty Lord. He has continued to keep His promise and looks after the needs both secular as well as sacred, material as well as spiritual, outer as well as inner of those who have turned to Him, made Him their life's goal, made Him the very centre of their living, the treasure of their heart, and think of Him constantly. And the passage of time, the rolling centuries, the changing of the age, has made little difference to Him. He fulfils that promise ever, ever; He fulfils that promise in His own wonderful way.

Thus it is that in this world of insecurity, unemployment, poverty, suffering due to want, He has created a haven of refuge providing sincere seekers with food to eat, shelter, clothing, medical aid, all the necessities of life. And for Yoga, He has created the scope to practise devotion, prayer and worship; the scope to practise service, compassion, kindness, being good and doing good; the scope to engage in discipline and self-control; to practise concentration, meditation and inwardness; the scope to practise and evolve along lines of study, reflection, discrimination, analysis, investigation and *jnana sravana*. Thus, Yoga, the inner life, the spiritual aspect of man's life, He provides in a way so as to put us in a debt of gratitude that would perhaps take births for us to repay.

Fully this great promise of the Divine is continuously fulfilled in the case of all sincere seeking souls. As of yore, as of ancient times, a different age, even so today, at this moment, in these present times in our own lives, *yogakshemam vahamyaham* is being fulfilled again and again in all its fullness. God has been honest, God has been good, God has been true, God has kept His word.

If you ponder the state of human society all over the world and take a look at yourself in this haven of refuge, this haven of peace, then the light of understanding will dawn in your intellect, and the light of a grateful love will arise and fill your heart towards your invisible, but real benefactor. *Yogakshemam vahamyaham* has never been belied. All things may change, the world may be a different world with different conditions, but the Divine Word prevails, the promise goes on being fulfilled time after time in the lives of millions who sincerely seek the Divine, remember Him, think of Him constantly, make Him the centre of their lives, the goal of their lives. To them, amidst poverty there is plenty, amidst want there is the fulfilment of every want, amidst anxiety, insecurity, danger, there is safety, security and fearlessness.

Yogakshemam vahamyaham—this eternal promise is proved true in the lives of countless seeking souls who are given freedom from want and freedom of mind. But the discriminating soul will receive of this gift with awareness: “Now is the time when I must make the highest use of what has been given unto me.” Therefore, with a grateful heart, our life itself will be a perennial thanksgiving.

Beloved Gurudev gave us yet another precious, important and very meaningful concept. He said: “Integral Yoga, Yoga of synthesis—evolve in a many-sided manner, thus bringing about a beautiful harmony and balance within your personality. Let heart, mind and hand develop simultaneously. Let not one be developed at the neglect of another.” Because we are constantly

facing situations when discrimination is required, when rationality is required. If it does not serve us at that time, we are swept away by emotion, by sentiment. There are times when the exercise of sentiment—compassion, understanding, forgiveness, kindness—is necessary. At that time if only rationality is available then one becomes hard. One fails to understand, one misunderstands; one reacts in a hard manner, feelingless manner.

Therefore, balance should be there between the intellect and emotion, rationality and sentiment. They have to mutually help each other so that everything becomes an asset, not a problem or a liability, but an actively, vigorously helpful endowment. Mutually they counterbalance each other so that each function is regulated, and each functions in its proper context when it is needed.

When the exercise of emotion is called for, if you work or act through the intellect, you are bound to commit error. When the exercise of intellect, rationality, is required, if you act through emotion, you are bound to be in error. Both are good but both require regulation. And when it is time to act, if you remain inactive, then you are in deep error. Where it is necessary to act, if you are inactive or neglect to act, then you will regret later.

In the same way, if while engaging your mind and energy in all the necessary *kartavya karma*—duties that have to be done, actions that are obligatory—if you do not simultaneously practise detachment, inwardness, *antarmukhi pratyahara*, and even in the midst of actions you do not practise the truth that “I am *nishkriya*—I am the actionless soul, I am the detached witness, I am neither the doer nor the enjoyer,” if you do not develop this inwardness, moving towards the centre of your being, then activity becomes a net in which you become entangled.

To be involved is good, necessary. We must be involved. To be entangled is not good, it is not desirable. Thus inwardness must counterbalance *bahirmukhatva* (outward tendency), and action must counterbalance *nishkriyata* (non-activity). Rationality must counterbalance mere sentiment and emotion. And *bhav*, emotional attitude, must prevail in its own right field and sphere and its own time and place.

This was the wise and perceptive teaching of beloved Guru Maharaj, who invisibly ever-present looks after our Yoga and *kshema*, safeguards our welfare secular, physical, material and outer, as well as our welfare sacred, spiritual, unseen and inner. He has given us scope for this integrated development, this Yoga of synthesis. For this Ashram is a manifest expression of the Yoga of synthesis—the balance between mind, intellect, heart and hand. Gurudev’s advent, life, realisations, teachings and Ashram are the fulfilment of the ancient promise of the Almighty Lord.

Let us, therefore, recognise the boundless bounty and grace that has been showered upon us. Let us, therefore, rejoice in the ever recurring truth of the great promise of the Lord—*yogakshemam vahamyaham*. Let us, therefore, recognise His presence, His divine hand, His fulfilment of His pledge a hundred thousand times, again and yet again in our lives and in the lives of all sincere seekers. Let us, therefore, engage in utilising to the full the precious benefits from the fulfilment of His promise in the form of this centre of Yoga and Vedanta and crown ourselves with supreme blessedness. That is the least we can do. Then our lives will indeed be fruitful and fulfilled.

God bless us to have right perception. God bless us to understand what we possess. God give us the wisdom and grant us the insight to profit thereby to the maximum extent and crown ourselves with supreme peace and joy, peace and joy, peace and joy!

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THIS MOMENT

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! *Satsangis* of the spiritual family of Holy Master Swami Sivanandaji into whose presence we come during this morning hour, day after day, to directly receive his benedictions and his spiritual force to keep us upon the noble way of life we have chosen to live. May he give us the realisation that at this moment when we are thus under his glance of grace, when we are thus recipients of his *guru kripa*, may he also further grant us the insight and the grasp of the truth, that this moment is the only effective moment of our life.

True life is made up of “now.” True life is not made up of bygone yesterdays or uncertain tomorrows. What we have is like a lump of clay in a sculptor’s hands or a piece of gold in a goldsmith’s shop. We can create out of it what we will. At this moment, what are we doing with the time we have? Are we thinking of something else? Are we forming opinions of people who are sitting beside us or of the person speaking to us? Or, are we engaged in making our life sublime, enriching ourselves, uplifting ourselves, drawing nearer to the Divine, and awakening within, unfolding ourselves, shining with the awakened light? What are we engaged in doing in this moment?

This moment, this concept, this word, this fact, this truth is the most tremendous truth of life. Life is made up of this moment and this moment only—not of dead yesterdays nor of unborn tomorrows. But your life to each one of you is not even today. It is this moment. This moment is what we effectively have. Other aspects of time are what you imagine you have. Other aspects of time are present in your mind as ideas and concepts. They are most deceptive ideas.

