Questions and Answers
SWAMI KRISHNANANDA
The 25th of April 2022 marks the auspicious occasion of the Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Sivananda Ashram, Headquarters of The Divine Life Society, has decided to bring out one hundred booklets comprising the illuminating discourses of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj arrived in Rishikeh in the summer of 1944, and remained here until attaining Mahasamadhi in November 2001. Swami Krishnanandaji was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. “Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda,” said Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Over the years Swamiji gave many profound and insightful discourses during Sunday night satsanga, and on holy occasions such as Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj’s birthday, Sri Krishna Janmashtami, Maha Sivaratri, etc., and also during
Sadhana Week and to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy. Sri Swami Krishnanandaji always spoke extempore, spontaneously, without any preparation, and every discourse was fresh, unique, and divinely inspired. The audience was bathed in that stupendous unfathomable energy that radiated from Swamiji Maharaj during these discourses.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj’s discourses in booklet form as our worshipful offering at Swamiji’s holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary. The present booklet, ‘Questions and Answers’, consists of two sessions which took place on April 14th and 15th, 1982.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—The Divine Life Society
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Active persons cannot be calm and sober, and vice versa. What is the secret and method to be both active and sober?

Swamiji: There seems to be a conflict between activity and peace of mind. This is a sensible question indeed because this is the difficulty that we face every day, due to which we feel like renouncing things, going to caves and doing nothing. We feel that doing is a great bondage, but the central gospel of the Bhagavadgita says that doing need not necessarily be a bondage, and that activity is unavoidable. If at all there is any message to us from the Bhagavadgita, it is this, that action is not an opposite of knowledge, peace of mind, divine aspiration, God-vision, etc.

Activity seems to conflict with peace of mind or inner composure, etc., due to an erroneous outlook in life. There are many answers to this question given in the Bhagavadgita itself. I am not going to mention all of them, due to lack of time. One of the points mentioned in the Bhagavadgita is that we are all obsessed with the notion that we are the
doers of action, and if we are the doers of action, we have to reap the fruits of the action. Naturally, the recompense of the action comes upon us as pleasure or pain, which disturbs our minds.

The Bhagavadgita tells us that no one in this world does anything. Everyone participates in a great activity of the universe; we may call it the activity of God, if we like. The human individual, and every created being, are so inextricably involved in the structure of creation that everyone seems to be moving, doing, acting because the universe is moving, doing, acting. We seem to be moving because the railway train in which we are seated is moving. To imagine that we are carrying the load or the burden of action on our heads and worrying about it would be like the poor rustic who was riding in the railway train and still carrying his baggage on his head in order to lessen the weight which the train was carrying, because he wanted the train to move a little bit faster.

Hence, we require a great training and education to understand the mystery of action. It is very difficult to understand what action is. Action is not necessarily what we seem to be doing with our limbs, with our hands and feet. It is a vibration that is set up by the will of God, and it is sympathetically
communicated to all the lower levels of creation. The will of Ishvara is the original action which, like the ripple that moves towards the periphery or the shore of a large lake or ocean, makes itself felt in all individuals. The push and pull that we feel towards activity of any kind is the vibration of the central core of the cosmos working through us for a purpose which is not mine, not yours. To think that we are acting for our purpose, for anybody’s purpose, would be a mistake. We are participants in a cosmic purpose with universal intention, and therefore, neither do we gain anything nor do we lose anything by participation of this nature.

The word ‘activity’ has somehow or other conveyed to us a wrong meaning due to the association of ideas. We think activity means moving from place to place, or moving our physical limbs. Action is an outpouring of our being in the direction of the fulfilment of an objective or purpose which to us appears to be purely personal or localised, as if there is my purpose or objective as separate or different from yours, while really they are not separate; therefore, the fulfilment of a personal or localised objective is not possible.

This impersonal participation in the purpose of God’s creation is what the Bhagavadgita calls karma
yoga. You will not have to gain anything from what you do, nor have you to lose anything. The legs do not gain or lose anything by walking. They are walking for somebody else’s sake. The legs walk to the bank, but the money that we draw from the bank does not go to the legs even though they have walked so much. The eyes see, the ears hear, but the enjoyer or the participant is somebody else. We know very well how beautifully the mechanism of a huge engine or a robot operates for an output which is transcendent to the machine itself. We have to realise that every engagement of ours has a purpose transcendent to the engagement itself.

Thus it is that we have to understand the meaning of karma or action as a participation in the larger purpose of God’s creation, and not grab something for our purpose, because we have no purpose here. This is a difficult thing to understand. It requires protracted training under a competent Master.

**Question:** What is the ultimate result of *ananya chintana* of the Absolute? Does *nama japa* lead towards the realisation of the Absolute?

**Swamiji:** *Nama japa* certainly leads to communion with the Absolute because it is one of the greatest sadhanas laid down before us by the ancients. Perhaps in this age, *japa* should be considered as the
best sadhana. As Bhagavan Sri Krishna mentions in the Bhagavadgita, *yajñāṇāṃ japayajño’smi* (B.G. 10.25): Of all spiritual performances, engagements or sadhanas, *japa* is the best. The recitation of God’s name can direct us to God as the utterance of the name of any object or person gives us an idea of the person, and enables us to communicate with that person or object. If *japa* can be conducted with sincerity for a long period with dedicated spirit, it will be a complete sadhana by itself. There is no doubt about it.

**Question:** What is the ultimate result of *ananya chintana* of *japa* sadhana?

**Swamiji:** The ultimate result is union with God, which is called the Absolute in other words.

**Question:** *Jagan mithya:* The world is unreal. This statement belongs to the world, so is the statement real or unreal?

**Swamiji:** The statement is unreal, but there is something in the world which is real because if everything is unreal, you will not know that everything is unreal. The unreality cannot be conscious that everything is unreality. There must be something that is not unreal to know that there is something that is unreal. This is one aspect of the question. It is not true that everything is unreal.
There is something which is hiddenly present behind the apparent unrealities which is the thing that says that the world is unreal, whatever that thing be.