If you make this moment all that it ought to be, it will bring something improved the next moment. Because you have already enriched yourself this moment, the next moment will be built upon it and therefore be one step higher and maybe one shade brighter. Each moment can be an ascending step, a manifestation of a brighter light from within you. Moment by moment illumination is attained. Moment by moment enlightenment is brought about. Moment by moment is liberation ultimately experienced. Moment by moment is the supreme Goal achieved.

You do not have to wait for any moment; you do not have to exercise patience. On the contrary, the moment does not wait. It comes before you with each breath. Therefore, great mystics have said: “O Lord with every breath may I remember You. With every breath of my life may I ever seek to draw nearer to You.” Because the moment does not wait, it does not tarry. If you take it and live it, then you have it. If you daydream, allow yourself to be diverted elsewhere, get bogged down in something else, then you lose it. It is no longer yours; it is gone forever.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

Each moment is your real wealth, more precious than gold, diamonds and precious stones. Each moment is your very life. Each moment is what you are and what you can be. There is nothing that can compare to it. The tremendous importance of the moment, the incomparable value of the moment, is the most important insight and understanding that a living individual must have. “My wealth is each moment that is before me now. It is now I have to live my life, not in yesterdays or tomorrows. I have but this moment to live, to mould and to fashion, to make something out of it. This is my effective life.”

Remember, we do not have to work for it, we do not have to ask for it. It is constantly being given, constantly. It is always immediate. It comes. It does not delay, but you cannot ask it to wait. You cannot afford to allow it to pass by and then imagine you can do something about it. When it has passed, it is no longer yours. When you confront it, it is yours; you are master of the situation, you have full claim. It allows itself to be taken by you and made use of in any way you like.

Hence the adage *uttisthata jagrata* (arise, awake)—come, come, slumber not, be up and doing, arise, awake. For they knew this truth: that life is now. There is no other life but now. They knew that the only thing the individual soul has for his highest evolution, his supreme blessedness, is this moment.

Ponder, ponder well this great, all-important truth of your life. Go on pondering it and never stop deeply pondering this truth. For it is the most important truth. If it is grasped, life is yours; there is nothing that is withheld from you. If you do not grasp it, life is in vain. A hundred things will come and clutter up your consciousness, and your consciousness will lose the most precious of all things—the now, the moment, here. Wherever you are, at whatever time, you are at that moment in charge of the moment, in charge of your life. If you allow it to pass away, then no lamentation can bring it back, no effort can recall it.

Therefore the need of perennial wakefulness, vigilance and constant readiness for action. When we were children, the British government encouraged the Boy Scout movement. And the Boy Scouts’ motto was “Be Prepared.” If you are prepared, then you grasp the moment. If the moment comes and you are unprepared, you cannot blame the moment. It has done its duty. It has presented itself saying: “Here, here I am. I am life. I am your wealth. I am your highest salvation. I am all that you have. Come, here I am.” If you are unprepared, next moment it is lost.

You all know the story that the Master Jesus told about the wise and foolish virgins. The wise were wise because they were prepared. They anticipated the moment, they were prepared even before it came, they were in a state of readiness. They looked forward to the moment. And when the moment came they were ready and grasped it immediately. And so they became one with the Divine. The foolish were foolish precisely because they did not do what the wise ones did. They did not keep themselves in a constant state of preparedness in spite of seeing the wise ones doing all that was necessary for that great moment. The lesson was lost upon them.

Not without reason therefore *uttisthata jagrata*—arise, awake, attain illumination. The one who is awake, alert and ready—that being alone attains illumination. There is a very famous Hindi *bhajan* that says: “He who is awake, he attains, and he who is asleep, he loses.” And all of you know the old, old adage: “Time and tide wait for no man.”

Therefore, enrich yourself with what you have. Do not lose your life through daydreaming, building castles in the air, fantasy and imagination. More than anything, do not lose your life by dwelling upon the dead past. For although you imagine you have it, you do not. What you have is now, what you have is this moment. Life is this moment. This moment is your only wealth. This moment is your effective life, having which you can do anything, losing which you lose everything.

Therefore they say: “Grasp time by the forelock.” Even before it is before you, have it in your hand. For the moment is all that you have, but that is more than enough. If you take care of the moments you have your whole life. Life will take care of you. And there is no limit to what you can attain if you take care of this moment, this now. For it becomes a dynamic moment, full of power, full of potential, full of unlimited possibilities—this moment. Live now, live effectively. Make this moment your wealth, be enriched, and move towards your great divine destiny.

If you cannot grasp the concept of your divine destiny because it is too high up in the clouds, all right, leave it. Do not think about it, worry about it. Do not bother yourself about it. Take hold of this moment and make yourself an ideal human individual. Thus make yourself a wealth to your own contemporary society, to humanity of now, this moment. Enrich human life by your being. To be is to do.

This moment is God. God comes to you as this moment. He does not descend in some sort of supramundane shape and size with lights flashing and sound emanating. He comes silently as this moment. Now is God. He constantly keeps coming to you as now, as this moment. We have to help God to help us when He comes as *kaloham*—I am time, I am life.

And what is life and what is time if it is not now, if it is not this moment? Without any distinction of age or sex or caste or creed or race it is given to everyone, saint or sinner. That is the equal vision of the Divine. It is not withheld from anyone. It is given to everyone. God comes to everyone as this moment. This is life. This is the I AM God—here, now. That is the greatest thing. This moment is the most tremendous thing that can happen to you. It is the greatest thing that can be given to you. Be wise. Make use of this moment and bless yourself eternally.

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PRACTISE YOUR CONVICTION

Radiant Divinities! We are living in an age where the highest form of knowledge comes to us from all ten directions. There are countless books bringing spiritual, metaphysical, psychic and philosophical wisdom to us. There are countless spiritual organisations, institutions, societies and foundations all over the world. There are any number of new mystical schools, many of them reviving forgotten knowledge. They want to bring out the wisdom, philosophy and system of worship of the Incas, the Aztecs, the American Indians. And great gatherings and so many conferences are held each year. The discussions are tape-recorded and published. There is a great revival everywhere.

All this means that the educated citizen of the modern world has access to immense knowledge, and many a time this knowledge comes to where he is in the form of gift books and other literature. And therefore we know so much. We know that there is a great Reality. We know that It pervades everywhere, It is present everywhere. We know that It indwells our heart. We know so much.

But then, all this knowledge gets stored in the mind, in the intellect. And the person possessing this knowledge, having immense information through so much reading and so much listening, still continues to be in the same state of consciousness as before. Because, this intellectual grasp of certain fundamental great truths, and also an inner conviction based upon the intellectual grasp of these great truths, nevertheless fails to penetrate deeper into the consciousness and fails to manifest itself or produce actual experience of this truth. Everyone knows for example that we are parts of God. God has made us in His image and therefore we are divine, we are immortal Spirit. Everyone is convinced, “Yes, I am divine.” But it makes no difference to our here and now personality. We continue to remain very, very human and all that that implies.

So, therefore, an important question arises. It was put to me by a sincere seeker: “Swamiji, we know so many things, have grasped these things. We are absolutely convinced about these things, yet the actual experience of these things still seems far away. How to bring about this experience? How to make this conviction an experience?”

It is in answer to this question that all the different Yoga systems, all the different systems of *sadhana*, have come into being. The Bhagavad Gita gives not less than sixteen different kinds of *sadhana*. If you leave aside the first two chapters as an introduction and a preparation for *sadhana*, then from the third chapter onwards until the eighteenth, Yoga after Yoga, *sadhana* after *sadhana*, is expounded. And all the various Yoga Sutras, Vedanta Sutras and Bhakti Sutras, they also expound an answer to this question.

We are convinced God is our own. We are convinced we belong to God wholly and solely, we belong to no one else. We are only passers-by here; all connections are temporary. Our connection with God is a permanent, eternal, unchanging connection. We know that. God is our all-in-all. He is our father, mother, friend, relative, wealth, wisdom, everything. This knowledge is there; we are convinced also, we believe it, but we do not experience this fatherhood of God, this motherhood of God—the living experience. What to do?

All the scriptures answer this question. All the lives of saints answer this question. And what is the quintessence of this answer? Whatever your conviction is, commence, start practising the conviction in the form of again and again affirming the truth that you are convinced of, again and again asserting it, again and again dwelling upon it, again and again meditating upon this truth. And time and again as any contrary state of mind begins to emerge in your interior, any thought that contradicts this, immediately reject it. This is the classical method given by great teachers of Vedanta.

They say it is only by practise of the truth-affirming, asserting, reflecting upon, deeply pondering and meditating upon that truth, trying to listen to it again and again, trying to absorb it even more by study—that it will go deeper. Do it through *satsang*, through *sravana*, through

svadhyaya, through *manana* and through *nididhyasana*. And if anything of a contrary nature comes into your consciousness, immediately reject it.

Contrary thoughts will keep coming, because they do not come from outside, they are right within us. We have practised error for such a long time, since our birth. We have constantly lived in error and taken that to be the truth. We are groomed, reared up in error. Therefore, you cannot simply transform yourself overnight. The error will keep coming back and, you have to reject it.

So they say: “*satya ka pushtikaran asat ka nirakaran, jnana ka pushtikaran ajnana ka nirakaran; neti, neti* (the strengthening of truth, the rejecting of untruth; the strengthening of wisdom, the rejecting of ignorance; not this, not this).” “This is not right, this is not the correct thing. This is not the truth; I don’t want it.” Reject it, throw it out! And affirm, assert the Reality, the truth. Both of these are simultaneous. Both of these have to go together.

And, add to it deep study of the Goal. Absorb it, think of it constantly and then meditate upon it. “*Tat srotavyo mantavyo nididhyasitavyah* (That should be heard, reflected upon and contemplated).” So Yajnavalkya tells his disciple Maitreyi who was also his wife. On the eve of renouncing the householder status and entering the monastic life, when questioned about the Reality he said: “It is the greatest thing, dearer than the dearest, nearer than the nearest, the highest of all values, the one supreme thing.” He said: “Yes, this is the Atman. It has to be heard about, it has to be reflected upon, it has to be deeply meditated upon, O Maitreyi.”

He addresses Maitreyi, but actually he tells us this is what has to be done in order for conviction to gradually start developing into a feeling. First of all you experience it as a feeling. Though it may be on your psychical level, yet it is better than mere intellectual conviction. You are one step further. Not only are you convinced about it, you begin to feel it. That means it has started to approach closer to your consciousness. And then this *bhava* (feeling), if it is maintained, if it is brought into your daily life, if it is made to permeate your vision, then gradually this *bhava* begins to ripen into *anubhava* (direct perception).

So it is the result of a continuous, unceasing *abhyasa*, practice of affirming the truth, asserting the truth, reflecting upon it, meditating upon it and rejecting anything contrary to it. Thus, that which is only a conviction on the level of the intellect becomes an experience deep, deep within your innermost centre of consciousness. That is the beginning of liberation. So *abhyasa* is what is indicated and *abhyasa* is to be continuous. *Abhyasa* also includes the rejection of that which is contrary, not in consonance with the truth, with the Reality. Both are necessary.

When it says in the Gita: “You must focus your mind upon that great Reality, O Arjuna, and *kascidanyan na cintayet*—you should not think of anything else,” it means the entire mind should be focused upon the one great object of your meditation, the great Reality, to the exclusion of all other contrary thoughts. No other contrary thoughts should be allowed to enter in, to interfere with the focus. This is the way. And the law behind this practice is: “As a man thinketh, so he becometh.” “*Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh*—The mind alone of man is the main cause of either bondage or liberation.”

So there you have a method given to you. You have your mind, bring it under your control. You have your intellect which is already convinced. Now practise this conviction by affirmation. Assert, affirm, and reject all things that are contrary. Reflect upon it, meditate upon it, listen to it again and again. Read and absorb, take it deeper down. These are all *abhyasas*. It may be any path—*bhakti*, *jnana* or Yoga, any path. Practise this constant affirmation, the assertion of your relationship with God.

“God is my Father, I am the child of God”—this should be practised, this should be affirmed. Any other thing such as: “I belong to so and so, I am the son of this family,” should be rejected. “No, no, this is a false relationship. Any other relationship except with the source of my being, the cosmic origin, source and support of my being, is not authentic, is not genuine. The real, authentic relationship is with that Being alone Who is my Father, Mother, God. Any other relationship is an imagined one.” In that way one should practise.

Even upon the path of *bhakti*, even upon the path of duality, the same process is to be carried on, but modified and suited to that approach—through the heart, through emotion, through sentiment, through love, through devotion. But the technique is the same, the practice is the same, the *sadhana* is the same. “Mere to Giridhara Gopala dusara na koyi (So far as I am concerned, my God is Lord Krishna and nobody else).” That is *bhakti*. That is the same practice applied.

Whatever your path may be, God bless you to practise your conviction, strengthen it, take it ever deeper, and rejecting all that is contrary, may your efforts be crowned with success, with God-experience!

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YOU ARE THE LIGHT

Adorable Spiritual Presence! We bow in reverence and devotion before You and accept at Thy hands Thy most graciously given gift of this day. May we be enabled to live, think and act during the course of this precious day in a way that sows the seeds of a golden harvest of peace, contentment and satisfaction in the future, in the days to come, in this very earth life. Guide us with Thy wisdom teachings, so that in this day we may move with the understanding that the primary purpose of our having been sent here is to attain our highest good. It is to achieve our supreme welfare, transcending all limitations, vexations, all finite trammels that hold us bound.

May we have the right understanding that our supreme welfare, our greatest good, does not constitute something that contradicts the supreme welfare and the highest good of others. May we realise that it is in working for the good of all beings that we verily attain our highest good. It is verily in contributing to the happiness of Your creation that we ourselves go beyond creation and enter into You.

In this objective field of living our life, may our life become a noble process of perennial good unto the least of Thy creatures, unto all, for that is the way, the very art and science of attaining

YOU ARE THE LIGHT

You, Who are the highest good. And it is so, precisely because You are the indwelling principle in all beings, and therefore all good that is done to Thy creation verily constitutes good that is done to You. Thus it becomes a spiritual process of adoring You, worshipping You.