The other aspect of the matter is, unreality can cancel unreality. Whatever you do in this world is unreal only, but it is intended to cancel the absorption of your mind and your personality in the unrealities of the world. A famous example is given to us in some texts. The tiger that you see in dream is unreal, but it can roar so terribly that you can wake up, and that waking up is real. How can an unreal tiger create a real waking? There is no connection at all. How can unreality produce reality? This is the intention behind this question of how unreal things can create realities. Sometimes they do; the unreal tiger has created a real waking, and we wipe our eyes and see that the tiger is not there. So all the sadhana that you do is gone, the Guru is gone, and your philosophy has gone, religion has gone, everything has gone, but you have come to a new state which was somehow or other motivated by that unreality. That is one side of the matter.

The other side is, it is not true that everything is unreal. There is a reality behind all unreal appearances, and the question that is put here is not by an unreal person. The question is put by a real person; hence,
there is some secret behind unrealities in spite of the fact that everything is a phenomenon. The whole world is a phenomenon, but the consciousness that everything is a phenomenon cannot itself be a phenomenon. If that also is a phenomenon, nobody will know that the world is unreal. This is the answer to your question.

**Question:** What is the method to know whether I am doing meditation in the right direction and that the time spent in this practice is not a sheer waste of time?

**Swamiji:** Here you have to consult your Guru. You cannot know it yourself. If you have got such doubts, go to your Guru and ask, “Am I on the right path?” He will inquire into your practices and tell you the correct answer.

**Question:** There are consequences of actions, and they are the vibrations of the cosmos. Why do we call them bad actions and good actions?

**Swamiji:** There are no bad actions and good actions from that point of view. It is only from your personal point of view that they seem to be so. When you rise to that level, you will not see good and bad.

**Question:** Are the seeing of some light, hearing of sound, etc., a must when one advances in meditation?
Swamiji: They are not a must. When you are moving in the direction of Delhi, is it necessary that you should see Rishikesh, Muzaffarnagar and Ghaziabad? It is not necessary, but it is unavoidable because they are on the way. So likewise, they will be on the way. Don’t bother about them.

Question: Is it necessary to observe *mauna* at fixed hours or will it suffice if one tries to speak as little as possible?

Swamiji: I would feel that speaking measured words is better than having total *mauna* for a few hours, and then shouting afterwards. Harmony is better than extremes. That is my feeling, but anyhow *mauna* for a few hours is good. It has its own value.

Question: What are the surest methods to attain *kama jaya*?

Swamiji: *Guru-kripa* and *Ishvara-kripa*. You have to live with your Guru for some years. Human effort is not sufficient.

Question: What is the method of attaining *Guru-kripa* and *Ishvara-kripa*?

Swamiji: How did you come in contact with your Guru? You know yourself. You have to live with a Guru for years, and then automatically the *jaya* will take place. Nobody can conquer *kama*. It manifests itself in some form or the other. In the Mahabharata
there is a Gita called Kama Gita. Kama goes on laughing at people who are trying to conquer kama because even the desire to conquer kama is a kama only. Kama is laughing, “Oh, these people are trying to conquer me. That desire itself is me. They don’t understand that. It is me presenting myself in another way.” So this is a difficult subject. You can write a thesis on this matter because the whole world is desire manifested in some form. The only thing is, when you speak of kama you are thinking of some obstructive desire. That is what is in the mind of the person who put the question.

The energies of the human personality that drag it in the direction of external objects are what we generally call kama or desire, but in a higher sense any aspiration also is a desire only. Even to think of God is a desire, but it is a desire which destroys all other binding desires. As long as there is body-consciousness, some sort of desire cannot be avoided. It will pull you. And so, the method that we can conveniently adopt, as far as it is practicable for us, of course, is to be physically away from those conditions of living which may stimulate undesirable desires.

I know you are all thinking that it is impossible because you are living in Connaught Place, Piccadilly,
and such difficult places. As far as it is practicable, little by little, you have to try to place yourself under circumstances and conditions which may not stimulate such desires. That is the negative side of the practice: to physically withdraw, to the extent possible, from conditions, objects, things, persons, etc., which will stimulate such desires. Secondly, you need to find some time to read elevating literature which strengthens the mind and enables you to have an insight into the structure of things. Desires for objects arise due to a lack of knowledge of the true nature of things. A snake is very smooth, and a child may go and touch it because it is like velvet. The baby in its ignorance does not know the true nature of the snake. The baby only sees that it is velvet-like, but one who has knowledge as to what it is will not go near it. Likewise, velvet-like objects attract us. Power, name, authority, and so many things are very beautiful, but they are like cobras when we touch them. We do not see this because we are like the child who sees only one side of the matter. Therefore, it requires illumination, deep study, training and discipline under a competent Master.

**Question:** What are the seven *lokas*? What leads the soul to each of these *lokas*? How, why and when does inter-*loka* transmigration of souls take place?
Swamiji: Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Satyaloka are the seven planes of existence. They are subtle layers of being. Gross objects are made of molecules, inside the molecules are atoms, inside the atoms are electrons, and then there is the electromagnetic, pervasive universal continuum which the scientist calls something or nothing, and so on. Likewise, we have in this very place, in this very spot where we are seated, all the planes of existence, just as in the very same object you can see the molecule, the atom, the electron, and even its connection with the whole cosmos.

No one can enter all the planes of existence at the same time, in the same way as each person is a citizen of only one country at a time. You are a passport holder; how can you enter all the countries? I am not wholly acquainted with all these laws, but maybe a member of the United Nations may enter all nations. A person who belongs to everything can enter into all things. If you are a friend of everybody, you can enter into the house of any person, but if you are not such, you have to be cautious to guard yourself against such entries.

When a person dies, that person, that jīva, that soul, that discarnate spirit is said to enter into some subtler realm; it may be Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka,
Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Satyaloka, etc. Ordinary mortals who are bound souls will not go to the higher regions such as Janaloka, Tapoloka, Satyaloka, etc. They may go to the astral world, the next higher world, and sometimes not even go there. They will come back to this world due to their strong attachments and affections, and so on. Your capacity to enter a higher realm depends upon your unity with the structure of that realm, which is done by becoming more and more universalised and spiritual in your being, rather than being locked up in personal consciousness or physical consciousness.