Give us also the insight that we may know that no experiences come to us because others inflict them upon us, others do something good or bad to us. But all experiences, pleasant or unpleasant, come to us because we have worked for them. They come to us through the operation of a just Law. And within the justice of this Law lies concealed infinite love, infinite goodness which is of Thy nature, for in the operation of this Law lies the seeds of our highest good. No experience is meaningless, no experience is purposeless, no experience is futile.

“Through them all I am helped. Through them all I am given insight into this creation, this universe of Yours. I am given insight into myself. Through them all I progress in wisdom. Through them all I stand to benefit, I stand to gain if only I shall look at experiences with a perceiving eye, with a perceiving vision. Thus let me be given the insight that the operation of this Law is verily the operation of the functioning of Thy infinite love, infinite goodness, through infinite justice, divine justice.”

This Law is our greatest good. It is constantly seeking to awaken us, guide us, to make us aware of many things which we would otherwise be blind to. Thus it is a light upon the inner path as well as the outer path. May we be fortunate enough to recognise this and eagerly seek to grow through all experiences. Thus may our life be lived in understanding. May our life be lived with knowledge. May our life be lived with the recognition of Your goodness and love in all the experiences You send to us.

Radiant Divinities! A light is not lit and hidden away under some covering. A light is meant to shed radiance all around, banish darkness and illumine everything, to light up even dark nooks and corners. It penetrates everywhere, brightens everything, illumines all and shines and shines. It is lit to shine, to illumine, to brighten.

Whatever shines here, shines due to the radiance of that great Light of lights beyond all darkness. And of that great Light of lights beyond all darkness, you are all radiant rays. To shine is your birthright. Light is your unchanging eternal being.

And yet we pray *tamaso ma jyotirgamaya* (Lead us from darkness unto Light); and yet we pray *dhiyo yo nah prachodayat* (May He illumine our intellect). What is this contradiction? What is this anomaly? You who are the Light of lights, you who are a radiant centre of effulgence, divine effulgence, spiritual effulgence, why should you pray, *tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*? Where comes *tamas* (darkness)?

This morning in the spiritual presence of Gurudev, in this sacred Samadhi Hall of his holy Ashram, I wish to tell you once and for all—to shine is your birthright. I wish to tell you once and for all—there is no darkness in you.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

If you pray *tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*, it is not because there is any darkness in you. You are not asking for Light, because you are the Light. “I am in the Light, the Light is in me, I am the Light”—this is the truth. This is the truth and nothing else.

When you are the Light, why then do you pray *tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*? You pray this way because there is something that has come as a covering. Why it has come, how it has come, we need not go into. It is unnecessary. But we know that it is there. And therefore this covering is to be removed and this is your chance.

A dog cannot study Vedanta. A dog cannot work out the means of removing the darkness that enshrouds it, the darkness that tries to hide and cover the Light that refuses to be hidden, that refuses to remain covered for long. A pig or a sheep or a goat cannot know that it is the Light of lights beyond all darkness, a ray of the radiance called *param jyotisvarupa paramatma* (the supreme Self Who is of the nature of supreme light). But you can, because you are made in His image, capable of thinking.

The sky is the limit to the ascent of your thought. Great minds have proven it. So remove that which seems to be dark, which is not in you, but seems to be because of its proximity. *Avarana*, they used the significant word *avarana*—a covering. Therefore the prayer asks for the removal of that which covers your effulgence, the radiance that is your birthright.

And this prayer should be followed by action to remove this darkness. That action is called Yoga, That action is called *sadhana*. And that action to remove the darkness and once again shine with effulgence is the science of religion. It is your supreme duty. It is your great privilege. Engage in it. Our ancients gave it as the highest of all values to be pursued, striven after, the supreme value, *atma sakshatkara* (Self-realisation).

Ponder these points. There is no darkness in you. You are eternal Light. Come out of this enshrouding *anatma* (non-Self), enshrouding cover, that has been temporarily made to come over you. It cannot touch or dim or alter your effulgence. Radiantly effulgent, you have come here upon earth to shine, illumine all, and leave this world a thing of brightness.

This is your birthright. Claim it. Do *sadhana*. Practise Yoga and shine as a radiant ray of the supreme Light of lights beyond all darkness. That is the glory of human life. That is the greatness of man. That is the grandeur of your presence here on earth. Let your life manifest this grandeur, and may it complete its journey gloriously.

Engage in this day after day with keen interest, keen enthusiasm, and make life a thrilling adventure, a thing of great fervour, zest and zeal. Every moment look forward to that ultimate consummation. May you realise yourself: “I am the Light of lights beyond all darkness. To shine is my birthright. Effulgence is my natural state. I am here to brighten all, brighten everything, banish darkness and shine radiantly.” God help you in this glorious adventure!

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EVER ONWARD AND UPWARD

Radiant Divinities! Beloved and blessed children of Light! Yogis engaged in Yoga practices according to your own temperament and inclination! Yoga practice leads to the ultimate truth of Yoga, which is the cessation of all pain and suffering, the attainment of supreme bliss, the transcendence of limitations of time and space, birth and death, and becoming established forever in a state of fearlessness and freedom. The fruit of Yoga is *kaivalya moksha samrajya* (the kingdom of final liberation). It is that grand and glorious state of liberation, liberated consciousness, untrammelled by limitations of finite adjuncts and additives. When consciousness regains its pristine state of perennial purity, when it is unqualified, unlimited, transcending barriers that bind you down, you realise yourself as the pure Consciousness in its absolute state, characterised by peace and bliss.

“Yoga becomes the destroyer of sorrow for one who is wise, one who is moderate in all things, one who is self-controlled, one who is ever awake and vigilant and one who diligently pursues the path of *yoga sadhana*, does not give up.” Thus the great Teacher, master of Yoga, *yogeshvara* Lord Krishna tries to bring to us the truth of Yoga.

To attain this great truth of the sorrowless state of peace and joy, you have turned away from the delusions of the fleeting scene of passing events and perishable objects and have set your face to seek the Imperishable, the Immortal. Be determined that you will persist in this quest until the Goal is attained. Let not anything in this universe bring even a shadow of a doubt, even the slightest ripple of hesitation in this determined pursuit after the one and only worthwhile goal that there is in human existence. All other things are fraught with pain, all other things are fraught with innumerable defects, all other things are ever enveloped by sure decay and ultimate dissolution.

All things, including your own temporary earth personality are subject to disease and decay. Nothing can alter this fact though deluded people try to perpetuate physical life. Physical life is not to be hated, but it is not to be pampered or clung to. Physical life is not a deity to be worshipped; it is not a goal in itself. Physical life, if well lived, properly understood and wisely controlled, and directed with discrimination and understanding, may serve as a means to fulfil the prime purpose for which you have come here, which is supra-physical, supramundane, spiritual. Be, therefore, determined that nothing lesser will ever divert you from this great quest of the Eternal, the Imperishable, the Real.

Let each moment and each day of your life be as a series of steps climbing higher and higher until you attain the supreme Goal which is here. It is not somewhere high up, it is here. Let that be your life. Each day let it be a step higher. Make up your mind that this shall be your life, having but one determined direction, having but one fixed goal, one pattern, an ever upward ascent. To this end, do all that you can.

Innumerable minor distractions notwithstanding, the greatest deception is the swift passage of time that goes unperceived. Take up this challenge. Say: “I will not be deceived, I shall not allow

time to dupe me. I shall be aware of each passing moment and enrich myself. I shall enrich myself in each passing moment, by each passing moment; and thus, with each passing moment I shall find myself richer, higher, nearer to the great consummation.” With this spirit live your life. Then there shall not be one dull moment, I promise you. When you are looking forward to something, when each moment of life means something to you, there can be no monotony, there cannot be one single dull moment. There will be a keenness to the spirit as you live life for a great purpose. That should be the inner climate of the true Yogi—*utsahasampanna* (endowed with inspiration, zeal).

May God bless you all! May the Supreme, which is the greatest Beauty of beauties, the supreme Value, the one absolute Reality, ever shine before you, not only as your ultimate goal but even as your immediate goal! Live in that Presence.

May the spiritual presence of beloved and worshipful Gurudev, that shines here as the silent light, ever inspire you to keep on towards this great attainment! May your indwelling Reality ever draw you towards that supreme achievement! May your own love for it, your intense aspiration for it, be the power that takes you onward and upward day after day!

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THE TRUTH THAT LIBERATES

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved children of Light! You are without birth, without death, without old age, imperishable, indestructible and eternal. You are souls divine who are in the process of ascending into a state, into a plane of consciousness, where it is not a teacher, or an author, or a Guru, or a saint, or a scripture who knows that you are eternal, pure, perfect, indestructible, immortal, but a state of consciousness where you yourself know, “I am immortal Atman; I am without birth, without death; I am without old age, without fear, without worry.”

Someone else knowing what you are does not mean much to you. All the scriptures are oceans of wisdom; they are full of light, but it does not mean anything to you. It is only when the darkness within you, the darkness of self-forgetfulness is banished and you fill yourself with your own light, so that you become a shining centre that banishes darkness everywhere you *move*, then alone this truth becomes powerful, this truth becomes the Truth-experience, this truth becomes capable of freeing you, liberating you.

Not the self-same truth that is declared by scriptures everywhere, not the self-same truth that teachers silently teach, not the self-same truth that the prophets have proclaimed, not the truth that is experienced directly by sages and seers in their deep meditation, but the Truth that you yourself shall experience in the depth of your own consciousness—that Truth alone can liberate you. That Truth alone can free you. That Truth alone can take you beyond sorrow and confer upon you an unutterable, ineffable, indescribable, divine bliss. That Truth alone can grant you the peace that passes understanding. That Truth alone can make you fearless and free.

Therefore, make your life a steady ascent towards that great Self-experience. Do not bother too much about Guru and teaching and scriptures, what the prophets said, what someone else said, what this or that teacher said, be it yesterday, a century ago or thousands of years ago. It is not this. They are all path-pointers. They are all lights in the darkness. But it is not all these truths put together—ancient, medieval, modern or of the immediate past—that can make you rejoice and make you fearless; rather it is the Truth that you experience within yourself. And towards that strive. That is wisdom; that is the one thing needful. That is life. That is the need of the *sadhak* and the seeker, that is the need of the spiritual aspirant.

And do it courageously, do it boldly. Do not care for obstacles. Be intent upon steadily plodding on, plodding on, climbing upward and upward until you attain the pinnacle peak. That is the one thing needful. That is spiritual life, that is *sadhana*, that is Yoga. That is the true stuff and the grit that you must acquire—diligently, seriously, earnestly acquire. And that is what will liberate you, make you a liberated being.

And help is ever at hand, because in the ultimate context it is the Universal Being that calls the individual being. It is the call of God to man, of the Divine to the human, that brings one into this blessed spiritual path. The Christian mystics have a significant term, they call it “vocation”: “Have you a vocation? Have you been called? Has the Infinite called you? Have you heard the call of the Divine from the depths of your own heart, and has that call made you enter into the life spiritual? Then all is well. Do not worry. He Who has called will keep on calling you, keep on waking you up when you fall into drowsy slumber, keep on bringing light when you are groping in darkness, keep on showing you the path when you are in doubt and confusion, for He has called you.”

So, follow the Supreme Being. The great Guru is the indwelling Consciousness within, ever available. It is that great Guru Who has appeared to you in and through a human being, a teacher, and that great Guru is ever with you in the depths of your heart, prompting you, moving you, guiding you. You are never alone, even for a split second of time. You are always under the gracious protecting presence of your Guru. Wherever you may be, in the Arctic wilderness, on the top of Mount Everest, or in the midst of the vast Pacific Ocean, He is within you. The Guru never leaves the soul He has called. He walks with you when you walk. He rests with you when you rest. He broods over you while you slumber. He is the one Being Who is unfailing. He is the one Being Who is eternally yours and always with you. Become aware of this companionship and keep on going upward and ever upward. Success will be yours!

GLOSSARY

- abhiman(a)*: egoism, identification with the body
abhyasa: repetition, practice
abhisheka: holy bath
acharya: preceptor
ades(a): spiritual instruction, divine command
adhyasa: superimposition or false attribution of properties of one thing on another thing
advaita: non-dual
advaita Vedanta: non-dualistic philosophy
ahimsa: non-injury in thought, word and deed
ajnana: spiritual ignorance
amala: without impurity
amsa: part
ananda: bliss, happiness, joy
anasakti: non-attachment, dispassion
anatma(n): not-Self, insentient
anitya(m): non-eternal, impermanent, evanescent
antahkarana: inner instrument, organ, being, four-fold mind: mind, intellect, ego and subconscious mind
antarmukhi pratyahara: introspection, gaze turned inwards, withdrawal of the mind
apara vidya: lower knowledge, intellectual knowledge
aparoksha'nubhuti: direct, actual experience
apurna: imperfect, not-full, incomplete
arati: waving of light before the Lord
aradhana: worship of God, adoration
artha: an object of desire, wealth
asana: posture, seat
asanti: restlessness, absence of peace of mind, distraction
asat: that which is not, non-existent, unreal
asatya: untruth
Ashram: hermitage
ashtanga yoga: the eight-limbed Raja Yoga of Maharshi Patanjali
asura: demon, evil tendency in man
Atma(n): the Self
atma-jnana: direct knowledge of the Self
atma'nubhava: personal transcendental experience
atma-svarup: the essential nature of the Self
avarana: a covering, veil of ignorance
avastha: state
avatara: incarnation
avidya: ignorance, nescience
bandhas: a class of *hatha yoga* exercises
Bhagavan: the Lord