**Question:** In meditation we are told to still the mind and meditate. There is a group called Silva mind control where they work the mind, and obtain a lot through the use of the mind.

**Swamiji:** Even controlling the mind is working the mind only. It is not making the mind sleep. On the other hand, the so-called control of the mind is an intense activity of the mind. Perhaps the mind is more active in concentration than it would be in ordinary circumstances. It does not matter whether you call it Silva or anything else; whatever is the name that you give it, the mind becomes intensely active in a novel way when it is concentrated. You can burn things and break walls, as a ray of the sun
can burn objects when it is concentrated or focused through a lens.

Stilling the mind does not mean allowing the mind to sleep. The word ‘stilling’ is a very unfortunate word. It is not stilling the mind; it is making the mind more active than it would be ordinarily when it is in contact with objects. When it is in contact with objects it is dully operating, not actively operating. Your love for the objects of sense is shallow; therefore, it is not active, really speaking. But when you really discover the object of your love, it will bounce up immediately and it will be more active.

Hence, yoga is not stilling the mind. That is a wrong notion. It is making the mind more active in a larger sense, in a universalised sense, by which it can work miracles. It is an activity which is like karma yoga. It cannot be identified with the ordinary work that you perform here, though it is also a kind of supernatural activity. Yoga is not stilling the mind in the sense of not thinking anything. It is a high vibration of the mind, a supersonic and super-intelligible activity of the mind wherein, due to its intense rapidity like a fast-moving fan, it looks as if it is not moving at all. Hence, both are the same.

Question: It is said that sirsasana, sarvangasana and paschimottanasana can cure all diseases. Sirsasana is
a panacea for all diseases. If so, can’t it cure diseases like low and high blood pressure? If not, what is the asana for these diseases?

Swamiji: Low blood pressure, high blood pressure, etc., are caused by many factors, and one should not take to a stereotyped method of curing an illness—any illness, for the matter of that. Sirsasana is good, but when there is a problem with blood pressure, sirsasana should not be practised. When there is hypertension, if the person starts practising sirsasana under the impression that it will cure it, he may collapse at that moment. First of all, one must find out the causes behind hypertension, high blood pressure, etc. The causes may be psychological, emotional, social, etc. They may not be purely physical. Sometimes they are aggravated in a physical way, but their causes may not be. Mostly they are not physical; they are something else, though partially they may be due to the deterioration of the body due to old age, etc. Sirsasana can be practised when there is no hypertension, when the blood pressure is normal. When it is carried on in a very intelligent and disciplined manner, it may prevent a further occurrence of hypertension. But during the occurrence of the hypertension, asanas should not be practised, except sarvanga sana.
Question: What is the difference between Ishvara and Brahman, or the Absolute, and Hiranyagarbha? What are the seven planes such as Svarga, etc.?

Swamiji: Brahman and Ishvara are the same. They are not two different things. When Brahman is considered as something related to this universe, it is called Ishvara. When it is considered as something existing independent of the universe, it is called Brahman. So Brahman plus the universe is Ishvara, and Ishvara minus the universe is Brahman. Ishvara is only our interpretation of Brahman through the universe. There are no two persons, here Ishvara and there Brahman. It is only our reading of one and the same existence. Somehow or other, we are not able to free ourselves from the notion that there is a world before us, and because we see a world, we think there must be a creator. Because we first imagine that there is a world, we have to imagine that there is a creator also. That creator is Ishvara. But if the world is not there, if the whole world is absorbed into its cause, or if you want to think of reality before creation, you may call it Brahman.

Virat, Hiranyagarbha, Ishvara and Brahman are the stages conceived of the descent of reality in the process of creation. This is explained in an analogy in the beginning of the Sixth Chapter of
the Panchadasi of Sage Vidyaranya. He explains this truth in this way: Imagine that there is a clean piece of cloth. This will be compared to Brahman. Then you stiffen it with starch to make it into a canvas. This is Ishvara, where the pure, undiluted, clean whiteness of the cloth is stiffened for a certain purpose. That purposive transformation of the pure background of the cloth is the canvas that is Ishvara. Hence, Brahman with a purpose is Ishvara.

Now, why do you stiffen this cloth? Because you are a painter, you want to draw something on it, so you draw outlines of the intended painting. That outline is Hiranyagarbha, where the universe is like a dream in an outline form only, not fully visible. Then the painter fills the outline with colour, and we have the fully manifest gross universe which is Virat. So Brahman, Ishvara, Hiranyagarbha, Virat are something like the clean cloth, the stiffened, starchy cloth, the outline and the well-filled, colour-filled painting which is the completion of the art. This is the way in which we have to understand the descent of the Universal into grosser forms of creation.

**Question:** It is said that God is the master of all beings and sits in their hearts. He moves them as toys. If so, why did Lord Krishna ask Arjuna to be instrumental and surrender completely?
Swamiji: Lord Krishna wanted Arjuna to realise that he is only a vehicle which is driven by Lord Krishna, so there is no harm in the fountain pen writing, because the writer is somebody else. The question is an answer to its own self. There is no contradiction between these two things. When Lord Krishna does everything, where is the point of Arjuna who is only the fountain pen saying, “I will not write”? He is not writing anything; he is not doing anything. Hence, the questions “I will do” and “I will not do” have no meaning because he is only an instrument. So why are you grudging, why are you complaining, why do you say this or that? The instrument has no reason to say anything. Sri Krishna is doing everything; God is operating. Shakespeare is writing the plays with a pen. The pen is not writing the plays, so why should the pen get the credit? Just as neither the credit nor the discredit goes to the pen, neither do we get the punya nor the papa when God does everything, provided—underline the word provided—we are conscious that this is the fact. But if you think that you are the fountain pen itself—“I am writing, I am doing”—then God is not responsible. It is your consciousness of yourself that is the cause of your sorrow, and it is your consciousness of yourself in a different way that is the source of your freedom.
Question: The other day Swamiji said that knowledge comes instantly, just as a sleeping man wakes up. Nothing can be said about this; it just happens. If it is so, where is the necessity of doing sadhana?