GLOSSARY

Bhagavad Gita: 700 verses from the great Hindu epic Mahabharata recording the discourse between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, prior to the commencement of the great war and giving in clear and concise form the highest teachings and truths

bhajan: devotional singing, worship, praise of the Lord

bhakta: devotee

bhakti: devotion, love of God

bhav(a): mental attitude, feeling, purity of thought

bhumi: plane, land

Brahman: the Absolute Reality, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute, it is not only all-powerful but all-power itself, it is not only all-knowing and blissful but all-knowledge and bliss itself

brahmacharya: purity, celibacy

brahma-jnana: direct knowledge of Brahman

brahmakara vritti: thought of Brahman alone

brahmamuhurta: the period of an hour and a half before sunrise

brahmatva: the principle of Brahman

brahma-vidya: science of Brahman, knowledge of Brahman, learning pertaining to Brahman or the Absolute Reality

buddhi: the discriminating faculty, intellect, understanding

chaitanya: the consciousness that knows itself and knows others, Absolute Consciousness

chintan(a): thinking, reflecting

chit: absolute consciousness or intelligence

chitta: subconscious mind

daivi: divine

daivi sampad: divine wealth, divine qualities

dama: control of senses

dan(a): charity, giving

darsan: vision, making visible, sight

daya: compassion, mercy

dharana: concentration

dharma: righteous way of living as enjoined by the sacred scriptures, virtue

dhyana: meditation

duhkha: sorrow, pain, misery, grief

dvaita: dualism

dvandvas: pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, pleasure and pain, etc.

eka: one

ekameva' dvitiam: One alone, without a second, Brahman

gayatri: one of the most sacred Vedic *mantras*

Gita: see Bhagavad Gita

gudhah: hidden

guna: quality born of Nature: *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*

Guru: teacher, spiritual preceptor

guru kripa: preceptor's grace or blessings

guru stotra: hymn to the Guru

hatha yoga: a system of Yoga for gaining control over the physical body and vital energy

iccha: desire

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

ishta devata: chosen Deity
ishta mantra: *mantra* of one's chosen Deity
isvarapranidhana: devotion to the Lord
jada: inert, insentient, non-intelligent
jagat: world, changing
japa: repetition of the Lord's Name, repetition of a *mantra*
jijnasa: desire to know
jijnasu: one who aspires after knowledge, spiritual aspirant
jiva: individual soul with ego
jivan-mukti: liberated in this life while still living
jivatma(n): individual soul
jivatva: individuality
jnana: knowledge, wisdom of the Reality or Brahman
kama: desire, passion, lust, legitimate desires
karma: actions operating through the law of cause and effect
karma yoga: the Yoga of selfless service
karma yogi: one who practises *karma yoga*
kartritva: sense of doership
kartritva abhimana: pride of doership
kirtan: singing the name and glory of God
kripa: grace, mercy, blessing
kriya: physical action, *hatha yogic* exercise
kshetra: field, holy place, physical body in the philosophical sense
kundalini: the primordial cosmic energy located in the individual
linga: symbol, sign
loka: world of names and forms
mahapurusha: a great person, a great soul, a sage, the Supreme Lord
mahatma: great soul, saint, sage
mahavakya: great sentence
manana: reflection, constant thinking, meditation on the eternal verities
mantra: sacred syllable or word or set of words through the repetition and reflection of which one attains perfection or realisation of the Self
maya: the illusory power of Brahman, the veiling and projecting power
mithya: unreal, false, illusory
moha: delusion caused by wrong thinking, false identification and deluded attachment
moksha: liberation, Absolute Experience
mrityu: death
mudras: a certain class of exercises in *hatha yoga*, symbols shown with hands during worship
mumukshu: one who aspires after *moksha* or liberation
mumukshutva: intense aspiration for liberation
murti: idol
nada: primal mystic sound or first vibration from which all creation has emanated, the first manifestation of the unmanifested Absolute, Omkara or Sabda-Brahman
nam(a): Name
nam(a) sankirtan: singing of the Lord's Name
nami: the named

GLOSSARY

- navavidha bhakti*: nine modes of devotion
nididhyasana: profound and deep meditation
nirakara: formless
nirguna: without attribute
nirvikalpa samadhi: state of superconsciousness without modification of the mind
nishkam(a): without desire
nishkam(a)-karma-yoga: selfless service
nishtha: steadfastness, establishment in a certain state
nitya: eternal, permanent
nivritti: renunciation, stepping back from worldly activity
niyama: observances, the second step in *raja yoga*
padmasana: the lotus pose, a meditative posture
parabrahman: the Supreme Absolute, the transcendental Reality
paramananda: supreme bliss
paramatma(n): the Supreme Self
Para-Sakti: the Supreme Power or Energy
para vidya: higher knowledge, direct knowledge of Brahman
paripurna: all-full
prajnana: awareness, consciousness
prakriti: Nature, causal matter
prana: vital energy, life-force, life-breath
prana sakti: subtle vital power arising from the conservation of *prana*
pranava: the sacred monosyllable “OM”
pranayama: regulation and restraint of breath
prapancha: worldly life
prarabdha karma: the portion of *karma* that determines one’s present life
prasad: food dedicated to a deity during worship and then eaten by devotees as something sacred
pratyahara: abstraction or withdrawal of the senses from their objects
puja: worship, adoration
pundit: scholar, learned man
Puranas: Hindu scriptures, eighteen in number, containing the whole body of Hindu mythology
purascharana: an observance consisting of the repetition of a *mantra* as many hundred thousand times as there are syllables (letters) in the *mantra*, concluding with fire worship, libations of water and feeding the poor
purusha: the Supreme Being, the Self which abides in the heart of all things
purushartha: human effort, individual exertion
rajas, rajo guna: one of the three aspects of cosmic energy, the principle of dynamism in Nature bringing about all change, activity, passion, restlessness
rudri: a particular group of *mantras* in the Veda
rupa: form, appearance
sabda: sound, word, Omkara (OM)
sad-guru: a Guru of Self-realisation
sadhak(a): spiritual aspirant
sadhana: spiritual practice
sadhana chatustaya: four-fold means of liberation: discrimination, dispassion, six-fold virtues and burning desire for liberation

sadhu: a pious or righteous person, a *sanyasin*
sad-vichar(a): right enquiry, enquiry into Truth
saguna: with attributes or qualities
sahaja: natural, true, native
sahaja avastha: natural state, superconscious state that has become natural and continuous
sakshatkara: direct realisation, experience of Absoluteness
sakshi: witnessing principle, witness
sakti: power, energy, force, the Divine Power of becoming, the dynamic aspect of Eternal Being, the Absolute Power or cosmic energy
sama: control of mind, tranquillity
samadhi: the state of superconsciousness where Absoluteness is experienced, attended with all-knowledge and joy, Oneness
samadhisthan: the place of interment of a holy man
samatva: evenness of mind, equanimity
samsara: life through repeated births and deaths, the process of worldly life
samskara: mental impression, subconscious tendency
samyam(a): perfect restraint, an all-complete condition of balance and repose, concentration, meditation and *samadhi*
sankirtan: same as *kirtan*
santi(h): peace
santi path: peace chant
santosh(a): contentment, joy, happiness
sanyasi(n): a monk, one who has embraced the life of complete renunciation
sarvangasana: shoulder stand of the *hatha yogins*
sastra: scripture, words of authority
sat: Existence Absolute, Being, Reality, Truth
satchidananda: Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute
satsang(a): association with the wise (good)
satsangis: those who attend *satsang*
satsankalpa: true resolve, pure desire, perfect will
sattva: light, purity, reality
satya(m): truth
seva: service
siddhasana: a meditative pose
siddhanta: established tenet or doctrine
siddhi: psychic power, perfection
sirshasana: the headstand of *hatha yogins*
sivam: all that is auspicious
sloka: verse
sraddha: faith
sravana: listening to the scriptures
sruti: the Vedas
stotra: hymn
subha: auspicious, blessed
subheccha: good desire
suddha: pure, clear, clean, untainted

GLOSSARY

sukha: happiness, pleasure, joy

sukhasana: a meditative pose

sundaram: beautiful

surya-namaskar: offering worship to the sun by throwing oneself down on the ground quite prostrate and flat with eight limbs touching the ground

sushka: dry, empty

sutra: a terse sentence, aphorism

svabhava: one's own nature or potentiality, innate nature

svadhyaya: study of scriptures

svarupa: essence, essential nature, the essential nature of the Self, Reality, *satchidananda*, true nature of Being

Swami: a Hindu monk

tamas, tamo guna: ignorance, inertia, darkness

tapas(ya): purificatory action, ascetic self-denial, austerity, penance

tapasvi(n): ascetic, one who is practising *tapas*

tat sat: That, the Absolute Existence

tattva: reality, element, truth, essence, principle

tyaga: renunciation

upades(a): spiritual instruction

upadhis: limiting adjuncts or additions, superimposition that gives a limited view of the Absolute and makes It appear as the relative

Upanishads: knowledge portion of the Vedas, texts dealing with the ultimate Truth and Its realisation. 108 Upanishads are regarded as important ones of which ten are regarded as most important

upasana: worship, devout meditation

vairagya: dispassion, indifference towards sensual objects and enjoyments born as a result of spiritual discrimination

vasana: Subtle desire, a tendency created in a person by the doing of an action or by enjoyment

Vedanta: the end of the Vedas (lit.), the Upanishads

Veda: the most ancient authentic scripture of the Hindus, a revealed scripture and therefore free from imperfections

vichar(a): enquiry into the nature of the Self, Brahman, Truth Absolute

vidya: knowledge, also meditation and worship (*upasana*)

vimala: purity

visvas(a): faith

vivek(a): discrimination between the Real and the unreal

vritti: thought, thought wave, mental modification

vyavahara: worldly activity, relative activity as opposed to spiritual

yama(s): restraint, vow, the first step in *raja yoga*

Yoga: union (lit.), abstract meditation or union with the Supreme Being, unruffled state of mind under all conditions, Yoga is mainly of four types: *karma, bhakti, raja* and *jnana*

Yogi(n): one who practises Yoga

INDEX OF SANSKRIT VERSES

Upanishads

Aham brahmasmi (I am Brahman). Brihadaranyaka Up. 1-4-10; Talk 30, 57.

Anando brahmeti vyajanat (He understood that bliss is Brahman). Taittiriya Up. 3-6; Talk 52.

Eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah sarvavyapi sarvabhutantaratma, karmadhyakshah sarvabhutadhipasah...(God, Who is one only is hidden in all beings. He pervades all and He is the inner soul of all beings. He presides over all actions and He dwells in all beings). Svetasvatara Up. 6-11; Talk 2, 25, 32, 51.

Isavasyamidam sarvam yat kimcha jagatyam jagat (All this whatsoever in this universe moves (or moves not) is indwelt by the Lord). Isa Up. 1; Talk 39, 42.

Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh (Mind alone is the cause of bondage and liberation of human beings). Brahmabinda Up. 2; Talk 56, 66, 68, 72.

Nayamatma balahinena labhyah (This Atman cannot be attained by one who is destitute of strength). Mundaka Up. 3-2-4; Talk 30, 67.

Prajnanam brahma (Pure Consciousness is Brahman). Aitareya Up. 5-3-3; Talk 57.

Sarvam khalvidam brahma (All this is verily Brahman). Chandogya Up. 3-14-1; Talk 28, 55.

Satyameva jayate (Truth alone triumphs). Mundaka Up. 3-1-6; Talk 30.

Taddure tadvantike (It (the Atman) is distant and It is near). Isa Up. 5; Talk 43.

Tarati sokam atmavit (A knower of Atman goes beyond grief). Chandogya Up. 7-1-3; Talk 43.

Tat tvam asi (You are That). Chandogya Up. 6-8-7; Talk 57, 66.

Tesham santir...netaresham (To them only who behold the Self is peace, not to others). Katha Up. 2-2-13; Talk 42.

Uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata (Arise, awake, having reached the wise, be enlightened). Katha Up. 1-3-14; Talk 10, 45, 67.

Yasya deve para bhaktih yatha deve tatha gurau, tasyaite kathita hyarthah prakasante mahatmanah (He whose devotion to God is supreme and whose devotion to the Guru is as great as to the Lord, to that high-souled one all knowledge of the scriptures stands revealed). Svetasvatara Up. 6-23; Talk 35.

Yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha (Whence all speech turn back with the mind, not reaching It). Taittiriya Up. 2-4; Talk 51.

Bhagavad Gita

Ahamatma gudakesa sarvabhutasayasthitah; aham adischa madhyam cha bhutanam anta eva cha (I am the Self, O Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle and also the end of all beings). Ch. 10:20; Talk 17, 32.

...Ajo nityah sasvato'yam purano na hanyate hanyamane sarire (Unborn, eternal, changeless and ancient, the Self is not killed when the body is killed). Ch. 2:20; Talk 5, 18.

..Asantasya kutah sukham (To the man who has no peace, how can there be happiness?). Ch. 2:66; Talk 42.

Daivi sampad vimokshaya...(Divine nature is conducive to liberation). Ch. 16:5; Talk 55.

...Dharmaviruddho bhuteshu kamo'smi bharatarshabha (In all beings I am desire unopposed to dharma, O Arjuna). Ch. 7:11; Talk 19.

Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese' rjuna tishthati...(God dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna). Ch. 18:61; Talk 25.

...Jahi satrum mahabaho kamarupam durasadam (Slay thou, O mighty-armed Arjuna, the enemy in the form of desire, hard to conquer). Ch. 3:43; Talk 19, 35.

Jyotisham api tad jyotis tamasah paramuchyate; jnanam jneyam jnanagamyam hridi sarvasya vishtitam (That, the Light of lights, is said to be beyond darkness; knowledge, the knowable and the goal of knowledge, abides in the hearts of all). Ch. 13:17; Talk 25.

...Kamat krodho' bhijayate, krodhat bhavati sammohah, sammohat smritivibhramah...(From desire arises anger, from anger comes delusion, from delusion loss of memory). Ch. 2:62, 63; Talk 19, 54*.

Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phaleshu kadachana...(Thy right is to work only, but never with its fruits). Ch. 2:47; Talk 66.

...Kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati (O Arjuna, know thou for certain that My devotee is never destroyed). Ch. 9:31; Talk 65.

...Kripanah phalahetavah (Wretched are those who seek fruit). Ch. 2:49; Talk 66.

* English translation only

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

...*Kshudram hridayadaurbalyam tyaktvottishtha parantapa* (Cast off this mean weakness of the heart. Stand up, O scorcher of the foes). Ch. 2:3; Talk 30.