Swamiji: You need not do any sadhana. Why are you doing sadhana? There is something in you which tells you that you must do it. That something is the great mystery that is operating in you. You are again thinking that you are outside this mystery. The great trouble is not leaving us. You are asking, “Why should I do?” So again this ‘I’ is persisting as a separate thing from that which works. “When everything is happening automatically, why should I do?” Now, where do you come into the picture? Why you are butting in with this ‘I’? You have already made a mistake by thinking this question. This question should not arise because you have already committed a blunder in imagining you are there. Well, if you are there, do it. There is a mistake in the question.

Question: Swami Vivekananda said, “So long as even a dog is hungry in India, my religion will be to give it food.” If this is to be accepted, how it is to be reconciled with the practice of religion in personal life?
Swamiji: Well, you have to give food to all the dogs, and you can try your best. But, you are also one of the dogs, unfortunately, and that you should not forget. You cannot save one dog and kill another dog. Suppose you give all the food you have to one dog or a hundred dogs; then you, who are also a dog, will die. So there should be a commonsense point of view. You see, killing another is *himsa*; killing yourself also is *himsa*. Suicide is as culpable as murder. You cannot say that murder is an offense and suicide is not an offense, because you are as valuable as another, and others are as valuable as yourself. So you have to use your discretion in understanding what amount of service you can do to humanity or the world.

What Swami Vivekananda has said is perfectly correct. You are not supposed to hold wealth and property. You can keep only the minimum that is necessary for you to exist, because you should not die—unless, of course, you have a higher consciousness, which is called higher wisdom. It is difficult to explain here. That is something with which you are not acquainted, and you cannot identify with that high state of Christ or Buddha or Mahatma Gandhi. Normally speaking, you have to lead a very simple life of minimum requirements, which is the life of *tapasya*, unless you are fired up
with the higher consciousness of serving others by parting with every property that you have got—even the last penny that you have got, though it may be the death of yourself. But this consciousness must be spiritually motivated, not motivated by any political causative factor, etc.

So common sense is wisdom. You have to serve other people—all the dogs, all the poor people—and you can do it only to the extent you have the capacity. Of course, beyond that you cannot do. So you are right. This sentence of Vivekananda should not be taken in a literal sense. The dogs are not only in India; they are in the whole universe. You cannot go on feeding all the dogs in the whole cosmos. You do not know how many are there. This is an instruction which has to be taken in its spirit, and not in the letter. Do you know how many are suffering in this creation? You cannot even know them, and if you go on counting the number of people who are suffering, you will become mad in one second.

The idea behind it is the formation of a spirit of self-sacrifice and service to others by consciously abandoning the attitude of holding, grabbing, exploiting, and selfish enjoyment. If you can get on with a few morsels of rice, be satisfied with it. The rest you give to others. As Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj
used to say, if you can get on with one or two coats, have two coats. Why do you have ten coats and ten wristwatches, five cars and a ten-story bungalow? It is not necessary. It is called exploitation, a kind of theft.

Thus, the commonsense answer to this question is, keep for yourself the minimum that is necessary to keep your life going in a reasonable manner, and the balance must be given to others—to dogs, horses, poor people, whoever they are. This is something where you have to exercise your reason.

**Question:** Should we recite Jai Ganesha, Durga Stotra, Shantipad daily before meditation?

**Swamiji:** It is good if you can, but if you have any other sadhana, that is also good. There is no comparison. Jai Ganesha *kirtan* is a tradition that is followed in this ashram, and in other ashrams this tradition may not be followed. It does not follow that the other traditions of other ashrams are wrong. It is a question that you have to decide for yourself. If you have some other mantra into which you are initiated, or you have a family tradition of your own, that is also equally good. But if you are enamoured of this system here, well, follow this system. There is no compulsion, but it is a useful thing if you have no better method.
Question: Fast and vigil disturb the daily sadhana routine. Should I observe them?
Swamiji: You have to fast and observe vigil in such a way that they do not disturb your daily routine. It is up to you to understand how it can be done. You are not supposed to suffer. Sadhana is not a suffering. It is a satisfaction and a joy. It is a very important point that you should observe fast and vigil only in a controlled manner so that the other duties which are also important and which you cannot avoid are not hindered in any manner. Balance is yoga—समत्वम्
योगा उच्यते (B.G. 2.48)—not going to extremes.

Question: It is a common anxiety in the mind of seekers, sadhakas, as to what is beyond, what is after the great passing. Your noble ideas have given us food for thought. That is okay, but what compels me to ask you is that if God is mysterious, it does not mean that you should be so. With all the respect and love to you, I pray to you to enlighten us on this subject.

Swamiji: You serve me for 12 years; then I will tell you. Or fast like Nachiketas. Do not be too anxious. Too much is bad. You will get it in proper time.

Question: I am not satisfied with your answer, so I am putting the question again with adoration. How can one find the proper Guru?
Swamiji: God will bring you in contact with the Guru. You cannot find a Guru. You cannot see the Guru because he is superior to you, but you will be brought in contact. Your coming in contact with the Guru is also one of the mysteries of the world. But you will have to be conscious that you take advantage of that Guru. You should not go on experimenting with your Guru. Nowadays disciples seem to be superior to the Guru; they experiment with the Gurus, and want the Gurus to behave in a particular way according to their predilections. So it is a useless question, and it appears to me that you cannot find a Guru because you want to be superior to the Guru yourself by judging him. Unless you are prepared to completely self-efface yourself, give up your egoism and not judge Gurus, you will not find a Guru. But otherwise, if you are sincere, honest, and open in your heart, I am sure you will be brought in contact with a Guru. For your practical purpose, not to elude you very much, I give the simple answer. You might have seen thousands of people in this world. One person must have attracted you. That person can be regarded by you as your Guru for the time being unless you find another one later on.