Mamaivamso jivaloke jivabhutah sanatanah...(An eternal portion of Myself has become a living soul in the world of life). Ch. 15:7; Talk 66.

...*Mameva ye prapadyante mayametam taranti te* (Those who take refuge in Me alone, cross over this illusion). Ch. 7:14; Talk 63.

...*Ma suchah* (Do not grieve). Ch. 18:66; Talk 43, 63, 69.

Nashto mohah smritirlabdha tvatprasadat mayachyuta; sthito'smi gatasandehah karishye vachanam tava (Destroyed is my delusion as I have gained my memory (knowledge) through Thy grace, O Krishna. I remain free from doubts. I will act according to Thy word). Ch. 18:73; Talk 30.

...*Na tvam sochitum arhasi* (Thou shouldst not grieve). Ch. 2:27; Talk 69.

...*Nigrahaah kim karishyati* (What can restraint do?). Ch. 3:33; Talk 55.

...*Nistraigunyo bhava'rjuna* (Be thou above the three attributes, O Arjuna). Ch. 2:45; Talk 10.

Patram pushpam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayachchati...(Whoever offers to Me with devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a little water...). Ch. 9:26; Talk 48.

Samam sarveshu bhuteshu tishthantam paramesvaram...(The Supreme Lord existing equally in all beings...). Ch. 13:27; Talk 32.

...*Samatvam yoga uchyate* (Evenness of mind is called Yoga). Ch. 2:48; Talk 10, 66.

...*Samsayatma vinasyati...*(The doubting self goes to destruction). Ch. 4:40; Talk 10.

Sraddhavan labhate jnanam...(The man who is full of faith obtains knowledge). Ch. 4:39; Talk 10, 12, 69.

Sukhaduhkhe same kritva labhalabhau jayajayau...(Having made pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat the same...). Ch. 2:38; Talk 21.

Tadviddhi pranipatena pariprasnena sevaya...(Know that knowledge by long prostration, by question and by service). Ch. 4:34; Talk 23*, 39.

* English translation only

Tam vidyat duhkhasamyogaviyogam yogasamjnitam...(Let that be known by the name of Yoga, the severance from union with pain). Ch. 6:23; Talk 66.

...Tan titikshasva bharata (Endure them bravely, O Arjuna). Ch. 2:14; Talk 49, 62.

...Tasmat apariharyerthe na tvam sochitum arhasi (Therefore, over the inevitable thou shouldst not grieve). Ch. 2:27; Talk 49.

...Tasmat uttishtha kaunteya yuddhaya kritanischayah (Therefore, stand up, O son of Kunti, resolved to fight). Ch. 2:37; Talk 67.

Uddharet atmanatmanam...(Let a man raise himself by his own self). Ch. 6:5; Talk 29.

...Yogah karmasu kausalam (Yoga is skill in action). Ch. 2:50; Talk 55, 66.

...Yogakshemam vahamyaham (I secure what is not already possessed and preserve what they already possess). Ch. 9:22; Talk 70.

Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pasyati...(He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me...). Ch. 6:30; Talk 53.

...Yuddhyasva vigatajvarah (Being free from fever, do thou fight). Ch. 3:30; Talk 66.

Sankara

Ekameva' dvitiyam brahma (Brahman is one alone without a second). Sadachara-anusandhanam, 44; Talk 28, 50.

Kamah krodhascha lobhascha dehe tishthanti taskarah, jnanaratnapaharaya, tasmat jagrata jagrata (Lust, anger and greed are the dacoits residing within the body to plunder the pearl of wisdom; therefore, awake, awake!). Vairagya Dindima; Talk 35.

Slokardhena pravakshyami yaduktam granthakotibih, brahma satyam jagan-mithya jivo-brahmaiva naparah (I shall tell you within half a verse the quintessence of the teachings expounded in innumerable scriptures: Brahman alone is real, the world is unreal; the individual is verily Brahman, not different from It). Brahma-jnanavali-mala, 20; Talk 28, 47, 52, 53.

Other

Ahameva'vyayo'nantah suddhavijnanavigraha; sukham dukham na janami katham kasyapi vartate (I alone am imperishable, infinite, the form of pure Consciousness; I do not know pleasure or pain or how they can affect anybody). Avadhuta Gita 1:7; Talk 5, 30.

Ahimsa paramo dharmah (Non-violence is the highest duty). Mahabharata Anusasana Parva 116:28; Talk 39.

PONDER THESE TRUTHS

...*Chaitanyam sasvatam santam vyomatitam niranjanam* (...Who is pure Consciousness, eternal, peaceful, beyond ether, and untainted). Guru Gita 9; Talk 5.

Dehi me kripaya sambho tvayi bhaktirachanchala (Give me out of compassion, O Lord Siva, devotion to Thee that is constant). Talk 48.

Dharma'rthakamamokshanam arogyam mulam uttamam (Health is the best cause of virtue, wealth, fulfilment of desires and liberation). Charaka Samhita; Talk 50.

...*Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat* (May He illumine our intellects). Gayatri Mantra; Talk 43, 56, 73.

Gurur-brahma gurur-vishnuh gurur-devo mahesvarah; guruh sakshat param brahma tasmai sri gurave namah (Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu. Guru is Siva, Guru is the Supreme Brahman Itself. Prostrations to that Guru). Guru Gita 4; Talk 35.

Janma mrityurna te chittam bandhamokshau subha'subham, katham rodishi re vatsa, namarupau na te na me (You have no birth, no death, no mind; you have no bondage, no liberation, nothing good, nothing bad; why do you weep, O Child? You have no name or form, nor have I any). Avadhuta Gita 1:17; Talk 30.

Kaliyuga kevala nama adhara (The Name of the Lord is the only refuge in this Iron Age). Talk 51.

Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu (May all beings be happy). Talk 39.

Manahkalpitam jagat (This world is created by the mind). Talk 68.

Prarabdhakarmanam bhogat eva vinasah (It is only through experiencing that *prarabdha karma* is ultimately finished). Talk 49.

Sarvam brahmamayam (All is pervaded by Brahman). Sadasiva Brahmendra's Song; Talk 42.

Sarvesham svastir-bhavatu (May auspiciousness befall all beings). Talk 39.

Vasanat vasudevasvya vasitam bhuvanatrayam, sarvabhutanivaso'si vasudeva namo'stu te (By the presence of the Lord the three worlds are infused. Thou indweldest all beings, O Lord. Salutations to Thee). Epilogue to Vishnu-Sahasranama; Talk 32.

Vedanta sarasarvasvam jnanam vijnanam eva cha, ahamatma nirakarah sarvavyapi svabhavatah (This is the sum and essence of all Vedanta, this is wisdom and knowledge: "I am the Atma that is formless, all-pervading by nature"). Avadhuta Gita 1:5; Talk 3, 30.

...*Vishayan vishavat tyaja*...(Shun sense-objects like poison). Ashtavakra Gita 1:2; Talk 24.

Ya devi sarvabhuteshu buddhirupena samsthita, namastasyai namastasyai, namastasyai namo namah (Salutations to that Goddess Who is present in all beings as intellect. Salutations to Her again and again). Durga Saptasati Ch. 5, 20-22; Talk 4, 20.