Question: After that, how can I ascertain that a Guru so found is perfect?
Swamiji: Again the same question comes. You are superior to that Guru. Such a person need not want a Guru. He can mind his business better. A person who is wanting to find out whether the Guru is perfect does not need a Guru, because he is himself a Guru.

Question: Worshipful Swamiji Maharaj, please explain reason and feeling.

Swamiji: This question was asked by Arjuna at the beginning of the Seventeenth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, though he did not say ‘reason’ and ‘feeling’; he said ‘feeling’ and ‘scripture’.

A great metaphysician, a British philosopher who wrote a great book called Appearance and Reality, wrote in his Preface, “Metaphysics is the finding of reasons for what we believe upon instinct.” You argue only on the basis of what you feel, so the reason seems to be a handmaiden to your feelings. You cannot argue against your feelings, as you know very well. While reason is a very necessary and useful instrument, it cannot go counter to your feelings. In a way, you may say feeling rules reason like a housewife rules the family.

Question: Can reason create feeling, and vice versa?

Swamiji: Reason and feeling have to blend together. Reason does not mean arid logic minus
feeling, nor does feeling mean emotionalism minus understanding. Both are partialities of the personality. You are not supposed to be sentimental and weak in your emotions under the impression that you are devoted, nor are you supposed to be a feelingless armchair philosopher imagining that you are a metaphysician or a logician.

Reason has to marry feeling, and they should be a single, undivided family. Feeling is in the heart, the reason is in the brain, and they come together in intuition. Intuition is the union of the head with the heart. When feeling and reason come together, there is no disparity between them. You do not argue, and you do not feel; you are, that is all. Your perceptions, judgments and opinions will then be the outcome of what you are, and not what you think and feel. Thus it is that pure unimaginative, unfeeling reason will not succeed. It will come a cropper, come in conflict with other people who can also argue in the same way. Every reason has a counter reason. Anything can be proved, and also disproved. Mere crying, weeping, emotional sentimentalism without understanding the pros and cons of circumstances is not a virtue. They have to be blended together in equal proportions—50% and 50%—so that it is an undivided brotherhood.
Question: Sadhakas, devotees and disciples cannot change their nature; hence, the lower nature remains after so many years of satsanga. Then what is ananya-prokte?

Swamiji: They have not done Guru seva. They are only machines, bulldozers. A bulldozer can go to a Guru one thousand times, but it is not going to be different. It will crush the Guru himself. Many Gurus have been crushed by disciples because they are bulldozers, so this kind of discipleship is no good. Nobody has a hundred percent faith in any Guru. This is a matter to be expected. You always condition the Guru to your own mould. “If this is the way in which the Guru will speak and behave, then okay. Otherwise, I will go to another Guru.” Hence, you are the Guru, rather than that person. There is a hypocritical attitude of disciples when they approach Gurus, which is a very sorry state of affairs. It is not possible to gain any spiritual experience because there is a suspicious attitude at the back of even the self-surrender of the disciple. I think I cannot give any other answer. We have to blame our own selves.

Question: When I sit for meditation, the mind, like a monkey, jumps away. On rare occasions a few seconds of concentration can be achieved, and that
is peaceful, but mostly it is difficult to contemplate. Kindly advise how to achieve concentration.

Swamiji: It is not possible to concentrate fully on anything for which you have not got true love and affection. Wherever your heart is, there your thoughts are, your mind is, your reason is, and you yourself are. It is not true that we have a full hundred-percent affection for anything in this world. Therefore, we have not got real friends in this world. We have only conditioned friends. For certain purposes, under different conditions, so-and-so is my friend. When the conditions are lifted, the friendship ceases. Likewise, the spiritual concentration that we are practising on something is not an object of whole-souled devotion. We have multifaceted love. It is not possible to focus all love only in one direction because there are what we call responsibilities, commitments, etc. We are unable to integrate them into one focus.

There is a great difficulty in every one of us. We cannot integrate our occupations into one activity. They appear to be different activities. The work that you do in your hospital or school or college or in your office does not seem to go hand in hand with your duties in the family, and so on. But they have to be somehow brought together because they are
connected with the vital purpose for which you are existing. You have to understand that everything you do has some connection with the ultimate purpose, though it is not easy to discover that they are so connected. It requires a little bit of reasoning. You take a cup of tea. What connection has it got with God-realisation? Why should you purchase a train ticket and travel to some place? God-realisation and the train ticket seem to have no connection, but you know there is some connection. Everything that you feel must be done has a connection with that for which you are living.

This is an art of integrating various occupations, even various affections. You may have varieties of loves and affections which may all appear to be different from one another, but they are all capable of being brought together into a single focus if you know the reason behind these affections. “I love my money, my property, my brother and sister; I love my status, my respected position, and one hundred things.” They appear to be one hundred things, but they are not really a hundred things. They are like branches of a tree, ramifications of a central root and stem. It requires a little analysis to know how your affections can be brought together into a single focus of concentration, and then you realise that
the particular thing on which you are engaged in concentration is not outside the other things which attract your attention. This so-called thing—your Ishta-devata, your God, whatever you call it—is capable of bestowing upon you the same satisfaction that other objects which attract your attention are also capable of doing.

One anna is included in one rupee. When you get one rupee, one anna is already there, one paisa is there. You need not say that you have lost one paisa because you have got one rupee. It is there inside. The ocean contains all the drops in all the rivers. The whole is inclusive of the parts. Here is a crucial point. The object on which you are concentrating, at least from the spiritual point of view, is not one among the many things in the world. It is a whole which contains all the things in the world. This is hard to concentrate upon because you have always a misconception that even God, what to speak of other things, is something different from other things which distract your attention. God, the object of your meditation, is a total. It is a whole which also includes the other thing which distracts your attention. So why should the mind go here and there? Please have some common sense.
If you have full faith in the truth that the object, so-called, on which you are concentrating spiritually, is inclusive of every other thing for which you also have some affection, with which you are concerned, then the mind will not jump from place to place. When you have got the whole, you need not think of the parts. The parts are included in the whole. This requires training under a Guru to think as a whole and not bit by bit. Then concentration is successful.

**Question:** When everything is predestined, how is an individual instrumental and responsible for his or her karma? Kindly enlighten us about the compatibility between prarabdha, or destiny, and voluntary karma.

**Swamiji:** This question is wrongly put. You mention compatibility between two things, as if they are two things. They are not two things. It is one law operating. There is no such thing as predestination, and so on. They are all wrong names that we give to a particular way in which the law of the universe operates. This has been mentioned in a half verse of the Panchadasi of Sage Vidyaranya. Ṣaḥ puruṣa kārasya rūpeṇāpi vivartate (Pan. 6.177): There is one law operating everywhere. If you want to call it predestination, you can call it that; there is no objection. If you want to call it God’s will, call it
by that name. If you call it by any other name, okay, satisfy yourself. But you are a part of that operative area, and you forget that. So there is no question of compatibility and incompatibility. You are imagining that you are outside the world, and then this question arises.

When you say ‘God’s will’, ‘predestination’, etc., you are thinking of some universal law operating, and you are feeling that there is a conflict between your will and that so-called universal will. You have already imagined that you are outside the world, that you are outside God’s realm. God thinks something, you think another thing, and what is the compatibility between the two? You cannot think something independent of God’s will because that would imply that you are outside God’s existence, outside the creation of God. So we have a prejudice in our heads, a bifurcated thinking in our minds, cutting off subject from object, the world from the individual, etc.

It is on the basis of this imagined bifurcation, or disparity between the thinker and the thought, that we ask questions of this kind. The question cannot arise, will not arise, and no answer will be given if you accept that you cannot stand outside the creation of God. Then you yourself will answer
this question for yourself. If you imagine you are outside, well, you have to pay a heavy price for this mistake. I don’t think that any answer is required for this question because this question is wrongly put, under a false assumption that man is outside God, outside the world, outside the universe, which is not the case. And what I have told you earlier explains this matter. They are one thing only, not two things. 

**Question:** Yesterday Swamiji replied that for *kama jaya* one should stay with his Guru. Did Swamiji mean physically being with his Guru, as is only possible for a fortunate few? 

**Swamiji:** If it is possible to live physically, you are thrice blessed, and if you have such an opportunity, don’t miss that opportunity. If you cannot live physically with your Guru for a protracted period, live for as long a period as possible, even if it be for three days or one day. If that also is not possible, keep correspondence with your Guru, if that is practicable and permissible. If that also is not possible, meditate on the form of your Guru, and his blessing will come. But I do not think that it is totally impossible. You have some guide in this world whom you respect and adore, and it will not be entirely impossible to contact that person. Your difficulties will be obviated by that particular person whom you have chosen as
your guide. He will say, “This is what I prescribe for you under these circumstances.” This question should not be put to me; it should be put to your own Guru, whoever the Guru is.

**Question:** What is *samarpana-bhava*? How can it be practised?

**Swamiji:** *Samarpana-bhava* is the spirit of self-dedication. You offer yourself. It is just as when you do *samarpana* of plantain and food, etc., to Gurudev and God in your worship, but here you do not offer material or physical objects to your deity. You say, “I am here, and everything that is with me also is here.” In this way King Janaka offered himself to Yajnavalkya, the Master: “Here I am, and everything that is mine is at your disposal.” Shivaji, the great ruler, told Ramdas, “Here I am, your servant. Do whatever you like with me.” This complete offering of oneself to the deity that you are adoring as your God is *samarpana*, also known as *atma-samarpana*.

**Question:** Should the *sadhaka* stick to one system of yoga, or should he combine all the systems in his practice?

**Swamiji:** It is better to combine all the systems integrally. However, again this is a kind of medical prescription. The doctor alone can tell the patient
what medicines he should take. In one condition of your mind you may have to practise one particular technique for some time, and in another condition of your mind you may have to synthesise. “Today you take this capsule; tomorrow you take this, and that one also,” the doctor will say. And the third day you take three of them, and the fourth day you stop them all. So the doctor knows the type of medicine that is to be taken by the patient under different conditions of the body. Again, it is a question of a purely personal relationship between the Guru and the disciple. A generalised, universal answer cannot be given. But if you insist on a universal answer, it is better to combine all the factors in an integrated way, as perhaps the Bhagavadgita proclaims in its great gospel.

**Question:** If God is all in all and is the indweller in our hearts, then who is doing all the *papa* or *punya*? Who is responsible for the karmas?

**Swamiji:** All the *punyas*, virtues, are done by God, and the *papas*, sins, are done by you only. *Nādatte kasyacit pāpaṁ na caiva sukṛtaṁ vibhuḥ, ajñānenāvṛtam jñānam tena muhyanti jantavaḥ* (B.G. 5.15): God has no connection with virtue and vice, good and bad, beautiful and ugly. These things do not exist there. You will be surprised to hear this,
how they do not exist. I will give an illustration. When Bhagavan Sri Krishna showed the Visvarupa to Arjuna, what did he see there? Did Arjuna see cow dung or a scorpion crawling and stinging somebody, somebody attacking somebody, very horrible sights? He saw that all these so-called ugly, evil things are connected in such a way that they look like a complete picture where there is no disparity, contrast and contradiction between one and another.

If one limb of the body operates upon another limb of the body in a particular manner, you cannot call it a virtue or a vice. It does not do a good thing or a bad thing. When I take a morsel of food and put it into my mouth, it is not a great charity that I am doing. And if my tongue is bitten by my teeth, it is not an evil act that has been done by the teeth. If I put the food into another man’s mouth, you may say it is a virtuous act, but if I put it into my own mouth, it is not a virtue. So if I bite somebody, it is an evil act, but if I bite my own tongue, there is nothing to say.

This is a very peculiar, picturesque answer I am giving to this question. Because there is outsideness, externality, you are having this problem in your mind. God is a complete whole. Again I am coming to the point: You are included in that, so you cannot
put such questions. You are raising questions because you have already placed yourself outside God’s creation and are unnecessarily fighting with God. What is your duty towards me, and what is my duty towards you? This was the question Arjuna raised, and Sri Krishna had to struggle hard to hammer upon the mind of Arjuna that one Being operates universally, and the other people who are doing are not outside. So this *punya-papa* should not arise. The question should not arise.

This is a highly advanced answer, but for tentatively convincing your mind I will say that when you do a *papa*, you do not believe God is doing everything. You are a hypocrite of the first water. You have no faith that God is everywhere. You first deny God, and only then do you commit the evil. Unless you deny God’s existence, you cannot do wrong. So why do you say God is doing everything? You are trying to deceive God by uttering a statement like this. If God is doing everything, you cannot have the feeling that you are doing something. Then why does this question arise? When you say you are doing something and this question arises, you have automatically denied the omnipresence of God, so you are a double dealer, a hypocrite. This question is a hypocritical question. It is not honest, I am very sorry to say.
Question: What is the difference between *so ham* and *tat tvam asi*?
Swamiji: They are practically the same. *So ham* means, “I am he.” Perhaps one is telling one’s own self, “I am that.” And *tat tvam asi* means telling somebody else, “You are that.” So they are practically the same thing: I am that, you are that. They mean one and the same thing.

Question: It is said that a dip in the holy Sarayu confers *mukti*. Is it so?
Swamiji: Maybe. As I am not competent to answer this, I should not say anything about it. When great Masters have said that, you have to believe it; otherwise, don’t bother about it. Why are you taking a dip there? Things which cannot be demonstrated should not be attempted. If you have faith, take a dip. What do you lose? Take a dip. If you can get merit, it is well and good. If you don’t get it, you have not lost anything.

Question: It is said that God made this body that is man, and entered into it. He also takes embodiments as Avatars. What is the difference between a *jiva*, an Avatara, and Brahman?
Swamiji: A *jiva* is unconscious of its relationship with Brahman. A *jiva* is a spark of Brahman itself which is unconscious that it is a spark of the
Supreme Being. An emperor’s son who thinks he is a shepherd because he lives with shepherds is something like the jīva, which does not know that it is heir apparent to that great heritage. An Incarnation is a self-conscious embodiment, self-conscious in the sense that the particular embodiment called an Avatara is conscious of its relationship with the Ultimate Truth. An embodiment which is conscious of its relationship with the supreme Brahman is an Avatara. The very same embodiment which is not so conscious, and thinks it is only the body, is the jīva.

This is the answer to the question.

**Question:** As you said, one does not have absolute faith in anyone, including one’s Guru. Then what is the process of surrendering completely?

**Swamiji:** In the course of time you will find yourself prepared for this great act of surrender. No one can say how knowledge arises in a person. Somehow it comes. Things seem to happen, rather than the other way around, that things are being done. It does not appear that things are being done by people. Things are happening somehow or other by the operation of certain powers. Likewise, you cannot create the spirit of self-surrender in yourself by effort, because the spirit of self-surrender is the spirit of a higher consciousness, the awakening into the existence of a
larger reality which includes your own being, and the question is how that larger consciousness arises in you. It is something like asking, “How do you wake up from sleep?” No one knows how we wake up from sleep. We wake up. Something happens. Likewise, by the operation of the universe, by the mystery of God’s creation, a circumstance will be created by which you will be brought in contact with a suitable medium called the Guru. That spirit also will arise in you in the course of time. However, from your part, as far as you are concerned now, you may sincerely aspire for that great day. “Oh God, when will that blessed day come to me?” Pray like this. It will come. Question: How can one know that the Guru is perfect? Swamiji: You need not have any Guru. A person who has a question like this need not have a Guru because that person himself is greater than anybody else.

Question: How can one be so sure of others when he is not sure of himself? Swamiji: Certainly so. When you are not sure of yourself, how can you be sure of others? So be sure of yourself first. Physician, heal thyself first.

Question: I request you to kindly throw some more light on your statement that the world
is non-three-dimensional. Can we call it a zero-dimensional or an infinitely-dimensional space-time continuum?

Swamiji: You can call it either way. Zero and infinity perhaps mean one and the same thing. When you are nothing, you will be everything, and when you are everything, you will be nothing. These are strange statements which look like contradictions, but these contradictions show that all extremes meet at one point. So your statement is correct. You may say it is zero, or you may call it infinite.

Question: It is said that not a blade of grass moves without the will of God. It is also said that man is the creator of his destiny. If everything is done by Him, how is man responsible for his destiny, and why does he enjoy the fruit of his actions?

Swamiji: Man is the creator of his destiny to the extent he is able to be conscious that God is doing everything. The consciousness that God is doing everything itself is the greatest achievement of man. Again we are coming to the question of how this consciousness arises. We cannot answer this question. Even Acharya Sankara did not answer this question of how knowledge arises in the jīva. He said it is by the grace of Ishvara. Īśvarānugrahādeva puṁsāmadvaitavāsanā (Avadhuta Gita 1). This is the
first verse of the Avadhuta Gita of Sage Dattatreya: By the grace of the Almighty, the consciousness of the unity of things arises.

If you are conscious of good and evil, you are responsible for what you do. Adam and Eve became responsible when they were conscious that they were naked. One felt “I am a man”, the other felt “I am a woman”, and they ran here and there to cover themselves with bark. When the great Almighty called Adam, he said, “I cannot come, my dear Master. I am naked.” We have eaten the fruit of the forbidden tree. The knowledge of good and evil is the reason why such questions arise in us. When you are aware that God does everything, you will not be able to think that there is such a thing as good and evil, right and wrong, or even of your own existence. Then your responsibility will merge into the will of God. The will of the citizen of the country is in harmony with the will of the nation. They are not opposites. The citizen does not fight with the nation or the national spirit; when they fight, it is a failure of democracy.

Likewise, the destiny of man is the same as the will of God. We are unable to understand this harmony between the two because we are somehow or other accustomed to think that we are different
from God, outside the universe, a question I tried to broach yesterday. The difficulty is in our thinking itself. So to the extent you are conscious that you exist independently, to that extent your responsibility arises. To the extent that you are able to rise above this consciousness that you exist independently, to that extent you have no responsibility in this world. God will take care of you. Your responsibility arises to the extent you are conscious that you are, so if you are there, you have a responsibility. If you are not there, you have no responsibility. First of all, decide whether you are there or not.

**Question**: Kindly suggest some good commentaries on the Gita in English and Hindi.

**Swamiji**: For a medium understanding, for commonplace people, I should say the best commentary available both in English and in Hindi is the discourse on the Bhagavadgita by the great sage Jnaneshwar Maharaj. It is a very handy compendium, very easy to understand and very thrilling, stimulating. It is available both in Hindi and in English.

There are different approaches to the Gita; otherwise, there would not be so many commentaries. Those who feel that the gospel of the Bhagavadgita is an urge to intense altruistic
servicefullness and activity would like Tilak’s Gita. More rational minds who are metaphysical in their outlook may like Sri Aurobindo’s Essays on the Gita. Those who are practical and are not bothered much about theories would like the commentary of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. I think, for the present, this is sufficient.

**Question:** In the present-day world one often finds that his colleagues or competitors in service or business achieve status, power or wealth by adopting unfair and unethical practices. Society not only accepts them, but accords them recognition and respectability. This deflects others and tempts them to do wrong things. What is your advice in such situations?

**Swamiji:** I agree with what you say. It may deflect you into wrong directions when you find the whole atmosphere around you is moving in a wrong direction. So what can I tell you? If possible, do not place yourself in the company of those people; be away from that atmosphere which deflects you or drags you, if practicable. If it is not practicable, develop a little strength of mind to see that you are not affected by that atmosphere outside. But even here, you might find a difficulty. You may be in untold difficulties if you try to stick to your guns
of righteousness, virtue, etc. You may lose your job or get harassed by your superiors. Your boss may be taking bribes, and he will turn you out if you don’t take bribes. This may be your difficulty.

So here is a choice which you have to make personally between what is, in your opinion, good for you, in spite of intense suffering. It may even be to the point of complete ruin of one’s physical and social welfare. Or if you want to accommodate yourself, you are the best judge. I cannot answer you; the question is for yourself. Your circumstances will tell you what you ought to do. Each circumstance should be taken as an isolated unit, and there is no general answer. Sometimes you have to sacrifice something, and if you do not want to sacrifice, then resign your job and cultivate your land and be an independent person. There are some people who did that. They resigned government jobs as they did not want to acquiesce in conditions which they did not respect. But all people cannot do that. Well-to-do people may do that; ordinary people cannot do that, so they may have to suffer. Choose between this predicament of undergoing great suffering because you choose righteousness, or acquiesce in it, eat a little bitter thing, and suffer its consequences.
However, these questions have to be individually considered; each case may vary one from the other in its details, though in generality they may look alike. Each case should be taken independently and examined.

**Question:** How can I distinguish which is due to *prarabdha* and which is due to *kriyamana* karma in day-to-day life?

**Swamiji:** It is said that what you do deliberately is your own *kriyamana* karma and what happens of its own accord is *prarabdha* karma, though sometimes the *prarabdha* may be behind your *kriyamana* karma also. The *prarabdha* may be impelling you to do something; that is a different matter. Generally speaking, if some event takes place without your involvement in it, that may be regarded as a consequence of your *prarabdha*. But if you deliberately enter into it and purposely do it with premeditation, that is *kriyamana* karma. Where your egoism and personality are involved and you consciously do it, you should consider it as a fresh karma. Where you are not involved in it but somehow things happen even without you expecting it, that may be considered as *prarabdha*.

**Question:** Some days we progress in the spiritual path, but it reduces gradually. What is the reason?
Swamiji: The reason is old karma, bad company and the pressing circumstances of life, all combined.

Question: Why is it written in the Vedas that women are not entitled to pronounce Om and read Vedas? Is it correct?

Swamiji: It is not said in the Vedas. Women are not barred. There were great women who were masters, geniuses, Vedic pundits. It was a later development which arose on account of social circumstances. It was an unfortunate social occurrence which has become a kind of Vedic sanction, as you have tried to put it. Vedas, or anything connected with the Vedas, were regarded as very sacred. It appears to me to be a purely traditional orthodoxy connected with the four days of the women’s cycle which later on, somehow or other, got deterioration into a feeling that women belong to somebody, that they do not possess anything, and it is only a man that possesses. Why this philosophy arose is for the historians to try to find out.

However, these social questions apart and political circumstances aside, the question concerning the Vedas seems to be purely a question of sanctity associated with the Vedas and unholiness associated with these four days. Otherwise, there should be no reason why the Vedas should not
be recited by women. They were really recited and studied by women, and there were occasions when even upayana ceremonies were performed by pundits who were women. So it is purely social and circumstantial, and not spiritual.

**Question:** Kindly explain the process of japa for a beginner. They say one mala of japa on the bank of Mother Ganga has one hundred times the force. Is it a fact?

**Swamiji:** Yes, yes. It is true. Not only on the bank of Mother Ganga, but any holy place has a vibration of its own. A particular spot where a great man lived vibrates with the spiritual prowess of that person who lived there, like Uttarakhand for instance. Mother Ganga, of course, is a holy river and has its own vibrations. Therefore, the vibrations that you are trying to set up within yourself by chanting the holy mantra get accentuated, enhanced in their intensity, and receive additional power by the atmosphere which is already charged with the vibrations of these holy forces.
Namajapa certainly leads to communion with the Absolute because it is one of the greatest sadhanas laid down before us by the ancients. Perhaps in this age, japa should be considered as the best sadhana. As Bhagavan Sri Krishna mentions in the Bhagavadgita, yajñānāṁ japayajño'smi (B.G. 10.25): Of all spiritual performances, engagements or sadhanas, japa is the best. The recitation of God's name can direct us to God, as the utterance of the name of any object or person gives us an idea of the person, and enables us to communicate with that person or object. If japa can be conducted with sincerity for a long period, with dedicated spirit, it will be a complete sadhana by itself. There is no doubt about it.

—SWAMI KRISHNANANDA